

NEWSCAST

Stay at home if at all possible

KEEP 2 METRES APART, WASH YOUR HANDS AND STAY HOME IF YOU CAN

COVID-19 is the biggest threat to our nation since world war two.

The guidance to remain at home if you can, to wash your hands regularly, for at least 20 seconds, and to keep at least 2 metres away from people who don't live in your household, will save lives.

We have seen the government apply further restrictions this week to try and stop the spread; the best way to beat this virus is to do all we can to follow these directions. The death toll continues to rise across the world and we have to do all we can to protect our communities, our neighbours and our loved ones.

UNISON has taken the decision to close all of our regional centres across the Country, but we remain committed to supporting our membership through these difficult times.

You will still be able to make contact with your local representatives and we are trying to get as much information to our branches and our members as possible.

Due to the nature of the work, **UNISONdirect** has closed and will remain closed for the foreseeable future, it is imperative that we take steps to protect our workforce and this was a necessary step to take to reinforce our own social distancing strategy.

If you routinely contact UNISON by calling 0800 0 857 857, you will **not** be able to do this until the restrictions are relaxed.

If you need support you will be able to find out who to contact by visiting:

<https://branches.unison.org.uk>

This link will help you find who your local branch contact is, by inputting your employer details. You can change the search filters to show the closest branch to you, which will more often than not be the best point of contact.

Our plea to you during this time is to stay safe and to speak to us if your employer is asking you to do things you are not comfortable with.

Exercising Your Mental & Physical Health

Social isolation over a number of weeks or months will be difficult for most of us, it is crucial to keep yourself fit during this time.

Exercising at home is fairly easy, if you have access to the internet and can navigate around Youtube. There are millions of videos of small home workouts that you can do without equipment or previous knowledge - **The Body Coach** is running PE classes at 9am Monday - Friday on his Youtube channel. He will continue to do this until schools open.

Exercising your mental health is just as important, taking time to meditate or relax is an important step to accepting our current way of life.

- **Headspace** is a meditation and mindfulness app, that is offering a wealth of free guided meditation sessions through its online portal to help people deal with isolation, the free section is called 'weathering the storm'.

WHAT HAS THE GOVERNMENT SAID?

The government is asking schools and childcare providers to provide care for children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Government guidance

outlines the key workers who must remain active to deliver this education provision in England, which includes childcare, support and teaching staff, social workers and specialist education professionals.

The government has also produced the following guidance:

- [Vulnerable children and young people](#)
- [Isolation for residential education settings](#)
- [Guidance for schools about temporary closures](#)
- [Q&A for parents and carers](#)
- [Cancellation of GCSEs, AS and A levels](#)
- [Free school meals](#)

We know our members are committed to doing everything possible to help the country through this health emergency.

Meanwhile UNISON is doing everything it can to uphold your rights at work, guarantee your financial position and safeguard your health.

You should speak to your employer about its plans for your school, and to **your UNISON branch** if you have any concerns.

WHAT IS UNISON DOING?

UNISON continues to have discussions with government departments and employers across the UK about the implications of coronavirus for school support staff. Following our detailed discussions with the Department for Education and the Local Government

Association, schools in England should now be doing the following:

- Continue full pay for all staff and guarantee full pay for contractors (catering, cleaning etc) and agency staff during this emergency period;
- Suspend all sickness absence procedures and ensure no detriment to staff;
- Conduct health and safety risk assessments, provide protective equipment and ensure the school is fully stocked with all necessary cleaning products;
- Postpone redundancies, restructures, TUPE transfers

and non urgent disciplinary hearings (etc) during this period, to free up resources and to reduce the number of people going into schools;

- Work with unions and employers locally and nationally to help get schools and pupils and staff through the crisis, with both sides recognising the need for flexibility;
- Arrange rotas and schedules to reduce the number of staff required on site while still providing safe care for children who need to attend. With vastly reduced pupil numbers, there is no need for all staff to work on site each day. Home working (where the role permits) for staff not scheduled to be on site will also better achieve the recommended social distancing of staff and pupils in school.
- Adopt the approach of asking for volunteers first on issues of redeployment and additional hours;
- Ensure staff are fully paid for working through the Easter holidays.



NJC UPDATE

CRITICAL COUNCIL WORKERS

UNISON has negotiated with local government employers and jointly agreed advice can be found below, including information on home working and vulnerable groups.

Local government employers have agreed that staff should work from home as far as possible.

CRITICAL SERVICES

Local government staff are likely to be critical to the delivery of the COVID-19 response irrespective of their formal role. In schools this includes teaching assistants and other support staff.

Where critical services need to be maintained, it may be necessary for some staff to move to other duties. This should be agreed beforehand with individuals and local trade unions.

Employees should not suffer any detriment in pay and conditions for the period of any temporary changes that are introduced.

Where staff are being asked to work flexibly, initially volunteers should be sought and

appropriate training and personal protective equipment provided.

Unless there are urgent, mitigating reasons, employers should not require staff who do not have experience of supervising large groups of children as part of their usual role, to do so now, without the adequate support provided.

Employees who agree to undertake a different role should suffer no financial detriment and continue to be paid at their usual contracted rate. Where they undertake roles that are paid at a higher rate than their usual contracted rate, they should receive the higher rate of pay for the duration of the redeployment.

Staff with an underlying condition or who are pregnant Where staff have an underlying health condition or are pregnant they should work from home where possible.

If they cannot work from home they should not be asked to use annual leave to cover the period they need to stay at home due to government advice on self-isolation and social distancing.

Staff who cannot work from home

The local government employers and trade unions have agreed that ultimately employers will need to accept that some staff will have to be allowed to stay at home on full pay for the duration of the crisis if home working is not an option.

Useful links:

Education:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/key-issues/covid-19-closures/>

Social Care:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/care-workers-your-rights/coronavirus-advice-social-care-workers/>

Local Gov:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/local-government/coronavirus-guidance-local-government-workers/>

Higher Ed:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/key-issues/covid-19-advice-staff/>



SOCIAL CARE NEWS

SPOTTING ISSUES DURING THE CRISIS: YOUR HELP NEEDED

We are putting pressure on your employer and the government to produce much better arrangements for care workers. In order to do this, we need to know what you are experiencing on the ground. This will help us to spot trends and get ahead of issues before they become unmanageable.

If you become aware of a workplace problem in a social care setting, related to the coronavirus outbreak, email us with a short summary here: care@unison.co.uk

FAQ'S

I work as a carer and I'm frequently in contact with elderly and vulnerable people, I'm concerned about passing on the virus to them. What should I do?

If you're not showing symptoms of coronavirus should continue to attend work in the normal way, according to public health advice.

It is very important that the care system continues to operate and the crucial work done by you is vital to this. However, if you experience symptoms as set out in this advice, you should remain

at home and not attend work.

Also, if anyone in your household has symptoms, you need to self-isolate for 14 days.

I am self-isolating but the care provider I work for is refusing to pay my sick pay from day one. What should I do?

The government has confirmed that **statutory sick pay (SSP)** is available for eligible people from day one of their absence, if they are self-isolating in line with Government advice.

This is available to all those who are advised to self-isolate, even if they don't have symptoms. It is particularly important that this is in place for workers in social care settings because of your close contact with individuals from high-risk groups. If your employer is refusing to comply with this, contact your UNISON rep or branch (link to branch finder). In the meantime, follow public health advice and do not attend work if you have COVID-19 symptoms.

This is the kind of issue we want you to report via:

care@unison.co.uk - information about what is happening on the

ground is vital for us to deliver action from employers and government.

What personal protective equipment should I expect to have been provided by my employer?

Public Health England have issued guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE). Advice for social care states that, "Aprons, gloves and fluid repellent surgical masks should be used in these situations. If there is a risk of splashing, then eye protection will minimise risk."

For more guidance on PPE, [see our main coronavirus page.](#)

What should I do if my employer has not provided me with the correct personal protective equipment?

If you believe that your employer is not providing the necessary PPE, report this to **your workplace rep and/or your branch** in the first instance. UNISON will raise this with your employer and challenge them to provide the required equipment. Please also report this as an issue to care@unison.co.uk.

JOIN UNISON



join.unison.org.uk



Call **FREE** to join:
0800 171 2194

7 reasons to join UNISON

Each of our 1.4 million members has their own reasons for joining UNISON.

But every one receives our help and support.



Legal Help

For you at work and your family at home



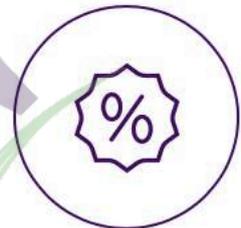
Financial Assistance

And debt advice in times of need



Compensation

for you and your family



Discounts

including money off cars and holidays



Helpline

Our helpline is open until midnight weekdays, and 4pm on Saturdays, closed on Sundays



Training

to help develop your career



Support

we'll be with you when you need it most

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