

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your response (dated 2 February) to our letter, regarding the Covid-19 Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Whilst all of our organisations appreciate your response, your letter fails to address the concerns our respective organisations initially raised and the significant detrimentally financial impact this is having and will continue to have on hardworking and dedicated supply teachers, support staff and the agencies that stand ready to support them.

Backdated furlough

The key issue here is that there are a number of supply teachers and other workers supplied via agencies who cannot be furloughed under the current iteration of the CJRS.. Everyone was working under the assumption that schools would reopen from 4 January 2021, right up until the last minute. Agencies would not and could not have therefore anticipated the announcement from the Prime Minister in respect of the closure of schools and had the requisite furlough agreement in place with their supply teachers. There was then a further delay in receiving clarification from government on the correct interpretation of furlough rules for this time which compounded the situation. As a consequence, thousands of supply teachers and support staff have been left without pay. All of our organisations acknowledge and support the decision to close schools to protect health and safety, but the fact schools were closed at the last minute without notice makes this a unique case compared to other industries, which therefore requires a unique solution.

Where income has been lost for teachers and support workers, they are increasingly likely to leave the industry. This could see a shortage of supply teachers and support staff when they are most needed as schools start to reopen. Agencies have already played a crucial role in helping schools meet spikes in demand when permanent staff have been on sick leave but they will not be able to do this moving forward if fewer supply staff are in the industry. The government has repeatedly stressed the importance of schools. Ignoring the education sector at this time will make it harder for schools and pupils to get back to normal as smoothly as possible when they fully re-open.

PPN Alternative

Whilst all of our organisations welcomed the new guidance published last week that allowed schools to pay their suppliers as usual, our respective organisations do not believe it goes far enough, as it fails to place an obligation on schools to use the scheme, meaning that vast swathes of supply teachers will still have no income protection. We fear that as there is no clear incentive or compulsion to use the scheme, many schools will not. Anecdotal evidence from members of the REC and supply teachers suggests that there has already been poor take up from schools. It is crucial that supply staff are supported during this time; a failure to do so will cost the Treasury more in the long-term due to unemployment costs.

These are pressing issues that still need to be addressed as a matter of urgency during the ongoing pandemic. All our organisations remain committed to working with Government but after a month of delay, a solution is needed now more than ever.

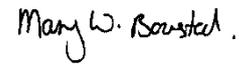
Yours sincerely,



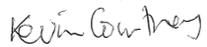
Kate Shoesmith
Deputy CEO
REC



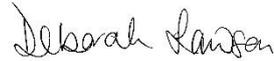
Dr Patrick Roach
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