

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to dominate all aspects of public life, particularly given the national lockdowns operating throughout the UK to curb the spread of the new COVID-19 variant.

Whilst recognising the importance of the measures imposed to curtail the spread of the disease, the NASUWT is aware of the significant detrimental financial impact this will have on supply teachers who may now be unable to work, have had work cancelled, or who are drastically limited in the employment opportunities available.

The Union has written to Ministers highlighting the situation for supply teachers, calling upon governments to put in place appropriate financial support measures urgently for supply teachers, whose incomes and livelihoods will be seriously impacted on as a consequence of the further extension of coronavirus emergency restrictions enacted by Parliament.

Whilst Government advice and guidance for the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) makes it clear that employers can still claim for supply teachers, including during school holiday periods, provided they meet the usual eligibility criteria, the Union is aware that the increased employers' costs towards the scheme (such as National Insurance and pension contributions) have resulted in supply agencies stating that they cannot place supply teachers on furlough when coupled with the associated loss of earnings.

The NASUWT believes that the Government should provide appropriate financial support through a grant or rebate for employment businesses who continue to use the CJRS and furlough supply teachers. The Union has produced a template letter for members to send to their MP to highlight the need to amend the extended CJRS to better protect supply teachers at this time.

Details of this are available at: <https://www.nasuw.org.uk/advice/supply-teacher/supply-teachers-furlough-campaign.html>.

With this in mind, the Union has written to the Department for Education (DfE), along with other unions representing staff working in education, calling for better income protection for supply staff. A letter signed by the NASUWT, AEP, GMB, NAHT, NEU, Prospect and UNISON calls for the DfE to send a direction and provide adequate funding to ensure that supply staff continue to be financially supported following the closure of schools from 5 January.

The joint letter calls upon ministers to assess whether the current employer contributions within the CJRS, covering National Insurance and pension contributions, are acting as a disincentive for agencies to furlough workers, particularly supply staff working in education.

Details of the letters are available at: <https://www.nasuw.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-campaign-for-supply-teachers.html>.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT THAT MAY BE AVAILABLE TO SUPPLY TEACHERS

Statutory Sick Pay

Supply teachers working through a supply agency or an umbrella company may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provided they meet the eligibility criteria. Social security legislation uses a broader definition of 'employee' which means that supply teachers may be eligible for SSP if they have accumulated three months of continuous service and earn a minimum of £118 per week or, if the level of pay varies, depending on the average pay over the previous eight weeks.

For the purposes of supply teachers as agency workers, continuous employment is not broken by periods of sickness, annual leave or if the agency is unable to offer work.

If a supply teacher has more than one contract with an agency and their earnings are aggregated for the purposes of National Insurance Contributions (NICs), they must be incapable of work under all their contracts before they are entitled to SSP.

The Government has removed the four-day qualifying period so that SSP can be claimed from the first day of absence due to self-isolation. Further information is available on the GOV.UK website (see links below).

The Union has produced further detailed advice and guidance which can be found at: <https://www.nasuwat.org.uk/advice/supply-teacher/statutory-sick-pay-for-supply-teachers.html>.

Other state benefits

As a supply teacher, depending on your circumstances and the eligibility criteria, you and your partner may be able to access one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit;
- Employment and Support Allowance;
- Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a payment to help with your living costs. It is paid monthly and is available for those who are on a low income or who are out of work, provided they meet the eligibility criteria, which may include supply teachers as agency workers.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

ESA is an individual benefit for those with a disability or health condition which impacts on their ability to work. ESA provides money towards living costs for those unable to work, as well as supporting individuals back into work.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

JSA is available online for those who are currently unemployed and actively looking for work, or who work fewer than 16 hours per week.

Further information, including eligibility criteria, can be found on the GOV.UK website:

- <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>;
- <https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance>;
- <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>;
- <https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance>.

Test and Trace Support Payment

The Government Test and Trace Support Payment scheme provides for a one-off payment of £500 to anyone forced to self-isolate who meets ALL the following criteria:

- you have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace;
- you are employed or self-employed;
- you cannot work from home and will lose income as a result;
- you are claiming at least one of the following benefits:
 - o Universal Credit;
 - o Working Tax Credits;
 - o Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - o Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
 - o Income Support;
 - o Pension Credit;
 - o Housing Benefit.

The NASUWT is aware that a number of supply teachers may not meet such rigid eligibility criteria and this raises concerns about the situation for supply teachers who are sent home by a school to self-isolate whilst undertaking an assignment.

However, if you do not fulfil the criteria outlined above, you may be eligible for a £500 discretionary payment if you are living in England and you meet the following eligibility criteria:

- you have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace either because you have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
- you are employed or self-employed;
- you are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result of self-isolating;
- you are not currently receiving any of the benefits identified above; and
- you are on a low income and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while you are self-isolating.

If you are eligible for either the Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment, the £500 payment you will receive is in addition to any benefits and SSP that you may currently receive.

As a supply teacher, it is important that you obtain details of the relevant NHS Test and Trace notification from the school and/or the agency that supplied it to you, in order to apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment.

Further details on the Test and Trace Support Payment, including what you will need in order to apply, can be found on the Government's web page 'Claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme'.

NASUWT Benevolence

For those supply teachers experiencing financial hardship, the NASUWT Benevolent Fund is available provided a subscription has been paid to the Union.

The NASUWT Benevolent Fund was created to provide effective short-term assistance during times of financial hardship and difficulty.

To make an application for benevolence assistance, contact your Local Association Secretary in the first instance.

Other possible sources of help

For those members who have accumulated large or unmanageable debts, the Benevolent Fund provides access to a money advice service through Payplan. Payplan is a free and confidential debt advice company which can provide advice on difficulties with debt and how best to manage such situations.

Additionally, you can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to speak to an experienced advisor about your eligibility for state benefits.



E-mail: advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk
Website: www.nasuwt.org.uk