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NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

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Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State
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By email: Sec-OF-STATE.PS@education.gov.uk

Dear Gavin,

Urgent clarification regarding financial support for supply teachers and access to the CJRS

The NASUWT finds itself in the position of having to send further correspondence regarding financial support for supply teachers in light of the continuation of the national lockdown the continued closure of schools to the vast majority of pupils until 8 March.

Whilst acknowledging the need to contain the spread of the COVID-19 disease, it must be recognised that vast numbers of supply teachers have now found themselves in the position of having had very little access to work and a source of income. The NASUWT has written to you on numerous occasions to highlight this situation and request that more is done to provide adequate financial assistance.

We know that you appreciate the key role played by supply teachers and the Union recognises the value of the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) until April 2020, particularly for supply teachers as agency workers.

However, as previously stated in correspondence, the Union is increasingly concerned that more and more supply teachers are reporting that the agencies and/or umbrella companies they work for are unable to place them on furlough because of the increased employers' costs towards the scheme.

Such a situation has been made even more precarious with recent changes announced by the Treasury that now mean supply agencies are no longer able to backdate claims for supply teachers to the start of the new academic term in January.

I am sure you will agree that the inability to backdate furlough to the start of January, as per section 7.1 (c) i) of the revised Treasury Direction is unacceptable, as it has left thousands of supply teachers without any possible source of income unless subject to a protective furlough agreement with the agency.

Added to this the short notice that was received for many schools, supply teachers and supply agencies which left many unable to put in place in time the necessary arrangements to place supply teachers on furlough as per the above Treasury Direction.

Despite this, your Department still references access to the CJRS as a solution for supply teachers working through agencies, see below from the Schools Minister in response to a question raised:

25 January 2021

If supply staff employed via employment agencies are unable to work due to COVID-19, their employment agency can place them on furlough and use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to claim for 80% of their wages, including during school holiday periods, provided that the eligibility criteria are met. Further information on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>(opens in a new tab).

It cannot go unnoticed that the absence of any further advice and guidance from the DfE, in the form of a revised Public Procurement Note (PPN), such as that issued by the Cabinet Office/Crown Commercial Services (CCS), has exacerbated the situation.

Indeed the current advice for schools on financial support available for schools during the Coronavirus pandemic, states that the following in respect of supply teachers:

This section on supply staff in schools is out of date. The Cabinet Office policy procurement notices 02/20 and 04/20 are no longer in effect. We will publish updated information shortly.

It should be noted that no such updated information has been forthcoming since 14 January.

Once again, the NASUWT calls on the DfE and the Treasury to urgently look at the situation for dedicated supply teachers whose incomes and livelihoods have been detrimentally impacted as a consequence of the aforementioned limitations and lack of clarity.

The NASUWT would welcome an assurance that urgent consideration will be given by the Government and colleagues in the DfE, the Treasury and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to an appropriate level of financial protection, including better access to the CJRS.

I look forward to your positive response on these very important matters.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary