

Supply Teachers' Conference

The Supply Teachers' Conference, held on 17 September in Birmingham, saw the largest gathering of supply teachers from across the UK call for the introduction of national standards for supply agencies to tackle the exploitation and unscrupulous practices that many supply teachers are subjected to.

A real-time electronic poll of members attending the Conference found that over half (55%) of supply teachers believed that national standards for supply agencies would help secure better employment conditions for supply teachers. Nearly a third (32%) said that they would not recommend their main supply agency to other teachers.

Dr Patrick Roach, Deputy General Secretary of the NASUWT, who addressed the Conference, said that, "too many supply teachers are having their employment rights, their dignity and their wellbeing undermined by the exploitative and unfair treatment they are being subjected to by some supply agencies, umbrella companies and by schools."

Supply Teachers' Conference Declaration 2016

Following this, the NASUWT reaffirmed its commitment to supporting and developing supply teachers by issuing the Supply Teachers' Conference Declaration 2016 (<https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/supply>).

The NASUWT Declaration recognises the essential resource that supply teachers are and the vital contribution that they make as dedicated professionals. The Declaration acknowledges the anger and frustration felt by many supply teachers and notes their deep concerns, as well as setting out the next steps.

Supply agency code of conduct

The NASUWT has continued to hold regular meetings with both the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) and the Recruitment Employment Confederation (REC). As a consequence of work by the NASUWT, significant improvements have been made to the REC Code of Conduct, which includes:

- clarification over the terminology used throughout the document so that it is easier to understand;
- enhanced detail about the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003 so that agencies and agency workers are clear in terms of what agencies must do in order to comply with the law;
- specific reference to the fact that agencies are prohibited from supplying teachers or education support staff to schools during industrial action;
- more explicit references to exactly what an agency worker must be provided with when they accept an assignment;
- reference to equal opportunities monitoring and an obligation on agencies to ensure they work with schools to safeguard against any unlawful discrimination;
- greater transparency around what an agency worker can expect in regards to rates of pay.

The REC has also confirmed to the Union that it will investigate any complaints raised by the NASUWT in relation to the work of any employment agencies that are members of the REC.

NASUWT supply teacher members should contact the Union immediately if they are experiencing problems or difficulties with a supply agency.

The Employment Agency Standards

The NASUWT has met with representatives from the Employment Agency Standards (EAS) who are responsible for monitoring and compliance with employment rights, particularly for agency workers such as supply teachers.

It was agreed that further keeping-in-touch days would be established to discuss further the concerns the Union has about the practices of supply agencies.

Continued overleaf

NASUWT trade dispute

As part of the national trade dispute with the Department for Education (DfE), the NASUWT has established a programme of high-level talks with DfE officials examining concerns around the exploitation of supply teachers.

On the agenda for these discussions is supply teacher pay rates, pensions and the right to work.

Ministers at the DfE have indicated to the NASUWT their commitment to tackle the poor practices adopted by some employment agencies and umbrella companies.

Government's Autumn Statement 2016

Following the November 2016 Autumn Statement, the NASUWT wrote to representatives of the Government, seeking more detail and clarity on how the proposed changes to Off-Payroll Working Rules for those working in the public sector would impact on agency workers, specifically supply teachers.

The Chancellor announced proposals which would see the responsibility for ensuring that off-payroll workers in the public sector, including schools are paying the correct tax and National Insurance Contributions (NICs) fall on those paying the workers' company.

Detailed discussions are ongoing and the NASUWT will keep members updated.

The Future World of Work

In December, the NASUWT submitted written evidence to the House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee into the Future World of Work.

The House of Commons Inquiry looks at the changing nature of work and the status and rights of agency workers, the self-employed and those working in the 'gig' economy.

In its submission, the Union makes it clear that there are significant concerns about the employment of agency and self-employed workers in the education sector, and that these concerns are intensifying with the increased casualisation of the workforce and the growth of supply agencies and umbrella companies. The Union made a number of recommendations, including for proper regulation of the employment agency market, and will be seeking to secure improvements over the coming months.

Supply Advisor website

The NASUWT is the only union to publish a comprehensive and high-quality resource and information pack for supply teachers and to provide supply teacher members with access to free and accredited training and continuing professional development (CPD) delivered through a programme of regional and national events.

The updated Supply Advisor website now includes details of all supply agencies registered with either the APSCo and the REC.

For more information, go to www.supplyadvisor.co.uk.

Supply Teachers' Consultation Conference

The NASUWT Supply Teachers' Consultation Conference will be held on 10 and 11 March 2017, commencing with a consultation forum meeting between 8:00pm and 10:00pm on the evening of Friday 10 March. The main conference will take place on Saturday 11 March starting at 9:30am and concluding at 3:30pm.

The consultation forum meeting is an open meeting to which all NASUWT supply teacher members can attend and where there will be an opportunity to:

- discuss the work of the NASUWT on behalf of supply teacher members;
- provide advice to the Union on policy issues (as currently operates for advisory committees);
- give feedback on practical priorities (e.g. your priorities or preferences for future training and development);
- provide feedback on general work-related issues.

An evening meal and overnight accommodation will be available for members who attend.

To register for the consultation forum and the conference, please contact conferencesandevents@mail.nasuwt.org.uk.

