

Supporting members with childcare responsibilities

Introduction

An increasing number of pupils and staff in schools are having to self-isolate as a result of suspected cases or outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools.

This is causing childcare issues for teachers who are required to be in work but whose own children have been sent home from school.

Some teachers have found themselves placed under significant pressure by their employers when they have raised the problems they are facing, and in some cases have been threatened with deduction of salary or told that their only option is to take unpaid leave.

This advice note sets out the issues members should consider when faced unexpectedly with having to make childcare arrangements as a result of their children being sent home from school.

If alternative childcare cannot be arranged, the advice from the Department of Education (DE) is that the member of staff should be facilitated to work from home. You should discuss with your employer the possibility of working from home and the types of work-related activity you can undertake, including working remotely, for example, by:

- delivering lessons remotely to groups of pupils in school;
- providing work and support for pupils who are self-isolating;
- preparing resources to support remote learning.

Think of all the work-related activities you may be able to do working from home, including participating in school meetings remotely, and be prepared to offer those to the employer to support your request to work from home.

If the nature of the individual's job prevents this, the member of staff, in these circumstances and for the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, may request exceptional dependant leave from their principal/line manager up to a maximum of ten working days (pro-rated for part time staff) on normal pay.

Where the employer is unwilling to consider either of these options, then you should contact the NASUWT at that stage before any other options are considered.