

Workers can't pay the price for coronavirus

The NSSN welcomes information being sent by unions to members on coronavirus/Covid-19. It is essential workers are protected during this worrying period and not impacted in terms of safety or pay and employment rights. We have drafted a model motion to be used in your union/trades council.

This union organisation/conference notes with great concern the spread of coronavirus, which has seen almost 100,000 people infected globally, with over 3,000 fatalities and rising. Governments in parts of Europe are beginning to stop gatherings of people in an attempt to control the spread of the virus.

We believe the virus is exposing decades of privatisation and spending cuts in health, education, local authorities and infrastructure.

This union organisation/conference instructs the NEC (etc) to campaign for:

- Emergency measures to provide resources to protect workers, patients, pupils and students in the NHS, education and public services;
- The government to ensure schools and health services are adequately funded to meet needs. This should include additional budgets to provide supply staff to cover additional absence arising from the coronavirus, and to make sure both staff and parents are fully compensated for any loss of earnings arising from the crisis;
- Advice to members, workplace representatives and local officers to ensure workload demands on staff are reduced, and time is available to prioritise protecting the health and safety of staff and students;
- Opposition to any removal of statutory class size limits as a response to managing teacher absences arising from coronavirus. Schools should not be treated as if they were just child-minding services. Increasing class sizes would damage education and heighten the risk of infection being spread further, as well as further increasing staff workload. Public health advice to education workers to hand wash regularly will only be possible if time is provided within the school day for this to take place;
- No worker to pay the price for any spread of the virus. Any worker who is required not to attend work or is unable to do so because of childcare or transport closures should receive full pay and not be forced

to take annual leave. This should include workers in receipt of in-work benefits such as Universal Credit, who should be paid the benefits and receive no sanction. Workers who follow health advice to be absent from work to avoid potential spread of the coronavirus should be excluded from any attendance management procedures;

- Self-employed, agency, zero-hour contract and gig economy workers required to self-isolate to be granted emergency benefits by DWP for their normal working hours [equivalent to £12/hour or £15/hour in London]. As a minimum, all workers should be entitled to sick pay from day one for as long as it is needed;
- Rights for benefit claimants who have to self-isolate. Claimants should be believed and excused signing and attending mandatory interviews and have their benefit payment advanced. Claimants should not be penalised for not being able to leave their homes and not being able to

undertake labour market activities because of lack of access to the transport/internet/postal services etc;

- No redundancies, lay-offs or loss of pay in manufacturing, logistics and/or service industries because of supply issues;
- Any companies who do not comply with this to be nationalised and taken into public ownership to defend workers' jobs and incomes;
- Vaccines when developed to be available free. Nationalisation of the pharmaceutical companies;
- The reversal of privatisation of the NHS, removal of the privateers and a massive increase in health spending;
- Trade union oversight over any government emergency measures taken to contain the virus such as restrictions on public assemblies and strikes;
- For the TUC and the unions, the biggest national organisation of over 6 million workers across the country, to

prepare to lead national coordinated strike action to protect people should the government not take these measures.



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