



# Planning guide for supply members

NEU checklist



**Coronavirus crisis**  
Workplace checklist



# Coronavirus: checklist for supply educators

This National Education Union Cymru (NEU Cymru) checklist for supply members gives advice on work via supply agencies or directly with schools and colleges following wider opening from 22 February.

It gives you advice on:

- how to respond if you are offered work but are concerned about returning to work generally or at a particular workplace.
- how to respond if you are on furlough and an agency asks you to declare yourself available for work.
- how to seek advice and support if you are threatened with any penalty as a result of expressing concerns about returning to work.

If you are a supply member already working in a school or college on a long-term placement, you should read our separate advice for NEU Cymru members in relation to wider opening.

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## Wider opening of schools

Please check the latest NEU position on wider opening.

The NEU is seeking to ensure that safety measures are in place in all workplaces to protect all staff, including supply staff. Supply staff are also entitled to receive the lateral flow tests to be completed twice a week in line with school policy.

The Welsh Government has advised schools to ensure they are able to continue to employ supply staff where necessary, so schools' Covid-19 safety policies should be drawn up with supply staff in mind, as well as permanent staff and students. The NEU has also reminded all schools about this.

## Responding to offers of work

For most supply staff, any offer of work after such a long period of disruption and financial loss will be welcome, but many will want to seek assurances about the likely 'Covid-19 safety' of education workplaces.

Every employer is under a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of employees and others present in the workplace (including temporary staff for whom it is not the employer). This means that the workplace must be safe in general terms and for you specifically. You should be provided with a copy of all safety procedures on arrival at the school, and preferably before.

When placing you in a workplace, your agency also has a general duty of care towards you in relation to your safety. Before it offers you work, the law says that your agency must consider whether it will be safe for you to work at the proposed workplace.

It is legitimate for you to ask your agency what steps it has taken to assure itself that schools are safe and for it to obtain copies of safety procedures to provide to prospective temporary staff.

**You could ask the agency the following questions:**

- † Is the agency satisfied that the proposed workplace is safe?
- † What steps has it taken to ensure that it is?
- † Has it asked for the school's risk assessment and safety procedures?
- † Can it provide you with a copy of these documents before you go to the school?
- † Will you be allowed (during paid time) to fully familiarise yourself with working arrangements before commencing work?

**If you are concerned about specific issues, you could also ask about the following:**

- † Social distancing – will this be maintained appropriately in accordance with Welsh Government guidance?
- † Cleaning provisions – are these adequate?
- † Face coverings – are these required to be worn in accordance with Welsh Government guidance?
- † PPE provision – will this be provided as necessary?
- † Is there an adequate track and trace process in place?
- † Are plans in relation to either a suspected in-school case, a school outbreak, or local outbreak adequate and robust?

**If you are in a vulnerable or higher risk category, you could ask:**

- † Is the agency satisfied that the workplace is safe for you personally?
- † Has it informed the employer of your personal circumstances and asked the employer to take them into account via an individual risk assessment if necessary?

Use our advice on vulnerable and higher risk staff and let your agency know about anything that may make it difficult for you to work. This includes your own health or that of family members, or other matters such as childcare difficulties or issues with travelling to any particular workplace, and if you require protective or supportive measures.

If you work via an umbrella company arrangement, that umbrella company is your employer, and you are legally its employee. The fact that it may not be involved in the process of securing placements for you does not exempt it from its responsibility in relation to your health and safety as its employee if you return to work.

If you have any concerns after going into any workplace, find out the name of the NEU Cymru rep and speak to them in the first instance. If there is no NEU Cymru rep, contact your NEU district officers.

## Responding to questions about availability for work if you are furloughed

If you are asked by an agency to say whether or not you are available for work:

- Reply that you may be available for work and that you will want to be informed of available assignments.
- Say that you will need to discuss the safety of each individual assignment, given the legal obligations with regard to health and safety both on the agency and on the employer at the particular workplace.
- Use our advice on vulnerability at work and let your agency know about anything that may make it difficult or impossible for you to work in school, such as your own health, that of family members, or other matters such as childcare difficulties – or if you require protective or supportive measures.
- Do not say that you are unavailable for work especially while you continue to be furloughed.

## Seeking support if you are threatened with being penalised

The Welsh Government is advising all employers to engage with any legitimate concerns about returning to work. This applies just as much in moral terms to agencies, and certainly applies in legal terms to umbrella companies as legal employers.

You should seek support from your NEU Cymru district officer if you are threatened with any penalty for saying that you are not available to work on health or other reasonable grounds, or refusing to work in any workplace which you reasonably believe to be unsafe.

March 2021



NEU1892/0620