

YOUR VOICE

Voice
community

No. 51

OCTOBER 2020

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VOICE JOINS COMMUNITY Members vote for transfer



**VOICE SECTION OF
COMMUNITY:**

- > **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**
- > **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

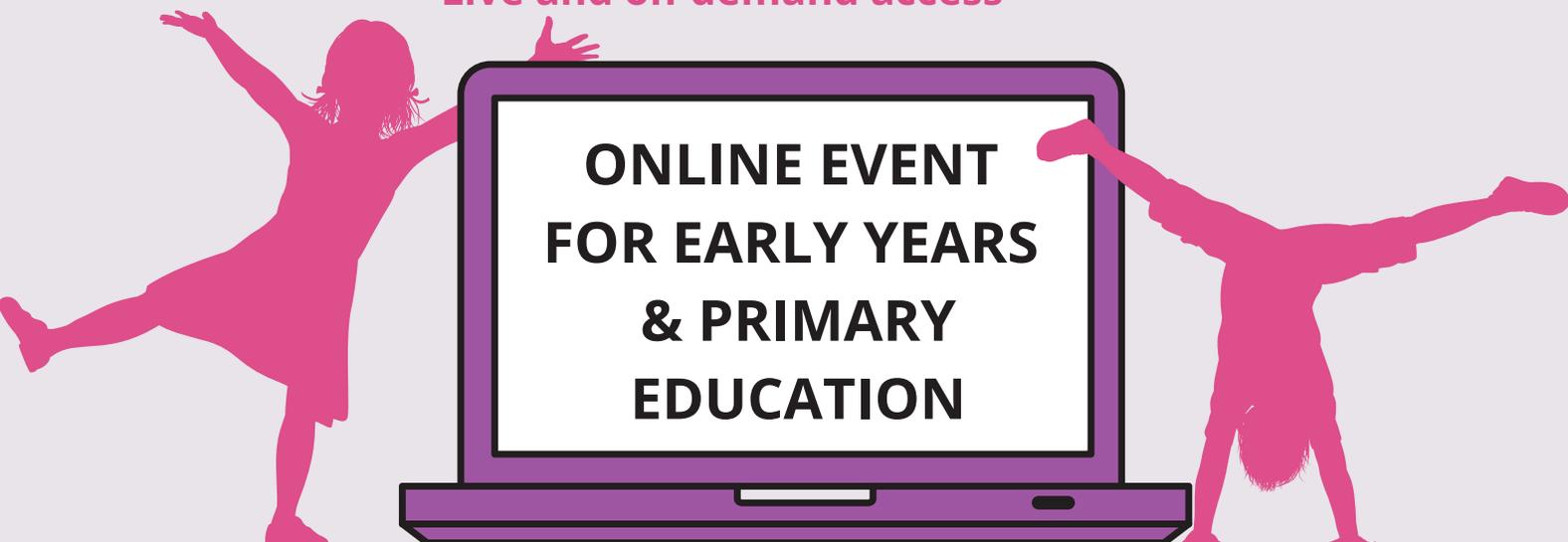


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VOICE UPDATE

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Coronavirus resources & information

We continue to provide regular news updates on our website and social media to keep you informed. See www.voicetheunion.org.uk for resources including:

- > the **latest information and government guidance** from across the UK (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/coronavirus); and
- > your **FAQs** (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/help-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-faqs).

Social media

You can also follow Voice on **Facebook** (www.facebook.com/Voicetheunion) and **Twitter** (@Voicetheunion, @VoiceCymru, @VoiceScotland) for news, shared content and resources.

Advice and support

If you need **advice or support with a workplace issue**, we cannot do this via Facebook or Twitter, so please **contact us and ask for the duty officer**: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/contact-us.

You can also contact us there if you have an enquiry about **membership subscriptions or updating your details**. (Direct messages sent via Facebook, including out of office hours, may not be seen until the next working day.)



FROM THE BLOG

Crying out for help

(Article by Voice General Secretary Deborah Lawson for *Early Years Educator (EYE) Magazine*, September 2020)

'For too long, the private, voluntary and independent early years sector has been the "Cinderella service" – with hard working and dedicated staff starved of resources, overlooked and taken for granted ... what we need now is a national pay and career structure.'

Comment: It is high time all politicians understood that investment in early years is the only route to a more cohesive society, one where the differentials between achievement and

wealth creation are improved for the common good.

Governments look enviously at other countries where there are fewer issues, better outcomes and increased GDP and yet fail to understand that in order to achieve their aspirations they need to change the model and invest in early years.

To be successful requires work, politicians would do well to remember that the only place success comes before work is in the dictionary!

Melynda Standing [Immediate Past President of Voice]

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/crying-out-help



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*Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. See website for details. Offers subject to change without notice and correct at time of print. Foyles - Unfortunately, the discount is not applicable against certain items, including but not limited to already-discounted products, events, gift cards, book tokens, theatre tickets, and A Year of Books. The discount is not applicable to postage costs. Foyles reserves the right to alter products included or excluded from the scheme, and to add to or amend these terms and conditions. Voice Rewards is managed and run on behalf of Voice by Parliament Hill Ltd.

VOICE NEWS

Transfer 2020 ballot result

At the close of the ballot on Friday 31 July 2020, **1,786 members voted in favour of the resolution to transfer Voice to Community Union**, with 489 against.

Voice rules (rule 76) required the resolution to transfer to be passed by a simple majority, and 78.5% of those voting voted in favour.

The transfer of Voice to Community took place on 1 October 2020, when Voice became a section of Community and members and staff automatically transferred to Community. This will be followed by a period of transition and integration.

A copy of the independent scrutineers' report is available on the website (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/transfer-2020-result). We are required under section 100E(7) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 to inform you that, notwithstanding our publication of the independent scrutineers' report, Voice will, on request, supply any member with a copy of the report on payment of a fee of £1.

Civica were the independent scrutineers for this ballot.

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/Transfer-2020

Prevention of back pain in the early years



Protect yourself and your employees from back pain and other Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) with free, detailed guidance and resources from Jolly Back and the Early Years Alliance. Produced in partnership with the University of Derby.

www.eyalliance.org.uk/back-pain

GETTING YOUR BACK BACK ON TRACK

Following World Spine Day on 16 October – the global day of action to highlight the burden of spinal pain and disability and promote optimum spinal health – physiotherapist Lorna Taylor has written a new blog for Voice about back health.

Studies show that as many as 75 per cent of early years and primary teachers have problems with their backs, as well as their necks, hips and knees, which they feel are related to their work.

Lorna's article includes links to new practical guidance and training materials, and to a survey being undertaken by the University of Derby, which is researching back, knee and neck pain and other 'musculoskeletal' problems in the early years workforce.

To read the blog and take part in the survey, go to:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/world-spine-day



EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS CALENDAR 2020-21

POSTPONED: date to be advised

Voice Conference 2020
Clayton Hotel Chiswick,
London

Saturday 21 November 2020 & Saturday 27 February 2021
Childcare and Education Virtual Summits

Friday 8 January to Saturday 9 January 2021
tes SEN Show, Business Design Centre, London

TBC

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/events

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY'S VOICE

NEW ERA FOR VOICE

By Deborah Lawson, Assistant General Secretary (Voice Section) (deborahlawson@voicetheunion.org.uk)

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, it is fitting that we have, again, broken the mould and reached another key milestone in a journey that began with Colin Leicester and Ray Bryant, our founders.

In 1970, we began as the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) and dared to be different by seeking alternative methods to resolve disputes. In 2020, we took a momentous step to modernise, and to secure the future of Voice and a choice of union membership for those who work in education and early years education and childcare.

On 1 October, following the ballot earlier this year (see page 3), Voice transferred to Community to become its education and early years section. We are delighted to be joining forces with a union which shares our values while giving us a stronger voice when campaigning and lobbying on issues that matter to you.

The transfer offers the best of both worlds for our members. Both unions are modern and forward-thinking. As a section of Community, Voice retains its name, responsibility for education policy, identity and specialist staff. Voice will continue to set its own distinct and unique agenda and

priorities for education, the early years and childcare.

Additionally, as part of a much larger union – with four representatives on Community's National Executive Council – Voice members will be part of a larger campaigning union, and that will strengthen and increase our influence on education and early years issues that are important to you, our members.

The transfer to Community is – and a resounding 78.5% agreed – the best way to strengthen Voice's influence, its service to members, and provide a modern trade union approach in an increasingly challenging world.

At a time of great change in how and where we work, it is exciting to look forward to positive change, and to working with Community and Voice colleagues through the transition period.

You can read more about what the transfer means for Voice members in the following pages.

Members' concerns

We know that it is a very concerning time in education at the moment, with the situation changing on a daily basis. Some of you have let us know of the problems and issues you are experiencing, and we have been able to share these with government ministers and officials to raise your very real concerns and seek workable solutions.

Accountability, inspections, exams and testing and workload are all matters which we know you are concerned about. While we all want things to return to normal, we must be prepared for normal to be different after the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, we have engaged with ministers, officials, other agencies and stakeholders about what happens when or if. Following announcements about exams in England (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/dfe-exams-2021) we are now involved in the development of contingency plans, which are essential, if somewhat late in the day. You can read more about exams in Scotland on page 23.

Our recent survey (page 9) suggested many of you are interested in discussing COVID-19 and other issues, and we are looking to set up webinars for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to give you the opportunity to share your thoughts, experiences and suggested solutions.

We are proud to be your voice in this dialogue, but we can only do so because you tell us your concerns. So **please do keep telling us what is happening in your workplace**, and together we can build a brighter future for education.

COMMUNITY FOCUS

WELCOME FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

By Roy Rickhuss CBE, General
Secretary of Community trade union

Community are delighted to be welcoming Voice members into our family, particularly following the resounding result of the ballot.

The values of our unions have always aligned well – from your belief in the importance of modern trade unionism, to the consistent focus on securing the best workplaces for members. The transfer means that we'll have an even stronger voice when pushing for the things that matter to you.

I wanted to use this opportunity to tell you more about Community so you know what to expect from us over the coming months.

The modern union for the changing world

Community calls itself 'the modern union for the changing world' because we believe that unions must adapt to how workers and workplaces are changing in order to remain relevant and to secure the best deal for our members. I know that Voice shares that approach and believes that if members are facing difficulties at work, these are best dealt with by getting around the table and having a constructive discussion with your employers.



We share the view that the needs of our members are changing – from those members wanting more flexibility, to our younger members who often don't settle in a career for life and instead move jobs frequently in their 20s and even 30s. We're really proud of our work on equalities to ensure that no worker is left behind or misses out because of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Support beyond the workplace

We are a union that is rooted not just in workplaces, but in the communities where our members work and live. That means the benefits of Community membership aren't there just to support you at work, but in every aspect of your lives. You can turn to page 7 for further information on the many benefits of Community membership that extend beyond the workplace.

A strong collective voice

Community is a proud campaigning union. We campaign on issues that affect our members and that our members care about. These can be sectoral campaigns, or they can be broader campaigns like those chosen by our conference to be our priority campaigns around mental health, homelessness and skills.

I recognise how important education and childcare are to Voice members. The full weight of my union will now be campaigning and lobbying with you and on your behalf to create a better system for education and early years professionals and the people you work with.

Our campaigning approach is successful because, by working together, we have a strong voice that can influence decision makers at every level the length and breadth of the country. Our political work too means that we know when and how to effectively secure change, and that we are lobbying from a strong position. As a union we have worked hard to have cross-party respect, and we use that to the advantage of our members.

My team and I can't wait to get started working with the Voice team to ensure the best deal for workers in the education and childcare sectors.

COMMUNITY FOCUS

VOICE SECTION

Following the ballot and transfer, Voice has been welcomed into the Community family as its education and early years section. That means that all members of Voice the union are now members of Community, but organised as a distinct section which retains responsibility for education and early years policy. New members who work in education and early years will join existing members in Voice Community section.

Here's how that works:

General Secretary

Roy Rickhuss CBE is Community's General Secretary, responsible for the day-to-day running of the union. Read his article on page 5.



Chris Wilson: Voice's Vice President, Chris has been a committed trade unionist since age 17. He has represented Northern Ireland Voice members on National Council, and served on a number of national committees. He also chairs Voice's Northern Ireland Executive Committee. Chris combines his church ministry with part-time tutoring (mainly History).



Community National Executive Council

NEC is democratically elected by Community's members to guide and govern the whole organisation. NEC is chaired by Community President **Ross Clark**.



Melynda Standing: Voice's Immediate Past President, Melynda has been a member since 1984, and has served in numerous branch and national committee member roles, including currently on Voice's Wales Executive Committee (WEC). She has worked in schools, nurseries and further education and been self-employed.



Upon the transfer, Community's NEC increased in number by four to 27. The new NEC reps are Voice representatives.

Voice's NEC representatives are:

Joy Rowley: Voice's President and a Field Officer in Yorkshire and North East England, Joy is a teacher who has worked mainly in special schools across a range of ages.



Angie Rutter is Voice's Deputy Treasurer and Field Officer for the South West of England, and a National Council, Finance Committee and England Executive Council member. She trained and taught in mainstream primary education, and in both primary and secondary education as a specialist SEND teacher.



<https://community-tu.org/about-community/nec/>

Voice Section

Assistant General Secretary (Voice Section)

Deborah Lawson was General Secretary of Voice and is now Assistant General Secretary (Voice Section) responsible for the day-to-day running of the section. Read her article on page 4.



Voice Council

Council is Voice Section's policy-making body for education and early years, elected by Voice members. Council members also serve on Voice's various Committees, including those in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Voice Section will be governed by Community Rules and the Voice byelaws as set out by the transfer.

Council is chaired by Voice President **Joy Rowley**.

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/about-us/national-officers-and-council

COMMUNITY FOCUS

BENEFITS AND SERVICES

As a member of Community's Voice section, you continue to have access to:

- > advice, support and legal representation from specialist staff;
- > property/motor vehicle/personal accident and hospitalisation insurance;
- > legal support and representation to Voice members and their families for **non-workplace** related issues through Pattinson & Brewer (see page 12);
- > access to our online resources;
- > quarterly and monthly updates from our digital members' magazine and emails;
- > free workshop and conferences; and
- > cost-saving discounts and offers from Voice Rewards (see page 2).

You now also have access to a range of additional benefits that include:

- > **Community Member Support Fund** – we hope you never need it, but if you do fall on harder times, then Community can support members financially through those difficult times.
- > **Charity Fund** – if you are part of sports or social club and would like to receive funding for something, for instance a new sports kit sponsorship, or if you're raising funds for a local charity or good cause, you could apply to the Community Charity Fund.
- > **Child Benefit** – registered children receive birthday cards and gifts at key milestones in their lives.
- > **Life Change Benefit** – (for example, financial help during bereavement) – life sometimes deals us things that are unexpected, Community's Life Change benefit gives members a little extra help at those key moments in life.
- > **Capital Credit Union** – Community works with Capital Credit Union to offer Community members access to various banking services, such as savings accounts, loans and mortgages. Credit Unions are run by members and the board of directors are all volunteers, and support people regardless of financial background: www.community-tu.org/our-services/credit-union
- > **Bespoke learning workshops – Community Learn** are on hand to help you up-skill or to retrain for a different job including through online and bespoke training. www.community-tu.org/our-services/community-learn
- > **Campaigning** – A union campaigning for better workplaces in the education and childcare sector. We work on behalf of our members to secure fairer, safer and more equal workplaces.

Stay with Community

Community represents members wherever they work, so even if you stop working in education or childcare and find part-time or full-time employment in another sector, you can remain in Community and continue to enjoy all the benefits of membership.



Voice
community

Find out more:

www.community-tu.org/our-services/financial-family-support

VOICE FOCUS

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF THE TEACHERS OF THE DEAF (BATOD)

By Teresa Quail, Assistant National Executive Officer and Magazine Editor, BATOD



BATOD is the sole professional association for Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) in the UK. The Association represents the interests of ToDs and the children and young people (CYP) they teach with a range of Government and other agencies.

BATOD membership is not restricted to only Teachers of the Deaf. Communication support workers, teaching assistants, audiology technicians and college staff have also benefited as BATOD members.

This term, following the closure of NATED (The National Association for Tertiary Education for the Deaf), trading as adept, BATOD will be extending its membership profile to include adept's prior cohort profile, such as support staff and post-16 specialist professionals. Following feedback about the support needs for staff in audiology technician roles and responsibilities, BATOD has also extended the membership to meet this professional need.

Guidance

The pandemic has resulted in copious amounts of government guidance, and as specialists we are always looking to

ensure that the needs of deaf children and young people are considered. BATOD works very closely with NatSIP (National Sensory Impairment Partnership) and the NDCS (National Deaf Children's Society) on this.

Recent publications include guidance on returning to school and college:

- > **Meeting the needs of deaf children as schools re-open** (www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Meeting-the-needs-of-deaf-children-as-schools-reopen-FINAL.pdf); and
- > **Meeting the needs of deaf young people as further education providers reopen** (www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Return-to-college-guidance-English-FINAL.pdf)

A key focus of BATOD during these times has been to work closely with the NDCS, amongst other partners, to highlight the need for **clear face masks** to be used publicly, as well as being available for health settings, whilst meeting the infection control requirements.

Our recent **document on face coverings in education settings** is available at www.batod.org.uk/batod-update-in-relation-to-face-coverings-in-education-settings

Information about appropriate **cleaning of technical/audiological equipment** in schools is also available on our website (www.batod.org.uk).

Survey

Responses to a survey of BATOD members, including those who are Voice members, conducted in May 2020, highlighted a few key areas for focus:

- > accessibility in the 'socially-distanced' classroom whether traditional or virtual;
- > guidance for safe use of assistive listening devices in learning environments; and
- > targeted CPD for teachers, specialist teachers and support staff.

www.batod.org.uk/resource/batod-survey-summary-members-views-on-how-covid-19-and-the-lockdown-had-been-affecting-education-and-childrens-services

Courses and resources

The Association organises CPD courses and national and regional meetings to provide relevant, up-to-date information and to disseminate good practice.

In addition to this support, members also access an informative magazine five times per year and a refereed Journal (*Deafness and Education International*) four times per year.

In addition, since August, BATOD is the official website host of content from the former adept website (www.batod.org.uk/information/adept-website-to-batod-website) and that of the Assistive Listening Technology Working Group (www.batod.org.uk/information-category/audiology-and-technology/assistive-listening-technology-working-group).

Professionals in deaf education who are not BATOD members can also join the **NatSIP QToD forum**, which is moderated by BATOD, by going to this page of the SI forums website: <https://siforums.org.uk/5-the-qtod-forum>

Strong links are maintained between BATOD and government to ensure the voice of the Teachers of the Deaf is heard at all levels.

As a member of Voice, if you wish to discuss any aspect of this article, please contact Paul Simpson, National Executive Officer, via batod_neo@icloud.com.

BATOD is not a trade union and does not offer union services.

VOICE FOCUS

ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS

By Martin Hodge Senior Professional Officer (Policy)

Over the summer, we received almost 600 full responses to our annual member survey, plus partial responses to questions covering COVID-19, workload, pay and conditions, and hopes and aspirations for education.

Responses came from all sectors of membership and across the UK, with around 67% working in publicly funded schools, 15% in early years settings and 11% in independent education. 69% worked full-time and 31% part-time.

The most common job roles included teachers, classroom support (TA, HLTA, etc), school and nursery leadership positions, early years (7%) and other supporting roles (school business managers and office, site, catering and cleaning staff).

The age range respondents worked with included:

- > nurseries, nursery schools and other early years settings (29%);
- > further and higher education (4%); and
- > schools (two thirds in P2-P7 / primary) (66%).

Coronavirus

Understandably, the pandemic had a significant influence. Some employers had to restructure, even schools – despite funding being protected by government.

Some private employers were able to hold off on restructures because of the **furlough scheme**.

- > 11% of respondents were furloughed at some point.
- > 32% agreed to employer requests to work whilst on furlough – despite the guidance stating furloughed employees should not engage in work that made money for the employer.
- > 3% were laid off.

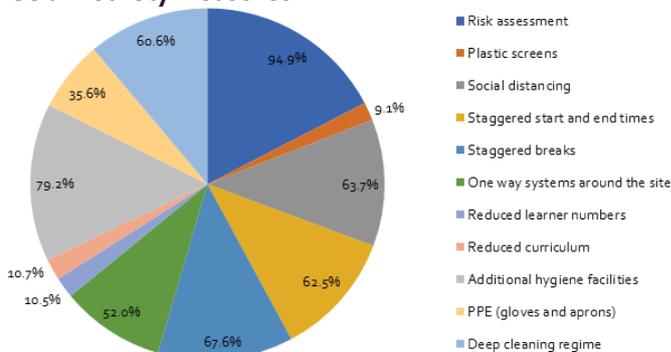
Of those furloughed who were requested to work:

- > 17% were in early years settings;
- > 5% in independent schools;
- > 28% in academies/free schools; and
- > 50% in maintained schools.

Health, safety and wellbeing

- > 96% of respondents reported a workplace risk assessment.
- > Only 63% were consulted on the risk assessment.
- > 1 in 5 felt the risk assessment did not address the issues.

COVID safety measures

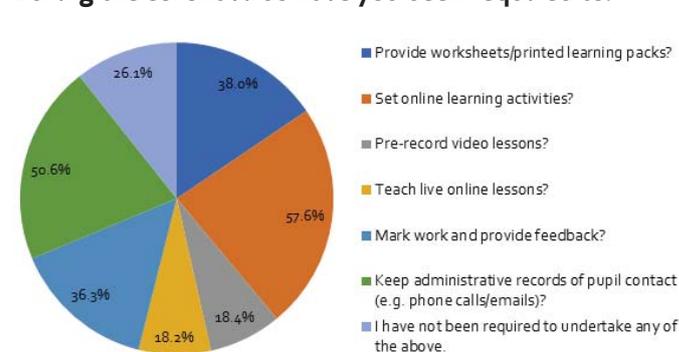


- > 44% felt unsafe or very unsafe when they returned to the workplace.

Remote learning

- > Only 34% received specific training or support, and 39% received none.
- > Necessary equipment was provided to 39%, but not to 34%.

During the coronavirus have you been required to:



Workload

- > Almost 44% said there had been an increase or significant increase to their workload.
- > 23% saw a reduction.

Mental health and wellbeing of staff, parents and children.

- > 43% felt lockdown had a detrimental impact on their mental health.
- > 76% felt safe/very safe at work.
- > Alarming, 24% did not feel safe at work; and
- > almost 12% experienced bullying or harassment – from a senior leader or manager (over 65% of cases). Only 52% reported it.

continued over...

Desires for Education post Covid



A brighter future

Respondents' desires for education post-COVID included:

- > more support for wellbeing and mental health;
- > reforms to the national curriculum and to testing;
- > an increase in trust and respect for education staff;
- > a reduction in class sizes; and
- > increased use of technology, including video lessons, to support learning.

Pay

- > 82% of respondents reported their salary was enough to cover bills; but
- > for 10% monthly pay was not sufficient to cover their regular outgoings.

Discussion and engagement

20% of respondents said they'd consider volunteering for Voice, and we're contacting those who supplied details.

We're also planning some new discussion groups to give members

more opportunity to learn about policy proposals and shape our responses. The survey highlighted **curriculum (schools and early years)**, **inspection** and **primary assessment** as key areas of interest, and respondents were also keen to discuss national issues in their home countries.

Please look out for further details on joining these groups, as we'd love to have your input and together build a brighter future for education.

Full report: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/publications-resources/annual-survey-2020

LEGAL FOCUS

SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

By Catherine Scrivens, Solicitor (catherinescrivens@voicetheunion.org.uk)

As we are now well into the Autumn, with a long winter ahead and sadly no sign of the pandemic abating, many will no doubt be concerned about a repeat of the situation in March and April this year, with daily notifications of increasing infection rates and corresponding deaths across the UK, particularly where numbers have begun to increase significantly in certain areas in relation to their attendance at their place of work.

How safe do you feel in your workplace?

Your employer should have undertaken a risk assessment, even if your workplace stayed open throughout the lockdown earlier this year. The risk assessment should demonstrate that the employer has and is following government guidance

and that of other relevant statutory bodies. This information should have been provided before employees were required to return to work. The risk assessment is not a static document – it should be regularly reviewed and updated, particularly where there have been incidents.

LEGAL FOCUS CONTINUED

What legal protections apply to employees in relation to COVID-19?

The potential claims open to employees who are concerned about being in the workplace with potential COVID-19 largely fall into four groups. What gives rise to a potential claim will be very fact-specific.

Health and safety claims

Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA) protects employees from suffering any detriment as a result of acting or failing to act on a number of health and safety related grounds.

In particular, s44 provides that the employee has the right not to be subject to a detriment where he or she acts in circumstances of danger which they reasonably believe are serious and imminent. If the employee has a genuine and reasonable belief that they cannot avert the danger, he or she is entitled to remove themselves from that danger. Similarly, section 100 of the ERA confirms that the dismissal of an employee on these grounds will be automatically unfair.

Where an employee withdraws their labour because of a threat from COVID-19, a tribunal would have to consider whether:

- > the employee's perceived risk of contracting coronavirus was a danger that was serious and imminent; and
- > the employee believed that they could not avert that risk.

If the employee's concern arises from the need to use public transport to get to work, sections 44 and 100 are not engaged and so the employer may seek to terminate the employment where the employee refused to work.

Discrimination claims

Employees have the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of a protected characteristic (notably, for COVID purposes, age, sex, disability, race, religion or belief or pregnancy) including (in some cases) a protected characteristic of somebody they associate with.



Employers also have an obligation to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 where someone has a disability. Employees who received government instruction to shield are likely to qualify as disabled under the Equality Act, and many employees who are not shielding but are otherwise considered vulnerable may also do so.

Whistleblowing claims

Employees have the right not to suffer a detriment or be dismissed (including constructive dismissal) for making protected disclosures which they reasonably believe to be in the public interest.

This type of claim can arise in a variety of situations, but specifically in relation to COVID-19, some examples include:

- > where a worker raises concerns over the employer's implementation of health and safety measures; or
- > where PPE should be available and is not.

If an employee raises a complaint and suffers a detriment or dismissal this may give rise to a claim.

Negligence claims

Employers can be liable for breach of their duty of care towards employees. The employer is also vicariously liable for the actions of its employees if

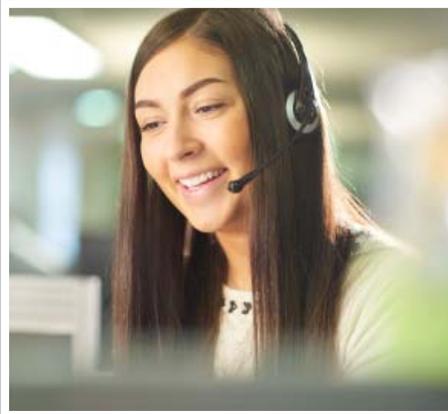
these cause harm to others in the workplace, by either physical harm or by transmitting the virus or mental distress. Where a breach of the duty of care can be established, this could give rise to a claim for personal injury.

The 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines **Working safely during coronavirus (COVID 19)** (www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19) state that the employer's obligation is not to eliminate risk but only to reduce it to the 'lowest reasonable practicable level', and that the steps referred to are just those 'usually' required. No workplace can be made definitively COVID-secure therefore these claims are likely to be difficult.



LEGAL SERVICE FOR MEMBERS

Pattinson & Brewer provide legal support and representation to Voice members and their families for non-workplace related issues.



Established in 1890, Pattinson & Brewer have always been firmly on the side of working people, helping them to fight for justice. With an ethos that access to justice is a basic human right, Pattinson & Brewer are proud to defend it.

Their teams of lawyers are leaders in their field supporting members with:

- > personal injury, union members keep 100% of their personal injury compensation;
- > clinical negligence;
- > wills, probate and elderly client issues;
- > conveyancing and matrimonial problems; and
- > 24/7 free non-employment free legal advice.

Pattinson & Brewer's lawyers want to work with trade unions and help people like Voice members and their families, and are ready to 'go the extra mile' to help.

As a matter of fundamental principle, Pattinson & Brewer do not act for employers or their insurers and are 100% committed to being on the side of working people. With offices in London, York and Bristol, and close partnerships in Scotland, they provide a truly national service.

They promise that everyone who needs help will be treated as a valued individual, each one a personal client not a file name or number.



To contact Pattinson & Brewer today



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STUDENT FOCUS



EXTENDED STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

As a student, you are covered throughout the duration of your course by our **FREE** student membership. However, in addition to your studies, you may take up a part-time job to supplement your income and student loan.

For most students who take up work during their undergraduate studies, any part-time work is likely to be in non-unionised environments, for example, bars, restaurants, cafes, shops or factories, often as casual labour, as well as in the gig economy for delivery companies. Because these workplaces are largely non-unionised, employment practices and health and safety can be more ad hoc. This means that you are far more likely to have problems at work in workplaces where there is no union presence and often no HR presence.

There are a number of types of issues that might arise, including:

- > problems with your pay;
- > either non or part payment of wages;
- > discrimination; and
- > breaches of health and safety.

See voicetheunion.org.uk/extended-student-membership-potential-work-issues

Because things can go wrong in this type of work, we are offering you **the opportunity to be covered under our Extended Student Membership for just £1 a month.**

This extended coverage entitles you to the same cover for your part-time employment that you will receive as part of your Voice membership once you enter the education workplace, such as employment advice and representation.

Don't go it alone

Extend your Voice membership and make sure that you have our support in your corner, not only for your placements, but also for your part-time, casual work. Find out more and extend your membership today: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/who-we-support/students/extended-student-membership

Terms and conditions apply

Assistance is offered to students who are employees or workers. We are unable to offer assistance to self-employed students. Employment must be based in the UK. Voice cannot represent members with issues that arose prior to extending their membership. Once membership is extended, payments and coverage will continue until 31 August 2021 and for each year it is renewed unless the member contacts Voice in writing to cancel. Only available to Voice Student members.

STUDENT FOCUS



TYPES OF SCHOOLS AND NURSERIES

You're studying to enter a teaching or early years position, but what type of employer do you want to work for once you qualify? In England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland there are many types of schools and nurseries for you to think about once you are qualified and looking to enter the workplace, and it's important to consider which you would prefer before you start your job hunt.

This job search happens at different times for graduates in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but we advise students to give it thought as early as possible. Teachers' pay in Wales is now devolved and there is a separate Pay and Conditions Document.

SCHOOLS

State maintained schools In England, Wales and Scotland

Maintained schools (such as local authority-controlled 'comprehensive' or 'community' schools) are government funded, so parents don't pay fees. Most children attend them and follow the national curriculum.

Maintained schools follow the School Teachers' Pay & Conditions (Wales) Document (STPCD/STPC(WD))/Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) which set out guidelines for schools.

For example, as a newly qualified teacher (NQT) in England, you should follow an induction process and be allocated

10% PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time, plus an extra 10% for CPD (continuing professional development).

Grammar schools, which exist in some parts of England, unlike most schools, select all or most of their pupils based on academic ability and there is often an exam to get in.

Academies In England only

Academies are also publicly funded but are run by an academy trust that employs the staff. However, NQTs will still receive the statutory induction period which applies to all schools. Academies don't have to follow the national curriculum and can also set their own term times. They can also set their own pay and conditions for staff and don't have to follow the STPCD, although most do. However, they must still abide by the same rules on admissions, special needs students and exclusions as state schools. Academies can also be sponsored by businesses, universities and other schools, which are responsible for improving the performance of the academy.

Free schools In England only

Free schools are funded directly by the Government and are not run by the local authority, so have more control over how the school is run. They set their own pay and conditions for staff, don't have to follow the STPCD or national curriculum – although some do – and can change the length of the school's terms and days.

They are run on a not-for-profit basis by organisations such as charities, other teaching institutions and even parents and teachers. The curriculum at a free school tends to focus on specialist subjects, such as engineering and construction, and are usually supported by an organisation running the school and offering work experience. Free schools also include **studio schools** and **university technical colleges**.

Faith schools In England, Wales and Scotland

Faith schools are funded by the local authority and a faith group. They are run like state schools, following the national curriculum, but have a religious character or formal link with a religious organisation. They will also teach about other faiths. The term is usually applied to state-run schools, but can also apply to independent schools and academies. They do, however, differ from other state-run schools in terms of admission criteria and staffing policies.

In Scotland, most faith schools are local authority operated and funded.

City technology colleges In England only

City technology colleges are independent schools in urban areas that are free to attend. They're funded by central government – companies can also contribute. City technology colleges emphasise teaching science and technology.

STUDENT FOCUS



State boarding schools In England and Wales

State boarding schools provide free education, but charge fees for boarding. Most state boarding schools are academies, some are free schools, and some are run by local councils. State boarding schools give priority to children who have a need to board, and will assess children's suitability for boarding.

In Wales, there is only one state boarding school, St. Brigid's School in Denbigh.

Independent schools In England, Wales and Scotland

Independent (or 'private') schools don't follow the national curriculum or the STPCD/STPC(W)D/SNCT and can set their own pay and conditions. Independent schools which are registered for newly qualified induction will carry out the same process as in the state sector.

However, you do not have to be a qualified teacher to teach at an independent school. Teachers at independent schools have more freedom over what they teach.

Independent schools are paid for by the parents of the students that attend them, therefore are run on the fees paid.

Special schools In England, Wales and Scotland

There are both state and private special schools. They provide for those with a need which might not be met in a mainstream setting.

Schools with pupils 11 and older can specialise in areas such as:

- > communication and interaction;
- > cognition and learning;
- > social, emotional and mental health; and
- > sensory and physical needs.

Legislation in Scotland means that all children and young people have the right to be educated alongside their peers in mainstream schools, unless there are good reasons for not doing so.

However, the needs of some children and young people will be better met in specialist settings rather than in mainstream schools. Approaches differ between local authorities. Some local authorities offer specialist settings within mainstream schools, others have no special schools.

There are around 2,000 primary schools, 360 secondary schools, and 140 special schools/SEN (Special Educational Needs) units in Scotland.

Other forms of teaching

Alternatively, if you're not interested in working for one school, you could look at working as a supply teacher, giving private tuition, or teaching peripatetically, for example, as a visiting music teacher. These options come with variations on contracted hours, pay and conditions of service.

Schools in Northern Ireland

Most schools in Northern Ireland are grant-aided, follow the revised Curriculum and are regularly inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

Children normally start primary school at four years and leave at 11, moving on (transferring) to a post-primary school.

Controlled Schools

Controlled schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority (EA) and are supported by the Controlled Schools Support Council. Controlled primary and secondary schools are governed by representatives of transferors – primarily the Protestant churches, along with the EA as well as representatives of parents and teachers. Controlled nursery, grammar and special schools are governed only by representatives of parents and teachers. There are also several Controlled Integrated schools and Irish-Medium schools (see below).

Integrated Schools

Integrated schools invite both Protestant and Catholic traditions to come together with other traditions to improve their understanding of each other's culture, religion and values. Each of these schools is managed by a board of governors, which consists of trustees, foundation governors as well as parent, teacher and Department for Education representatives.

In grant-maintained integrated schools, the board of governors are the employing authority for the school, responsible for the employment of staff. Integrated schools are funded by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) which promotes the development of integrated schools and provides advice and guidance for integrated schools.

Irish-Medium Schools

Irish-Medium schools focus on providing education in an Irish speaking environment. There are both controlled and maintained Irish-Medium schools. The maintained schools are owned by trustees and are managed by a board of governors.

STUDENT FOCUS

The Department for Education in Northern Ireland has a duty to assist and encourage development of Irish-Medium education, with the Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) being a representative body which aims to facilitate, promote and encourage Irish-Medium education in Northern Ireland.

Catholic Maintained

Catholic Maintained schools are managed by boards of governors nominated by trustees who are primarily Roman Catholic, along with parents, teachers and Education Authority representatives. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is responsible for managing the Catholic Maintained sector and is the employment authority for teachers throughout Catholic Maintained schools.

Voluntary Grammar schools

Voluntary Grammar schools are managed by boards of governors constituted in line with each school's scheme of management – usually representatives of foundation governors, parents, teachers, the Department for Education and, in most cases, Education Authority representatives – and responsible for employing all staff in Voluntary Grammar schools. These schools vary in the rates of capital grant they receive, depending on the management structure of each school, with most being entitled to grants of 100 per cent.

Special Schools

Special schools are Controlled or Voluntary schools providing education for pupils with special educational needs.

Independent Schools

Independent schools provide full-time education for students from 4 to 16 and are not grant-aided. They are responsible for setting their own curriculum and admissions policies, and are funded by fees paid by parents as well as income from investors. Each independent school must be registered with the Department for Education and are regularly inspected by the Education Training Inspectorate.

NURSERIES

Day nurseries

Most day nurseries operate between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm (although children can be dropped off and taken from the nursery any time between those hours) which makes them a great option for parents who work, as they will look after children from the age of three months up until when they are ready to go to school.

Day nurseries usually follow a schedule of activities to support children's development and learning as well as naps, meals and playtime.

Pre-schools and playgroups

Pre-schools and playgroups are typically designed to ease the child out of being at home into socialising in a fun environment and encouraging them to interact with other children through play.

Children can attend these from the age of 2.5 years old, and parents are often encouraged to take part in sessions, which makes the environment less daunting for children who are socialising for the first time. This is also good for those who work in the pre-school or playgroup, as they can get a better understanding of the children in their care.

Nursery schools

Nursery schools are more structured in their approach, focusing more on age-appropriate activities which promote all round development and prepare children for school, including socialising and independence. Nursery schools will take on children who are 2.5 to 3 years old, and are often smaller so that it makes learning and socialising easier for the children who go there.

Nursery classes in schools

This can be an excellent option for children who are ready for school as they are structured around educational play. Unlike day nurseries and nursery schools, nursery classes in schools are typically run in short sessions, often only a couple of hours long.

Classes that take place in independent schools are more likely to be run for a full day.



Workplace nurseries

Some workplaces will offer childcare services for their employees, having nurseries on site to give their parents easy access to childcare.

Montessori nurseries and Steiner schools

Montessori nurseries are focused on fostering teaching based on children's in-built curiosity for learning, where the children choose what activities they want to do from a broad range on offer, through sensory materials that are used to provide intellectual, physical and psychological stimuli to improve a child's personality.

Steiner schools use play and social interactions and play time to foster imagination and creativity within the children that attend them. Young children who attend Steiner schools won't be introduced to any form of formal education until the age of 6.

Pay and conditions

Pay and conditions may vary between employers as there are no national pay and conditions for early years staff, unless they are teachers employed under the relevant national pay and conditions document or regulations.

EARLY YEARS (ENGLAND)



SUPPORTING THE EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

By the Early Years Workforce
Commission

Against a backdrop of an escalating funding crisis and other well-documented challenges facing the sector, the impacts of COVID-19 are being felt by early years staff and settings. The pandemic, lockdown and declining economy have begun to take their toll.

At the centre of these challenges sit the providers and workforce who continue to work in stressful, challenging roles, while delivering a service imperative for the country's workforce and economy, and its long-term future.

The Early Years Workforce Commission, of which Voice is a member, was set up to address the challenges facing the early years workforce, and offer workable solutions to support the sector. During this challenging time, the Commission is working to ensure the sector is able to continue providing its vital service.

The Commission has been gathering data from the sector, which will inform a report to be published later this year. It will address some of the workforce's biggest concerns highlighted by our research, and provide workable solutions that can be embedded into a revised workforce strategy.

Impact of COVID-19

Our research gathered data on key areas affecting the workforce, including COVID-19. When asked what they felt was important for them to thrive in their roles following the national lockdown, respondents said:

- > contingency planning for another potential local lockdown;
- > wellbeing initiatives; and
- > internal and external training opportunities.

Having additional support in place for staff to feel safe and comfortable at work can make a huge difference to the care and education they provide.

Ideas settings can implement to support the workforce

- > **Having strong contingency plans and protocols** in place for various eventualities is essential for any business, and can make a huge difference to staff. Communicating these plans to the staff team is important. Regular updates and meetings, individually or as a group, can provide the opportunity for employees to ask questions, share their thoughts and suggestions, and ultimately, ensure they feel informed and included.
- > **Mental health workshops and training** can be great for morale and job satisfaction. A designated mental health lead can support the team and provide training to keep staff morale and wellbeing high. This support could come in the form of workshops or more

formal training. National education services charity NCFE (www.ncfe.org.uk) has developed qualifications and tools to support staff wellbeing and remove the stigmas around mental health.

- > **Increased training and CPD make jobs more fulfilling.** Making sure staff have up-to-date knowledge and continue to broaden their understanding of child development and wellbeing through continuing professional development (CPD) and training ensures they feel that they are continuing to learn and develop in their role, and that the job holds opportunity for progression, as well as having a positive impact on the children they care for. At this challenging time, staff and children need additional guidance to navigate new and unprecedented circumstances.

Recommendations and further information

The Commission's report will explore these challenges and many more much further, and will have recommendations which address **our overarching goals to:**

- > **support the sector to identify, and recover from, the impacts of COVID-19;**
- > **promote wider recognition of the importance of the early years sector and its staff;**
- > **identify ways the sector can offer more rewarding and attractive career opportunities that reflect the intrinsic role the sector plays in supporting the economy and national workforce; and**
- > **establish ways to boost recruitment and safeguard job retention within the sector.**

Find out more about the Commission on **Twitter @EYWC2020** or by email: eywc@plmr.co.uk.

FURTHER & HIGHER EDUCATION



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

By Martin Hodge
Senior Professional Officer (Policy)

There has been much talk in the media about GCSE and A Level exams over the past few days and weeks, but there remains the question about how the changes to 2020 exam results, and the proposed changes to courses to be examined in 2021, will impact on universities and other higher education qualifications. And there is still limited guidance on those who need specific end-point assessment – such as electrical engineers, drivers and gas fitters – in order to begin their working lives.

Universities

This year saw the biggest rise in university entries after the Government relaxed the cap, including a 9% increase in the number of undergraduate students from outside the UK and the EU starting their studies this autumn, rising to a new record total of 44,300. This is in addition to the multitude of international students who apply direct.

Following three years of falling enrolment, Ucas noted: 'Overall demand for higher education has increased during the coronavirus pandemic, and there were a record 515,650 students with a confirmed place, up 4% on last year.'

Initially it was uncertain whether universities would be open for entry come September 2020, causing a spike in interest of students searching for online courses. However, the reality is that almost all universities have opened in some capacity, with most adopting a blended learning approach – both online and face-to-face learning. We continue to have concerns about how universities will run courses with a significant practical element, such as lab-based science or medical courses, via online/distance learning.

Of course, this increase in student numbers is welcome for the financial success of our universities, but it does also mean increased levels of student support and risks a high 'drop-out' rate. And this is compounded with the lockdown that many university residents are currently experiencing.

Technical Qualifications

To try and address the issues experienced by providers of Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) in England, Ofqual published its Extended Extraordinary regulatory framework (www.gov.uk/government/publications/extraordinary-regulatory-framework-vtq-covid-19-conditions-and-requirements) to provide qualification providers with tools to adapt the qualifications or the assessment, though it makes clear that, 'assessments should take place in 2020/2021 ... so awarding organisations will need to mitigate

disruption to teaching, learning and assessment'.

Voice has been discussing assessment in relation to GCSEs, A Levels and VTQs with the Government and Ofqual. We believe that, despite the Government's intentions, it is highly likely that there will be further disruption to learning and to the exams and assessments throughout the next twelve months.

We have therefore been urging awarding organisations to modify and adapt their courses and assessments. Ideally, we would like to see some reduction in the course content to recognise the reduction in teaching time, however we are aware that the official guidance does not expect this, but does expect there to be a reduction in the assessed content.

It is highly likely that those working within courses and apprenticeships leading to end-point assessment, or those working towards certificates of competency, would not want to see modified assessments or reductions in content for legitimate safety reasons, and so we have been suggesting alternative methods of assessment using technology to try to support learners.

Engage with Voice

The current situation is not likely to go away for the foreseeable future and creative solutions will be needed for the months to come. If you would like to engage with us about exams/assessment issues, please do get in touch (exams@voicetheunion.org.uk).

PENSIONS UK & TEACHERS' PAY (ENGLAND)

PENSIONS: TRANSITIONAL PROTECTION UPDATE

By Nicola Huddleston,
Professional Officer
(nicolahuddleston@voicetheunion.org.uk)

In our August (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/publications-resources/your-voice-august-2019) and November 2019 (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/publications-resources/your-voice-november-2019) issues, we discussed the high-profile public sector pension case, McCloud (Judges and Firefighters).

This was where a claim of age discrimination was brought, and upheld, against public sector schemes that allowed certain older scheme members to remain in the final salary arrangements following the 2015 pension changes.

Consultation proposals

A recent Government consultation (which closed on 11 October 2020) was undertaken to gather opinion. It discussed the proposals to address the discrimination caused by transitional protection arrangements within public service pensions.

There is a leaflet produced by the Government which gives further details. It can be found at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/900859/Public_Service_Pensions_Leaflet.pdf

The Government's proposals will apply to all pension scheme members who were in service on or before 31 March 2012 and on or after 1 April 2015, including those with a qualifying break in service of not more than five years.

The proposals provide affected members with the option to choose between their old (final salary) and new (career average) pension scheme benefits for service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022.

The Government has suggested options within the consultation, both involving members having the choice between the legacy (final salary) and reformed (career average) scheme benefits for the service they have accrued during these dates.

The options are an 'Immediate Choice Exercise', where most members would make this decision soon after the point of legislative implementation, or a 'Deferred Choice Underpin', so the majority of members making this decision would be deferred until the point at which they take their pension benefits.

If any affected members have retired or will retire before 2022, they will be given a choice between old and new scheme benefits for service between 2015 and their retirement date. Where possible, the choice will be offered at retirement, but where this is not possible, the choice will be offered as soon as practicable after legislative changes are implemented and any change to benefits will be backdated.

There will be more specific information on the scheme after the consultation exercise ends and the Government has announced its response. This will be released via the Teachers' Pensions website and social media platforms in due course.

We will continue to update you in future issues.

EARLY RETIREMENT

The earliest you can be paid your pension benefits is age 55 (unless you are granted ill health retirement).

If you are a member of a public sector pension such as a teachers' pension scheme or the LGPS and take your pension benefits between age 55 and your normal pension age, they will be reduced in accordance with your age at retirement. The reduction is approximately 3% to 5% for each year before your normal retirement age.

If you have any pension issues or queries, please contact **Janine Sansom** (janinesansom@voicetheunion.org.uk).

Teachers' pay (England) Government pay proposals 'divisive and inadequate'

In September, Voice and the ASCL, NAHT and NEU unions wrote to Education Secretary Gavin Williamson about the Government's response to the recommendations of the 30th report of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB).

In a joint statement, the unions' general secretaries said: 'The Government must improve teacher pay levels and pay prospects, and drop damaging and unfair performance-related pay (PRP), if we are to tackle the serious and entrenched teacher recruitment and retention problems.'

In her own response letter, Voice General Secretary Deborah Lawson said it was essential that teacher pay should in future recognise teachers' 'ongoing role as key workers, who have proved essential ... during the Coronavirus pandemic.'

She also noted it was 'disappointing' that there was again 'delay in the publication of the STRB Report until the end of the summer term', which caused 'significant problems for schools'.

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/joint-strb-response-2020

Pay scales

Recommended teacher pay scales for England from September 2020: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/help-and-advice/teacher-pay

WALES UPDATE

SENIOR PROFESSIONAL OFFICER



Senior Professional Officer for Wales **Elizabeth Williams** (above) moved to a new post in September.

Assistant General Secretary (Voice Section) Deborah Lawson said: 'We will miss Elizabeth's proactive enthusiasm, dedication and persistence in

representing members in Wales. I would like to thank her for her four years of service to Voice.'

Our new SPO is due to start work at the beginning of November (details in the next issue). In the meantime, Professional Officer **Rob Jaques** (below) is covering Welsh policy work so that Voice continues to contribute



to the various committees and groups we sit on across Wales. If you have any comments, concerns or contributions regarding Wales, please contact us at wales@voicetheunion.org.uk.

ACCESSING A TEST THROUGH YOUR LOCAL HEALTH BOARD (LHB)

In September, Health Minister Vaughan Gething MS announced that those in education or childcare settings who are symptomatic and experiencing significant barriers in accessing a test for COVID-19 via the online booking portal can access a test through the Local Health Board Community Testing Units (<https://hwb-team-storage.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Dysg/Accessing+a+Test+through+your+Local+Health+Board.pdf>).



COVID UPDATES

Statement on 'firebreak': www.voicetheunion.org.uk/Wales-firebreak

COVID-19 updates (including **exams update** expected 9 November): www.voicetheunion.org.uk/news-media-issues/coronavirus-information-updated#Wales

HEADTEACHERS WELLBEING SERVICE

Education Support is offering FREE wellbeing services for headteachers in Wales to help them maintain their mental health and wellbeing: bit.ly/35gH2Nd

VOICE CYMRU'S RESPONSE TO IWPRB REPORT AND WELSH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB) is a vital component of the devolved process for determining teachers' pay and conditions in Wales. The IWPRB's seven recommendations in its second report, published in July 2020, are a step in the right direction, and we welcomed its recommendations regarding the introduction of national pay scales and the removal of performance-related pay but, as with last year's report, we remain disappointed with its recommendations for pay increases.



Pay Increases

We were disappointed that the IWPRB did not accept our demand for an across-the-board pay rise for all teachers and leaders of 5%.

However, we were pleased that the Cabinet Minister for Education acted promptly in accepting in principle all of the IWPRB's recommendations, but were disappointed that the Minister proposed a 3.1% overall pay rise which, although higher than the IWPRB's overall recommendation, does not compensate for the years of cuts to teachers' pay.

We also had concerns about how the 3.1% uplift will be funded when only a 2.75% uplift has been provided for in this year's local authorities' settlement. The Cabinet Minister said that schools would not be adversely affected by the uplift so we have sought reassurance from the Welsh Government that they will cover in full the 3.1% pay increase for both this year and in next year's local authority settlement.

Whilst acknowledging the serious issues regarding the recruitment and retention of graduates and early years teachers, we were also concerned that the IWPRB recommended the removal of the first pay point in the Main Pay Range so that the minimum pay point will receive an 8.48% rise. Although the Cabinet Minister proposed a pay rise of 3.75% for the remaining points, the Upper Pay Range and the Leadership Pay Range will only receive a 2.75% increase.

We believe that that the increasing reduction in differentials within and between pay ranges indicates that more senior teachers and senior leaders will not feel valued in the essential role that they play in the education system in Wales, and that this may lead to further disincentives for teachers to progress to senior leadership roles. This is already a matter of concern and is going to get worse unless senior teachers and senior leaders receive proper and proportionate pay increases.

Voice's contribution

We were pleased to see many different aspects of our written submissions quoted by the IWPRB – in particular, our evidence on recruitment targets, pay scales and flexibilities, TLRs and pay portability, in addition to several pieces of research that we cited.

We believe that our evidence played a significant part in persuading the IWPRB to make some of its recommendations that we support, and that were proposed to be implemented by the Cabinet Minister.

Recommendations welcomed by Voice

We welcomed the following recommendations made by the IWPRB and proposed for implementation by the Cabinet Minister:

- > **the introduction of national pay scales**, including the provision of a clear and transparent structure, the simplification of the pay system, and a more cost-effective solution in the Welsh context;
- > **the removal of performance-related pay** – as we recommended in our written submission, the IWPRB states that, only in cases where a formal capability process has been involved, should incremental annual progression be paused until such time as the process has been concluded, and that appraisals should now focus on the development, enhancement and improvement of an individual teacher's performance, using the Professional Teaching Standards to assist in this process;
- > **standardised pay portability** should be reintroduced as a statutory requirement in Wales from September 2021 and be implemented on a voluntary basis before then; and
- > **Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments (TLRs)** – we stated that TLRs were a useful feature of the pay structure but were currently inconsistently and unfairly applied. The IWPRB accepted this assertion and has recommended that a review of TLRs should be undertaken as part of future IWPRB remits.

Other issues

Workload: Although the IWPRB acknowledged that workload is affecting the recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders, we would have liked to have seen more concrete recommendations requiring ascertainable outputs in the reduction of workload and bureaucracy by the end of the next academic year,

particularly in the current COVID-19 context. We are pleased to see that the Welsh Government has re-introduced meetings for the Reducing Workload and Bureaucracy Working Group and now appears to be making efforts to address these issues. We will play our part along with other stakeholders in working with the Welsh Government to attempt to achieve real change in this area.

Timing of the annual pay round:

Although we would have liked to have seen a more explicit condemnation of the delays to the process caused by the Welsh Government and the missing of the deadline to submit evidence by the Welsh Local Government Association, we are pleased that the IWPRB recommended that the Welsh Government reviews its process for the 2021 remit to allow the IWPRB and its consultees to have a complete annual cycle to engage fully on the matters for consideration.

Equalities: We cited evidence to the IWPRB regarding the lower proportion of women in leadership positions compared to the general teaching workforce, and evidence showing that the gender pay gap in education is significantly worse than the average gender pay gap. We were therefore pleased that the IWPRB referred to this and asked the Welsh Government to remind local authorities and school governing bodies of their legal requirement to monitor and report on the equalities aspects of pay decisions.

Confirmation

On 14 October, Minister for Education Kirsty Williams confirmed the teachers' pay award for 2020/21 and made the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Order 2020.

Further information

IWPRB report and submissions, statements on teachers' pay, School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document 2020: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/IWPRB-2020

VOICE SCOTLAND



STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STAFF

Package will include help with mental health

Voice understands that school staff will be offered new support as part of a £1.5 million funding package to help manage additional pressures as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Barnardo's Scotland and mental health charity Place2Be will offer new mental health support for staff with the intention this will be available after the October break.

Education Scotland and the General Teaching Council for Scotland will also offer new professional learning opportunities for post-probation teachers and develop a new coaching and mentoring offer for teachers who need it most.

The funding package also includes the continuation of the Scottish Government's commitment, in partnership with the Hunter Foundation, to the values-based leadership programmes delivered by social enterprise and charity Columba 1400.

The package of support for school staff has been developed in partnership with organisations represented on the Education Recovery Group.

Education Secretary John Swinney said:

'Supporting the health and wellbeing of teachers and other staff is of paramount importance. This was true before COVID-19, but it is of crucial importance as school staff support our children and young people to recover from the pandemic. This additional package of measures will complement the excellent practice which is already taking place to support the wellbeing of staff in schools across Scotland.'

Ken Muir, Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for Scotland, said:

'GTC Scotland is pleased to deliver this important support to hard-working teachers in collaboration with our partners in education. GTC Scotland has invested heavily in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of education professionals and we look forward to continuing to do so.'

Gillian Hamilton, Strategic Director at Education Scotland, said:

'Ensuring school staff feel well supported, particularly at this time, is essential. This new support package, designed collaboratively with partners in the Education Recovery Group, provides direct access to a range of focused supports including coaching, reflective supervision and opportunities for school staff to learn together through the challenges presented by COVID-19.'

Laurence Findlay, Aberdeenshire Council Director of Education and Children's Services, said:

'I am delighted with the support package being put forward as part of ongoing efforts to support the education workforce. I hope as many practitioners as possible make use of these resources.'

Dougie Atkinson, Senior Professional Officer at Voice Scotland's Edinburgh office said:

'Voice welcome this development. Staff in Scottish schools are facing unprecedented challenges while balancing their work and domestic responsibilities during this pandemic. This support will be a valuable resource as we go through the winter months.'

VOICE SCOTLAND

EXAMS 2021

By Dougie Atkinson,
Senior Professional Officer (Scotland)

Voice became concerned when Education Secretary John Swinney warned there was a 'very real risk' that plans to hold exams could be disrupted again next year.

The Deputy First Minister told Holyrood's Education Committee on 16 September that he wanted exams to go ahead in the Spring, but the Scottish Government faced a 'dilemma' because of the risk of further coronavirus disruption for schools.

Mr Swinney said the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) was already working on contingency plans if exams were cancelled once again due to coronavirus.

Giving evidence to the Committee, the Education Secretary said: 'The very real risk remains that there may be further disruptions for individual learners, individual schools and colleges, or more widely across the country, during the course of the year.'

'And there's no way of knowing what circumstances we will face in the spring of next year when, in normal circumstances, the exam day would take place.'

'That uncertainty and risk of full disruption makes identifying a fair and robust approach an incredibly difficult decision and there are a wide range of views on the best approach to take.'

He added: 'Our ambition remains to run a 2021 examination diet.'

'However, in these exceptional times, the SQA ... are looking at contingencies which will be appropriate to the circumstances.'

'This is especially relevant as we are currently seeing a disturbing increase in the number of cases of coronavirus, which has the potential to cause further disruption.'

Mr Swinney also told MSPs there were 'very striking and significant differences' between the cancellation of the 2020 exams and preparation for next year's exams.

Learning lessons

When schools were closed towards the start of the pandemic, the Scottish Government asked the SQA to develop a replacement grading system in the absence of exams.

The outcome sparked a widespread backlash because the SQA's moderation process disproportionately downgraded teachers' evidence-based estimates for pupils from poorer backgrounds and relied on an algorithm based on schools' historic performances.

Mr Swinney later rowed back and announced grades would revert to teacher predictions.

He said it was 'imperative' the Scottish Government learned lessons from the cancellations this year, and it would consider a report into the problems that was due by the end of September.

The Education Secretary said 'extensive feedback' would be gathered by the SQA before making a decision about next year's exams.

Asked by Scottish Greens MSP Ross Greer about teachers being concerned their workload could 'spiral out of control' if they have to prepare pupils for exams, as well as any contingency plan if they are cancelled, Mr Swinney said he wanted to avoid this 'at all possible cost'.

National 5s cancelled

On 7 October, Education Secretary John Swinney updated MSPs on plans for school exams in Scotland next year.

COVID means it is likely that some schools are to expect disruption over the winter of 2020/21. It was therefore proposed that National Level 5 exams will not now be held in 2021, and are to be replaced by teacher assessments under a quality assurance framework to be ready later this month.

Mr Swinney said a full exam diet during the continuing COVID pandemic was 'too big a risk'.

However, that space then allows an exam diet to be put in place for Higher and Advanced Higher exams in 2021 in COVID-secure conditions in schools.

Significantly, Mr Swinney said 'awards will not be given – or taken away - on the basis of a statistical model nor on the basis of a school's past performance. There will be no algorithm.'

Read Mr Swinney's statement at www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/update-exams-scotland

VOICE SCOTLAND

SCOTTISH SCHOOLS RETURN

By Dougie Atkinson, Senior Professional Officer (Scotland)
(scotland@voicetheunion.org.uk)

It seems a long time ago that schools in Scotland were suddenly closed as part of the UK coronavirus pandemic response. Staff did their best to continue to teach their pupils remotely and are to be congratulated for their efforts in unprecedented times.

There was some respite for staff and pupils over the summer holidays, despite the uncertainty of what was to happen in August. Voice was involved in a great deal of planning over the summer months in order to reopen schools following the summer break. I was on several workstreams supporting the work of the Education Recovery Group, chaired by the Education Secretary, John Swinney.

A great deal of work was put into planning for a hybrid blended learning model, which would have seen some children in school for part of the week and the remainder learning online. However, eventually the decision was taken by the First Minister to reopen schools in full in mid August.

Preparing schools and staff and young people for that was not without its challenges. No two schools are the same, and the risk assessments that had to take place in schools to make them COVID-secure was formidable. And there was some trepidation amongst some about going back into a heavily populated environment. But it was to the credit of our remarkable school workforce that all schools and early years centres were reopened successfully.

Guidance

Voice was involved in developing the guidance for schools on how to reopen safely, and that has been adjusted since to reflect particular issues that inevitably arose as schools felt their way back into a new rhythm. See the latest version (www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020-version-3) plus the new **Education Scotland COVID-19 Education Recovery** page (www.education.gov.scot/improvement/covid-19-education-recovery).

To date, there have been relatively few cases of coronavirus in our schools, and that is largely down to the behaviour of pupils who have generally taken the changes seriously and observed the new rules and restrictions that are now in place in our schools.

The winter months ahead will inevitably bring further challenges, and Voice stands ready to support and advise members who encounter issues that concern them.

Support

Face-to-face support is still something that will prove difficult, but we are already engaging with employers on member issues via Zoom/Microsoft Teams, and this seems to be working very well. However, nothing quite replaces the assurance and confidence that real in-person meetings provide, and we very much hope that such support can return as soon as we see coronavirus receding.

It is fair to say that none of us have seen or experienced anything like the situation we have lived through these last seven months or so. But Voice has been impressed and proud of how resilient and imaginative our members have been in continuing to ensure Scottish young people continue to learn and develop.



VOICE NORTHERN IRELAND

TIMES OF CHANGE, TIMES OF CHALLENGE

By Chris Wilson, Field Officer,
Voice Northern Ireland, Chair of the
Northern Ireland Executive Committee
(chriswilson@voiceactivists.org.uk)

Inevitably, with schools now reopened in Northern Ireland, much attention has been focused on the management of risk arising from the coronavirus. Education professionals have continued to do their best in these extraordinary circumstances. But support from authorities has, at best, been inconsistent.

First, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) had to apologise for sending an email to schools in Northern Ireland referring to them as 'care homes' and declaring that testing kits would be delivered on 7 September. Needless to say, it was sent in error, but such actions do nothing to build confidence that government is in full charge of a rapidly changing situation. Home testing kits are to be sent for parents of pupils with COVID-19, but these will come from Department of Education in Northern Ireland, and not from the DHSC.

Second, and again according to the BBC, 88 positive COVID-19 cases had, in September, been reported in 64 schools across Northern Ireland. This was reported to the Stormont Education Committee and adds to the growing sense that tighter restrictions could need to be reintroduced across the province. The political parties in institutional power sharing (inevitably) do not agree on the best way forward.

The DUP in particular were reluctant to see reintroduction of restrictions (save in parts of Belfast and Antrim) whilst the cross-community Alliance Party and nationalist SDLP favour them. The health brief is held by the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and it is clear that they are also increasingly concerned about the rising number of cases.



We need to be ever-mindful that children have already lost time in schools during the last lockdown, and no one wants to see their life chances further disadvantaged.

This is particularly important when we remember that more than 300,000 children have now returned to classrooms in Northern Ireland, and that schools here have already sent groups of children home to self-isolate for 14 days after advice from the Public Health Agency.

'Circuit break'

On 14 October, with a rising number of cases in Northern Ireland, the Executive agreed a range of 'significant time-bound interventions' to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Northern Ireland. The half term holiday break for schools and colleges was extended to a two-week break from 19 to 30 October.

The Department of Education asked schools to use two of their existing Optional Days with the remainder of the additional time off through the use of automatically allocated Exceptional Closure Days. Schools and other education settings will reopen on Monday, 2 November. All non-teaching staff will be paid as normal.

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/executive-tightens-restrictions-curb-covid-19

www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/statement-education-minister-peter-weir-covid-19-restrictions

Latest updates:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/news-media-issues/coronavirus-information-updated#Northern

Voice Northern Ireland

On a more positive note, Voice in Northern Ireland goes from strength to strength.

We continue to support members' casework as needed, and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee met (virtually) in October.

We are always keen to hear from members who need support, or who would like to get more involved with our union. Please just get in contact, and in these changing and challenging times, let's continue to support each other and to stay safe, whatever the failures of our political masters.



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