

Branch Circular: Covid-19 Update #3

MANCHESTER UNISON AND CITY COUNCIL AGREES COVID-19 PAY / REDEPLOYMENT PROCEDURE

Inevitably a prime focus for UNISON has been to protect members during this period, to ensure their safety and those of their households and to ensure members do not suffer financial detriment.

See [attached an agreed FAQs](#) that explains how MCC is treating absence/staff remaining at home during the Covid-19 period. In particular please note that all those who need to self-isolate because they are vulnerable, required to shield (as per Public Health guidance) or living with someone who needs to shield will be paid full pay even if they are unable to undertake alternative work from home.

MCC have also agreed to disregard any Covid-19 sickness absence from any sickness monitoring triggers. In addition anyone who is off sick due to Covid-19 sickness who was due to go on half, or no pay, will be paid full sick pay, to support them at this time.

We have also been discussing with Manchester Council the need to safely deliver the Covid-19 critical services that are vital to our communities. Many of our members continue to work in those vital services which are under enormous pressures and have been joined by large numbers of staff who have volunteered their services to assist. However there will be areas that need greater assistance if they are to meet exceptionally high demands in some services.

Manchester UNISON and other trade unions have been involved in negotiations with the Council on ways to both meet critical service needs whilst also protecting individual members' needs. A revised Redeployment Procedure aimed at meeting both objectives was considered by our Branch Executive on Wednesday who unanimously [agreed the attached FAQs](#) for the duration of the Covid-19 Period.

The key points are that for a three month period, subject to monthly reviews with TUs, the flexibility clause in MCC contracts has been amended so that requests to redeploy staff may be at short notice, if required. In addition a full risk assessment, including PPE if required and social distancing arrangements must be in place before any matching takes place. Individual circumstances, such as being in a vulnerable/shield group, childcare responsibilities and distance to travel will all be taken into account.

All the details are in the attached documents and I would urge you to read them both. If any problems arise then please contact your steward/branch officer ASAP to discuss. We will be actively involved in overseeing these arrangements to ensure that implementation is based on the agreed principles and will continually monitor the process.

Evelyn Doyle - Manchester UNISON Branch Secretary

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SCHOOLS

UNISON challenges government's claim that education staff don't need PPE

UNISON has written to the Department for Education, after its updated guidance on social distancing in education settings said that education staff do not require personal protective equipment (PPE).

While the union understands that the risks in schools are different to those in hospitals, it is concerned that the guidance doesn't reflect all school situations – for example where social distancing is impossible, and where schools can be more like social care settings.

In its letter to the DfE, the union raises a number of points:

- following a risk assessment, there should be a supply of PPE for staff doing work where social distancing is impossible (such as supporting medical needs, notably where there are invasive interventions). Some schools already have a limited supply of PPE for these situations – UNISON strongly disagrees with the department's implication that they shouldn't have any;
- the guidance over-estimates the ability of staff and pupils to achieve social distancing in schools where children have complex needs, particularly in special schools;
- the blanket statement in the guidance that education staff do not require PPE contradicts advice from Public Health England, which is clear that PPE is needed for cleaners;
- the guidance talks about the need for schools to ration cleaning products. This is completely unacceptable. The DfE must ensure sufficient levels of cleaning products so staff and pupils can follow rules on hand-washing to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.

The guidance also says that, in alternative provision settings, a risk assessment may be needed if it is thought that a child might not be able to follow social distancing instructions.

However, UNISON observes that children and staff in various education settings – not just in alternative provision settings – might be unable to follow social distancing guidelines. To be consistent with health and safety law, risk assessments should be carried out in all settings.

While we await further guidance from the department, we call on schools to fully follow [UNISON's health and safety advice](#) for school staff, as the best way to protect staff and pupils.

[Government guidance on social distancing in education and childcare settings](#)
[Government advice on cleaning in non-healthcare environments](#)

You can also read our previous updates for School staff by clicking on the following links:

[Covid-19 FAQs for school staff in England](#)
[Don't forget to thank school support staff too, says UNISON](#)
[Updated Schools Health & Safety FAQs – COVID-19](#)
[Extra support for schools and parents to help cope with coronavirus](#)

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CORPORATE CORE

Manchester Community Response Hub

The council, has set up a Community Hub that is running out of Contact Manchester to deliver support to residents during this Covid-19 outbreak. It has a free phone number **0800 234 6123**. It is there to support vulnerable and self isolated residents. The service is run 6 days per week from 8.30am until 5.30pm

The Hub is run by staff who have volunteered to move roles to help out with this vitally important frontline service.

The Hub operated over the bank holiday weekend, it was open both bank holidays and Saturday morning, to maintain the support our residents need.

Also there have been a number of staff who have moved voluntary from their current jobs to support the welfare provision team so that children can still get free school meals.

As residents become more aware of this service it may be further requests for volunteers to run it.

Staff from Neighbourhood services are part of the teams that are delivering food, medicines fuel top ups and helping combat loneliness to the residents who have contacted the hub.

We hope to have some numbers soon of how many contacts the Hub has had and how many people have received help.



Help is available if you need it.



Food.



Medicines.



Company.



Fuel bills.



Online help.

CALL 0800 234 6123

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Staff Volunteering in Corporate Core

There has been an increase in the number of staff in the Corporate Core who are volunteering to do other roles within the council to sure up for time services and prevent hardship to residents.

Clearly there is still an need for staff to deliver some of critical front line work in the contact centre for Children and Families, the telephone service is still office based but there on average 8 staff are working from home each day handling written contacts.

The rest of the services that are delivered the staff are working from home.

Revenues, Benefits and Business Rates staff are delivering the service from home along with Parking services staff.

Staff have already volunteered to work in an alternative role within the service, currently:

- 7 staff supporting Benefits with free school meal provision
- 20 staff have moved to help out on welfare grant provision
- 4 staff supporting Council Tax with the cancellation of Direct Debit work load to prevent hardship for residents who may have lost their jobs or have been ferloughed
- 8 managers and staff supporting the hub.
- 23 staff have moved from Council Tax to support Business Rate
- 1 member of staff supporting homelessness hostel support (1 day per week)

We hope to get some stories from staff who have volunteered to do something else during this period of social distancing and lock down and hope to share them soon.

Free Online Support for Young People

Online counselling is being offered to young people from 11 to 18 years. This is particularly being offered to those struggling with their mental health during Covid-19, through Kooth an online counselling and emotional wellbeing platform for children and young people. Young people can sign up to the service at www.kooth.com.

More information and resources can be found online at the [Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Hub](#).

Volunteer Drivers Required for Emergency Food Distribution

Drivers are urgently required to support the distribution of emergency supplies to Manchester City Council's residents across the City. The Food Response Team coordinates the requests received for vulnerable residents and the alignment of those requests with the suppliers who provide the food packages (charities and other food production facilities). Where possible the number of household deliveries per driver will be around 15 per afternoon (which to date has been achieved in an average of 4 hours) and drivers are asked to be available from approx 12:30 dependent on the time of their collection.

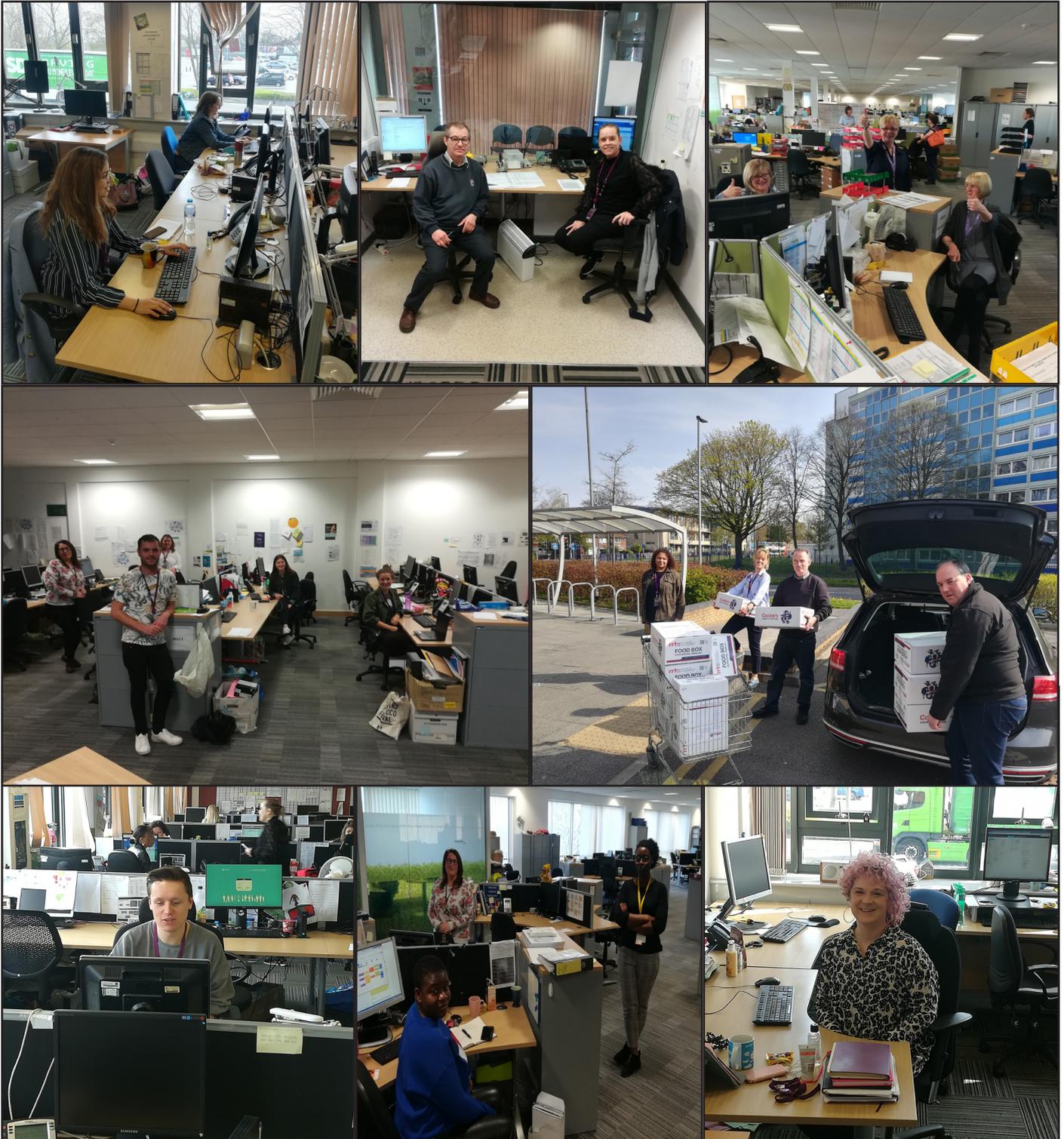
For further information please contact Juliet Williams in the Events Unit on **07852 903794**.

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ADULTS / CHILDREN'S SERVICES

When we come together on Thursday to [#ClapForOurCarers](#), let us not forget the other key workers who continue to travel into work each day to ensure that vulnerable adults and children are still able to receive the critical services that are essential to their physical and mental health and well-being.

To show our appreciation for these key workers, we have included some photos below taken by Assistant Branch Secretary **Eddy Redmond** when he visited our members based in Etrop Court.



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CARE WORKERS VS COVID-19

Care workers are at the forefront of the struggle against the coronavirus. They put themselves at risk to provide direct care and support to high risk groups including the over-70s and people with underlying health conditions. They need all necessary support, training, equipment and resources to allow them to give critical care, prevent the spread of disease and protect our communities.

The Government has made some commitments, but they do not adequately address concerns about resources and support getting to frontline staff and public services. Many care workers are on low wages and cannot get access to statutory sick pay. Some private social care companies are ignoring the Government's advice to pay staff if they have to self isolate, which could put lives at risk.

It is absolutely essential that care workers have necessary equipment to protect patients and are able to self-isolate or take time off work if we become ill. The threat of losing pay means that many of them may have to choose between feeding their children, defaulting on rent payments or attending work whilst ill.

SUPPORT US TO STOP THE SPREAD

Unison is calling for urgent action now to protect vital care workers and those most at risk to the spread of COVID-19. We are calling on employers, local councils and other commissioners of social care to:

- 1. Protect Our Health** – Priority testing for care workers to limit the spread of disease to vulnerable patients and service users. Guarantee all essential training and personal protection equipment (PPE) to all frontline workers (e.g. goggles, masks, hand sanitisers, thermometers) in line with Public Health England guidance.
- 2. Protect Our Pay** – Full normal pay for all those required by government guidance to self-isolate or who become ill because of COVID-19, in order to prevent unnecessary spread of infection. This includes all staff on zero-hour contracts, bank/relief contracts or multiple contracts.
- 3. Protect Our Employment** – Ensure no-one is dismissed or laid-off for staying at home to care for themselves or their family. Absence due to COVID-19 should be excluded from absence management triggers.
- 4. Protect Our Families** – Carers leave on full-pay for workers caring for a dependent who has COVID-19 or for whom childcare is unavailable.

JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN!

If you are a social care worker based in North West England please complete our survey which can be found here: <https://www.surveygizmo.eu/s3/90223476/careworkersvsCOVID19>

Support care workers to stop the spread by signing our petition: <https://action.unison.org.uk/page/58242/petition/1>

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BRANCH OFFICER CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Core

Please contact **Jane Slater** - Email: j.slater@manchester.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Services

Please contact **Pete Banks** - Email: p.banks@manchester.gov.uk

Children's Services

Please contact **Eddy Redmond** - Email: e.redmond@manchester.gov.uk

Adult Services

Please contact **Carl Greatbatch** - Email: c.greatbatch@manchester.gov.uk

Schools (Secondary Schools / Special Schools)

Please contact **Cath Baggaley** - Email: c.baggaley@manchester.gov.uk

Schools (Primary Schools - North)

Please contact Jane Wilcox - Email: j.wilcox@manchester.gov.uk

Schools (Primary Schools - South)

Please contact Rena Wood - Email: r.wood@manchester.gov.uk

BRANCH TWEETS THIS WEEK

06 April 2020 - [Link to Tweet](#)

Our thoughts are with [@tony4rochdale](#) who has recently been admitted to hospital due to [#COVID19](#). Tony is a long-term friend of the branch and we all wish him a speedy recovery during this difficult time.

06 April 2020 - [Link to Tweet](#)

Our latest branch circular sent out to all Manchester UNISON members via email is now available to read on our website here [@NorthWestUNISON #COVID19 https://t.co/QdcaQgejEG?amp=1](#)

07 April 2020 - [Link to Tweet](#)

We are so saddened by the death today of Cllr Sue Murphy, whose achievements in making our city a better place to live and work over her 25 years in office, we will remember. Many of us have fond personal memories of her comradeship and support. Our thoughts are with her family. <https://twitter.com/ManCityCouncil/status/1247568690859708417>

09 April 2020 - [Link to Tweet](#)

Read our latest update to find out about the extra support now available for schools and parents to help cope with the coronavirus crisis [@UNISONinSchools https://t.co/tnmlu117qF?amp=1](#)

09 April 2020 - [Link to Tweet](#)

Don't forget to join in at 8pm TONIGHT as we [#ClapForOurCarers](#) to recognise the efforts of our NHS, carers, Local Government workers and every single one of the [#KeyWorkers](#) as they continue to keep us safe and the country running. We love you all!

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Manchester UNISON Contact Information

Telephone Number: **0161 254 7500**

Email Address: unison@manchester.gov.uk

Branch Website: www.unisonmanchester.gov.uk

Twitter Feed: twitter.com/UnisonMcr

UNISONdirect

The UNISONdirect call centre will be closed from 5pm on 24 March 2020. There are a limited number of staff working from home and they will continue to help members through UNISON's online enquiries form <http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/online-enquiries>

When members phone UNISONDirect, the greeting message will sign post them to the UNISON website for branch and region information. They will also be directed to UNISON's coronavirus webpage <https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/> that is updated regularly.

Social Media

The social media accounts below are worth following for more information.

[@UnisonMcr](https://twitter.com/UnisonMcr) - our branch twitter account which will have regular updates during the crisis

[@manchesterheal1](https://twitter.com/manchesterheal1) - regular updates for all UNISON health workers in Manchester

[@NorthWestUNISON](https://twitter.com/NorthWestUNISON) - official twitter account of the North West Region of UNISON

[@unisontheunion](https://twitter.com/unisontheunion) - official twitter account for the national union

Mental Health Helplines

If remaining isolated is affecting your mental health, or you are concerned about a loved one who might be suffering themselves then have a look at this list of helplines and support groups that may be able to help: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

Home Education Resources

The Government recently published a list of high-quality resources that parents and schools can consider to support education at home: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>

Free School Meals Guidance

The Government has also confirmed that it will extend financial support to children eligible for free school meals who are not attending school during the Easter holidays. For more information you should refer to the official guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>



0161 254 7500



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