

4<sup>th</sup> November 2020

## **WALES BULLETIN: SOCIAL CARE SICKPAY – COVID-19**

Dear Colleagues

You may have heard on the news and Social media that Welsh Government has released details of The Statutory sick pay enhancement scheme, this provides additional financial support to eligible social care workers when they are required to stay off work due to actual or potential exposure to COVID-19. The GMB Union was part of the working group that negotiated this scheme and is continuing to be involved in improving the working lives of GMB members in Social care

This is primarily an infection control measure in that it removes the financial barrier for Socialcare workers whose income reduces significantly to statutory sick pay (SSP) or to no income at all when they should not come into work in order to protect people receiving care. This scheme will support staff to 'do the right thing' and stay off work when they may present an infection risk to the vulnerable people to whom they provide care.

The scheme has been developed with the engagement of the trade unions, provider representatives and local authorities.

Welsh Government will provide funding for employers to pay eligible workers at full pay if they can't work because:

- they have symptoms of COVID-19
- they have tested positive for COVID-19
- they are self – isolating due to being identified as a contact by NHS Wales Test Trace Protect (TTP)

- they are self-isolating because a member of their (extended) household is self-isolating

Staff are expected to be tested without delay.

Staff eligible for this scheme are those employed by registered care homes and domiciliary support services and Personal Assistants paid via direct payments. It also covers agency staff, bank/pool staff and staff working for contractors, when providing core daily services that bring them into close contact with people cared for. Full details of the scheme will be available in a guidance document from 30 October on the Welsh Government website.

**From the 1<sup>st</sup> November, all eligible employees should be paid at full pay via your employers usual payroll arrangements (weekly or monthly) for the COVID-19 related absences outlined above.**

If you are employed and your hours are irregular, pay should be an average of the last eight weeks. If you are not eligible for SSP, you should be reimbursed 100% of the usual/average pay.

Agency staff are eligible for this scheme when they have been booked for a series of shifts and the worker has completed at least one shift prior to needing to stay off work. The agency should provide the payment, if you are a bank/ pool staff member you will be eligible to receive payment for a series of shifts begun, but not completed, due to COVID-19 related absence, again this would be paid through normal payroll.

**IF GMB MEMBERS DO NOT RECEIVE FULL SICK PAY WHEN THEY MEET THE ABOVE CRITERA THEY CAN CONTACT GMB FOR ADVICE & SUPPORT.**

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT:**

The issue of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in social care has been one of the huge problems faced by GMB members working in social care during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The social care workforce was originally excluded from Government and Public Health Guidance. The GMB was successful in getting this guidance amended.

Key points to note are:

- Gloves and aprons should be used for single use only and disposed after each service user / resident contact.
- Sessional use means 1 worker, 1 shift.
- Gowns or coveralls can be used for an entire session of work in higher risk areas, but staff should not move between Covid and no-Covid areas.
- Fluid repellent surgical masks (FRSM) and eye protection can be used for an entire session of work.
- PPE must be changed when moving between Covid Positive and Non-Positive residents / service users.
- Any PPE that is suitable for reuse (in cases of extreme shortages) is to be reused by that individual only and not shared amongst workers, with appropriate cleaning performed after each use. A detergent product either combined / sequentially with a decontamination product should be used to clean the item, rinsed thoroughly and left to dry.
- Reusable face masks should be carefully folded so the outer surface is held inwards and should be stored in a clean sealable bag / box marked with the persons name. Fit checks should be performed each time a respirator is donned if it is reused.
- Hand hygiene should be practiced and extended to exposed forearms, after the removal of PPE.
- All staff should adhere to social distancing (2 meters) wherever possible, particularly if not wearing PPE and in non-clinical communal areas.

**It is essential that all social care staff wear the appropriate PPE. When doing so, staff are reminded that they are entitled to take regular breaks and rest periods, ensuring that you increase your fluid intake. Breaks should be staggered to limit the numbers of staff in communal rest areas.**

PASS THIS BULLETIN ONTO YOUR WORK COLLEAGUES AND ASK THEM TO JOIN GMB!

Not a GMB Member? Join today at [www.gmb.org.uk/join](http://www.gmb.org.uk/join)



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