

3rd June 2020

Helen Whately MP
Minister of State for Care
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



By Email: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Minister for Care

Re: Track & Trace

I am contacting you on behalf GMB members working in Social Care, to raise concerns about the Government Track & Trace Programme. There has only been limited information on this programme published so far, but from what we have seen we have grave concerns.

It has been stated that workers who are informed that they must self-isolate for 14 days will be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

The GMB believes that any worker following a Government instruction to self-isolate should not suffer any financial detriment. SSP is set at £95.85 and is not in any way sustainable for individuals. Therefore, it is highly likely that staff will be forced to ignore your Governments advice and attend work anyway. This would completely defeat the objective of the track and trace programme.

During Covid-19 within the NHS, health trade unions including the GMB, have successfully secured Covid Special Leave for all staff that have to take time off work due to Covid-19 related reasons. Covid special leave entitles them to full and normal pay during the absence and has no impact on non-Covid sickness absence records. We would expect this to extend to requirements imposed upon staff under the track and trace programme.

Most of the social care workforce however have been completely abandoned by their employers and your Government when it came to sick pay. After pressure from the GMB, SSP was extended to be payable from day one, but this is still unacceptable to us and our members. To reiterate again, the GMB does not believe any worker should suffer a financial detriment for following Government advice. We continue to lobby yourselves and private care providers on this crucial issue for our members.

There is no end to Covid-19 in sight as we move into the second phase and an attempt is made to lift lockdown measures. Therefore, there is the potential for an increased risk of exposure to Covid-19 due to travelling on unsafe public transport and the continued difficulties accessing appropriate PPE and testing. This will no doubt lead to further financial impacts of Covid-19 and this is a real and continuing fear for our members.

It is a matter of value and recognition. The social care workforce has continued to work throughout this pandemic, putting their lives on the line as they were let down on PPE, testing and pay. It is time that the true value of the social care workforce was recognised

and acknowledged by protecting their pay should they be required to self-isolate for the duration of Covid-19.

GMB is seeking clarification on:

1. What exemptions for self-isolation are being made for social care staff?
2. What enforcement measures are you proposing for social care staff who do not follow self-isolation instructions?
3. What are you doing to ensure that the social care workforce do not suffer a financial detriment?

I have written to you on several occasions with regards our Covid-19 concerns and the impact on our members in the social care workforce and to date have not received an acknowledgement of receipt or response.

Therefore, I trust you will take the time to respond to this letter so that we can advise our members that you do value and recognise their Covid-19 efforts and will be protecting their pay through this unprecedented time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Harrison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rachel Harrison
GMB National Officer - Health & Social Care

Rachel.harrison@gmb.org.uk