



UNITE EQUALITIES UPDATE 1

COVID-19 CHECKLIST for ACTION

We all know these are difficult and demanding times for everyone, and how important it is to come together to protect safety, pay and jobs for all. This Unite Equalities COVID-19 Checklist for Action highlights key issues as we do just that. We need to act on equality as an integrated part of our action on COVID-19, to stop it worsening the discrimination, violence and harassment, inequality, unfair pay, exclusion and under-representation we continue to tackle together. **Thank you for all you are doing.** For Unite Health & Safety Guide Coronavirus COVID-19 & your rights to the furlough Job Retention Scheme JRS that Unite successfully campaigned for, and more, go to <https://unitetheunion.org/coronavirus>. This also includes details of how to access the Unite Coronavirus COVID-19 helpline.

What Unite is saying:

✓ Everyone must be safe – take action to include everyone

- **Pregnant women** – have been identified as a ‘vulnerable group’ requiring social distancing, which must not mean loss of pay
- **Gender sensitive health and safety** – recognising the strain on women as the majority of frontline workers and as carers; and checking appropriate in-date, quality PPE
- **Disabled workers** – Safety measures and Personal Protective Equipment appropriate PPE
- **Workers with invisible disabilities** – may need additional protections whether at work, working from home, or shielding
- **Workers living with eg cancer, heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, sickle cell and thalassaemia** – may need to self-isolate or shield, this should not mean loss of pay or job security; some BAEM communities are more likely to have eg diabetes. Workers “shielding in line with public health guidance or required to stay home due to shielding of another individual” are eligible to be included in furlough, as Unite called for
- **Zero tolerance of harassment** - including clear processes to protect front-line workers

✓ We must value childcare and caring and protect the safety, jobs and incomes of all parents and carers

- **Protecting maternity, paternity, parental, adoption leave rights/pay** – being aware of the impact if you are already on leave, if you are approaching leave or pay qualifying dates, and ensuring no losses – helpful information from Maternity Action <https://maternityaction.org.uk/covidmaternityfaqs/>
- **Ensuring carers and those caring for children get their rights** - to be ‘furloughed’ on the JRS, 80% pay up to £2,500 a month, which now includes those who are “caring for children at home as a result of school and childcare facilities closing, or caring for a vulnerable individual in your household” – Basic rights to build on

✓ We must guard against COVID-19 intensifying discrimination

- **Women, BAEM and Disabled workers are more likely to be lower paid** – and to suffer unequal pay gaps, poverty, income loss from austerity, low Universal credit. Fair and transparent policies for furlough pay and top up, backed up by equality audits, are essential

<https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FINAL-Covid-19-briefing.pdf>
<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/coronavirus-will-increase-race-inequalities>
<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2020/april/covid-19-and-rights-disabled-people>

- **Women are 74% of part-time workers** – check no discrimination, that all pay is pro-rata without losing eg right to statutory maternity pay
- **Race and Nationality discrimination** – are abhorrent and unlawful – guarding against COVID19-related race and nationality discrimination, and ensuring we tackle the ‘hostile environment’ in immigration, including rights for our members who are EU citizens following Brexit, those who are part of the Windrush generation, and migrant workers
- **Disabled workers working in a different way or from home** – require appropriate adjustments; and Access to Work support to continue as needed
- **LGBT+ workers** – crises such as the COVID19 pandemic can deepen existing inequalities, and lockdown can have particular impact around ‘coming out’ and discriminatory attitudes. Unite support is for **all** members. Helpful information here, which includes self-isolation helplines and support for LGBT+ people : <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/covid-19---how-lgbt-inclusive-organisations-can-help>
- **Migrant Domestic Workers** – who are Unite members, already face uncertainty and insecurity from the reductions in the Overseas Domestic Workers Visa, and their vulnerability to abuse is well-documented. On the front line providing care, childcare and cleaning or facing dismissal because of COVID-19 threatening their immigration status, their words “No one knows what goes on behind closed doors” must not mean they are forgotten

✓ **We must tackle the isolation, division and intense pressure faced by people working, shielding, caring, self-isolating or unwell at home**

- **Mental health** – Home working and lone working can cause work-related stress and affect people’s mental health. Members living with mental health issues may need additional support. You can access guidance from the organisation MIND for better mental health here <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/> NHS guide here <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus>
- **Domestic violence and abuse** – Excellent [new interactive guide](#) here for reps from TUC. Also <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/vawg-sector-statement-on-covid-19/> Includes England, Scotland, Wales, N Ireland. For Ireland : <https://www.womensaid.ie/> This link <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-help-for-domestic-violence/> includes support for women suffering violence and abuse, for men, for LGBT+, for anyone concerned about forced marriage or about their own or someone else’s behavior towards their partner
- **LGBT+ people** – may be facing additional pressures – please see above
- **Migrant domestic workers and others** – working in private households must not be overlooked in ensuring safety, income protection, job protection, decent treatment



at the ♥ of our union



You can get up-to-date information about Coronavirus (COVID-19) and what you need to do on [GOV.UK](#). Regular updated daily health advice regarding COVID-19 is provided by the four devolved health authorities set out below :

England: Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Scotland: NHS Scotland <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/wuhan-novel-coronavirus/>

Wales: Public Health Wales Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Northern Ireland: Public Health Agency find here <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>

The health authority for the Republic of Ireland and COVID info can be found here:

Republic of Ireland: Health Service Executive (HSE) Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Slainte find here: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

Unite Equalities Update

COVID-19 CHECKLIST for ACTION

ACTION! Have you taken action to check all members' safety and pay is protected?

	Safety protection : social distancing/appropriate PPE	Pay protection : no additional loss of pay
Pregnant women		
Gender sensitive health & safety		
Disabled workers including invisible disabilities and BAEM workers living with health conditions		

ACTION! Have you taken action to check parents and carers' safety, jobs and pay?

	Rights protected while on leave, kept informed	Pay rights not undermined through COVID-19 impact eg earnings during furlough	Right to return to work protected
Maternity leave/pay			
Paternity leave/pay			
Adoption leave/pay			
Parental/family leave			

	Opportunity to 'furlough'	Top up negotiated with employer
Caring for a 'vulnerable' person		
Caring for children		

ACTION! Have you taken action to prevent COVID-19 intensifying discrimination?

	COVID-19 changes checked/equality audited	Advised of union support available or signposting to other organisation
Lower paid workers		
Gender pay gap		
Part-time workers		
Workers zero hours/precarious contracts		
Race and Nationality Discrimination		
Disabled members		
LGBT+ members		
Migrant domestic workers		

ACTION! Have you taken action to support members' safety & wellbeing at home?

	Agreed policy from employer	Advised of union support available or signposting to other organisation
Mental health		
Domestic Violence/Abuse		
LGBT+ members		

Unite Equalities thanks everyone for all you are doing

Diana Holland - Assistant General Secretary : Equalities equality@unitetheunion.org

Women : Chair, EC Rep Jane Stewart; National Equalities Officer : Siobhan Edean

BAEM : Chair, EC Rep Susan Matthews; National Equalities Officer : Harish Patel

Disabled Members : Chair Dave Allan, EC Rep Sean McGovern; National Equalities Officer : Harish Patel

LGBT+ : Chair Phil Jones, EC rep Jenny Douglas; Nat Equalities Officer : Harish Patel

Regional Women's & Equalities Officers : NEYH Sue Pollard, NW Sharon Hutchinson, WM Maureen Scott-Douglas, EM Jess Honess, SW Karen Cole, SE Janet Henney, L&E Carolyn Simpson, George Dodo-Williams, Scotland Lorna Glen/Siobhan McCready, Wales Jo Galazka, Ireland Taryn Trainor

National Minimum Wage rates from 1 April 2020

Category of worker	Hourly rate
Aged 25 and above (national living wage rate)	£8.72
Aged 21 to 24 inclusive	£8.20
Aged 18 to 20 inclusive	£6.45
Aged under 18 (but above compulsory school leaving age)	£4.55
Apprentices aged under 19	£4.15
Apprentices aged 19 and over, but in the first year of their apprenticeship	£4.15

Ireland Minimum wage details here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/41a981-the-minimum-wage-in-ireland/>

Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Parental Pay

2020 to 2021 rate

Maternity SMP – weekly rate for first 6 weeks	90% of the employee's average weekly earnings
SMP – weekly rate for remaining weeks	£151.20 or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower
Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) – weekly rate	£151.20 or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower
Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) – weekly rate for first 6 weeks	90% of employee's average weekly earnings
SAP – weekly rate for remaining weeks	£151.20 or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower
Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) – weekly rate	£151.20 or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower
Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay (SPBP) – weekly rate (from 6 April 2020)	£151.20 or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower

LOWER EARNINGS LIMIT (LEL) £120 per week £520 per month £6,240 per year
Average weekly earnings must be above the Lower Earnings Limit (over 8 weeks before the qualifying week) Qualifying week is the 15th week before the baby is due

Maternity Allowance (MA) Maximum £151.20 – Minimum earnings threshold for MA £30

Ireland: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/apply-for-maternity-benefit/#covid-19-and-maternity-benefit>