

Information for social care members about the “furlough” scheme

In every workplace that we have members, UNISON is asking employers to make sure that workers who follow government and NHS guidance to ‘shield’, or those who have ‘caring’ responsibilities, do not lose out financially by not being able to attend work. Some organisations may already be committed to supporting their employees by paying them their full pay while having to stay off work however there are those who are not always able to.

Until recently, information on the provision of ‘furlough’ provided by government was not clear for Social Care Providers who receive Government/Local Authority funding.

However, new additional information in relation to this was published on 17th April, in order to help Social Care providers make a decision on applying for ‘Furlough’, for those who fell into these categories. This was published on the ‘Skills for Care’ website [here](#).

The document states that “the Department of Health and Social Care has agreed the following interpretation of the guidance on the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#).”

This guidance states: “We also know that some of the care workforce will have been contacted by the NHS to say that they should be “shielding” for a period of 12 weeks. These workers are not able to continue working in the usual way. An employer could decide to keep these workers on full pay without using the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme, but the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme is also available if employers choose to use it for this purpose.”

The scheme covers amongst others :

Shielding Employees

Employees who are unable to work because they are [shielding in line with public health guidance](#) (or need to stay home with someone who is shielding) can be furloughed.

Employees with caring responsibilities

Employees who are unable to work because they have caring responsibilities resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) can be furloughed. For example, employees that need to look after children can be furloughed.

UNISON is asking that best practice be followed in implementing ‘Furlough’, this would include:

- The 80% pay that furloughed employees would be entitled to, would be topped up by 20% by Inspire to ensure employees affected would receive 100% of their pay and not be left in detriment.

- The Scheme covers those on Full, Part time and Fixed term contracts but also those on '0' hours contracts.
- The scheme covers not only those having to shield but those who have 'caring' responsibilities.
- The decision to furlough employees should be done in a fair way and not be discriminatory.

Any employees placed on furlough must be furloughed for a minimum period of 3 consecutive weeks. When they return to work, they must be taken off furlough. Employees can be furloughed multiple times, but each separate instance must be for a minimum period of 3 consecutive weeks.

Our members who are having to stay off of work in the above categories now need a decision to be made, to help alleviate the additional stress of not knowing if they can meet their domestic financial commitments.

Members experiencing financial difficulties can contact our welfare charity, 'There for You', which provides confidential advice and support service for members and their dependents.

Ann McEvoy
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