

26th May 2022

Dear Head Teacher,

Re: Long COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic has had and continues to have an impact on schools and colleges, teachers and pupils.

One of the major differences between COVID-19 and other illnesses such as influenza is the large number of people suffering from prolonged symptoms following the initial infection, a condition that has been termed 'Long COVID'.

Recent Office of National Statistics (ONS) data shows that over a million people are suffering from Long COVID, over one in five of all those infected. Approximately one in five of those suffering Long COVID also report that their Long COVID symptoms impact on their ability to undertake day-to-day activities 'a lot'. This represents almost 5% of people infected with coronavirus: 376,000 people have had symptoms for over a year.

The debilitating condition includes symptoms of the virus, lasting organ damage, impairment of mental processing, extreme fatigue, and shortness of breath, leading to exhaustion after even minor activity. Many report their daily activities severely impeded and are left unable to work.

ONS data also shows that large numbers of staff working in teaching and education are suffering with Long COVID, with over 100,000 people reporting symptoms. Many of these individuals will have contracted COVID-19 through their employment.

We are sure you would agree that with so many teachers still experiencing symptoms, it is essential that they are treated fairly. The NASUWT would expect all employers to be taking appropriate steps to ensure teachers are properly supported, including by:

- encouraging employees to report any persistent symptoms of COVID-19, especially fatigue and brain fog;
- carrying out a risk assessment and occupational health (OH) assessment where required;
- enacting reasonable adjustments, including any OH recommendations;
- providing time off with pay for any medical appointments and/or treatments within normal working hours;

- treating the condition as a disability under the Equality Act 2010; and not counting absences for the purposes of sickness absence monitoring;
- providing extended phased returns, and agreeing requests for short-term flexible working in excess of the phased return; and
- supporting long-term flexible working requests.

Taking these steps and adopting our Joint Union Protocol on the Management of Long Covid (attached) will enable you as an employer to demonstrate your commitment to supporting teachers who are suffering from Long COVID through no fault of their own.

We look forward to your response and would request that the protocol is tabled as an agenda item at any local consultation and negotiation meetings please to discuss these points further. The contents of this letter have also been shared with Kirston Nelson, Director of Education and Skills at Coventry City Council.

Yours sincerely,

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NASUWT Coventry