



19th May 2020

Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Dear Julie,

We are writing to support the recent letter from the GMB trade union regarding the provision of funding so that social care workers can receive their normal pay if they are forced to take sick leave or self-isolate as a result of coronavirus.

We note that Welsh Government will receive a £35 million consequential because of the UK Government's Infection Control Fund, introduced to address the spread of coronavirus in care homes. The Secretary of State has confirmed that a part of this fund is intended for employers to match the difference between Statutory Sick Pay and normal pay, and the UK Government guidance states it should be used to "maintain the normal wages of staff, in order to reduce the spread of infection need to reduce the number of establishments in which they work, reduce the number of hours they work, or self-isolate."

We understand that the GMB approached Welsh Government about introducing this policy in March, and has raised this in meetings with officials since. The fact that many social care staff, who are already typically low paid, continue to face a financial penalty for taking sickness absence is contributing to the spread of the virus, particularly within care homes, and we would welcome a similar policy commitment in Wales that extends to all social care workers, including agency workers. This policy and its delivery should be designed in partnership with the relevant trade unions.

We also echo the GMB's call for a sectoral social partnership arrangement to be established in social care. This is something which we have been calling for some time, along with the other key affiliate in the sector - UNISON. We believe that a number of issues that have arisen during this pandemic could have been dealt with far more efficiently if such a structure existed, and in a way that created better, fairer and more equal outcomes for both the workforce and those in receipt of care.

Best wishes,

Shavanah Taj

Acting General Secretary