

Manufacturing update 6: Negotiating lay-off under the Job Retention Scheme



Following guidance being issued on eligibility for the government's **Job Retention Scheme** our officers and shop stewards have been working tirelessly to secure the best possible protections for our members. In doing this, **those on the front line who understand best the concerns of our members and circumstances faced by their employers, are negotiating agreements that deliver on both immediate health and safety needs as well as the best pay and job security arrangements they can in these unprecedented times.** I want to congratulate you all on the way you are approaching this and addressing the many unforeseen challenges the crisis is throwing up on a daily basis.

With **government advice still that manufacturing should continue to operate - albeit within the strict public health guidance** issued (*covered in Update 4*) - those who cannot work from home are, in many cases, being asked to continue working. Where this is not possible, furloughing under the government scheme is an option – *see Update 5 for further information on this.* **This Update clarifies issues and answers a number of questions that continue to be asked.**

Firstly, it is important to know that **employers must negotiate a furloughing arrangement; it's not an issue for your employer to determine alone.** Officers have been sent specific legal advice on issues relating to furloughing workers and **shop stewards should contact their local officer for more information.**

GENERAL SCOPE AND PRINCIPLES IN ANY JRS AGREEMENT:

- ⇒ **All employees are covered but the whole workforce does not have to be laid-off in order to qualify for the JRS.** We are seeking clarity from government on whether essential workers are covered and/or employers can place workers in and out of the scheme to maintain service levels in a rapidly changing situation.
- ⇒ Particular **attention should be paid to more vulnerable groups** if lay-off short of the whole workforce is under discussion.
- ⇒ **Short time working, job sharing and/or rotation are not permitted under the government scheme.** We are talking to government about creating flexibility in the scheme to address this.
- ⇒ **Many companies have existing agreements in place providing for banked or corridor hours, temporary shut down and lay-off arrangements at 100% pay.** We are seeking confirmation from government that existing contractual arrangements for holiday use, banked and/or corridor hours do not have to be exhausted prior to any claim being made under the JRS.
- ⇒ Where not already provided for employers are permitted to make **top up payments to 100% of pay.**
- ⇒ **Any agreement should be temporary and specific** to the current COVID-19 pandemic. These are unprecedented times so **please speak to your officer**, who will have additional advice and information **before finalising any agreement.**
- ⇒ In particular, **any company proposals to reduce pay, utilise existing temporary arrangements such as banked/corridor hours or workers entitlements must be discussed with your officer** at the earliest opportunity and in any event **before finalising any agreement.**

More information can be found at <http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme/>

Once again, I want to thank you for the tremendous job you are all doing; shop stewards, Health and Safety Representatives and officers alike, in these very challenging circumstances.

In solidarity

Steve Turner

Assistant General Secretary

