

# Supply Teachers

Annual survey of experiences



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## **INTRODUCTION**

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Supply teachers are integral to the education system. Without supply teachers, many pupils would be denied the opportunity to be taught by qualified and dedicated teachers who ensure that schools can continue to provide the education to which children and young people are entitled. Supply teachers make a vital contribution to securing high educational standards for all children and young people.

Despite the crucial role supply teachers have played during the coronavirus pandemic, the experiences of many supply teachers suggest that developments such as deregulation have had a significant impact upon how supply teachers are deployed, how they are paid, and on their working conditions, in comparison with teachers who have a contract of employment with a school. The NASUWT's annual survey of supply teachers in Wales aims to examine the changing experiences of supply teachers, including issues and trends.

The 2020 survey was undertaken between August and September.

A total of 161 supply teachers responded to the survey.

This report provides the main findings from the 2020 survey of supply teachers and highlights the experiences of supply teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the wider opening of schools from September 2020.

## THE SURVEY

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### Nature of work

Supply teachers were asked about their ability to secure work teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. Four fifths (80%) reported that they were unable to secure work teaching during the pandemic.

### Access to work

Of those supply teachers who reported that they were able to secure work during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, just under three fifths of supply teachers (59%) said that they had secured work through a supply agency, whilst well over a third (37%) reported that they had secured work directly as a supply teacher by a school, and just 4% stated that they had secured work via a local authority supply pool during the pandemic.



*I was on long-term supply at a school.*



For those supply teachers working through an agency during the COVID-19 pandemic, over half of respondents (53%) stated that they were signed up to one agency to secure work, 30% reported that they were signed up to two agencies, just over one in ten (11%) reported that they were signed up to three agencies, 4% reported that they had signed up to four agencies, and 2% reported that they were signed up to five or more agencies.

Almost a quarter of supply teachers (23%) reported that they had been asked to sign a contract or agreement with an umbrella company when working through a supply agency.

For those supply teachers working for a local authority during the COVID-19 pandemic, just over four fifths (81%) reported that they were working for one local authority, one in ten (10%) stated that they were working for two local authorities, 2% reported working for three local authorities, and 7% reported working for five or more local authorities.

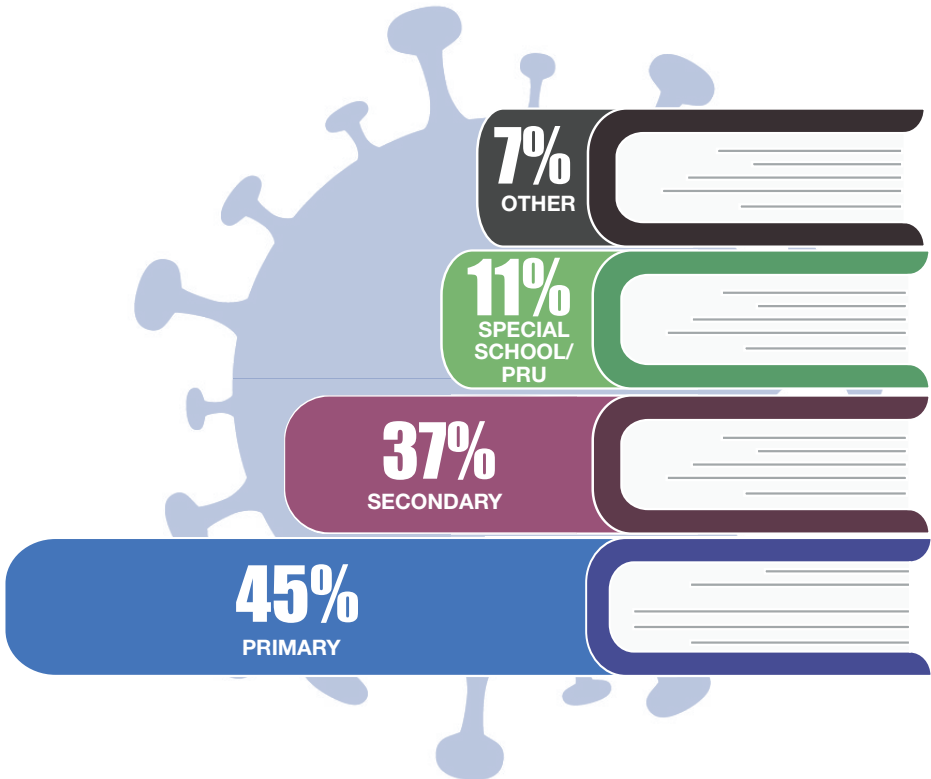
For those supply teachers working directly for a school during the COVID-19 pandemic, almost four fifths (79%) stated that they were working directly for one school, less than one in 20 (4%) reported working directly for two schools, just under one in ten (9%) were working directly for three schools, and 8% were working directly for more than five schools.

## Availability of work

Supply teachers were asked where they were able to obtain work during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

Well over four fifths of supply teachers (45%) who responded to the survey stated that their supply work took place in primary schools. Well over a third (37%) stated that their work was in secondary schools. Seven per cent of supply teachers reported that their supply work took place in a special school/pupil referral unit (PRU).

### Where supply teachers undertook the majority of their work during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown



### Working for an agency and/or an umbrella company during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown

Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working through an agency and/or umbrella company during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

In regards to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and furlough, well over two fifths of supply teachers (45%) reported that all of the agencies they were working for placed them on furlough. Just over one fifth of supply teachers (21%) stated that some of the agencies they were working for placed them on furlough, and over a third of supply teachers (34%) reported that the agencies they were working for did not furlough them.

**Just over a third of supply teachers reported that the agencies they were working for did not furlough them.**

*I wasn't given a reason.*

For those supply teachers placed on furlough by an umbrella company, 71% reported that they were paid 80% of their average wage and just 1% reported that they were paid at 100% of their average wage. However, one in 20 (5%) stated that they were paid at just 80% of National Minimum Wage (NMW).

For those supply teachers placed on furlough, just under two thirds (65%) reported that they would be paid for the August school closure period, whereas over a quarter (27%) of supply teachers stated that they would not be paid for the August school closure period, and 8% of supply teachers reported that they did not know.

**Over a quarter of supply teachers stated that they would not be paid for the August school closure period.**

*Paying furlough from lockdown and having to wait for payment from the Government nearly put the agency out of business. Could not afford to furlough through August.*

When supply teachers were asked if the agencies and/or umbrella companies had adjusted furlough payments so they received the highest amount possible each time they were paid, one fifth (20%) reported that all the agencies and/or umbrella companies had adjusted their furlough payments, and 7% reported that some of the agencies and/or umbrella companies had adjusted furlough payments to reflect the highest amount possible. However, 16% stated that the agencies and/or umbrella companies had not adjusted furlough payments so they received the highest amount possible each time they were paid, and just under three fifths (57%) reported that they were not sure.

**Just under three fifths of supply teachers (57%) reported that they were not sure if the agencies and/or umbrella companies had adjusted furlough payments so they received the highest amount possible for each pay period.**

In respect of the Cabinet Office guidance on the use of contingent labour in the public sector (e.g. at least 80% of salary, capped at £2,500), well over a third of supply teachers (37%) reported that the school and the agency where they were working paid them according to the Cabinet Office guidance. Just under one in ten supply teachers (9%) reported that some of the schools and the agencies where they were working paid them according to the Cabinet Office guidance. One in ten supply teachers (10%) reported that all of the schools and the agencies where they were working paid them according to the Cabinet Office guidance, and well over two fifths of supply teachers (44%) reported that the schools and the agencies did not pay them according to the Cabinet Office guidance.

*My assignment that I was on when the pandemic started was cancelled because I have asthma. The agency cancelled all my bookings in the school after the head asked all the staff who had asthma to be sent home immediately. The head contacted the agency to let them know I was being sent home, which prompted them to cancel all assignments booked.*

### **Working for a local authority during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown**

Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working for a local authority during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

Of those supply teachers working on long-term assignments that were cancelled by a local authority or local authorities, just over four fifths of supply teachers (81%) reported that they were not reinstated on their original terms and did not continue to be paid according to advice and guidance from the Welsh Government.

Just under a fifth (19%) reported that the local authority reinstated them and paid them on their original terms according to advice and guidance from the Welsh Government.

**Eighty-one per cent of supply teachers working for a local authority were not reinstated on their original terms and paid according to advice and guidance from the Welsh Government.**

In regards to casual or ad hoc assignments, almost three quarters of supply teachers (74%) reported that the authority or local authorities where they were working did not pay them according to the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government (e.g. 80% of typical pay, based on a retrospective audit of the average days or hours worked). Just under a quarter of supply teachers (24%) stated that the local authority they were working for paid them according to the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government, and just 2% stated that all the local authorities paid them according to the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government.

*We were made to feel useless by the local authority. We were sent emails explaining they owed us nothing.*

### **Working directly for a school during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown**

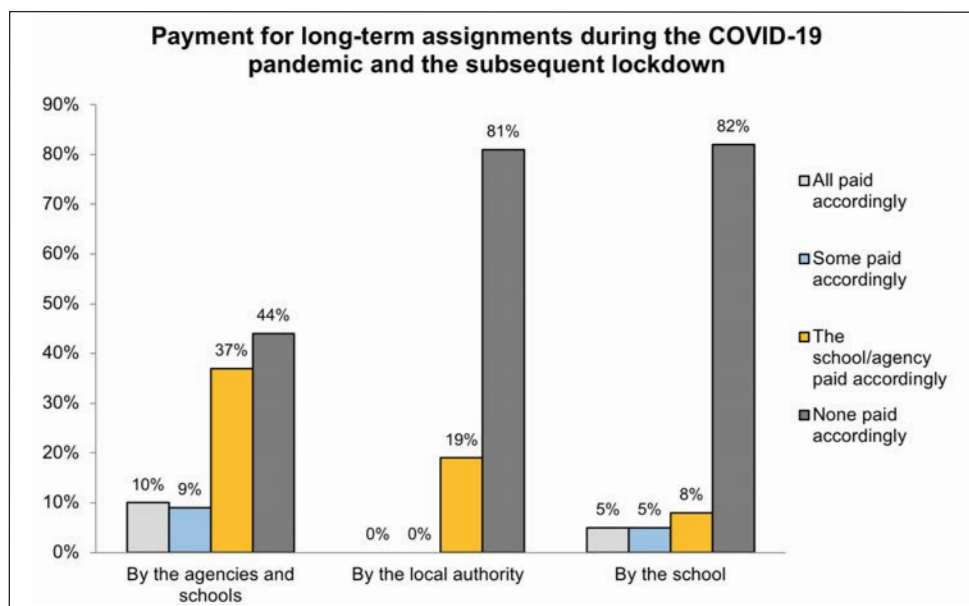
Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working directly for a school during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

For those supply teachers working on long-term assignments that were cancelled by the school/schools, over four fifths (82%) reported that they were not reinstated on their original terms and did not continue to be paid according to advice and guidance from the Welsh Government. Just under one in ten (8%) stated that the school reinstated them and paid them according to the advice



and guidance from the Welsh Government. One in 20 supply teachers (5%) reported that some of the schools paid them accordingly, and one in 20 respondents (5%) stated that all of the schools reinstated them and paid them according to the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government.

In regards to casual or ad hoc assignments, just over four fifths of supply teachers (81%) reported that the school/schools where they were working did not pay them according to the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government (e.g. 80% of typical pay, based on a retrospective audit of the average days or hours worked). Sixteen per cent of supply teachers stated that the school they were working in paid them according to the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government, and just 3% stated that all the schools where they were working paid them according to the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government.



### Financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown

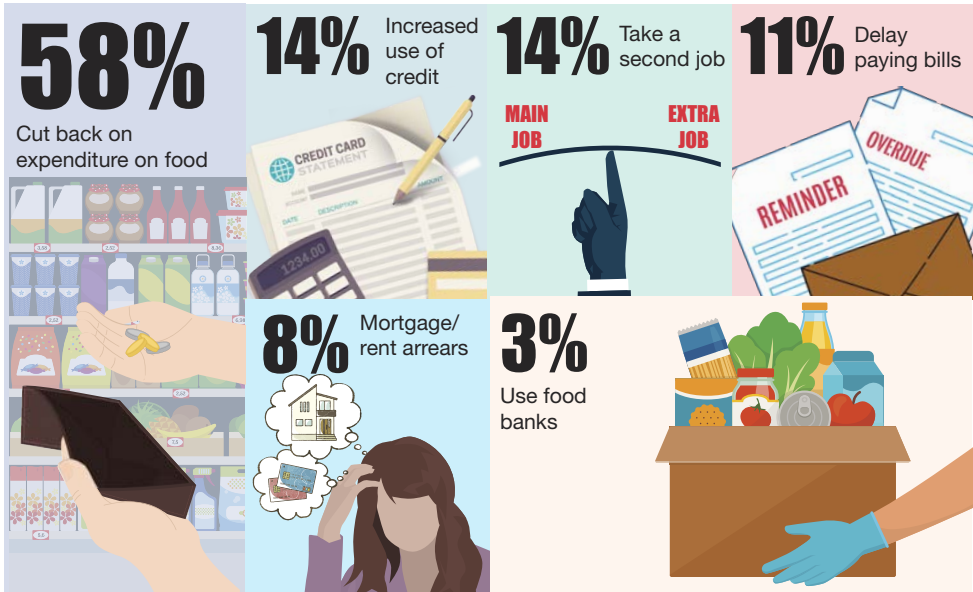
Supply teachers were asked about their financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

Almost a quarter of supply teachers (24%) reported that they had sourced work elsewhere other than teaching since the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those, over four fifths (83%) stated that the work sourced elsewhere other than teaching failed to provide the same level of financial income that they would have obtained had they been able to obtain work teaching.

Fifteen per cent of supply teachers reported that they had to claim some form of state benefit since the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Universal Credit), and well over half of respondents (55%) stated that they had experienced financial hardship since the pandemic began.

Just under three quarters of supply teachers (72%) reported that changes to the CJRS from the end of August will impact on their ability to continue to be furloughed.

### Financial situation since the COVID-19 pandemic



*Cut back on expenditure and budget strictly.*

*Had to cut back on many other activities as well as food bills.*

### Securing work from September 2020

Seventy-one per cent of supply teachers reported that they had not been offered work or were unable to secure any work with the full opening of schools from September 2020.

For those supply teachers who reported that they were offered or able to secure work with the full opening of schools from September 2020, almost two fifths of respondents (39%) reported that this was ad hoc/daily work, 23% said that this was weekly assignments, and one in ten (10%) stated that this was monthly assignments. Just over a fifth of supply teachers (22%) reported that this was termly assignments, and one in ten (10%) stated that they were offered or able to secure work in excess of a termly assignment.

Just under two fifths of those supply teachers (39%) who were able to secure work reported that they had not been provided with information regarding the school's risk assessment, as well as other appropriate information (e.g. behaviour management policy).

Almost three quarters of supply teachers (74%) think that the opportunities to undertake supply work will decrease from September 2020. Just 14% of supply teachers think that the opportunities to undertake supply work will increase, and 12% of respondents think that the opportunities will stay the same.

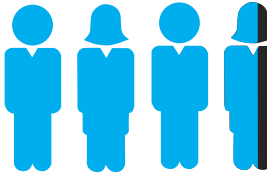
Over two thirds of supply teachers (67%) think that the need to maintain the integrity of 'bubbles' in schools will have a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020. However, just 7% of supply teachers think that the need to maintain the integrity of 'bubbles' in schools will not have a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020, and just over a quarter of supply teachers (26%) reported that they were not sure about the impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020.

*Moving from school to school could be deemed unsafe for some schools.*

Seventy per cent of supply teachers stated that the advice from the Welsh Government to school leaders on the use of supply teachers and minimising the number of visitors to schools will have a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020. Only one in 20 supply teachers (5%) reported that the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government would not have a detrimental impact, and a quarter of supply teachers (25%) stated that they did not know.

*Management in schools within the Borough is being encouraged not to use agency workers because they have more contact with a wider range of schools.*

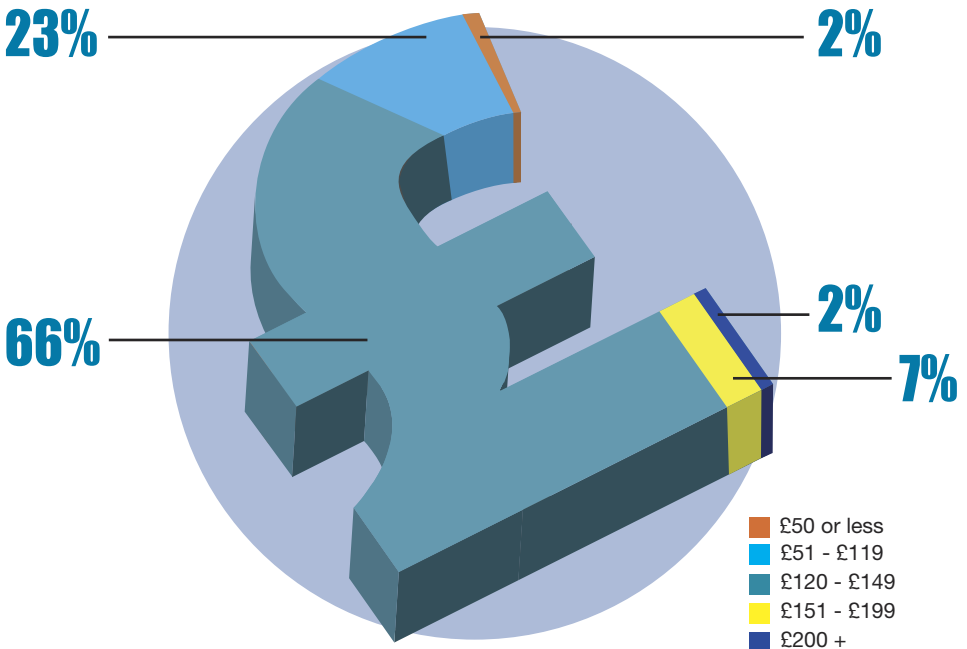
**10%** of supply teachers reported that the advice and guidance from the Welsh Government on the use of supply teachers for longer term assignments will have a positive impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020.



**37%** reported that it would have a detrimental impact or no impact at all on their ability to secure work from September 2020.

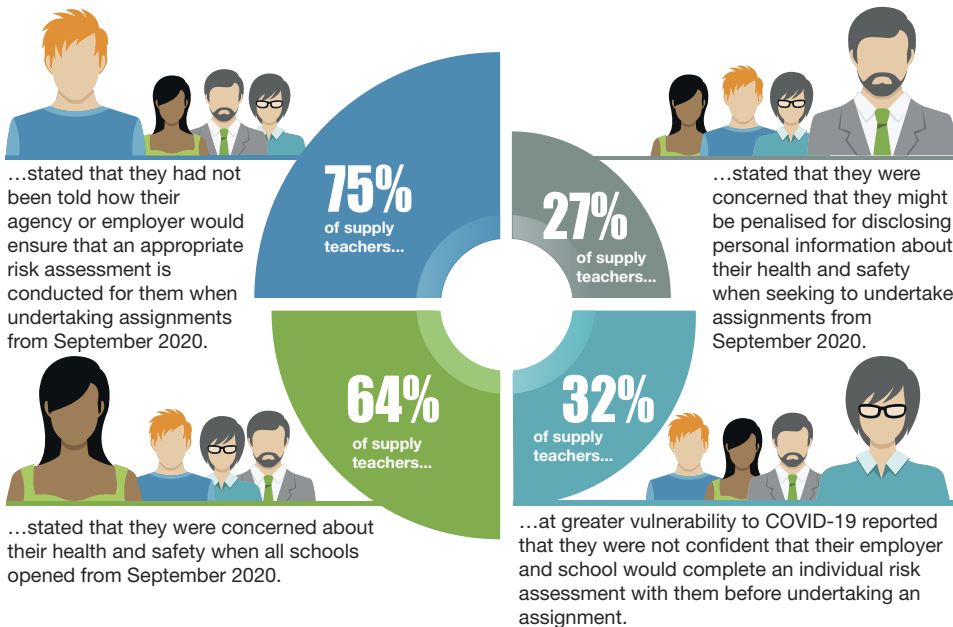
### Rates of pay for supply teachers from September 2020

Just under a quarter of supply teachers (23%) stated that they were aware of assignments being offered or paid at between £51 and £119 per day from September 2020. Two thirds (66%) reported assignments being offered or paid at between £120 and £149 per day, and just 7% reported assignments being offered or paid at between £151 and £199 a day. Only 2% said that they were aware of assignments being offered or paid at over £200 per day. Two per cent said they were aware of assignments being offered or paid at less than £50 per day.



Over four fifths of supply teachers (82%) indicated that the rates of pay that they were aware of or being offered was the same as those they were able to earn prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas just over one in ten (11%) reported that the rates of pay being offered was less than those they were able to earn prior to the pandemic. Seven per cent said that the rates of pay being offered had increased.

## Health and safety issues for supply teachers from September 2020



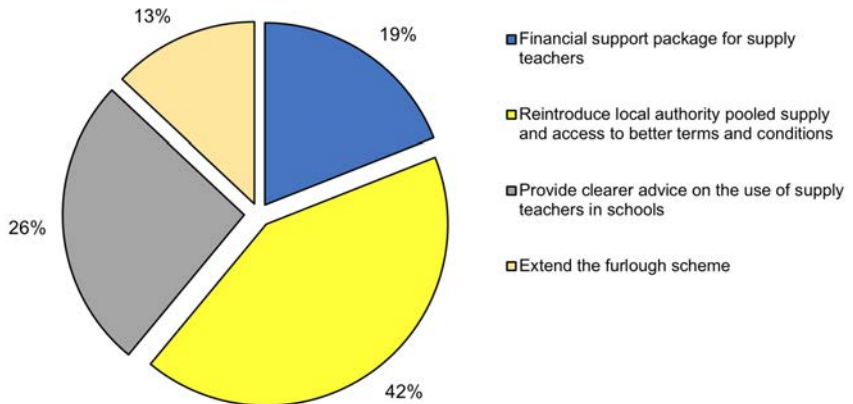
*I do not know all the procedures in my normal schools, even by checking their websites for information.*

*If I make a fuss, I'll get no work!*

**Well over two fifths of supply teachers (45%) reported that they do not feel they are being treated with respect and dignity during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

*We have been left isolated and uninformed for the most part. We do not appear to be considered as a necessary part of the teaching workforce and more or less have been left high and dry...The overall experience has been a very disheartening one.*

### **Ways in which the Welsh Government can best support supply teachers from September 2020**



# CONCLUSION

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Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of supply teachers and the crucial role they have played, the 2020 supply teacher survey reveals that the experiences of supply teachers during the pandemic, whether working through a local authority, directly for a school and/or through a supply agency, have been mixed.

Some supply teachers have reported that they have not been furloughed by their agency/agencies, whereas others saw their agencies taking proactive steps to ensure hard-working and dedicated supply teachers were able to access some level of financial income when schools were partially closed from March 2020.

Supply teachers working through a local authority or directly for a school appear to have fared particularly badly in Wales, with a significant number reporting that their employment assignments had been terminated with little or no notice. Despite Welsh Government advice and guidance to the contrary, very few were reinstated or paid accordingly, a situation that appears to have been compounded for those undertaking ad hoc or daily supply assignments.

The lack of financial support available to supply teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the failure of the Welsh Government to act has resulted in a situation where a number of supply teachers have been forced to secure work outside of teaching, often at rates of pay that are not commensurate with the level of income derived from teaching.

This has exposed the disparity between the pay of supply teachers and others, as well as placing supply teachers in a precarious financial situation where they have had to make tough decisions about their expenditure, or rely on the increased use of credit or the generosity of family and friends to make ends meet. Some supply teachers have been forced to claim Universal Credit and there are those who have had to rely on food banks.

In addition, there are concerns that these disparities in treatment are impacting disproportionately on women, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and disabled teachers, who are more likely to be employed on precarious supply teaching contracts. There is a pressing need for the Welsh Government to address the failures of the market in teacher supply, which is having profoundly adverse equalities impacts.

Furthermore, the opening of schools from September 2020 has alleviated the stress and anxiety supply teachers have about the lack of work, particularly given the detrimental impact that advice and guidance from the Welsh

Government has had on the use of supply teachers from the autumn term.

Even when work is available, supply teachers have significant concerns over their health and safety, as agencies and the schools are not providing the key information on risk assessments to enable supply teachers to feel confident when undertaking an assignment.

In this context, the results from the 2020 survey indicate that there is a pressing need for action on the part of the Welsh Government to address the concerns of hard-working and dedicated supply teachers, who make an important and significant contribution to the public education system, and ensure that they are afforded some level of financial support going forwards, such as additional job protection funding.



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