



Supply Teachers

Annual survey of experiences

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INTRODUCTION

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.

The NASUWT's annual survey of supply teachers in Scotland aims to examine the changing experiences of supply teachers, including issues and trends.

The 2020/21 survey was undertaken January and February.

This report provides the main findings from the 2020/21 survey of supply teachers and highlights the experiences of supply teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE SURVEY

Nature of work

Supply teachers were asked about the ability to secure work teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and the first lockdown in 2020. Just over two fifths (43%) reported that they were unable to secure work teaching during the pandemic and the first lockdown in 2020.

When supply teachers were asked if they were eligible for the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) Supply Teachers Job Retention Scheme due to the loss of work associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, over two fifths of supply teachers (42%) stated that they were eligible compared to just under three fifths (58%) who stated that they were not eligible. Of those who were eligible, 3% reported that they had yet to receive payment.

In regards to the ability to secure work teaching during the second lockdown from January 2021, two-thirds of supply teachers (66%) reported that they had been unable to secure work during the second lockdown from January.

Access to work

Of those supply teachers who reported that they were able to secure work from January 2021, nine out of ten supply teachers (90%) said that they had secured work through one local authority, 1% stated that they were working for two local authorities, and just under one in ten (9%) reported working for more than five local authorities.

Availability of work

Supply teachers were asked where they were able to obtain work during the lockdown imposed from January 2021 in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Just under half of supply teachers (49%) who responded to the survey stated that their supply work was the continuation of long-term supply. Sixteen per cent stated that they were issued with a new long-term supply contract. Just over a fifth of supply teachers (21%) reported that their work was the continuation of an existing short-term supply contract, whereas 14% reported securing a new short-term supply contract.

Of those supply teachers on a long-term assignment, in excess of two fifths (42%) reported working from home, 17% reported working onsite from an educational establishment, and well over half (52%) reported a mixture of the above.

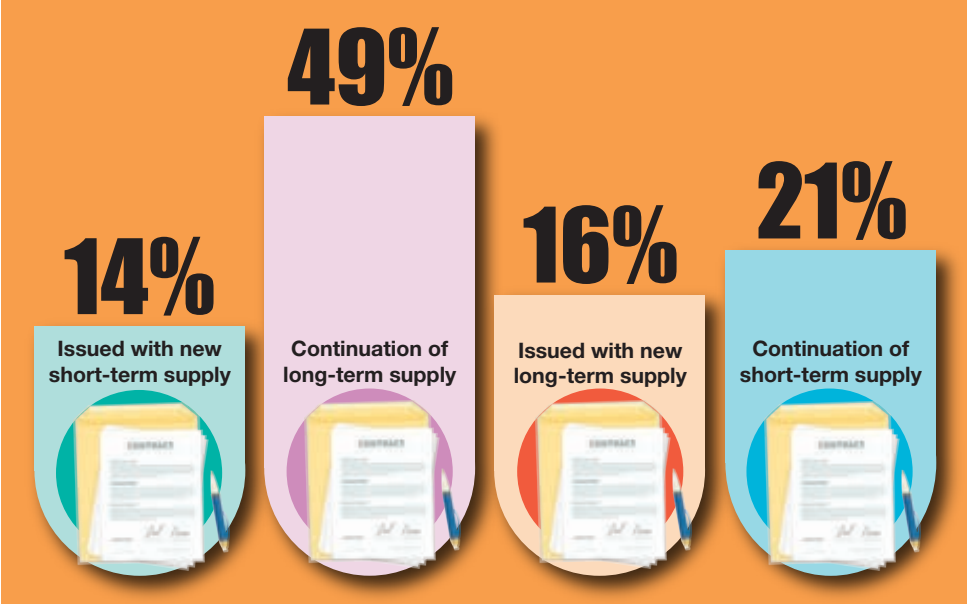
In respect of those supply teachers undertaking short-term supply, 17% reported working from home, well over half (56%) reported working onsite from an educational establishment, and just under two fifths (39%) reported a mixture of the above.

Short-term general supply work, which I had verbally agreed with the school, is no longer required. This is putting me under financial strain as a result.

My booking with the school was live and till July. After they announced the lockdown, the school said I was not needed. Overnight, I was left without a job.

When supply teachers were asked about existing assignments following the announcement of the lockdown from January 2021, well over a third of supply teachers (36%) stated that the assignment/s had been withdrawn, 14% stated that the hours had been reduced, well over two fifths (45%) stated that the terms of the assignment had been altered/amended (i.e. the place or nature of the work), one in twenty supply teachers (5%) stated that they had been given notice, and 14% stated that the assignment had been unilaterally withdrawn without notice.

Availability of work during the lockdown imposed from January 2021



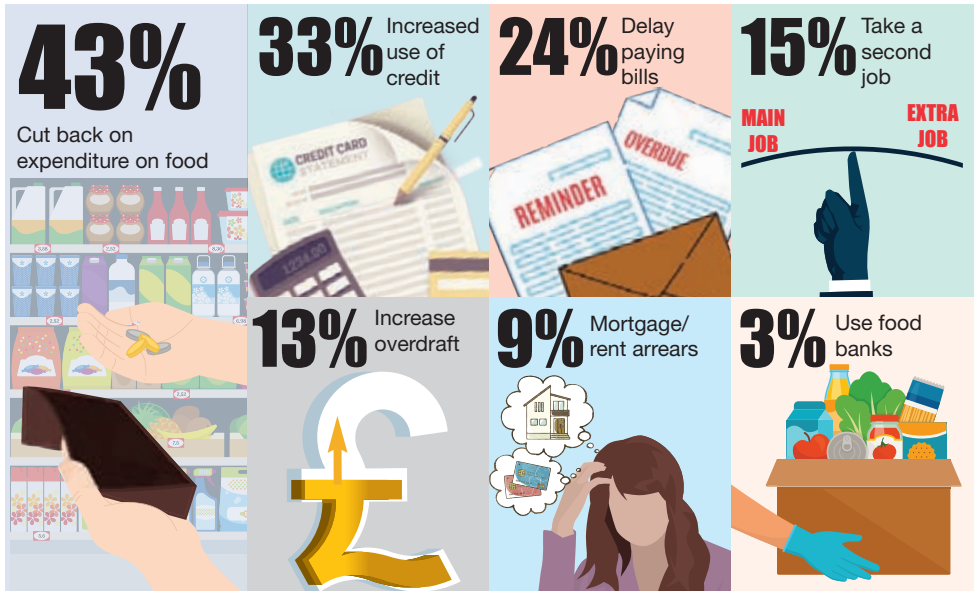
Financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown

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

Over a fifth of supply teachers (22%) reported that they had sourced work elsewhere other than teaching since the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those, just fewer than nine out of ten supply teachers (89%) 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.

Fourteen per cent of supply teachers reported that they have had to claim some form of state benefit since the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Universal Credit), and over two fifths of respondents (43%) stated that they had experienced financial hardship since the pandemic began.

Financial situation since the COVID-19 pandemic



I will likely have to leave my house as I cannot pay the rent and will not be able to afford to pay it in the future.

Securing work during the COVID-19 pandemic

For those supply teachers who reported that they had secured work, a fifth of supply teachers (20%) 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), and well over one in ten supply teachers (13%) reported that they did not know.

Just under two fifths of supply teachers (39%) think that the opportunities to undertake supply work will decrease from February 2021. Just 11% of supply teachers think that the opportunities to undertake supply work will increase, and half of respondents (50%) think that the opportunities will stay the same.



Only 9% of supply teachers think that the advice and guidance from the Scottish Government on the importance and utilisation of supply staff in maintaining educational continuity will have a positive impact on their ability to secure work. However, one in ten supply teachers (10%) think that the advice and guidance from the Scottish Government will have a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work, and well over two fifths of supply teachers (43%) reported that the advice and guidance from the Scottish Government would have no impact at all.

I think schools will economise where they can because of pressures on budgets, and supply will be one of the main areas they will avoid using if possible.

Councils are telling schools that there are no supply teachers available when that is not the case. This leads me to believe that councils are just not willing to pay for additional supply staff.

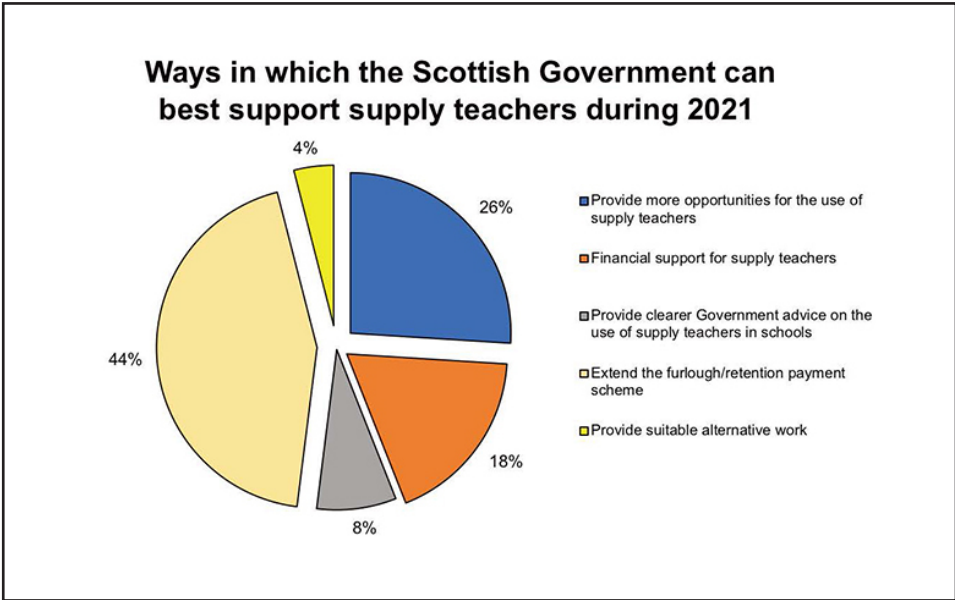
Health and safety issues for supply teachers with the reopening of schools in 2021

Almost seven out of ten supply teachers (69%) stated that they were concerned about their health and safety in respect of the reopening of schools in 2021, and almost three out of ten supply teachers (29%) stated that they were concerned that they might be penalised for disclosing personal information about their health and safety when seeking to undertake assignments with the reopening of schools in 2021.

Almost a third of supply teachers (32%) at greater vulnerability to COVID-19 reported that they were not confident that their employer would complete an individual risk assessment with them before undertaking an assignment.

Well over two fifths of supply teachers (44%) reported that they do not feel they have been treated with respect and dignity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has been emotionally draining and depressing.



CONCLUSION

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of supply teachers and the crucial role they have played, the 2020/21 supply teacher survey reveals that the experiences of supply teachers have been mixed.

The lack of financial support available to a number of supply teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic 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 as supply teachers.

Furthermore, the reopening of schools in 2021 has not alleviated the stress and anxiety some supply teachers have about the lack of work available, particularly given the detrimental impact that advice and guidance from the Scottish Government has had on the situation for supply teachers.

In addition, supply teachers have indicated significant concerns over their health and safety, as 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 2020/21 survey indicate that there is need to ensure that hard-working and dedicated supply teachers, who make an important and significant contribution to the public education system, are afforded some level of financial support going forwards.



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