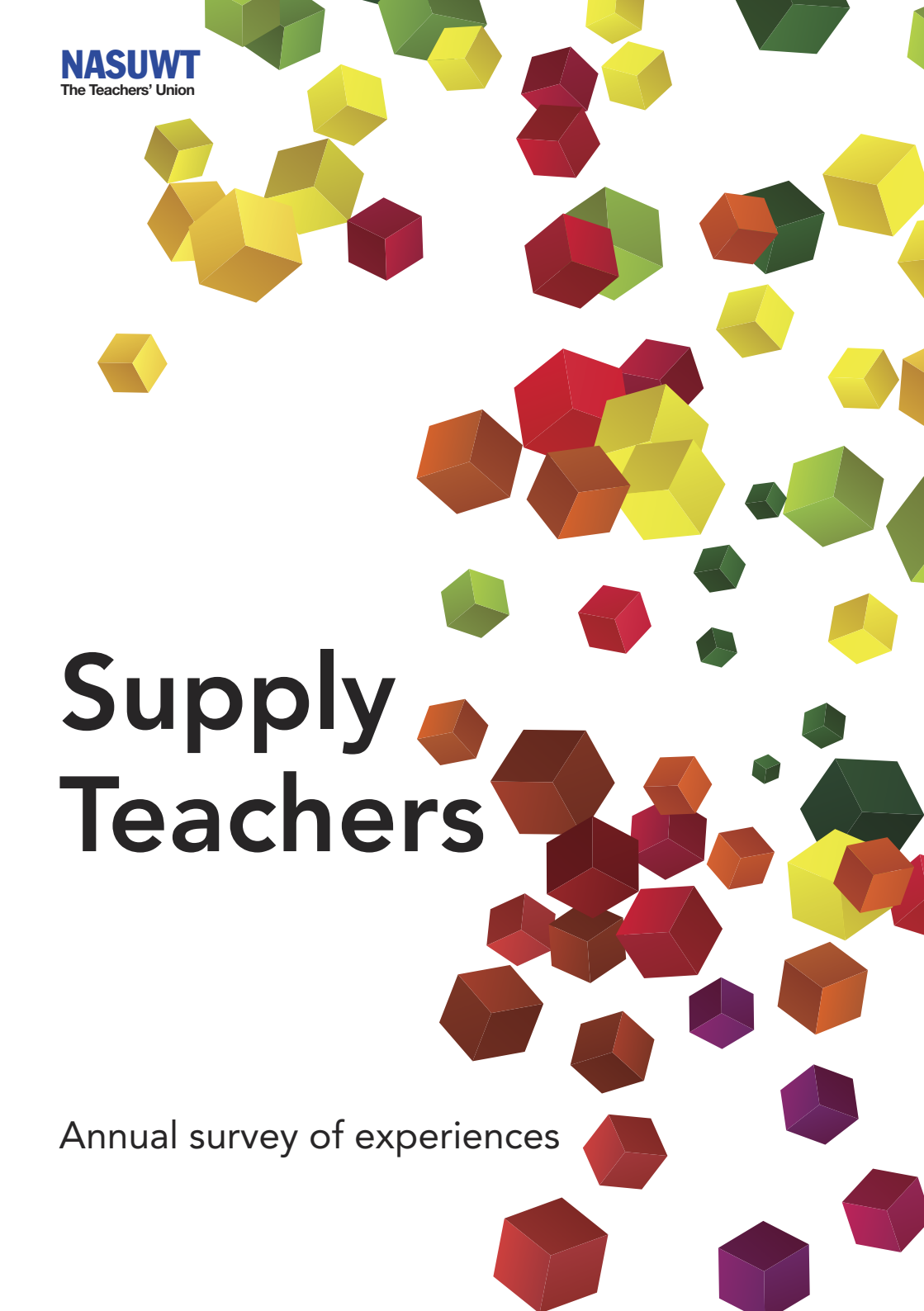


# Supply Teachers

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 England 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 794 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 the 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, well over two thirds of supply teachers (69%) said that they had secured work through a supply agency, whilst 30% reported that they had secured work directly as a supply teacher by a school, and just 3% stated that they had secured work via a local authority supply pool during the pandemic.

*Only one day's work since March and the agency refused to furlough me despite qualifying.*

For those supply teachers working through an agency during the COVID-19 pandemic, just under half of respondents (47%) stated that they were signed up to one agency to secure work, 30% reported that they were signed up to two agencies, 14% reported that they were signed up to three agencies, one in 20 (5%) reported that they had signed up to four agencies, and 4% 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.

*Only way to get work is through agencies.*

For those supply teachers working for a local authority during the COVID-19 pandemic, four fifths (80%) reported that they were working for one local authority, 3% stated that they were working for two local authorities, 2% reported working for three local authorities, and 15% reported working for five or more local authorities.

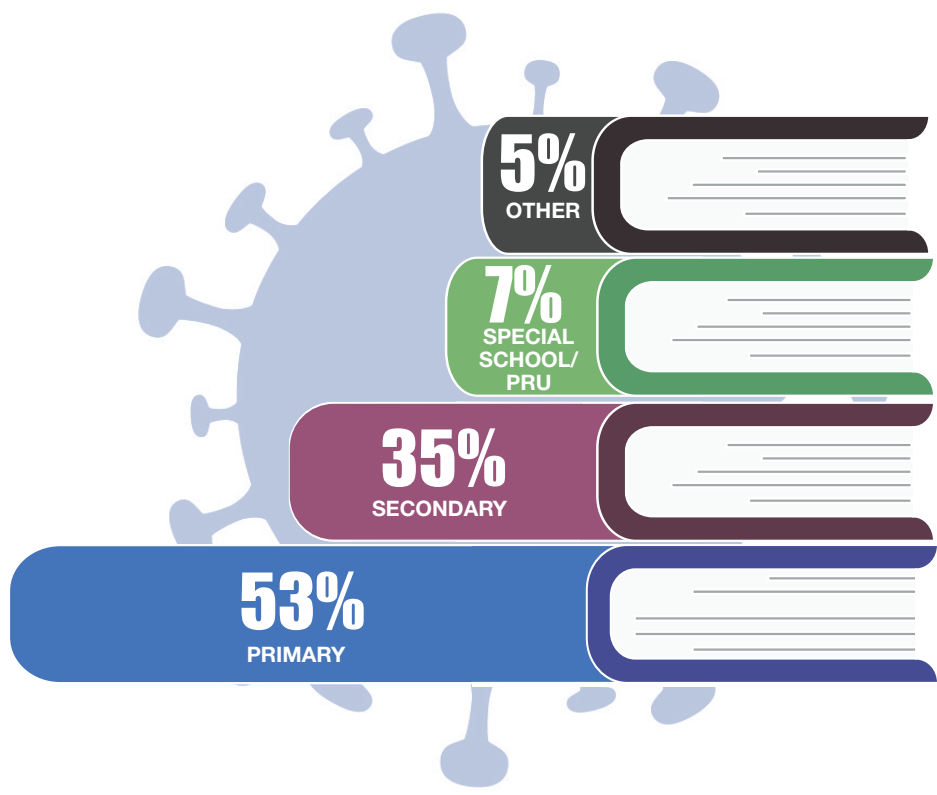
For those supply teachers working directly for a school during the COVID-19 pandemic, just over three quarters (76%) stated that they were working directly for one school, one in ten (10%) reported working directly for two schools, 1% of respondents were working directly for three or four schools respectively, and over one in ten (12%) were working directly for five or more schools.

**Availability of work**

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

Over half of supply teachers (53%) who responded to the survey stated that their supply work took place in primary schools. Just over a third (35%) 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 the subsequent lockdown**

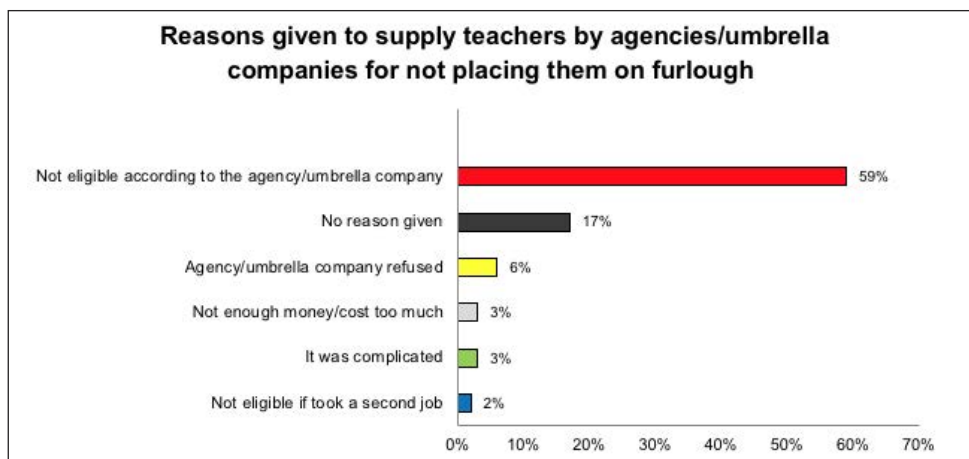


## Working for an agency and/or an umbrella company during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown

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, just under half of supply teachers (47%) reported that all of the agencies they were working for placed them on furlough. Just under a quarter of supply teachers (23%) stated that some of the agencies they were working for placed them on furlough, and 30% of supply teachers reported that the agencies they were working for did not furlough them.

**Thirty per cent of supply teachers reported that the agencies they were working for did not furlough them.**



*The company said if I took a second job, they would not be able to give me furlough. I went to work in Asda.*

*I was not eligible based on the agencies' in-house criteria, which they have refused to disclose.*

For those supply teachers placed on furlough by an umbrella company, three quarters (75%) reported that they were paid 80% of their average wage, 4% stated that they were paid at 80% of National Minimum Wage (NMW), and just 3% reported that they were paid at 100% of their average wage.

For those supply teachers placed on furlough, 71% reported that they would be paid for the August school closure period, whereas over one fifth of supply teachers (22%) stated that they would not be paid for the August school closure period, and well over one in 20 supply teachers (7%) reported that they did not know.

**Twenty-two per cent of supply teachers stated that they would not be paid for the August school closure period.**

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 3% reported that some of the agencies and/or umbrella companies had adjusted furlough payments to reflect the highest amount possible. However, just over one in ten (11%) 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 two thirds (66%) reported that they were not sure.

**Two thirds of supply teachers (66%) 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 two fifths of supply teachers (46%) reported that the school and the agency where they were working paid them according to the Cabinet Office guidance. One in ten supply teachers (10%) reported that some of the school/s and the agency/agencies where they were working paid them according to the Cabinet Office guidance. Well over one in ten supply teachers (14%) reported that all

of the schools and the agencies where they were working paid them according to the Cabinet Office guidance, and 30% of supply teachers reported that the schools and the agencies did not pay them according to the Cabinet Office guidance.

*I was on a live assignment. The school cancelled my long-term placement immediately.*

### **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, well over two thirds of supply teachers (69%) reported that they were not reinstated on their original terms and did not continue to be paid according to advice and guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). Twenty-nine per cent reported that the local authority reinstated them and paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE, and only 2% of respondents stated that all of the local authorities reinstated them and paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE.

**Sixty-nine 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 DfE.**

In regards to casual or ad hoc assignments, over three quarters of supply teachers (77%) reported that the authority or local authorities where they were working did not pay them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE (e.g. 80% of typical pay, based on a retrospective audit of the average days or hours worked). Eighteen per cent of supply teachers stated that the local authority they were working for paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE, and just one in 20 (5%) stated that all the local authorities paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE.

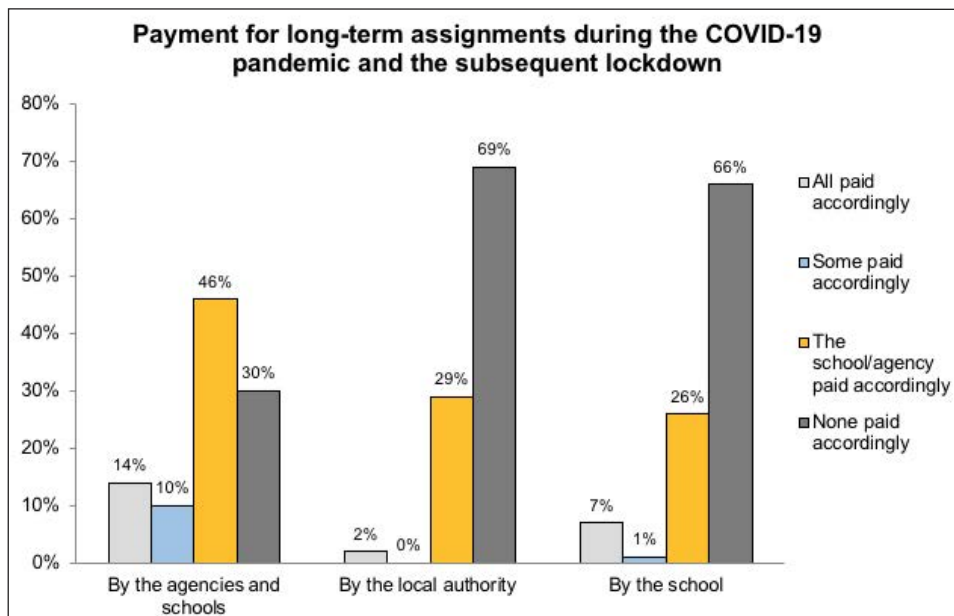


## Working directly for a school during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown

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, two thirds (66%) reported that they were not reinstated on their original terms and did not continue to be paid according to advice and guidance from the DfE. Just over a quarter (26%) stated that the school reinstated them and paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE. One per cent reported that some of the schools paid them accordingly, and 7% of respondents stated that all of the schools reinstated them and paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE.

In regards to casual or ad hoc assignments, 71% of supply teachers reported that the school/schools where they were working did not pay them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE (e.g. 80% of typical pay, based on a retrospective audit of the average days or hours worked). Fourteen per cent of supply teachers stated that the school they were working in paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE. Just under one in 20 (4%) stated that some of the schools paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE, and just over one in ten (11%) stated that all the schools where they were working paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE.



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

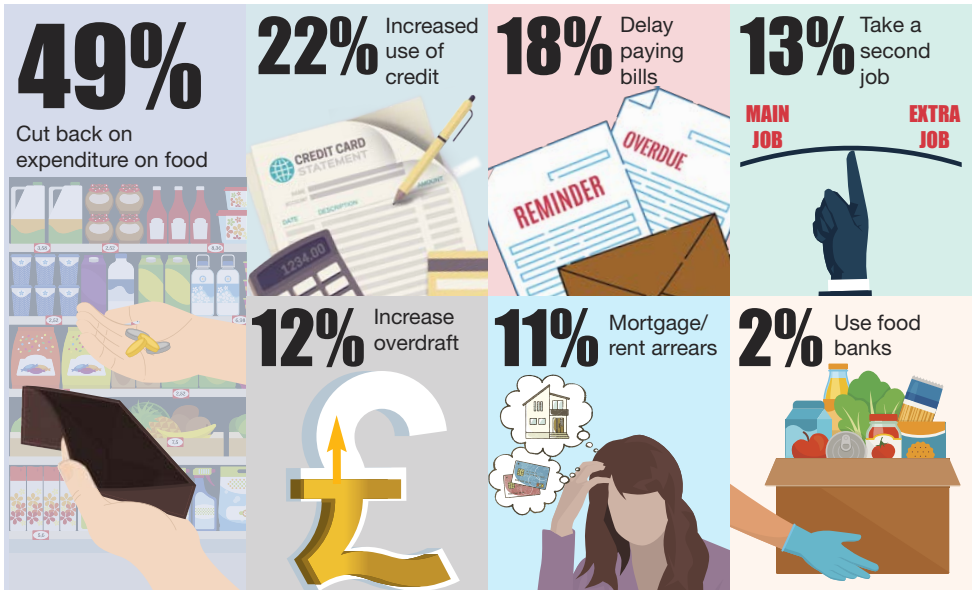
Supply teachers were asked about their financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

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 nine out of ten supply teachers (93%) 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.

Sixteen 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 just under half of respondents (49%) stated that they had experienced financial hardship since the pandemic began.

Over four fifths of supply teachers (81%) 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



*I have had to quit teaching as a full-time job and decided to take a non-teaching job working night shifts.*

## Securing work from September 2020

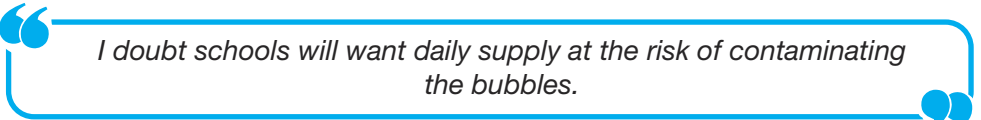
Sixty-eight per cent of supply teachers reported that they had not been offered or were unable to secure any work with the full opening of schools from September 2020.

For those supply teachers who reported that they were offered or able to secure work with the full opening of schools from September 2020, a quarter of respondents (25%) reported that this was ad hoc/daily work, 14% said that this was weekly assignments, and one in ten (10%) stated that this was monthly assignments. Just over a quarter of supply teachers (26%) reported that this was termly assignments, and almost a third (32%) stated that they were offered or able to secure work in excess of a termly assignment.

Well over two fifths of those supply teachers (44%) 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).

Well over a third of supply teachers (69%) think that the opportunities to undertake supply work will decrease from September 2020. Just 18% of supply teachers think that the opportunities to undertake supply work will increase, and 13% of respondents think that the opportunities will stay the same.

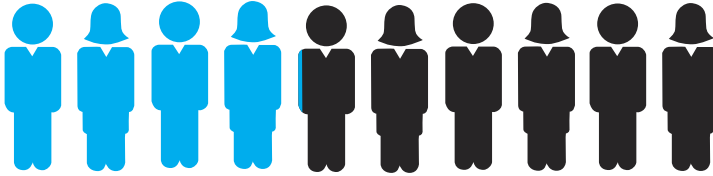
Over three fifths of supply teachers (63%) think that the need to maintain the integrity of 'bubbles' in schools will have a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020. However, just under one in ten supply teachers (9%) think that the need to maintain the integrity of 'bubbles' in schools will not have a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020, and well over a quarter of supply teachers (28%) reported that they were not sure about the impact of the need to maintain the integrity of 'bubbles' on their ability to secure work from September 2020.



*I doubt schools will want daily supply at the risk of contaminating the bubbles.*

Over two thirds of supply teachers (69%) stated that the advice from the DfE 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 7% of supply teachers reported that the advice and guidance from the DfE would not have a detrimental impact, and just under a quarter of supply teachers (24%) stated that they did not know.

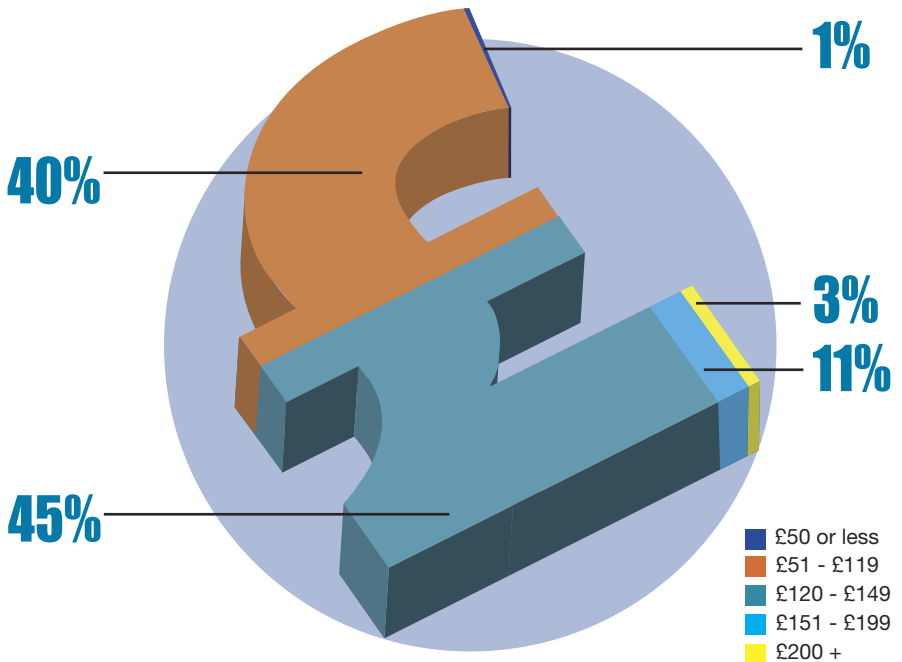
**4%** of supply teachers reported that the advice and guidance from the DfE on the use of supply teachers for longer term assignments will have a positive impact on their ability to secure work from September 2020.



**41%** of supply teachers 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

One per cent said they were aware of assignments being offered or paid at less than £50 per day. Two fifths of supply teachers (40%) stated that they were aware of assignments being offered or paid at between £51 and £119 per day from September 2020. Well over two fifths (45%) reported assignments being offered or paid at between £120 and £149 per day, and just over one in ten respondents (11%) reported assignments being offered or paid at between £151 and £199 a day. Only 3% said that they were aware of assignments being offered or paid at over £200 per day.

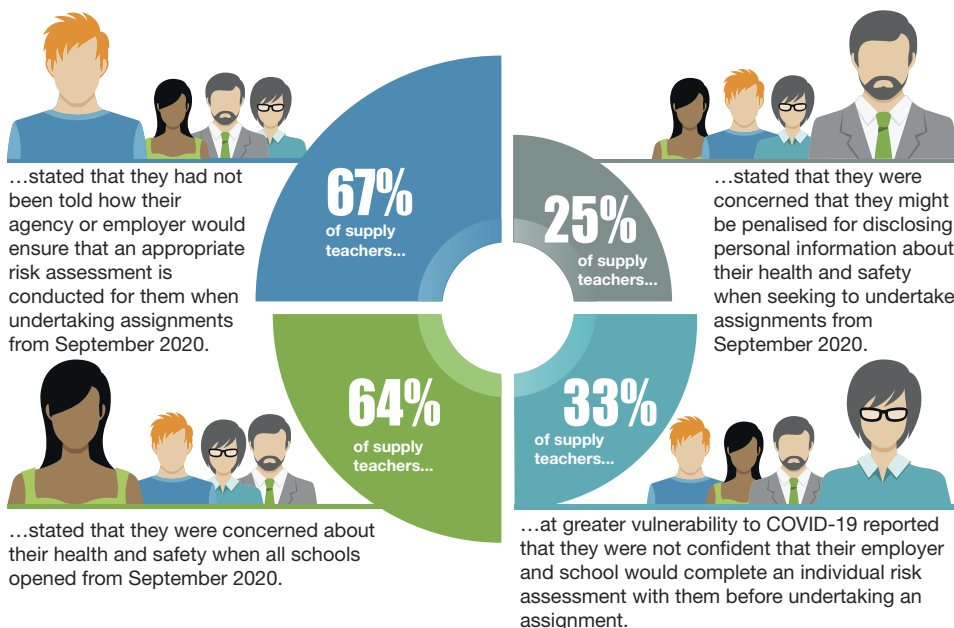


Over four fifths of supply teachers (82%) indicated that the rates of pay that they were aware of or being offered were the same as those they were able to earn prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas 15% reported that the rates of pay being offered were less than those they were able to earn prior to the pandemic. Only 3% said that the rates of pay being offered had increased.

*My rate of pay has not changed in nearly seven years.*

*The rate of pay is degrading, belittling and insulting (£80 per day for teaching). I am forced to take this pay as I am trapped in a cycle of headline pay and Universal Credit pressure to take work.*

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

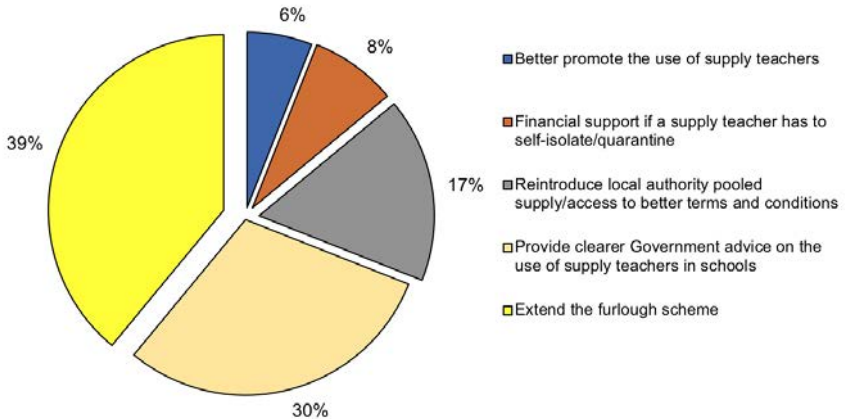


*As a supply teacher, I have not been involved with any of the consultations within a school with regards to being COVID-secure.*

**Just under half of supply teachers (48%) reported that they do not feel they are being treated with respect and dignity during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

*There seems to have been very little thought for supply teachers and limited consideration as to how they will earn a living.*

### **Ways in which the 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.

Other supply teachers working through a local authority or directly for a school had their employment assignments terminated with little or no notice. Despite 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 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 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 not alleviated the stress and anxiety that supply teachers have about the lack of work, particularly given the detrimental impact that advice and guidance from the Government has had on the use of supply teachers from the autumn term.

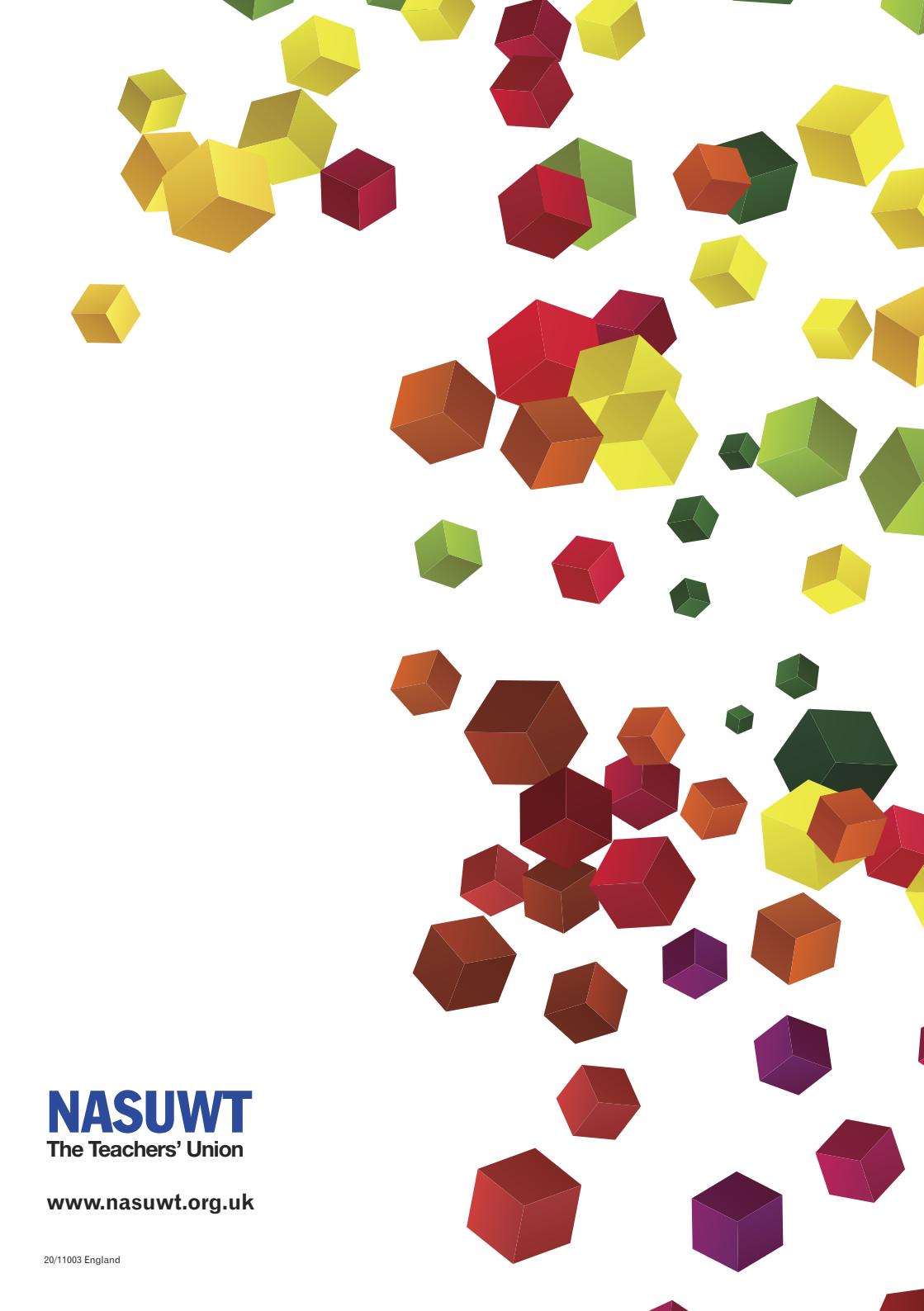
Even when work is available, supply teachers have significant concerns over their health and safety, as agencies and the schools are not providing the key information on risk assessments to enable supply teachers to feel confident when undertaking an assignment.

In this context, the results from the 2020 survey indicate that there is a pressing need for action on the part of the 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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