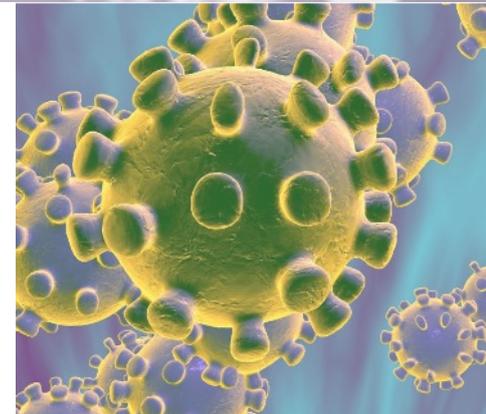




# Coronavirus is a trade union issue



The Coronavirus is having a devastating effect on our whole society. The schools are closed until further notice and tens of thousands of civil servants are at home after the civil service agreed that anybody with an underlying health condition should not be in work and should be 'social distancing'.

It is clear that the Tory government gambled with our lives. Their 'herd immunity' plan is in tatters and we are currently in lock down. They are failing to mass test or to trace contacts for people who have the virus. Daily the government is exposed for its failure to react sufficiently to the crisis.

After a decade of cuts our NHS is not prepared for this pandemic. The testing rate for NHS staff is pitiful and they don't have enough protective equipment. We have far less Intensive Care beds than Italy, which has been overwhelmed by the virus.

In many of our workplaces it has been PCS reps who have been arguing that we

should stop face to face contact, send people home, and concentrate on delivering the services that are needed, such as UC and other benefits.

After a decade of mistreatment the government has now defined PCS members as 'key workers' as our members try to pay UC to a million

people thrown out of work and to help those who are self employed or furloughed. When this is over there can be no going back.

Every day we are faced with new challenges but what is clear is that strong organisation in every

workplace is key to protecting our members in this situation, as it is in every other.

Please read on for useful guidance from the union and employment law.



[Click here for the latest PCS guidance in your group](#)



## Health and Safety Know your rights

Every day our PCS representatives, nationally and locally, are involved in discussions with our employers to protect us, whether we are at home or at work.

### If you are in work

Your employer should be practising stringent social distancing and cleaning to protect you. If you are not sure if they are complying [click here for the guidance](#).

If you think that your employer is breaching Health and Safety law you should contact your PCS Group Office. It is also worth being aware of Health and Safety legislation.

- HSE and TUC Guide a brief guide for workers [click here](#)
- Employment Rights Act 1996 Section 44 [click here](#)
- ACAS advice [click here](#)

### If you are working from home

It is important that your work area is suitable as you could be working from home for some time. This can also have an affect on your mental health.

[Click here for a useful guide](#)

**The PCS is continuing to campaign to protect and improve our rights.**

[Click here for more details](#)

[Click here for the PCS Coronavirus branch organising guide](#)

# Midlands PCS is here to support you

*By Andrew Lloyd, Midlands PCS regional secretary*

Of course my first thoughts are for every member and their families, I hope you are all well.

Writing this is almost impossible because the pace of change is as you know phenomenal.



Despite the Midlands PCS office being temporarily closed, staff have never been so busy, staff have been working 12 hour days to support members. What has been achieved by the team is remarkable, and whilst the Chancellor and the Prime Minister continue to mention how they are working with unions (who would have thought that would come from them!!), 'the devil in all these things is in the detail'.

We continue to try to respond to the situation, and in the next few days, there will be a dedicated team set up by PCS to respond. Additionally there will be a new union team set up in all regions to look at campaigns and organising opportunities.

These new teams will work with the existing town committees and also the six new campaign committees set up in the Midlands region. The PCS membership has grown since the crisis, because I believe people generally are looking toward the union for support and leadership. This new campaign team will look to continue that growth and ensure that members are safe and that working conditions and pay and pensions are delivered.

Whilst on the face of it the government are looking to protect we have to remain vigilant, just look at what has happened with Sports Direct, and Wetherspoons, whose response have been changed not by government but by union intervention.

Please feel free to contact our regional office for anything you need, and if you are interested to do more for the union to support the new teams, contact me direct on [andrewl@pcs.org.uk](mailto:andrewl@pcs.org.uk).

Look after yourself and family.

*Andrew*