

THE  
TRADE UNION  
CO-ORDINATING  
GROUP

# UNIONS IN ACTION



Solidarity at a time of crisis

Introduction	<b>3</b>
BFAWU	<b>5</b>
FBU	<b>6</b>
NAPO	<b>7</b>
NEU	<b>8</b>
NUJ	<b>9</b>
PCS	<b>10</b>
POA	<b>11</b>
RMT	<b>12</b>
UCU	<b>13</b>
URTU	<b>14</b>
Conclusion	<b>15</b>



Photo: Steve Eason

The coronavirus pandemic is a cause of concern to workers across the planet – concern for their health and that of their loved ones; for their safety at work and their mental wellbeing; for the security of their jobs and finances given the likelihood of a serious economic depression; and for their neighbours and colleagues, especially those who are most vulnerable.

After four decades of global neoliberalism we live in world marked by grotesque inequalities. Wealth is owned by a tiny ruling elite and often stashed offshore in tax havens. The economy is run in the interests of maximising profits, with working people exploited so shareholders can cream off lucrative dividends. Production of essential goods is offshored into the sweatshops of the global south, along with many of the worst impacts of climate change. Meanwhile, in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, public services have been decimated by

savage austerity cuts.

The Covid-19 crisis means a suspension of “business as usual” – to the alarm of the world’s political, financial and business elites, the power-brokers who gather in the Swiss resort of Davos each year. Their response to the crisis so far has been dictated by the interests of profit over people’s lives.

The UK government was initially basing its strategy on “herd immunity” – letting the virus rip through society unimpeded on the basis that there was an acceptable number of deaths, which in any case would be mainly impact the elderly, whose longevity was seen as a drain on the country’s finances. Large public gatherings such as horse-racing’s Cheltenham Festival and Liverpool’s Champions League football fixture were allowed to go ahead despite the likely increased burden on the NHS due to extra coronavirus cases.

There was an utterly negligent failure to ensure the protection of essential

***“After four decades of global neoliberalism we live in world marked by grotesque inequalities”***



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for those on the frontline of public services, including doctors, nurses and paramedics who put their lives on the line on our behalf. Tragically, some would pay the ultimate price and die after having contracted the virus themselves. It's not just the NHS or care sectors where this happened but also for unsung heroes – prison and probation officers, bus drivers, civil servants in tax offices, food workers, cleaners and many more who have been forced to work in unsafe conditions without proper protection. This was the fault not only of government but also of private-sector employers more concerned about protecting their profits than their workers.

Even weeks into the lockdown, the government has yet to implement the mass testing suggested by World Health Organisation guidance, while contact tracing is still not being developed at the necessary scale or pace.

But working people have not been passive in the face of these callous and uncaring conditions. The spontaneous emergence of Mutual Aid groups in communities and neighbourhoods across the country have meant that vital food and medical supplies have been taken to the vulnerable or those in self-isolation. No one should be left to starve. The idea that undocumented migrants should be denied basic food aid or any “recourse to public funds”, and be targeted for deportation in inhumane and overcrowded detention centres, has no place in any civilised society.

Unions are joining campaigners calling for “leave to remain” for the duration of the crisis to be given to people who have come from overseas to seek work or asylum.

Working people have stepped up in all manner of ways to serve the public.



**Photo: Steve Eason**

Crucially, when working people are organised collectively – into trade unions linked up into a wider a labour movement – we are able to fight for the interests of people to come before profit when it comes to the key decisions which shape our lives, which in a time of crisis might mean matters of life and death. We can fight back when employers pit worker against worker, when they unfairly attack our pay and conditions, or when our health and safety is under threat.

What follows is far from a complete account of the solidarity in action undertaken by members of the unions which make up the Trade Union Coordinating Group during this coronavirus crisis. However we hope it offers a flavour of why organising together in trade unions is so important for helping to improve our lives in the workplace and wider community.

Without food workers, the supermarket shelves would be empty and people would be left to go hungry. Over four million people work in the food and drink sector, 14% of the total UK working population. The BFAWU helped to lobby for government to include people working in the food processing sector in its list of "key workers" so they could still use public transport to get to work and continue sending their children to school – helping to avoid scarcity of essential supplies.

Some employers have acted responsibly. The union negotiated with companies, including Greggs, to retain staff on 100% pay. Warburtons and Burton's Biscuits even rewarded their workers' productivity with a cash bonus.

Sadly, this isn't always the case. Working in a largely labour-intensive industry, staff in food factories are often required to work quite closely together, making social distancing difficult. But that doesn't mean no extra thought should be given to health and safety in the workplace, even in a worldwide pandemic.

Working closely together without proper PPE is understandably a source of concern for BFAWU members. Bosses at one 2 Sisters site told their staff that social distancing was simply "not necessary" in its premises. Another company is reported to have told workers that PPE would be rationed – and only given to people on senior and managerial grades – until the union stepped in. Suppliers could agree to slow down the production lines to allow workers greater space. But this would put up costs and squeeze the profit margins of the big supermarkets,

who have pushed back against it. BFAWU are organising to ensure that health and safety concerns are recognised, and appropriate steps taken to mitigate risk.

At sites producing goods for restaurants and catering outlets, the picture was very different, as orders often dropped off altogether. Workers suddenly face being laid off. The boss of the highly profitable Wetherspoons pub chain, Tim Martin,

recorded a video message raising a glass to his workers – but telling them they wouldn't be paid for the foreseeable future and advising them to apply for jobs in Tesco! BFAWU members were amongst those who organised on social media and got the attention of MPs – causing a potential PR disaster. Thanks to the work of the union and the workers organised around the Spoonstrike campaign, Wetherspoons was forced to back down and keep staff on the payroll.

The "job retention scheme" conceded by the Tory government under pressure from

the unions and businesses meant that companies were given 80% of the staff costs of each worker

they chose to "furlough". But a number of big companies – such as McDonald's, whose business model is already accused of exploiting low-paid workers – could easily have found the resources to protect staff on full pay and have instead passed on a 20% pay cut. As a result, people are left unable to afford rent or even to feed themselves properly. The campaign is now fighting for these companies to cough up the extra 20% and put proper procedures in place to protect staff who are able to work as the lockdown relaxes.



***"Wetherspoons was forced to back down and keep staff on the payroll"***

When the Covid-19 crisis began, it was clear that firefighters, alongside other emergency services, were going to play an important role in the battle against the virus. The FBU swiftly engaged in talks with the national employers and the NFCC (the fire services chief officers' body) to discuss how firefighters could take on additional work outside their normal duties to protect the public for the duration of the health crisis, while continuing to sustain core services.

On 26 March, a tripartite agreement was reached whereby firefighters could volunteer for three new additional activities – ambulance service assistance, deliveries to vulnerable persons, and mass casualty collection.

The three parties continued to meet weekly to assess the situation, and on 16 April more areas of additional activity were added. These included the assembly of face masks for NHS staff, the collection of samples for testing from individuals, and driving non-Covid-19 patients to clinical appointments. Currently, 12 new areas of work have been negotiated.

This agreement was reached only after employers promised to provide those volunteering for the extra duties with appropriate PPE where social distancing cannot be maintained, and to generally consider the health and safety implications of any new activity. In the context of years of campaigning around

expanding the role of firefighters, alongside guarantees on suitable training and pay, a crucial aspect of this agreement is that these activities are time-limited to two months and that

“all parties recognise no fire and rescue service can or should seek to permanently embed any of the temporary changes to terms and conditions applied in accordance with this agreement”.

The FBU has wider concerns about the government's handling of the crisis. There is a sluggish approach to improving capacity for testing and, equally, to procuring PPE for

key workers. Due to the frontline work firefighters are currently undertaking and staff absences through self-isolation, the union has been calling for firefighters to be included in the higher priority group for Covid-19 testing, in line with the World Health Organisation's demands for as much testing as possible. The general

secretary wrote to ministers on 20 March calling for this, but it was not until 17 April it was confirmed that firefighters are in this group.

Alongside the national agreements, the union's local officials are working hard on the ground to oversee how changes are being implemented. The FBU is clear that, despite this being an extremely difficult time for all, there is never any excuse to take shortcuts on risk assessments, training or PPE that would endanger our members.



***“There is never any excuse to take shortcuts on risk assessments, training or PPE that would endanger our members”***

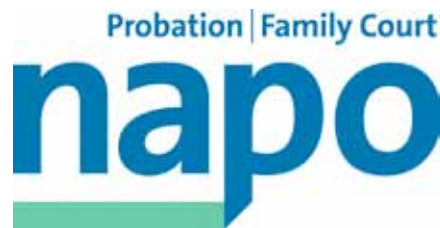
Probation, by its nature, involves direct contact with clients – not all of which can be done remotely. Members working in approved premises (APs) perform face-to-face duties such as medication delivery. The higher rate of infection of Covid-19 among the prison population – and therefore our clients – must also be taken into consideration.

At the start of this crisis, Napo won assurances from HMPPS that non-AP workplaces where social distancing cannot be achieved would not be used – and, where social distancing in a workplace relies on certain conditions (such as a maximum number of staff), these conditions will be met at all times. However, social distancing is simply not possible in APs – therefore our members need PPE. Thanks to pressure from Napo, official guidance now states that PPE must be used in all APs, including ones without residents currently displaying symptoms of the disease.

For members working in the community, they are having to doorstep riskier clients. This is proving problematic for both staff and clients, with interviews being held on the doorstep in front of neighbours, with little or no confidentiality as it simply isn't possible to park near the person's property, or they are required to attend with another agency.

Some Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) still have offices open (albeit with social distancing) because

they do not have the technology to allow home-working. A lack of work mobile phones in CRCs means staff are having to use their personal phones to maintain contact with clients.



The real challenge is how these measures can be effective should the lockdown continue in the long term, and a review of the exceptional delivery model needs to look at a longer-term plan that will

enable clients to carry out their sentence and for probation to protect the public.

The backlog in courts means there will be a huge increase in work once lockdown is over, and probation providers will need resources to tackle the significant increase in domestic violence. The early release of prisoners is a welcome move, but to date only 33 people have been released under the scheme – leaving prisons as a high-risk

environment for the virus.

General secretary Ian Lawrence said: "It is unlikely that lockdown will be lifted in the near future

***"After lockdown, probation providers will need resources to tackle the significant increase in domestic violence"***

and certainly not back to 'normality'. It is therefore vital that the Ministry of Justice builds a long-term strategy that will enable our members to do their work safely and effectively. There should also be much more action on releasing prisoners to reduce the risks in prisons.

"Now is the time to rethink our justice system and rebuild probation. Napo urges the ministry to halt its plans for new private contracts and focus on delivering an excellent service in the new world we are living in."



**N**EU members have continued to work throughout the Covid-19 crisis, as schools remain open to vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Education workers have also had to adapt teaching and learning practices for the majority of students who are at home.

In this unprecedented and rapidly moving situation, the NEU developed a strategic response based on four interrelated parts.

First, we quickly and clearly articulated the union's principled position on the safety and wellbeing of education workers, students and their families. We were also very clear on what we saw as realistic expectations of teaching and learning during this period. We popularised these positions with members and the public using a range of tactics and communication channels.

Second, we gave comprehensive and timely advice to members. This was achieved by analysing concerns raised through our AdviceLine and Regional Offices and then communicating advice on these issues through various channels (telephone conferences, social media platforms, email, website). We responded to issues thematically, rather than answering individual questions as "casework", meaning we could promote advice benefitting the broadest number of members. Analysis suggests that, by moving with speed in an integrated and prioritised way, we got in front of the curve in reassuring members on key issues and bought time to develop the next part of our response.

Third, we encouraged officers and reps to engage in negotiations around issues presented by the crisis. Branch officers have engaged with local authorities to

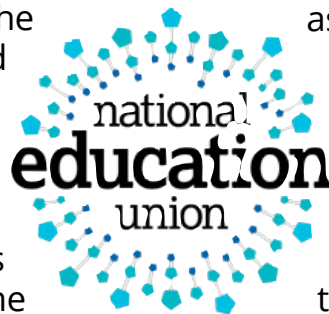
ensure the voice of education workers is heard as part of any planning. At workplace level, we have supported reps to assert the need for constant discussion with management about how schools are run and how learning takes place outside school.

As well as producing bargaining guidance, we organised a series of digital events with reps and officers. These discussions are not "top down" but allow lay activists to model best practice in discussion with their peers. Success stories are shared on a dedicated webpage. The NEU has embarked on a project to ensure every rep is spoken to individually. The purpose is to identify and promote good bargaining practices, as well as build a cadre of reps.

Fourth, we are campaigning for changes in policy. This includes the immediate issue of when and how lockdown should be lifted for schools and colleges, but also what teaching and learning should look like during any transitioned return and beyond.

To increase leverage, we have attempted to build consensus with sister unions, parent groups and opposition parties. We have produced several briefings and hosted digital conferences for MPs and councillors, launched a website for parents/carers to help them and their children in the current situation, and are seeking to widen and deepen work with parental allies around key policy demands.

This integrated approach has allowed the NEU to respond to immediate concerns, to shape and encourage workplace activity, and to campaign on wider policy issues as we move through and out of the current crisis.





Against the backdrop of a wave of disinformation, “fake news” and conspiracy theories circulating on social media regarding the spread of coronavirus, it is vital that a concerned public has access to sources of accurate and reliable information. In the current crisis, the value of journalism has been brought into sharp focus.

It is important to recognise the contribution made by reporters, photographers, videographers, press and information officers and all who help keep the public informed. It also shows just how vital is a well-resourced and supported public broadcasting service. Through the work of our members, the public has a renewed appreciation of the role of frontline workers. The union has been in liaison with the authorities to ensure that responsible journalism can continue even under the lockdown.

Yet even before the crisis hit there was a structural crisis in the local and regional press. With further pressures on print circulation and advertising revenue during the crisis, many of the leading publishers moved to implement lay-offs, reductions in pay and/or hours, and latterly to furlough workers for the duration of the crisis.

Particularly badly hit were self-employed/freelancers. Sports correspondents and photographers, for example, suddenly found all their work had dried

up. By no means well-paid, not covered by the government’s Job Retention Scheme, but sometimes with modest savings that disallowed them from claiming Universal Credit, these workers suddenly found themselves unable to pay the rent or feed their families. The union successfully helped to lobby an initially reluctant government to bring forward a package to cover the self-employed, although the compensation would only come through weeks later (in June) and some still fell through the cracks.

The NUJ has continued to make clear that longer-term support is also needed for freelancers beyond June, since most will see a longer-term impact from cancelled work and postponed events that will extend well beyond the summer. When furloughed/employed individuals start going back to work, many freelancers will still be facing significant continuing loss of income.

Looking ahead, the NUJ has developed its own “News Recovery Plan” mapping out support the industry needs to recover following the crisis, and move forwards to build a sustainable future for professional journalism at national and local level. Aid packages for media are being introduced around the world, but a piecemeal approach will only go so far – the NUJ is calling for a global recalibration of the media industry and renewed commitments to press freedom.



***“The NUJ has developed its own ‘News Recovery Plan’ mapping out support the industry needs to recover following the crisis”***

PCS members have been working tirelessly during the pandemic. Across a wide array of Departments, they've been supporting people and businesses through the unprecedented challenges of the coronavirus outbreak. From the Border Force to HMRC to Jobcentres, civil servants have been on the frontline keeping the country going.

The government has designated civil servants as key workers and PCS has made it clear that the safety and wellbeing of workers should always come first. The government's priority should be to protect workers and minimise the spread of the virus. That's why we've been working hard to ensure that as many staff can work from home as possible and, for those essential workers who have to go in, their safety mustn't be put at risk.

With the huge pressure they've been put under, there has never been a more important time for staff in the civil service and related areas to join PCS. This has been highlighted by several key victories for PCS members.

We've secured important assurances from Departments on areas such as sick pay, arrangements for special leave with pay, and social distancing measures in workplaces. We've helped protect the incomes of workers in several areas, with

many workers in the Culture and Aviation sectors receiving 100% of their pay.

We've also made some vital interventions to prevent workers from unnecessarily returning to work. Pressure from PCS put a halt to Her Majesty's Passport Office plans to bring up to 2,000 members of staff back to work for routine passport applications. Following the sad death of a member at Trinity House in Salford, who had been sent home with Covid-19 symptoms, PCS successfully pressured the Department and the Cabinet Office into closing the office immediately.

Many PCS members are being needlessly exposed to the virus because employers aren't providing PPE to frontline staff who need it. Tragically, we saw the second death of a Border Force worker at Heathrow. The safety of workers

is paramount – and pressing the government to do much more for frontline staff has and will be our number-one aim.

The British public has never relied on the civil service more than right now – and equally those workers in the civil service have never needed a union more. The coronavirus crisis has highlighted just how important the role workers across the country are playing and also just how vital trade unions are in standing up for workers too.



***“Pressure from PCS put a halt to Her Majesty’s Passport Office plans to bring up to 2,000 members of staff back to work for routine passport applications”***

The Covid-19 pandemic has proved beyond doubt that POA members are crucial keyworkers. They are fearless on the front line, keeping those in our care safe and keeping the Prison Service running – which keeps the public safe.

Social distancing is extremely difficult, particularly in old Victorian prisons where the landings are narrow. The communication between prison staff and prisoners in our care is vital if we are to avoid disorder. Sadly, colleagues have died from this cruel virus – and indeed several prisoners have as well. With in excess of 80,000 prisoners in our already over-crowded and underfunded prisons, it was always going to be challenging.

POA members have risen to that challenge, as have the prisoners. Relationships between officers and prisoners have improved greatly at this time because many inmates understand that the regime restrictions brought in were necessary – not only to keep our NHS from being overwhelmed but, in a closed environment such as a prison, to preserve life and prevent illness from this invisible virus that knows no boundaries.

The union is immensely proud of its members delivering a key service, when sometimes they feel as if they are the “forgotten service” – a Prison Service that gets too little recognition for the work that POA members do. It is taken for granted that they work in an extremely

dangerous environment in normal times, but in these unprecedented times it is unimaginably difficult and stressful.

It will be even more stressful when a recovery and exit strategy is looked at and tested over the coming weeks and months. The POA will be at the heart of those negotiations and discussions. The health and safety of our members will be paramount, as will be the safety of those in our care. That is why we will be insisting on a collaborative approach with employers and government, but at the same time the POA will be insisting on the following key issues.

Maintaining PPE for all workers is essential, as is ongoing testing for POA members and their families, with contact tracing implemented quickly. In order to free up vital space in our jails, there must be a meaningful “executive release” of prisoners who are nearing the end of their sentence. Despite the announcement in early April that up to 4,000 prisoners would be released early under

temporary licence, the Secretary of State admitted more than three weeks later that only 33 had been released.

“The value of trade unions in all our services must be recognised and accepted,” general secretary Steve Gillan explains. “Unions are part of the solution and never have been the problem. The trade union movement has a key part to play and the POA will play a leading role on the road to recovery.”



***“To free up vital space in our jails, there must be a meaningful ‘executive release’ of prisoners who are nearing the end of their sentence”***

The RMT warned that there was no chance of agreement to government plans to increase transport services, as their survey (15-17 April) of 10,000 transport workers revealed widespread failings to protect key transport workers and passengers from Covid-19.

One worker observed: "If we're key, then we're vital to the nation. We need to be tested to enable us to operate transport services for the country."

- The survey found that:
- 4 in 10 transport workers think their employer has put profit or business priorities before safety during the coronavirus crisis
  - 1 in 3 think their employers' actions to protect them from coronavirus have been poor or terrible
  - 1 in 3 have not been issued with any PPE
  - 4 in 10 have no access to washing facilities and a quarter have not been issued with hand sanitisers
  - 92% of transport workers say they need to be tested for Covid-19 to protect themselves and passengers, but no such testing has taken place
  - Only 1 in 3 transport workers report that their employer has paused non-essential or routine work tasks

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said: "We are being told by a range of rail companies that ministers definitely want to be ready to increase rail services

at some point in May. Yet our survey of 10,000 transport workers has shown there are widespread failures to provide even the most basic protections for our members.

"If these are not addressed then a ramping up of transport services will also ramp up the risk to workers and passengers. Transport workers are key workers in keeping essential workers and goods moving - and that means they will be key in deciding when it's safe to increase transport services."

The RMT has advised members against cooperating with any unsafe easing of lockdown measures in the future. The union also called for new powers and legal rights for workplace safety representatives, to include the establishment of roving trade union health and safety reps.

Mick Cash continued: "In recent days, there has been a disturbing stream of Tory backbenchers and grandees talking up an easing of lockdown measures. To be clear, we will advise our members in the transport sector against cooperating with any unsafe easing of lockdown measures.

"All the evidence shows that workplaces with trade union safety reps are also safer workplaces - and that means such reps must be recognised as central to the fight against coronavirus."



***"Our survey of 10,000 transport workers has shown there are widespread failures to provide even the most basic protections for our members"***



Since the start of this crisis, UCU has acted swiftly to protect members' health, safety and livelihoods. When, for example, Stanmore College in London told staff on variable hours contracts that their hours may be reduced to zero, the union demanded that staff hours and pay be maintained and that the College look into the government's furlough scheme as an alternative – as the College had indicated that they hadn't even checked whether they could access the scheme, which UCU described as callous contempt for the College's own workforce. Ultimately, Stanmore reversed its position, confirming to staff that hours would not be cut.

Many university and college lecturers have been asked to develop online teaching resources, including lecture recordings for remote access and playback by students. This raises many issues including concerns over the protection of intellectual property (IP). Members have been warned to ensure that any such recording is subject to an agreement between UCU and the institution. Where no agreement exists and the terms and conditions of lecture capture are inadequate to protect IP rights, members have been advised not to sign up to such terms and to make clear that any recordings they make can only be used with their permission and that permission is granted only for the duration of the current crisis.

The union also represents workers in prison education, who reported they were being asked by governors to cover non-educational roles such as cooking,

cleaning and delivering medicine. UCU immediately pushed back hard, with support from the POA, and secured agreements that any change of role must be voluntary and fully risk-assessed. When prisons were placed under lockdown, all face-to-face educational activities ceased, with members producing activity packs for prisoners remotely. However, some governors continued to put pressure on educators to continue attending the workplace and perform tasks such as repainting classrooms!

UCU stepped up to defend our members and put an end to this exploitation.

Moving forward, the union is now lobbying the government to underwrite the higher education sector to protect it from an expected collapse in student numbers. UCU commissioned independent research by London Economics that highlights the extent of the crisis facing higher education.

The report found the sector is expected to lose around £2.5bn in tuition fee income in the coming year, largely as a result of international students deferring or cancelling plans to study here, leading to a loss of

up to 30,000 jobs within the sector if no action is taken to mitigate the damage and protect staff. It also found that the overall cost to the UK economy could be more than £6bn. We need to build support for the vital post-16 education sector, and for urgent government intervention to underwrite lost income in HE. We are pressing hard for measures to preserve the sector so that it can make what will be a vital contribution to the social, economic and educational recovery post Covid-19.



***“Higher education is expected to lose around £2.5bn in tuition fee income in the coming year”***



Outside a Manchester hospital, there is a huge banner (above) tied to the railings. It states: "From the hospitals to supermarkets, care workers, binmen, hauliers, posties, delivery drivers, scientists, you are Manchester's heroes."

It is fantastic that NHS staff, working on the frontline of the Covid-19 pandemic, want to send a clear signal of their appreciation of other "key workers". It's true – they are all heroes. Key workers in the road transport, distribution and logistics industry have continued their vital role, including ensuring that medical supplies are delivered, businesses can continue operating and our supermarkets are fully stocked.

But many professional lorry drivers have been left feeling more like second-class citizens than key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Professional lorry drivers have been denied access to toilets at some service stations over coronavirus fears. They have also been told that they cannot use the facilities even at the distribution centres of major UK companies where they are going.

Drivers have a legal right to use toilets and washing facilities in commercial premises where they are delivering. As regular hand-washing is such an essential part in our fight to tackling Covid-19,

the Department for Transport needs to ensure professional lorry drivers have access to facilities and that the pandemic is not used as an excuse to deny access.

Our members are also suffering from the lack of suitable facilities for HGV drivers to eat and rest away from their cabs due to the imposed Covid-19 government guidelines. The government's announcement for social spaces has meant

that professional lorry drivers have to rely on takeaway services at cafes and motorway services, with nowhere to be able to sit at a table to have a meal. Just imagine not going home all week and eating all your meals in your car from a takeaway container. This is what many truck drivers are presently forced to do, for no logical reason.

After being isolated in their cabs for extended periods of time, professional lorry drivers need a cooked meal and the opportunity to eat at a table, away of their cabs. This could be done by classing roadside facilities, which are able to provide a very high standard of sanitisation and adopt social distancing strategies, as "work canteens".

The lack of access to toilets, washing facilities and somewhere to sit and have a meal away from their cab cannot be allowed to continue considering the vital work that our members are carrying out on behalf of our country.



By organising and taking action collectively in our trade unions, we can help to shape the decisions that will continue to shape our lives, both in the immediate days as the lockdown is eased and in the future when we try to resume our lives after the pandemic is over.

People want to get back to work – but not before the proper conditions have been put in place so it is safe to do so. If we were to rush, for example, to reopen the schools in the absence of testing and contact tracing, this might mean children spreading the virus and going back to live with vulnerable family members – leading to a second “spike” in contagion and an increase in fatalities.

It is vital to have PPE in place for all workers who are required to interface directly with the public or work in conditions where social distancing is difficult to implement. Businesses are losing money, but this can be no excuse to put workers in harm’s way. As we leave lockdown, unions will fight to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to mitigate the risks.

The financial impact of the crisis on the incomes and finances of millions of working people will be felt long after we return to work. The effect of factors such as reductions in pay or hours, the loss of self-employed or freelance income, rent/mortgage arrears, the cost of utility bills and increasing prices, and more, will all contribute to ongoing financial insecurity, perhaps with threats of eviction and homelessness. Solidarity action will be needed more than ever.

We mustn’t let bosses pit worker against worker by scapegoating migrants – or



**Photo: Michael Swan**

along racial or any other prejudiced lines.

Above all, there can be no returning to “business as usual” if that means going back to the austerity years in which workers paid the price for bailing out the bankers and

## ***“There can be no returning to ‘business as usual’ after the Covid-19 crisis”***

big business, or paid no heed to the serious threat to the planet posed by climate change.

We need a far greater democratic say in how our economy and society are structured.

The government compensation package was welcome insofar as it helped to protect the incomes and jobs of payrolled staff, but it represents a huge corporate subsidy to businesses, including multinational corporations that still expect to pay out dividends to shareholders. That’s without taking into account all other forms of financial assistance that corporations are enjoying from the taxpayer – including substantial tax reliefs on local business rates, depriving local authorities of much needed revenue. Given the extensive nature of this support, shouldn’t the public take a share in the ownership of these companies in return?



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