



The union has produced some new information, briefings, and advice/guidance for members available on the national UCU website: www.ucu.org.uk/coronavirus

Including: Critical Worker Status; Updated Covid-19 advice; Long Covid; Working from Home.

We also have a podcast on some of this new advice which you can listen to on your smartphone (search UCU Northern Region in any podcast app) or listen direct from the web at: www.anchor.fm/ucu-northern-region

East Durham College slammed for forcing staff on-site to teach remotely

[Full story:](#)

www.ucu.org.uk/article/11229

The Union has dedicated web pages on [Covid-19](#)

www.ucu.org.uk/covid19

If you know someone who wants to [join UCU:](#)

www.join.ucu.org.uk

Working at home: *guidelines for members*
Please check out the UCU guidance by clicking [here](#)

From Health & Safety Executive website: www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/vdubreaks.htm

- *breaks or changes of activity should be included in working time:*
- *short, frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional, longer breaks: e.g., a 5-10 minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/or keyboard work is likely to be better than a 15 minute break every 2 hours;*
- *if possible, breaks should be taken away from the screen;*

Critical Worker Status

Am I a critical worker?

The government definition:
Parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and EU transition response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the following sections. Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required.

It includes those who work in Education and childcare, including:

- *support and teaching staff;*
- *specialist education professionals who must remain active during the coronavirus (COVID-19) response to deliver this approach;*

But the government emphasises:

“parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can”

UCU Advice

Being a critical worker therefore means only that you should be able to access a school place for your children. It does **NOT** mean that you have to send your children to school.

**Query about critical worker status?
Check with your local UCU Rep**

Furlough FAQs

Can I be furloughed so I can help with home-schooling/childcare?

Yes. You should ask your employer about the possibility. Check with your UCU Branch Reps to see if there is an agreement/arrangement for this. However, you should note that there is no automatic right to be furloughed.

What about Flexible Furlough?

This is where you continue with some of your work, but combine it with paid time off for childcare/home schooling responsibilities. UCU advice is that you should seek to do this where possible, so that you continue to carry out some work tasks for your College/University. It might also be that you can reach agreement on working flexibly on a temporary basis, perhaps through special leave on full pay, rather than being furloughed.

Is there anything that I should say when applying or agreeing to be furloughed?

All applications/requests for furlough should explicitly state that the request is due solely to your increased need for childcare/home-schooling responsibilities - as a result of school closures announced by the Prime Minister at the start of January 2021. Make clear that the period of furlough will be for the duration of school closure only.

Is there another way to get help from my employer with childcare/home-schooling?

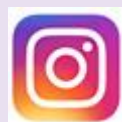
Yes. You should ask about paid time off from your work, perhaps through the Special Leave policy, or similar. Speak to your UCU Rep for assistance.

Where can I get more information?

- Your Union Branch
- Gov.UK
- UCU.ORG.UK
- Listen to our latest podcast:
[Search "UCU Northern Region" in any podcast app and play the latest episode](#)

You can find the Regional Office of UCU via the following:

ucunorthern.org.uk



Please check and update your personal information at

<https://my.ucu.org.uk/>