

Supply Teachers

Annual survey of experiences





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INTRODUCTION

Supply teachers are integral to the education system, a fact that has been brought into sharp focus throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 throughout the ongoing 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 2021 survey was undertaken between August and September.

A total of 558 supply teachers responded to the survey.

This Report provides the main findings from the 2021 survey of supply teachers and highlights the experiences of supply teachers during the academic year 2020/21.

THE SURVEY

Nature of work

Supply teachers were asked about their ability to secure work teaching during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January 2021. Just under three fifths (58%) reported that they had problems securing work. Of those, a fifth (20%) stated that they had significant problems securing work, and over one in 20 (7%) stated that they could not secure any supply work.

Some of my regular schools were apprehensive about employing people who were working in different schools.

Access to work

During the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January 2021, over a quarter of supply teachers (28%) reported that they were working for one school, over one in ten (13%) reported that they were working for two schools, and just over one in ten (11%) reported that they were working for three schools. A further one in ten (10%) reported that they were working for four schools, and over one in ten (13%) reported that they were working for five schools. A quarter of supply teachers (25%) reported that they were working for more than five schools.

Of those supply teachers who reported that they were able to secure work during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January 2021, just over three quarters of supply teachers (76%) said that they had secured work through a supply agency, whilst just over one fifth (21%) reported that they had secured work directly as a supply teacher by a school, and 3% stated that they had secured work via a local authority supply pool.

Constant decrease in the rate of pay offered and less work.

For those supply teachers working through an agency during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January 2021, just under half of respondents (48%) stated that they were signed up to one agency to secure work, over one fifth (22%) reported that they were signed up to two agencies, 14% reported that they were signed up to three agencies, and 8% reported that they had signed up to four agencies. Just over one in 20 (6%) reported

that they were signed up to five agencies and 2% of respondents reported that they were signed up to more than five agencies.

Well over one in ten supply teachers (15%) stated that this was more agencies than at the start of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown from January 2021, whereas 8% reported that this was less. Thirty per cent of respondents stated that this was the direct result of the way in which they were treated by the agency/agencies during the lockdown from January 2021.

My agency used a loophole to deny me furlough during the January lockdown and found me no work in September and October 2020, so I had four months with no income at all.

Despite it being a legal requirement since April 2020, only 19% of supply teachers who obtained work through a new supply agency reported that they had been provided with a Key Information Document (KID) detailing how they would be paid and associated deductions, as well as other key details.

Of those supply teachers who were provided with a KID, just over one fifth (21%) stated that the KID detailed whether they would be paid/employed through an umbrella company.

For those supply teachers working for an agency prior to April 2020, over a quarter (27%) reported that they had been asked to sign a contract or agreement with an umbrella company.

For those supply teachers working for a local authority during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January 2021, over two thirds (68%) reported that they were working for one local authority, just over one in ten (11%) stated that they were working for two local authorities, just under one in 20 (4%) reported working for three local authorities, and just 1% reported working for four local authorities. Sixteen per cent of supply teachers reported working for more than five local authorities.

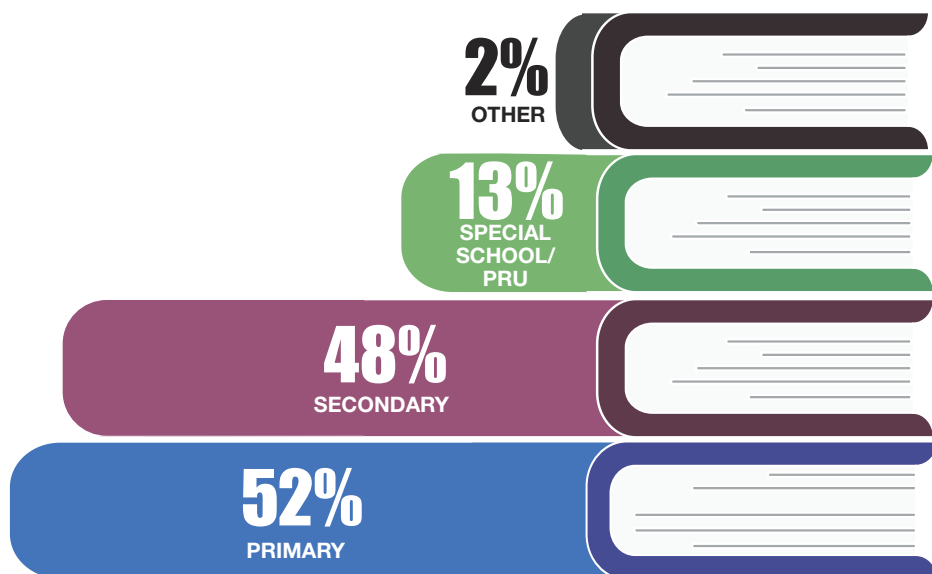
For those supply teachers working directly for a school during the COVID-19 pandemic, just over three fifths (61%) stated that they were working directly for one school, 16% reported working directly for two schools, just over one in 20 (6%) were working directly for three schools, and 3% were working directly for four schools. Well over one in ten (13%) stated that they were working directly for more than five schools.

Availability of work

Supply teachers were asked where they were able to obtain work during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January 2021.

Over half of supply teachers (52%) who responded to the survey stated that their supply work took place in primary schools. Just under half (48%) stated that their work was in secondary schools. Thirteen 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 academic year 2020/21 and the subsequent lockdown from January 2021



For those supply teachers who reported that they were able to secure work during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January 2021, over two fifths (43%) reported that the majority of their supply teaching was ad hoc/daily work, just under one fifth (19%) said that this was weekly assignments, and just under one in ten (9%) stated that this was monthly assignments. Under one fifth of supply teachers (17%) reported that the majority of their work was termly assignments, and just over one in ten (12%) stated that the majority of their teaching was on longer term assignments in excess of a term.

When supply teachers were asked how many days on average they were able to obtain work during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 lockdown from January, well over one in ten (15%) said they obtained work one day a week, over one fifth (22%) two days a week, and just over a quarter (26%) three days a week. Over one in ten (13%) of supply teachers in the survey said they were able to obtain work for four days a week and just under a quarter (24%) stated that they were able to obtain work five days a week.

Just under half of supply teachers (49%) stated that the amount of supply work had decreased during the academic year 2020/21 compared to the year prior to the pandemic, whereas 17% stated that the amount of supply work had increased. Just over a third (34%) of respondents stated that the opportunities had stayed the same.

School closures meant months with no work.

Twenty nine per cent of supply teachers stated that the need to maintain the integrity of 'bubbles' in schools had a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work, whereas over two fifths (43%) stated that this had not had an impact on their ability to secure work during the academic year 2020/21.

Well over two fifths of supply teachers (45%) stated that the advice from the Department for Education (DfE) to school leaders on the use of supply teachers and minimising the number of visitors to schools had a detrimental impact on their ability to secure work during the academic year 2020/21.

Just over one in 20 supply teachers (6%) stated that the advice from the DfE on the use of supply teachers for longer term assignments had a positive impact on their ability to secure work during the academic year 2020/21.

Just 9% of supply teachers thought that the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) would have a positive impact on their ability to secure work, and only 9% of supply teachers reported being able to secure work through the NTP during the academic year 2020/21.

This is being done on the cheap, using unqualified tutors rather than qualified teachers.

Of those who secured work through the NTP, just under two fifths of supply teachers (38%) reported receiving rates of pay which were the same as they normally received as a supply teacher, whilst just under a third (32%) reported receiving rates which were less than they normally received as a supply teacher.

A lot of work this year due to teachers isolating from being in contact with a case. However, I believe this will change for the upcoming year as close contacts do not need to isolate.

Working for an agency and/or an umbrella company during the academic year 2020/21 and the school closures from January 2021

Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working through an agency and/or umbrella company during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January 2021.

In regards to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and furlough, just under a third of supply teachers (31%) 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 well in excess of two fifths of supply teachers (46%) reported that the agencies they were working for did not furlough them.

46% of supply teachers reported that the agencies they were working for did not furlough them.

Only for the first lockdown. No furlough paid for the second lockdown from January 2021 from either agency.

For those supply teachers who were placed on furlough, just over one fifth (21%) stated that the agency/agencies and/or umbrella company/companies did not pay them according to their contract of employment (e.g. weekly or monthly).

Well over half of supply teachers (55%) believed that changes to the CJRS, which expected employers to contribute to National Insurance and pension contributions, impacted upon their ability to continue to be furloughed.

My agency told me they could not afford employer contributions.

Just over one fifth of supply teachers (21%) stated that the agencies and/or umbrella companies still refused to place them on furlough even if the relevant period for the calculation of furlough suggested there was no National Insurance or pension contribution payments required.

Just over two fifths of supply teachers (42%) stated that changes to the CJRS which prevented agencies and/or umbrella companies from backdating CJRS claims to January 2021 had a detrimental impact on their financial situation when furloughed during the subsequent lockdown from January 2021.

I missed out on several weeks' furlough payments.

My financial situation was such that we had to take two mortgage breaks and now our repayments are higher. We also had to take out a loan to get through this summer.

For those supply teachers placed on furlough by an umbrella company during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January 2021, just over three fifths (61%) reported that they were paid 80% of their average wage, whereas one in 20 (5%) stated that they were paid at just 80% of National Minimum Wage (NMW).

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 during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January 2021, just over one fifth (22%) reported that all the agencies and/or umbrella companies had adjusted their furlough payments, and 7% reported that some of the agencies and/or umbrella companies had adjusted furlough payments to reflect the highest amount possible. However, just under a quarter of supply teachers (23%) 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 just under half (48%) reported that they were not sure.

In respect of DfE guidance regarding live, long-term assignments (e.g. at least 80% of salary, capped at £2,500), over a third of supply teachers (36%) reported that the school and the agency paid them according to the DfE advice and guidance when on a live, long-term assignment that was cancelled during the academic year 2020/21 and school closures from January 2021. Thirteen

per cent of supply teachers reported that some of the schools and the agencies where they were working paid them according to the DfE guidance. Eight per cent of supply teachers reported that all of the schools and the agencies where they were working paid them according to the DfE guidance, whereas over two fifths of supply teachers (43%) reported that the schools and the agencies did not pay them according to the DfE guidance.

...had my term's work halved due to an appointed member of staff for September arriving early to take up the work I was doing. I was not paid anything during that period of time, after having been told I was working at the school until the end of the summer term.

Working for a local authority during the academic year 2020/21 and the subsequent lockdown from January 2021

Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working for a local authority during the academic year 2020/21 and the subsequent lockdown from January 2021.

Of those supply teachers working on long-term assignments that were cancelled by a local authority or local authorities due to COVID-19, three quarters (75%) 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.

One fifth of supply teachers (20%) reported that the local authority reinstated them and paid them on their original terms according to advice and guidance from the DfE, and one in 20 supply teachers (5%) reported that all the local authorities reinstated them and paid them on their original terms according to the advice and guidance from the DfE.

75% 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 that were cancelled due to COVID-19, over three quarters of supply teachers (76%) 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), and over one in ten supply teachers (13%) stated that the local authority they were working for paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE. Just under one in 20 (4%) stated that some of the local authorities paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE, and just over one in 20 (7%) of supply teachers reported that all the local authorities paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE.

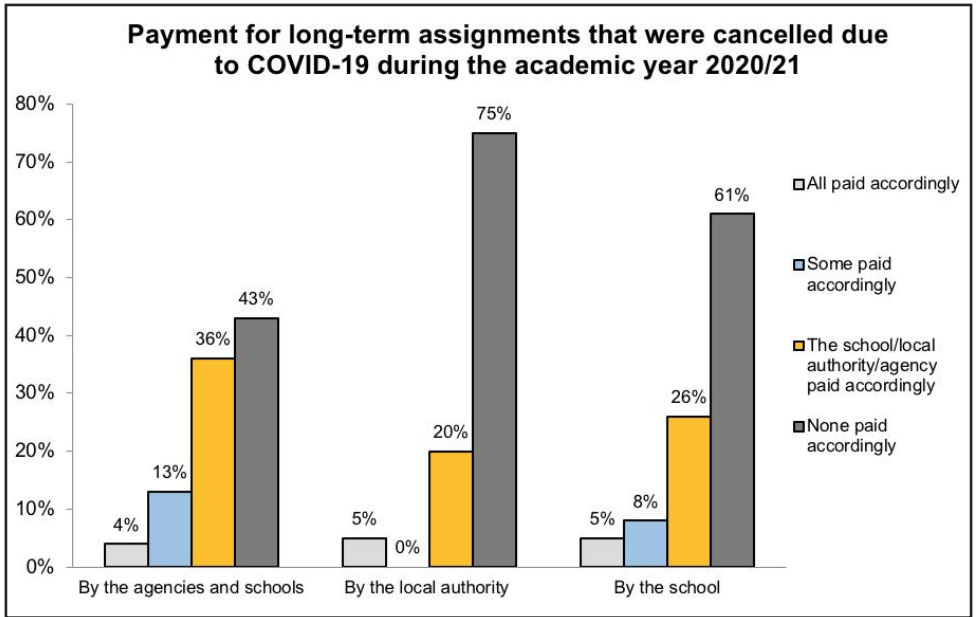
Working directly for a school during the academic year 2020/21 and the subsequent lockdown from January 2021

Supply teachers were asked about their experiences working directly for a school during the academic year 2020/21 and the subsequent lockdown from January 2021.

For those supply teachers working on long-term assignments that were cancelled by the school/schools due to COVID-19, just over three fifths (61%) 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, and just over a quarter (26%) stated that the school reinstated them and paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE. Eight per cent of respondents stated that some of the schools reinstated them and paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE, and one in 20 (5%) reported 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 that were cancelled due to COVID-19, over four fifths of supply teachers (82%) 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), and just over one in ten supply teachers (11%) stated that the school they were working in paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE. Just under one in 20 supply teachers (4%) stated that some of the schools where they were working paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE, whereas 3% reported that all of the schools paid them according to the advice and guidance from the DfE.

*I received nothing for the four afternoons they had asked me to do
...it was simply cancelled.*



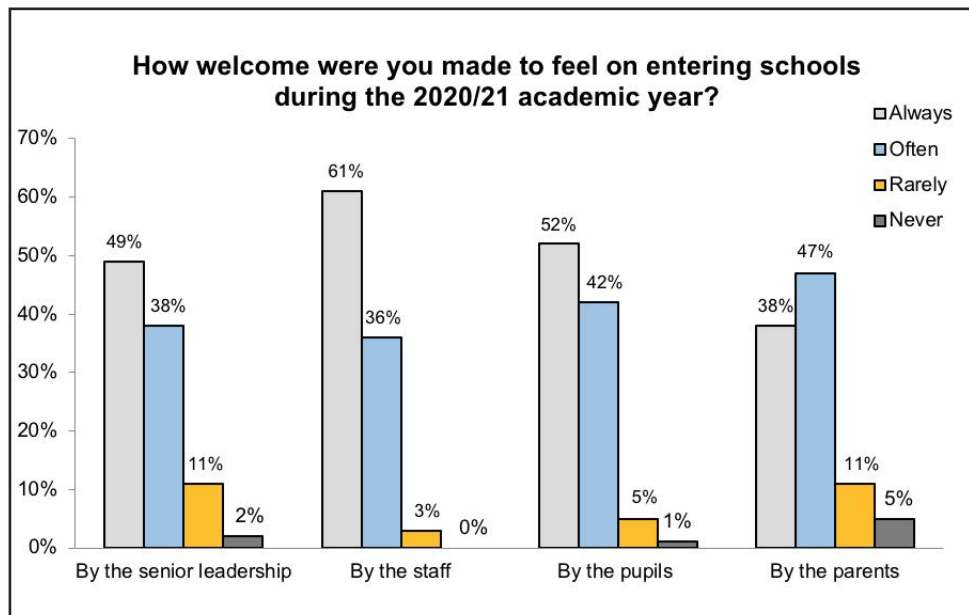
Experiences of supply teachers when undertaking work in schools during the 2020/21 academic year

Just under half of supply teachers (49%) reported that they are always made to feel welcome by the senior leadership in schools, and just under two fifths (38%) stated that they are often made to feel welcome by the senior leadership in schools. However, just over one in ten (11%) said that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the senior leadership in schools and 2% stated that they are never made to feel welcome by the senior leadership in schools.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the staff in schools, just over three fifths of supply teachers (61%) reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and just over a third (36%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by the staff in schools. However, 3% reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the staff in schools.

When asked how welcome they are made to feel by the pupils in schools, just over half of supply teachers (52%) reported that they are always made to feel welcome, and just over two fifths (42%) reported that they are often made to feel welcome by pupils in schools. However, one in 20 (5%) reported that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the pupils and 1% stated that they are never made to feel welcome by the pupils.

In respect of being made to feel welcome by the parents, just under two fifths (38%) stated that they are always made to feel welcome, and well over two fifths (47%) stated that they are made to feel welcome by the parents. However, just over one in ten (11%) stated that they are rarely made to feel welcome by the parents and one in 20 (5%) stated that they are never made to feel welcome by the parents.



Supply teachers who were able to secure work during the 2020/21 academic year were asked about the provision of key information by the agency and/or the school when undertaking an assignment.

Well in excess of three fifths of supply teachers (63%) stated that they were not given the school’s overall risk assessment by the agency, compared to 37% of supply teachers who stated that they were not given the information by the school.

Well over two fifths of supply teachers (45%) stated that they were not given the procedures and protective measures for staff to follow to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 by the agency. This compares to 17% of supply teachers who stated that they were not provided with the information by the school.

Well over two fifths of supply teachers (44%) stated that they did not have the arrangements in place for supply teachers to report safely to the workplace by

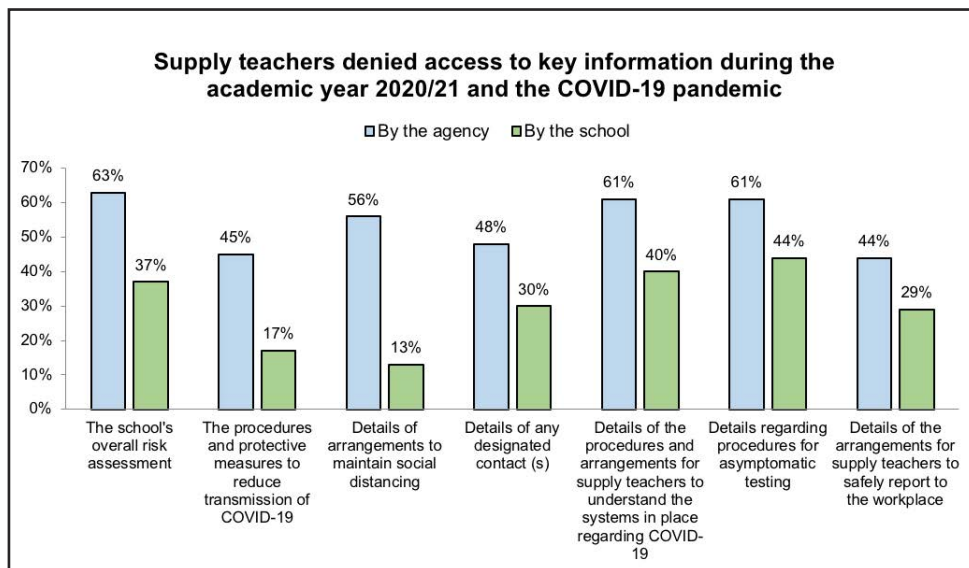
the agency, compared to 29% of supply teachers who stated that they were not provided with the information by the school.

Just over three fifths of supply teachers (61%) stated that they were not given the details of the procedures and arrangements to ensure that there was adequate time for supply teachers to be made aware of, and understand, the systems in place in respect of COVID-19 by the agency. This compares to two fifths of supply teachers (40%) who stated that they were not provided with the information by the school.

Just under half of supply teachers (48%) stated that they were not provided with the details of any designated contact(s) for any questions, problems or emergencies (COVID specific or otherwise) by the agency. This compares to 30% of supply teachers who stated that they were not provided with the information by the school.

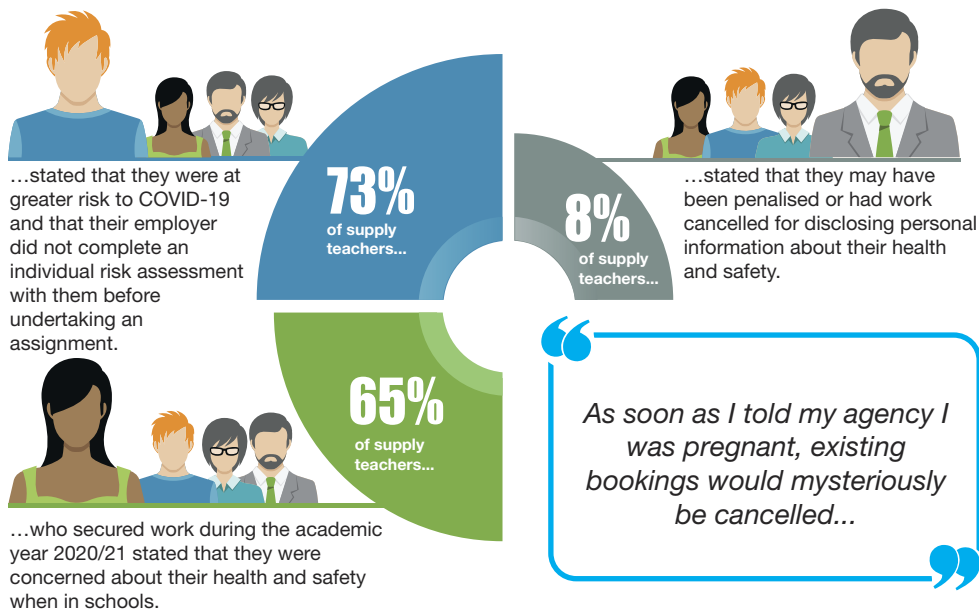
Well over half of supply teachers (56%) stated that they were not provided with the details of the arrangements to maintain social distancing of both staff and students by the agency, compared to 13% of supply teachers who stated that they were not provided with the information by the school.

Just over three fifths of supply teachers (61%) stated that the agency did not make them aware of the details of the steps and procedures in place for asymptomatic testing, including for supply teachers. This compares to well over two fifths of supply teachers (44%) who stated that they were not made aware of the details by the school.



Just under four fifths of supply teachers (78%) stated that they were not provided with the details of the contact person for obtaining the relevant NHS Test and Trace notification from the school, should they have needed to apply for the Self Isolation Support Payment, by the agency. This compares to just under two thirds of supply teachers (65%) who stated that they were not provided with the information by the school.

Health and safety issues for supply teachers during the academic year 2020/21

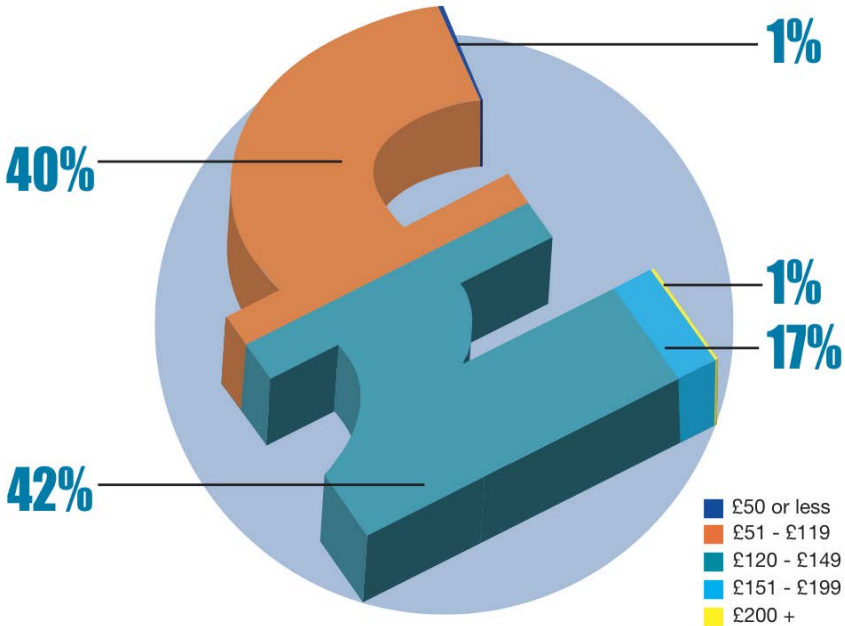


Rates of pay for supply teachers during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 pandemic

Supply teachers were asked about the rates of pay they were able to secure for assignments undertaken during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January 2021.

Two fifths of supply teachers (40%) stated that they were paid between £51 and £119 per day for assignments, just over two fifths (42%) stated that they were paid between £120 and £149 per day for assignments, and 17% stated that they were paid at between £151 and £199 a day for assignments. Only 1% said that they were paid at over £200 per day for assignments, whereas 1% said they were paid at less than £50 per day for assignments.

Rates of pay for supply teachers during the academic year 2020/21 and the COVID-19 pandemic

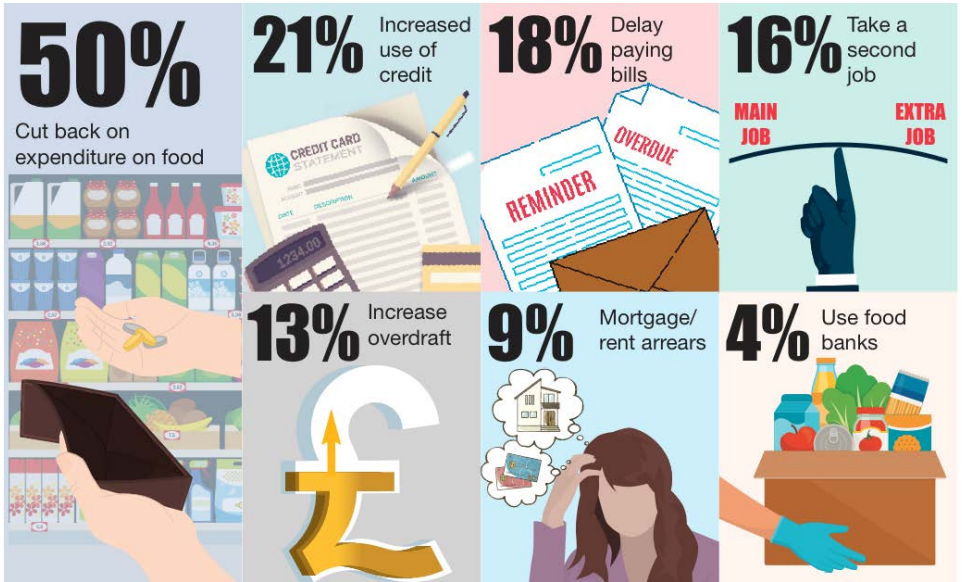


“I have 24 years’ experience as a teacher (now including four as supply), had reached UPS3 ...and in all this time I have been paid £100 a day by the agency... I asked for a pay rise at the beginning of my fourth year... I was told there could be no increase at all.”

Just over seven out of ten supply teachers (71%) indicated that the rates of pay received during the academic year 2020/21 were the same as those they were able to earn prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas almost a quarter (24%) reported that the rates of pay received were less than those they were able to earn prior to the pandemic. Just one in 20 (5%) said that the rates of pay received had increased compared to those they were able to earn prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financial situation during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January 2021

Supply teachers were asked about their financial situation during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January.



Over a quarter of supply teachers (27%) reported that they had sourced work elsewhere other than teaching during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January 2021. Of those, 88% 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 secure work teaching.

Just under one fifth of supply teachers (18%) reported having to claim some form of state benefit during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January (e.g. Universal Credit), and well over half of respondents (54%) stated that they had experienced financial hardship as a supply teacher over the same period.

I have cut back on car journeys except for work and shopping, bought clothes from charity shops, not had my hair cut.

I am lucky in that the 'credit' has been borrowing from family (who probably don't expect to be paid back).

54% stated that they had experienced financial hardship as a supply teacher.

Well over a third of supply teachers (37%) reported that they were required to self-isolate during the academic year 2020/21 and the lockdown from January 2021. Of those, a quarter (25%) reported that their employer did not make them aware of whether they were eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), and 15% of supply teachers reported that they did not know.

Well over two fifths of supply teachers (45%) who were required to self-isolate reported that they were not eligible for any financial support (e.g. Self Isolation Support Payment), and half (50%) reported that they did not know.

No help or assistance was given, no consideration was made to the fact that I was not earning money, and then when I was offered work, it was at a much lower rate than I should have been receiving.

Just over a third of supply teachers (34%) reported that they do not feel they are being treated with respect and dignity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supply teachers are largely considered irrelevant in terms of health and other issues. 'Throwaway assets' are the words that come to mind.

The lack of work, support and awareness left me feeling undervalued.

I am leaving the profession due to the insecurity of supply teaching.

Ways in which the Government could best support supply teachers during the ongoing pandemic, as well as moving forwards

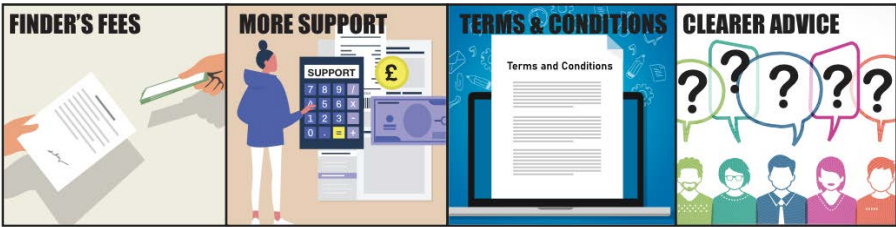


8% Respect and promote the service supply teachers provide.

24% Better rates of pay (e.g. minimum daily rate; paid to scale).

9% Ban the use of agencies and/or umbrella companies.

8% Access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS).



6% Limit or standardise agency finder's fees/commission rates.

29% Better financial support for supply teachers (e.g. sick pay for self-isolation; furlough; cancelled assignments).

12% Reintroduce local authority pooled supply and access to better terms and conditions.

4% Provide clearer advice on the use of supply teachers in schools, including in regards to health and safety.

We are not commodities, we are people who flourish if valued and respected. Too many schools seem to feel they do not have to treat supply as they would wish to be treated themselves.

The pandemic has raised my awareness of how vulnerable a career in supply teaching actually is after the disgusting treatment dished out by my agency during this period.

I am looking for different employment as I felt taken for granted and used as cheap labour.

CONCLUSION

This is the second NASUWT supply teachers' survey undertaken against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2021 Survey further highlights the importance of supply teachers and the crucial role they have played during the academic year 2020/21, particularly in helping schools and colleges manage the worst excesses of the pandemic and the lockdown from January 2021.

However, the Survey still demonstrates that the experiences of supply teachers throughout the pandemic and academic year 2020/21, whether working through a local authority, directly for a school and/or through a supply agency, have been mixed.

Changes to furlough during the academic year 2020/21 had a significant detrimental impact on the number of supply teachers who were able to access some level of financial income, particularly when schools were partially closed during the lockdown from January 2021.

Other supply teachers working through a local authority or directly for a school continued to see assignments cancelled with little or no reference to Government advice and guidance, which would have seen supply teachers paid accordingly, a situation that appears to have been compounded for those undertaking ad hoc or daily supply assignments.

For some supply teachers there is more work available, including through schemes such as the National Tutoring Programme, but for others this is not the case. Even when more work is available and schools need to draw upon the experience and expertise of supply teachers, this is not reflected in the rates of pay, which have not been uplifted to reflect issues to do with shortages of supply teachers.

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 placed 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. This has exposed the disparity between the pay of supply teachers and others.

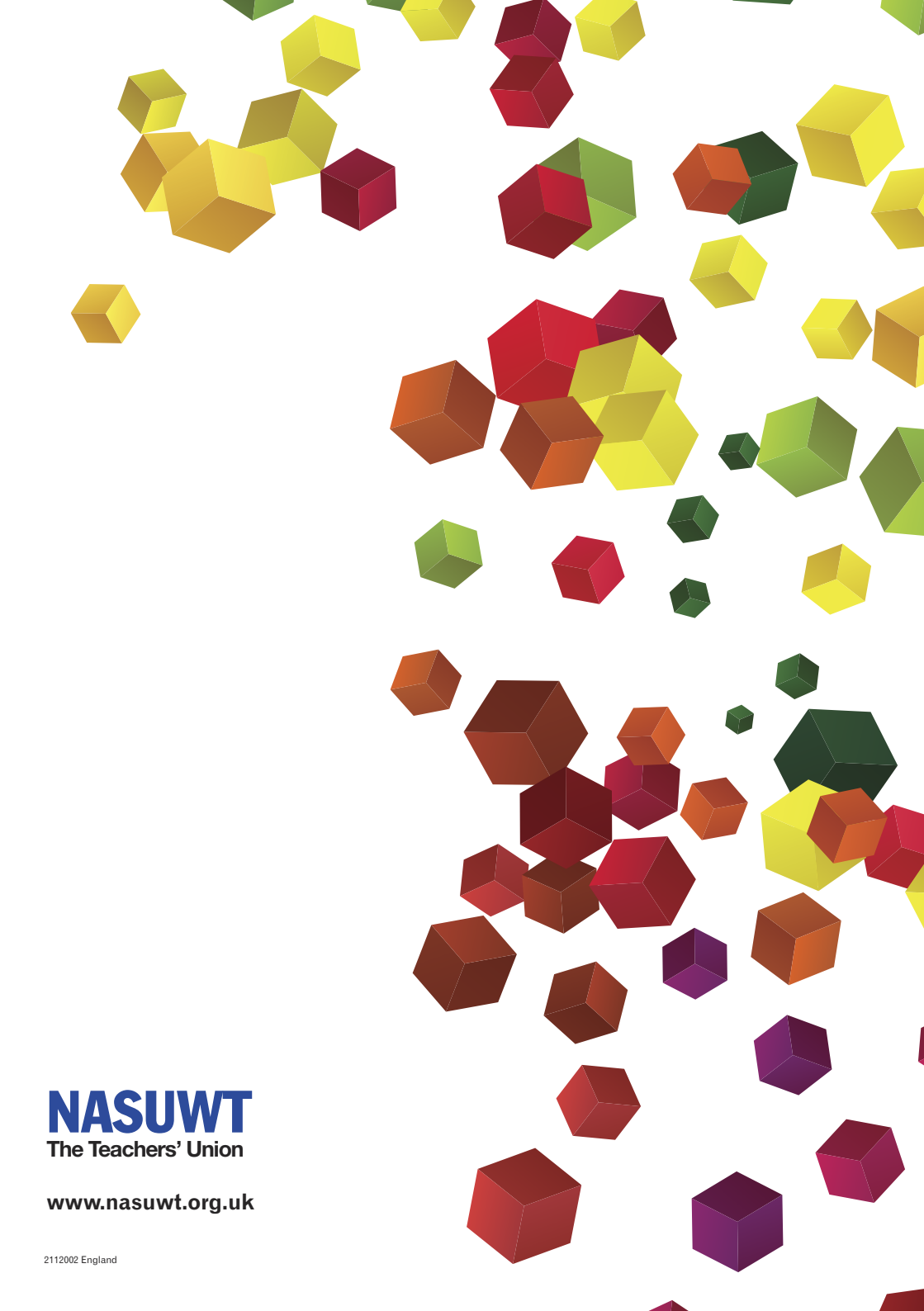
In addition, there are concerns that these disparities in treatment are impacting disproportionately on women, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and disabled teachers, who are more likely to be employed on precarious supply teaching contracts. There is a pressing need to address the failures of the market in teacher supply, which is having profoundly adverse equalities impacts.

Furthermore, the stress and anxiety felt by some supply teachers during the academic year 2020/21 has not been alleviated by the failure of many agencies, schools and local authorities to provide even the most basic health and safety information to enable hard-working and dedicated supply teachers to feel confident when undertaking an assignment.

In this context, the results from the 2021 Survey reaffirm and reinforce the 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.



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