

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

FIGHTING COVID-19

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...



DEALING WITH
NETWORK RAIL
PAGE 3



ACTION ON
OFFSHORE AND
MARITIME JOBS
PAGE 6 & 7



RAIL INDUSTRY
FORUM
PAGE 8



SAFE WORKING FOR
BUS WORKERS
PAGE 11



www.rmt.org.uk

contents

Page 3

DEALING WITH NETWORK RAIL

Page 4

MERSYRAIL AND RMT REACH AGREEMENT

Page 5

TUBE STAFF 'HEROS'

Page 6

RMT DEMANDS ACTION ON OFFSHORE JOBS

Page 7

JOINT STATEMENT BY RMT, NAUTILUS INTERNATIONAL AND THE UK CHAMBER OF SHIPPING

Page 8

RAIL INDUSTRY FORUM

Page 9

RMT DEMANDS URGENT SUPPORT FOR SSP RAIL CATERERS

Page 10

SAFE WORKING PRACTICES FOR BUS WORKERS

Page 11

RMT CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO MOBILISE TAXIS

Page 12

MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

Page 14

STAFF OUR STATIONS CAMPAIGN BOOST

Page 15

CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



STANDING TOGETHER

This is an emergency on-line edition of RMT News that we have produced to bring together the various strands of work that the union has been involved in since the Covid-19 crisis took hold.

Since this emergency broke the over-riding priority of your union has been to protect the health, safety and livelihoods of our members in every industry and sector where we organise.

This has been extremely challenging as you will be aware. Offices have had to be closed and our normal processes and procedures have had to be adapted to the critical situation we are confronted with to ensure continuity of our operations. The whole of the organisation has risen to this extraordinary challenge and I want to pay tribute to our reps, activists, officers and staff who have stepped up to the plate, rolled up their sleeves and kept the union functioning in our members' interests.

I also want to pay tribute

to you, our members. In the transport sector it is you who have kept our key workers moving so that our hospitals, fire stations, shops and other essential services can keep going. The union has secured guarantees on safety, pay, pensions and jobs for many of you but some of our members have been treated abysmally and we will continue to fight for your interests with every tool at our disposal.

RMT has prioritised getting information out to you as we have it on social media, our website and our app. Please keep tuned in to all of our platforms for important updates.

We will get through this. We have to stand together, we have to work together and we have to give each other the support and assistance we need to come through this crisis fit and strong for the future. That is exactly what we will endeavour to do.

Mick Cash

DEALING WITH NETWORK RAIL

RMT is continually negotiating safe working principles with Network Rail during the current health emergency

RMT is circulating a number of documents to members working for Network Rail following detailed negotiations at a senior level between employers and RMT representatives. All documents are complementary to each other and may be of assistance to all grades of transport workers.

They are as follows:

1. COVID-19 - SAFE WORK PRINCIPLES FOR NETWORK RAIL STAFF AND CONTRACTORS:
<https://bit.ly/3drAA9r>
2. COVID-19 - PRIORITISING WORK AND MINIMISING EXPOSURE:
<https://bit.ly/39i5PAr>
3. Guidelines for key workers - social distancing in the workplace:
<https://bit.ly/3dsN1Sh>
4. Guidelines Social Distancing whilst Working at Home:
<https://bit.ly/39k1Pj5>

These Safe Work Principles Guidelines set out NR's general position for its own staff and supply chain contractors during the period of the health emergency. Network Rail has agreed in a statement that it should not attempt to run its business as usual.

"Network Rail and its supply chain companies shall amend their workloads, practices and required staffing levels to that which are essential to provide, operate and support the railway. In doing so, they will reduce the number of staff required to operate and

maintain the railway safely and reduce the numbers of workers potentially in circulation and exposed to infection and transmission."

This should reduce the numbers of key workers required and in circulation on the railway and only essential work for the operation of the railway should be carried out. Staff that are not required for this essential work should remain at home.

The document also sets out that best practice in protecting workers by NR and their supply chain including enforcing distancing and eliminating the congregation of staff should be applied.

SECTION 10 GIVES A COMMITMENT THAT:

"Staff that are symptomatic, have underlying conditions, or have members of their household, that are considered vulnerable will be required to stay at home and will be paid their full pay. For staff working to a roster this will be their base roster or base published roster including any contractual allowance."

The Prioritising Work and Minimising Exposure document is a clarification of the commitment to only conduct essential work to provide operate and support the railway in this period.

You will see that it provides for "priority maintenance only" and will "not require staff to undertake non-essential maintenance tasks".

Track renewals are to be paused and the work bank reviewed in each Rote to determine if the work can be carried out within the social distancing guidelines; where this is the case the work will proceed.

Where work cannot be completed whilst complying with social distancing guidelines then the criticality of the work is to be reviewed and work should proceed only where it is deemed critical to maintaining a safety and operational railway.

The other documents are NR policies which they have compiled following our discussions and represent their interpretations of practices to be adopted based on the commitments given in the safe work principles and the general health guidance provided by the government.

There are two separate documents for those working at home and another for key workers required to come to the workplace.

For the key workers you will see there are some changes in work practices including home start and travel direct to worksite, use of own vehicles with company insurance covering. Mileage payments will be made for own car use in this period and the details will be covered in a separate document.

Company vehicles can be used for home to work travel and the HMRC restrictions have been lifted for the period.

These again are positive

commitments and will help to alleviate concerns about travelling in groups in vehicles and congregating of staff at booking on points and mess rooms. Local pragmatic solutions will develop to work around the problems that will arise once these principles and policies are published.

However, whatever solutions are created to deal with most issues there is no getting away from the fact that on track there will be certain tasks that will certainly compromise the two metre distancing, or the task will not be possible. Members carrying out such task will have to make the best use of PPE (gloves, masks, eyewear etc.) to minimise the risks.

While the principle do seem oriented to track work they do apply to all staff and our members in signal locations, control rooms, offices, etc. will have to be vigilant in enforcing social distancing at all times taking whatever practical measures they can.

In compiling these documents there has been genuine dialogue with NR and it has changed their stance and approach during the process which at the beginning was essentially business as usual and prompted by the Department for Transport.

There will be further developments as the emergency continues and the union will remain in constant dialogue with the company and inform members of all developments.



MERSEYRAIL AND RMT REACH AGREEMENT ON BACK-DATED PAY AWARDS FOR GUARDS

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Merseyrail and RMT have reached agreement on the release of back-dated pay awards to guards, withheld since the dispute over their roles on the city region's new trains commenced in April 2017.

The agreement was reached during talks over the weekend, brokered by Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram.

The dispute relates to the role of guards on board the new fleet of trains for the Merseyrail network, which are being purchased by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, with an overall investment of half a billion pounds. The first new train arrived in the city region for testing last month. Whilst this announcement does not bring the dispute to an end, all parties remain committed to on-going discussions to resolve the final details.

Although an agreement to end the industrial action was reached last year, Merseyrail and RMT are technically still in dispute until the final details of how the trains will be operated are agreed, including sign-off from the Office of Road and Rail regulator.

Pay award increases are

usually withheld during industrial disputes. However the three parties agreed that the back-pay, which has already been accounted for, would be released earlier than planned so as to alleviate any potential financial hardship that Guards might experience due to the Coronavirus crisis.

Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region, said that Coronavirus posed the greatest health threat in our lifetimes.

"People should focus on following the Public Health England advice on minimising the spread of COVID-19.

"For many though, there are also issues of financial security too and I don't want anybody in our region to be worried about their household income, so I am pushing the Government on matters affecting peoples' incomes, such as more support for the self-employed.

"Locally we should do all we can to support people, so I am glad that we have been able to come to an agreement that means Merseyrail guards will receive early any back pay owed to them. During these challenging times, it is important that we all pull together and do our bit. I am

happy to have helped Merseyrail and the RMT to do that here," he said.

Merseyrail Managing Director Andy Heath said that everyone should recognise the impact that the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic was having on the community.

"This includes our Guards and their families. Whilst the current dispute between Merseyrail and the RMT still needs to be resolved, we believe that taking the step of releasing these payments to Guards in their next pay packet is the right thing to do.

"In uncertain times, it's important that we all pull

together to keep the City Region's key workers moving," he said.

RMT regional organiser John Tilley said: that the union was working in strategic collaboration throughout the Rail industry during this crisis.

"RMT members are in the front line working to maintain a service across the Nation and the City-Region. It is right that we support them in their efforts.

This union welcomes this decision to release back-pay that has been withheld for so long as this will help relieve any financial concerns our members families have at this difficult time," he said. ■



RMT SECURES MASSIVE LIVING WAGE VICTORY ACROSS THE NORTH

After a long-running campaign RMT finally reached agreement with Carlisle Support Services Ltd to pay the Living Wage Foundation rate of pay of £9.30 per hour from April to all staff on the Northern Trains Revenue and Gateline contract.

The RMT victory will mean a

pay uplift to the living wage rate for 380 key rail staff across the whole of the North of England.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that after a long, hard campaign RMT has secured a living wage victory for nearly 400 contacted rail staff across

the North that will make a real difference.

"These workers are on the front line as we battle to keep essential workers moving around the system in the middle of the coronavirus crisis. It is only right that they are properly protected and rewarded.

"I want to pay tribute to our RMT regional organiser John Tilley and his team for securing this important victory at this extremely difficult time.

"As far as RMT is concerned the fight for workplace justice, safety and protection continues as usual," he said. ■



TUBE STAFF 'HEROES'

Union demands action as virus outbreak balloons in the capital compared to the rest of the country

Despite the fact that less than half of Tube services are running, carriages are still packed putting staff and passengers at risk of catching the Coronavirus.

Some London Underground trains remain crowded despite a further fall in passenger numbers and Transport for London calling for its services to only be used for 'essential journeys by vital workers in the NHS and other critical services'.

Yet passengers are still complaining about the lack of space as they travel to work, leading to them being unable

to follow government guidance to keep two metres away from others.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that more needed to be done in the current emergency situation and the union will continue to liaise closely with LU over the impact on staff.

"Tube workers should be recognised for their heroic efforts since the outbreak began but there is still enormous personal pressure on the workforce who are exposed to levels of social contact that the Government say are unacceptable for the wider

public.

"The only people using our transport services should be essential workers who have to travel and everyone else should stay away to protect themselves, the staff and the wider community.

"The government are also ignoring the fact that large numbers of LU staff are self isolating and those left on the job feel dangerously vulnerable. We would call on the government to work with the tube unions and the Mayor to protect health, safety, livelihoods and travel services for essential workers.

"RMT will continue to do everything in our power to protect our members throughout this crisis."

Around 40 Tube stations were closed for the foreseeable future in an attempt to reduce the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. There is no night Tube and bus services have also been reduced.

The Waterloo and City line is shut and TfL is gradually reducing other parts of its network including the London Overground, TfL Rail, the DLR and the tram network in south London.

RMT DEMANDS ACTION ON OFFSHORE JOBS



RMT

Fighting for Offshore Workers' Jobs & Safety

Covid-19

RMT is calling for:

- 1 Public ownership of North Sea assets if operators go out of business.**
- 2 State support for wages and sick pay to cover all workers across the offshore supply chain.**
- 3 Offshore energy workers categorised as Key Workers and 2 weeks-on 3 weeks-off rota imposed on all UKCS oil and gas installations.**
- 4 Regulate to protect workers from unsafe commercial pressure on offshore helicopter operators.**
- 5 Full Health and Safety Executive audit of oil and gas assets on the UKCS, including the clearance of any back logs in safety critical maintenance work.**
- 6 Ambitious Just Transition Fund to re-train offshore oil and gas workers.**

Union demands urgent action as oil and gas workforce numbers falls in global price war

RMT is demanding urgent and immediate action as energy operators rush to slash jobs and contracts in response to the Coronavirus emergency and the oil price war which has driven oil to below \$25 per barrel. There are reports that the workforce had fallen by nearly half

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that oil and gas companies were unilaterally sending staff home with no regard to their future income, work or health.

"Employers have failed to engage with offshore trade unions over standardising the industry's response to Coronavirus, even when there have been cases diagnosed on North Sea platforms, yet the UK Government stands by and watches thousands of skilled energy workers being dumped without any comment whatsoever.

"The Offshore Co-ordinating Group of trade unions and the STUC are meeting the Scottish Energy Minister, Paul Wheelhouse and we hope those talks deliver something meaningful.

"Those talks also serve to demonstrate the gaping hole in the UK government's response to the COVID-19 crisis offshore," he said. ■

JOINT STATEMENT BY RMT, NAUTILUS INTERNATIONAL AND THE UK CHAMBER OF SHIPPING



RMT is calling for:

- 1 Full pay for up to 6 months and half pay for a further 6 months for seafarers or dockers laid-off.**
- 2 Testing of Seafarers and Dockers for Coronavirus and full access to company sick pay schemes.**
- 3 Unions, Government and industry to 'pool' UK Ratings and Officers to cover seafarer shortages to protect jobs.**
- 4 MCA ship specific guidance to seafarers and ferry passengers on Coronavirus.**
- 5 Use spare capacity on passenger ferries to increase training of Ratings and Cadets.**

As organisations representing the interests of seafarers and employers in the shipping industry, we are united in our determination to protect the national interest from the economic impact of the COVID-19 emergency.

Our members must be empowered by government, urgently, to perform the shipping industry's key logistical role in keeping the UK supplied with the food, medicine, fuel and equipment required to sustain people and businesses during this period of unprecedented national and international emergency.

As a priority, the diverse range of onshore and onboard skills required to operate merchant vessels from the UK ports network must be protected from long term damage. Alongside the welcome government support announced for the payment of wages and company sick pay, the preservation of jobs and skills particularly for seafarers and other key workers affected by COVID-19, must now be the focus of joint industry and government action.

The collapse in passenger demand in particular is expected to last for the foreseeable future as countries attempt to ride out the COVID-19 storm. We believe that the government has a central role to play in backing our seafarers and business throughout this profoundly difficult time and we stand ready to continue the work with the government to agree an effective package of measures to achieve this.

As such, we call on the UK government and devolved administrations to exercise all the policy levers at their disposal to protect seafarer jobs and qualifications. Seafarers will always be needed to make the global economy work for the national interest and the maritime skills base will be even more important once we emerge from the other side of this global pandemic. ■

RAIL INDUSTRY FORUM

The Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum (RICF), which includes RMT, has adopted emergency working principles

The Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum (RICF) emergency working principles acknowledge that the Coronavirus crisis represents the biggest challenge to the UK and the rail industry since the war.

The scale of the challenge necessitates emergency but temporary measures to ensure the railway can continue to serve the nation but operate in a sustainable manner all of which will require the industry's trade unions and employers to work in co-operation. The top priority during this unprecedented period is to protect and safeguard workers and their families and to comply with government guidance and advice from all public health bodies across the UK.

PRINCIPLES

1. WORKING TOGETHER

Employers and trade unions commit to working together to address the challenges created by the Coronavirus crisis by maintaining good and positive industrial relations in order to provide rail services for other essential workers and for the movement of supplies and resources for the benefit of our communities.

Recognising that the sole focus will be on delivering the operational railway and protecting rail workers during this period the following business as usual activities will

be deferred: -

- Discipline procedure cases (except for cases of potential gross misconduct or where not proceeding would place the welfare of any employee involved at risk, such as instances of, but not limited to, safety violations, bullying, harassment, discrimination, in which case prior notification to the relevant trade union/FTO will be provided)
- Grievance procedure cases (except for cases involving instances of, but not limited to, bullying, harassment, discrimination in which case prior notification to the relevant trade union/FTO will be provided)
- Absence management procedure meetings
- Compulsory redundancies (for Network Rail, Transport Scotland & DfT franchise TOCs only)
- Training that is not essential to sustaining efficient on-going railway operations. Traincrew training to retain route and traction competence and to be able to deliver more qualified train crew during this period will continue. All other necessary training will seek to comply wherever practically possible. This could include revised agreed methodologies to undertake

training and assessments in order to reduce risk.

2. OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

It is recognised that emergency temporary arrangements need to be put in place that will require all parties to work flexibly together at company level to facilitate rail operations. This shall include: -

- Temporary changes to working arrangements including timetables, train services, station staffing, infrastructure and train maintenance arrangements
- Temporary changes to the normal place of work
- Temporary changes to the allocation of duties where normal activities are not being undertaken

Where changes are required these will be discussed at the earliest opportunity at the appropriate level within the respective rail company between management and union representatives whilst recognising where agreement is required this will not be unreasonably withheld.

Where there are temporary emergency changes to normal staffing levels and locations or their duties, rail workers will be expected to be flexible in being asked to work at an alternative location or undertake alternative duties within their competence level or be on stand-by. This

may reduce the number of rail workers required to operate and maintain the railway safely and at the same time may help to reduce the number of rail workers exposed to infection. In all such circumstances, rail workers will continue to receive their normal basic pay entitlements and any associated contractual allowances that would be normally payable.

During this period no changes to rail workers' terms and conditions will be made other than as above.

3. PROTECTING WORKERS

The Industry recognises that the government has designated rail workers involved in the operation of rail services as key workers to keep rail passenger and freight transport services operating during the period of the Coronavirus crisis.

This is to enable critical public services to deliver the services required during this period of national importance and so that we can support key workers to be able to travel to and from their place of work, alongside the provision of other essential travel and for the movement of critical freight supplies and resources for the benefit of our communities and the nation.

Whilst key workers continue to have access to childcare, the government has asked that we avoid taking up the limited

places in schools. The school childcare places are for rail workers who are essential to keep the railway open for our passengers and freight customers. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, wherever possible.

It is recognised, that in some cases rail workers may experience challenges in managing childcare. In such circumstances we will seek to support them and encourage all parents and guardians to approach their line manager to explore alternative arrangements that are not agreeable and not detrimental to the individual.

It is because of this critical role for rail workers that the health, safety and security of rail workers remains our top priority.

At all times, guidance will be followed and good practice will be shared in the industry with the aim of ensuring that those who are required to work shall be and feel suitably protected as is practical to do so whilst carrying out their duties.

These will be based on the principle of social distancing through modifying working arrangements where practical to do so and include:

- Provision of personal protective equipment where appropriate
- changes to workplaces (including rest facilities)
- changes to working arrangements/duties and additional cleaning routines to reduce risk of contamination and infection

Where rail workers are not able to attend for work due to showing symptoms or are self-isolating, in compliance with government guidance, because someone in their household has symptoms, sick pay will be applicable, in line with contractual arrangements. Qualification periods for new entrants (i.e. with less than six months service) consideration will be given to these being waived.

Rail workers covered by the government guidance on shielding and protecting people who are defined on medical grounds as being extremely vulnerable from Coronavirus who have been advised by their GP or NHS representative to self-isolate will receive full sick pay (i.e. not subject to reduction if entitlement becomes

exhausted under contractual arrangements with any booked/rostered Annual Leave falling due, being taken) for the period of isolation as instructed by the GP or NHS.

We will support rail workers on a case by case basis who are able to remain at work safely and who are covered by the Government guidance of being at an increased risk. However, if it is then deemed that they should self-isolate, they will receive full sick pay (i.e. not subject to reduction if entitlement becomes exhausted under contractual arrangements, with any booked/rostered Annual Leave falling due, being taken, or accrued leave being used first) for the period of isolation as instructed by the GP or NHS.

For direct contractors' employees e.g. those undertaking cleaning and catering on trains for DfT franchised train operating companies, all unavailability for work due to Coronavirus sickness or self-isolation or a reduced requirement to work due to a revised level of train service will be paid by their employer as a minimum the equivalent they

would receive under the Government's Furlough scheme being 80 per cent of their basic pay.

All sickness absence related to Coronavirus will be excluded from sickness absence monitoring procedures.

These emergency working principles will help protect rail workers, their jobs and pay whilst enabling the railway to continue to operate during the coronavirus crisis and to encourage all rail industry companies to follow these principles.

These emergency temporary measures or provisions shall principally apply to train operating companies, freight operating companies and Network Rail for the duration of the Coronavirus crisis or up to June 30 2020.

The RICF will continue to meet on a regular basis throughout this period to encourage the sharing of good practice and where applicable to the rail industry implement any new guidance and advice and the provision of additional guidance as considered necessary as it applies to these emergency working principles.■

RMT DEMANDS URGENT SUPPORT FOR SSP RAIL CATERERS

RMT is demanding that immediate action is taken to support the industry's outsourced caterers, who work across the railway in station outlets such as Ritazza and Upper Crust, who have been left high and dry by their employer, Select Service Partner (SSP), during the Coronavirus crisis.

RMT has spent weeks attempting to work with SSP, to ensure workers would be protected during this period of uncertainty, with the company totally unwilling to engage.

In a particularly heartless step, SSP workers were given just a day's notice that they were being 'laid off' and that their company does not plan to pay

them until the government's Job Retention Scheme is operational.

Caterers are some of the lowest paid workers on the railway, and SSP's workers now have no idea how they will manage financially until the Government scheme is in force.

In contrast an agreement has been reached by the Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum which guarantees that rail caterers who are directly contracted by Train Companies, such as on-train caterers, will be paid 80 per cent of their normal salary by their employer. SSP subsidiary, Rail Gourmet, is included in this agreement.

That SSP has so far refused the same protection for its other

workers is a gross injustice. RMT is calling on Government to ensure that these workers receive the same protections during these uncertain times.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was an outrageous show of contempt for hard working employees.

"SSP has chosen to protect its own interests rather than support its low paid workers during this crisis. This is the textbook definition of a 'bad boss'.

"SSP workers now have no idea how they will pay their bills and make ends meet until the government's scheme is operational.

"Staff employed at one of SSP's subsidiaries, Rail Gourmet,

now has security that 80 per cent of their income will be paid by their employer during this time. This must be extended to all of SSP's rail caterers as a matter of urgency.

"SSP has contracts at stations managed by Network Rail or Train Operating Companies, and these companies should be demanding it protects its workers.

"That SSP has so far refused to protect its workers during this period of uncertainty proves once and for all that their time on the rail industry is up and their workers should be brought in-house, to ensure receive the basic protections that they deserve," he said. ■

SAFE WORKING PRACTICES FOR BUS WORKERS



Buses and the Covid-19 Crisis

RMT is calling for:

- 1 A transition to cashless travel during the emergency.
- 2 Enhanced cleaning and sanitisation regimes on buses and associated facilities.
- 3 Ready access to hand sanitisers and washing facilities.
- 4 Driver protection screens to be fitted to all buses.

RMT has called on all bus operating companies to adopt the following practices during the COVID-19 crisis:

- a transition to cashless travel during the emergency
- enhanced cleaning and sanitisation regimes on buses, buildings, mess rooms, facilities etc. especially on common touch points
- assurance that toilet and washing facilities and hand sanitisers are readily available so that staff can comply with government guidance
- where screens are not currently fitted to buses, these to be installed to give drivers greater protection

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that buses were an essential service being run for and by frontline workers.

"It is crucial that the health risk to both the workers that run the buses and the passengers who have to travel are kept to an absolute minimum.

"That is why RMT is calling for cashless travel, enhanced cleaning and washing facilities, and for screens to be fitted to all buses for driver protection as part of the fight against the spread of Covid-19," he said.

The bus Industry has already called for a £1 billion state funded rescue package to protect 'tens of thousands of jobs' and RMT has reiterated the urgent need for the government to commit emergency funding to

maintain bus networks, which are a vital lifeline for key workers and the most vulnerable.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has confirmed that the Government's response to the Coronavirus crisis is likely to include taking private operators into public ownership.

RMT resolutely believes that to ensure that bus services can continue to transport key workers to where they are needed, the government should bring in emergency powers to allow all local authorities to run their bus services in the public sector.

"It is absolutely imperative that the government steps in now to protect our bus networks which are vital to the mobility of key workers.

"We have already heard that one of the largest bus operators National Express is likely to lay off staff as it reduces its services and we are concerned that more will follow suit.

The government must intervene to protect the jobs and skills of the UK's bus workers, who, alongside other transport workers, are now classed as 'key workers'.

"RMT believes that the government must provide emergency funding to protect the UK's bus networks and allow local authorities to run these vital services in the public sector, to ensure they can serve those who need them most," said Mick Cash.



RMT CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO MOBILISE TAXIS

RMT is calling on the government to use taxis to create a fifth emergency service during the Coronavirus crisis, to mitigate the isolation of families facing increasing levels of lockdown.

As the government closes schools and imposes more restrictions on movement to control the spread of the virus, families are facing increasing isolation.

Older and vulnerable people are struggling to travel to shops, while pharmacies face

difficulties in delivering the volume of prescriptions needed.

Official advice is urging people not to use public transport.

There is an urgent need for a trusted, high quality 'drop off' service able to connect people from their front doors to shops, pharmacies and other critical services.

RMT is calling on the government to use the Licenced Taxi trade to create a vital lifeline between isolated

people and services during the coronavirus crisis by creating an emergency public service staffed by Licenced Taxi drivers paid a temporary government salary.

This measure would throw a vital economic lifeline to more than 75,000 self-employed taxi drivers who are facing the collapse of their trade.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was a win-win idea for the government.

"At this time of crisis, we have increasingly isolated

communities and families needing door-to-door contact with shops and critical services, being advised not to use public transport, and we have more than 75,000 highly skilled, trusted Licenced taxi drivers who need a lifeline to survive.

"This is a time for government to show imagination and resolve and match a highly skilled resource to an increasingly desperate need," he said.



RMT union app

Packed with exciting features the new app allows you to update your personal details, follow all the latest news, campaigns and events and keeps you in contact with the union and your branch.





MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

RMT has produced a leaflet as part of a campaign for greater recognition of mental health problems at work called ‘Campaigning for mental wellbeing at work’

Trade unions have a long history of campaigning for change in the workplace and beyond, not only on employment rights or safety issues but also on the way people are viewed in the workplace and in society.

It is acknowledged that the scale of mental ill-health is much greater than previously thought. It is now recognised that one in four people will suffer from mental-health problems at some point in their life.

Suicide is now the likeliest cause of death for men between 29 and 49.

These are issues of justice, equality and fairness – core trade-union issues. People with mental-health problems face social and workplace exclusion, particularly in times of austerity when poverty levels and the

attendant stresses increase dramatically. They are at risk of being marginalised in the workplace and of being denied access to secure and sustainable employment and access to medical and social care.

There has never been a more important time for unions to campaign to raise awareness of the issues facing people with mental-health problems, although there should always be a link to prevention as well.

Just as capitalism causes physical health problems, often through industrial accidents and unsafe working environments, it also causes many mental health issues, not least by subjecting workers to exploitation and alienation.

Mental-health difficulties at work can be caused or worsened by factors such as:

- sleep-unfriendly shift work

- anti-social working hours,
- diminishing contact with friends and family;
- verbal and physical abuse;
- traumatic incidents at work;
- excessive workload;
- bullying, harassment and aggressive management;
- insecure employment such as zero-hours contracts,
- and pressure from harsh performance and attendance regimes.

Campaigning for less-distressing workplaces and helping members deal better with the pressures that work places on our mental wellbeing must be a core activity for RMT and its members.

RMT believes that mental-health issues are not treated with the seriousness they deserve. There are high levels of stigma associated with mental ill-health. The social pressures brought to bear on society by government austerity cuts are both causing mental distress and reducing the services available to those who develop mental-health problems.

This austerity agenda has resulted in mental-health services being pared back to the bone and this has resulted in increasing reliance on charities. There are concerns that this relies on a 'pity' narrative but the pragmatic approach is that there remains, at least for the present, a role for charities in the mental-health sphere.

RMT is dedicated to raising the level of interest, awareness and skill in its representatives. The union has a dedicated mental-health awareness course, and aims to ensure that this training is made available to all RMT reps as part of the overall campaign to improve mental health in the workplace.

Campaigns on mental health can:

- increase awareness of problems with stress in the workplace and the need to ensure that the employer takes action
- bring to light various issues facing people with mental-

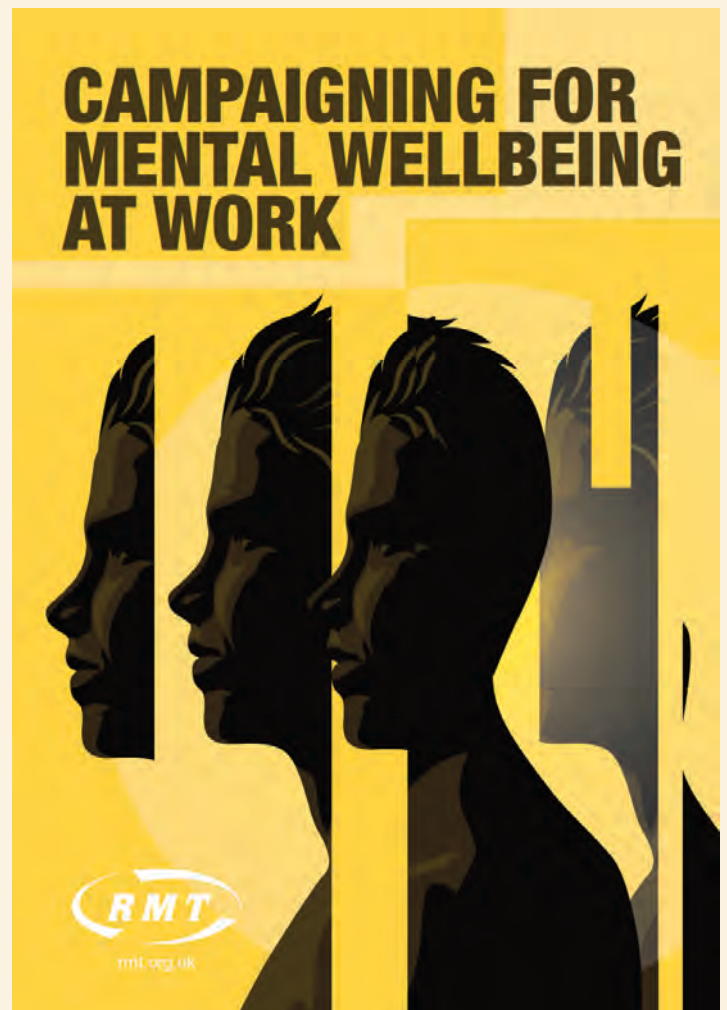
health problems and their causes

- point the way towards practical solutions and examples of good practice
- increase people's understanding of mental health in workplaces and the community
- dispel myths and fears about people with mental-health problems and encourage people affected to talk about their experiences
- encourage people with mental health problems to become active in their workplace, communities and union
- engage with local support/campaign groups and charities to build relationships and access support and services.

It is essential that people who have experienced mental ill-health are involved in designing and running any campaign: they will have the best understanding of the issues involved. As well as helping to build trust and confidence, this can also give members with mental-health problems an opportunity to engage in workplace or trade-union activity in a way that they may not have done before.

In 2017 the government commissioned an independent review on how employers can better support the mental health of all people currently in employment and to help those with existing problems to remain in and thrive through work. Although the resulting Stevenson- Farmer review was warmly welcomed there is little evidence of either government or employers tackling the significant challenges it established exist behind the stigma that deters open discussion.

While there are more people at work with mental-health conditions than ever before, some 300,000 people with a long-term mentalhealth condition lose their jobs each year, and at a much higher rate than those with physical-health



conditions.

The study found that around 15 per cent of people at work have symptoms of a mental-health condition. The human cost of this is huge, and can manifest itself in a variety of ways both at work and at home, affecting people's ability to manage other elements of their own personal lives and affecting those around them.

The economic cost is also huge. The study estimated an annual cost to employers of between £33 billion and £42 billion – with over half of that due to 'presenteeism', when individuals are less productive due to poor mental health despite spending more hours at work, and the rest due to sickness-absence and staff turnover.

The cost to taxpayers and government is between £24 billion and £27 billion, including costs in providing benefits, reduced tax revenue and costs to the NHS.

The cost to the economy as a whole through lost output is more than both of the above put together, at between £74 billion and £99 billion.

The 'Thriving at Work' report started from the position that the correct way to view mental health is that we all have it and fluctuate between thriving, struggling and being ill and possibly off work. People with poor mental health, ranging from the more common problems to severe mental illness, can be in any of these groups: an individual can have a serious mental-health problem but – with the right support – can still be thriving at work.

Society needs to be in a place where all of us become more aware of our own and others' mental health and how to cope when it fluctuates. It is the responsibility of all of us to make this change.

This pamphlet is available from the RMT web site.





STAFF OUR STATIONS CAMPAIGN BOOST

RMT News reports on the last grades conference held before the current pandemic forced a total shutdown of meetings

This year's national organising supervisory, clerical and other salaried grades conference took place in Eastleigh just before the COVID-19 virus shut the country down and decimated the union's timetable of grade conferences.

RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley addressed the conference and emphasised the importance of the organising conferences as being a key forum for making strategies for organising and recruiting members and reps within all grades.

He explained that this was a

key part of the union's high profile, Staff our Stations campaign which aims to fight cuts to station staffing and hours; end casualisation; stop violence and assaults against rail workers; ensure safe staffing levels and end lone working and ensure equal pay for work of equal value.

Many delegates at the conference were based in ticket offices and at stations and could speak first hand about the attacks on station staffing from the Train Operating Companies and Government and how this

risked passenger safety, security and accessibility.

Steve Hedley advised the conference, that as part of RMT's Staff Our Stations campaign, the union had recently agreed to plan campaign meetings when possible in each region, open to all station staff members and reps in the region. One outcome of the meetings would be the creation of regional station staff sub-committees, which would work on regional strategies for organising and campaigning within station grades.

The threat to transport workers of the government's proposals for Minimum Service Level legislation was also discussed, with Steve Hedley informing the group that the union was continuing to work politically, industrially and publicly to fight the government's draconian proposals and that all members would be kept updated on how they could join in this activity.

The Staff Our Stations campaign was also the theme for a resolution from Dover District General Grades branch

calling for the development of a clear strategy that puts ticket offices at the front and centre of the campaign as the 'human interface' point of sale and called for a list of action points to be agreed.

Mike Sargent said; "At the recent Staff our Stations campaign meeting that was held in London, it was heartening to see that there were lots of ticket office attendees.

"Ticket offices are the beating hearts of the railway station environment so this campaign applies enormously to our grades.

"This resolution talks about a lack of strategy but since it was written some new materials have come out but this is not ticket office related, nor has any guidance has been received from head office regarding ticket offices when more is needed.

"We request that the National Executive Committee report back regularly on this campaign and we would request that a sub-committee be created.

"Furthermore, we demand

that generic publicity materials, such as banners and badges are created, but solely for ticket offices, and distributed to ticket offices.

"There should be monthly features in the RMT News, and regional workshops should be held to develop strategy and a plan of action so that a comprehensive report can be put back before this conference in a years time," he said,

Dean Battel from Hastings branch also said that the union was awaiting the Williams Rail review on the future of the railway.

"in my region we have ten ticket offices and from the figures we've seen it looks like six station offices will be shut with others on reduced hours, this is why we must support this campaign," he said.

Andy Budds from Leeds urged conference to support saying; "Ticket offices are the first line of contact and what we've learnt from the guards dispute is that people value human contact.



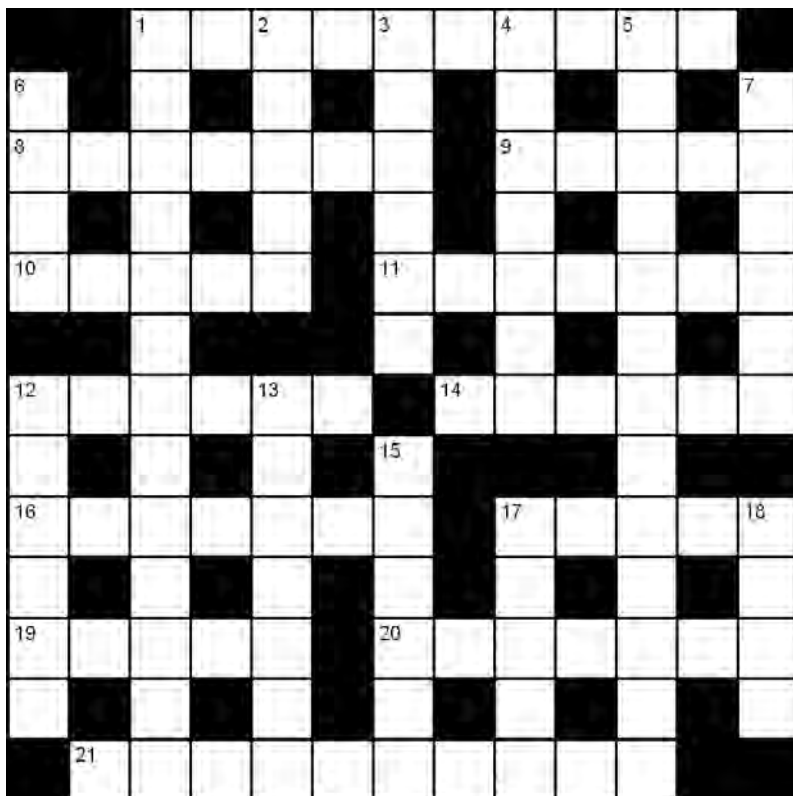
"If you make a mistake on an app you're stuck, whereas if you see a human they can resolve this issue but this doesn't make the company money and makes it difficult to justify the role.

"We need to call the employer out when they are not covering absences and shutting

ticket offices and I would urge us to develop a way to get this message across," he said.

A number of regional Staff Our Stations meeting had been organised but due to the COVID-19 outbreak these had to be cancelled until further notice.

CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



ACROSS

- 1 Ruin (10)
- 8 Outdoor (4-3)
- 9 Affect with wonder (5)
- 10 Meaningless (5)
- 11 Building (7)
- 12 Conflict (6)
- 14 Part of the eye (6)
- 16 Lacking special distinction (7)
- 17 Deception (5)
- 19 Money (5)
- 20 Dawn (7)
- 21 Adjustment (10)

DOWN

- 1 Untrained (13)
- 2 Frightening (5)
- 3 Small storeroom (6)
- 4 Avoiding (7)
- 5 Explanation (13)
- 6 Discharge (4)
- 7 What the Spanish need back (6)
- 12 Steady (6)
- 13 Erupt suddenly (5,2)
- 15 Japanese female entertainer (6)
- 17 Spore-producing plants



Britain's Largest Specialist Transport Union

ZERO TOLERANCE



OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Protecting our members' interests is our priority
Join us today

www.rmt.org.uk FREEPHONE 0800 376 3706

