

Survey Results from Working during the Pandemic

Thanks to all UNISON members who took the time to respond to our brief survey. You have helped the Branch assess your experiences during the pandemic. The findings are summarised below:-

Despite the pandemic running for 12 months now, a quarter of you that continue to work on the frontline reported that you still do not have adequate PPE! With a fifth of you not seeing the risk assessment that covers your workplace. Half of respondents working on the frontline thought their management could do more to keep them safe at work.

Tony Barnsley, Branch Secretary for Sandwell General UNISON Branch added, "For workers such as Carers', School Support Staff, Social Workers and all frontline workers', these figures are truly shocking. Over 80% of our members working on the frontline are worried about contracting COVID at work, so it isn't surprising that three quarters of them feel as though their mental health has suffered during the pandemic.

The fact that the Government is offering such frontline workers a pay freeze adds insult to injury."

The online survey was conducted during February 2021.

For staff working from home, 55% stated that their mental health has suffered, with two thirds saying that post-pandemic they wanted a workplace where their team would be based. Working from home has resulted in almost 6 in every 10 respondents saying their eyesight has come under extra strain, yet most had not received an eye test funded by their employer in the last 2 years. Over a third stated that 12 months on they still did not have a suitable chair and desk to work at.

Tony Barnsley added, "Whilst some staff have enjoyed working from home, there are many that have found it difficult. Almost a half of respondents work from general living areas and most want the new world of work to involve a mixture of working from the office and home. The survey indicates that the continuation of working from home would be problematic for many of our members."

2 Desks for every 10 Workers?

That is what the Council is currently planning to provide for office-based staff in the future – just two desks for every ten workers.

Providence Place has been sold, the lease at Court House in West Bromwich is up soon, and the Council is vacating Jack Judge House.

Providing two desks for every ten workers will in effect make working from home a permanent feature – with staff possibly meeting up as a team once every week or two weeks. New plans for Sandwell Council House are of meeting rooms/spaces and some touch down spaces. Team areas seem to have disappeared.

This radical change, which in effect makes working from home the new normal, may not be welcomed by many.

To capture your views, we will be emailing Council staff to take part in a new brief survey. Please let us know what you think.

Has UNISON Got Your Email Address?

In a world of social distancing and working from home, communication through email is more important than ever.

We will be calling members over the next few weeks where we have no email address.

If you don't want to miss out on important health and safety information or consultation ballots / surveys – we need your email address.

If you don't receive this newsletter via email, please send us your email address to sandwellunison@btconnect.com. Thank you.