



COVID-19

A guide for RMT workplace reps



rmt.org.uk



Dear RMT Rep,

During the Coronavirus crisis transport and offshore energy workers are key workers transporting other key workers and essential goods and supporting key services.

The RMT's priority throughout this crisis is protecting members' health, safety, jobs and conditions. So it is of vital importance that our members know that all departments and functions of their union continue to work through this crisis. Be it industrial, safety, legal advice, equalities and equal rights, union benefits, organising and campaigns, as a rep you will get the support that you need.

RMT members are key workers and RMT's strong network of elected reps such as yourself are essential to protecting members and keeping your union strong during this crisis. This short guide is designed to assist you in that role.

Thank you for all the work that you do as an RMT rep. Together and united we can help defeat coronavirus and continue to build a strong union that protects all of our members.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mick Cash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mick" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Cash".

Mick Cash
General Secretary

10 KEY STEPS TO PROTECTING MEMBERS AND KEEPING THE UNION STRONG

1. Keep yourself informed

Updated Covid-19 RMT information and general advice including safety and employment issues are all gathered in a dedicated RMT Covid-19 webpage [here](#). You are urged to read through all the information that is collated there.

In addition to the information contained on the website, RMT members will receive general Covid-19 information and news (for example in the RMT News) and also company information when there are significant developments to report. This information is sent by email and text. If you are not receiving these please contact the membership department to make sure they have your up to date details at membership@rmt.org.uk.

You can also keep up to date with the regular RMT press releases [here](#), and on [RMT Facebook](#) and [RMT twitter](#). You can also sign up to and download the [RMT app](#).

If you have any specific queries with regard to your company you can contact your RMT Regional Office in the first instance whose contact details can be found [here](#). You can also contact RMT Head Office at info@rmt.org.uk or 0800 376 3706.

2. Keep your workplace informed

Communication is key and RMT reps have an essential role to play in ensuring our message gets inside every workplace and to every worker. Reps are asked to ensure that RMT information is distributed through noticeboards, email, text and social media such as WhatsApp groups. Some RMT branches are producing simple and effective short video information clips that are then transmitted to activists and reps. This can now be done on a smart phone. If members are not receiving information make sure that you, your branch and RMT Head Office have all the members up-to-date contact details.

Remember, no member ever complains about too much communication. No member has ever left our union because the RMT is too visible in their workplace!

3. Keep organising. Keep recruiting. Keep members in RMT

More workers are now joining to get the protection of the RMT. The majority join online and it is quick and easy for them to sign up [here](#), where you can also find details of union services and benefits. You can also encourage workers to simply download the [RMT App](#) and they can quickly join without the need to fill in a paper form. It's really fast and easy to join this way.

Specific RMT recruitment leaflets can also be found on the dedicated [RMT Covid -19 page](#).

Of course, it is not just about how many members we recruit and keep in the union, it is about how many workers we have in the union compared to how many workers there are at a particular workplace. Unions get their power from the members and we are stronger when we have close to 100% membership levels at workplaces. Please aim for maximum union membership at your workplace. Together we are stronger!

Please also be aware the RMT's Organising Unit is currently calling members who have recently left our union to see if we can help sort out problems, but it is obviously better to avoid someone leaving if we can. If you need any help, support or advice with organising and recruiting, do not hesitate to contact the RMT Organising Unit at a.pottage@rmt.org.uk.

RMT has also introduced special temporary measures which may be able to assist members who are struggling financially as a result of the Covid - 19 impact on pay and jobs. Please refer any member who has suffered financial hardship and is finding it difficult to pay their RMT subs to membership@rmt.org.uk. The member will then be contacted and advised of the assistance that we may be able to provide.

Finally, be aware there are a range of digital communication tools such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Telegram that will help you reach more workers and scale your campaigns up quickly. A useful summary of these can be found at the TUC under [Apps for Organising](#).

4. Keep educating

Education and training remain essential for the development of RMT members and reps, and keeping the union strong. RMT is seeking to provide a range of courses for reps by hosting online education. You can find out more about these and other courses [here](#).

RMT also has a unique arrangement with the Labour Research Department that supplies up-to-date employment, equal rights, legal and safety briefings for reps. You can find LRD [here](#) and access free up-to-date information by entering the RMT log in details as follows - username: rmt, password: pot427.

In addition, RMT has launched a new online learning offer to support many of its members who have been stood down, furloughed and isolated. You can find out more [here](#).

5. Keep agitating to protect jobs, pay and conditions

RMT reps are still fully recognised through the agreed collective bargaining procedures. Now even more than ever we need to encourage members to raise their concerns so that we know where employers are working unfairly and we can raise these issues with management.

Members need to be advised RMT is using every means at its disposal – industrial, political and legal - to protect every single job and ensure our members do not suffer now or pay the price for the crisis in the future. If members are laid off or furloughed they should contact RMT for advice. If you cannot answer your members' concerns then remember your [Branch Secretary](#) and [Full Time Regional Organisers](#) are there to help.

And remember, while furloughed employees can't carry out work for their employer, this doesn't mean furloughed reps have to stop performing union duties – even if they'd normally get paid time off (facility time). You can carry out volunteer work or training, as long as it doesn't provide a service or generate revenue for your employer. The union cannot be furloughed! If you're a furloughed rep and you're experiencing problems with your employer, contact your Regional Office immediately.

6. Keeping safe

RMT health and safety reps have a critical role to play in protecting members during the crisis. The union has produced detailed guidance to advise reps of steps that should be taken to maximise the safety of members and to intervene if you think members are unsafe.

This information includes advice on the right of workers to stop work if they believe they are in danger. The advice can be found on the dedicated RMT Covid -19 web page [here](#).

It's also important to remember there are important regulations covering Trade Union health and safety reps which can be found [here](#).

If local health and safety reps cannot resolve issues locally, they can get advice and support from their next level rep, Branch Secretary or Regional Organiser.

7. Keep fighting for equality

Now more than ever we need to fight for equality. We need to ensure that when employers are implementing measures in relation to Covid -19 our members are not discriminated against in any way, for example because of their gender, race, sexual orientation or if they have a disability.

We need to be aware that there are already concerns being raised about the disproportionate impact Covid -19 is having on BAME members. Other issues in relation to gender and disability are emerging all the time. Whilst various government bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Public Health organisations are working in this area, RMT is developing a trade union response with our Equality Committees which will be issued soon. In the meantime reps should raise any concerns with their Regional Organiser or RMT Head Office.

8. Keep campaigning

During the Coronavirus crisis the union is stepping up campaigning for safety and security for our members. That will often involve seeking to put public and political pressure on employers and politicians to help achieve our objectives. The union is also campaigning to ensure RMT members don't pay the economic price of this crisis and that their role as key workers is recognised. And as well as campaigning for the industries we work in to be properly funded, we will also be fighting for a better society for all, including public ownership and strong trade union rights.

Please look out for communications from the union explaining how you and other members can support RMT campaigns in these areas, for example through online lobbying of MPs and building petitions. Campaigning not only gets results – it also raises the profile of the union to assist with recruitment and retention of members!

9. Keep meeting (remotely)

Right across the country reps and branches have started to utilise online meeting facilities such as Zoom. Keeping in touch with fellow activists and reps is essential for sharing information, supporting each other and planning and coordinating activity. Branch meetings are also of course the main forum for participating in the RMT's democratic structure and ensuring RMT is a member led, fighting union. You can find a useful list of online meeting options in the TUC organising guide under "Apps for organising" [here](#).

10. Keep in touch. Keep strong.

Let's keep the communication flowing within all the RMT networks. This will help the union work effectively and also support your own mental health during this particularly challenging time. Remember all of the union is still fully functioning and available to provide you with the advice and support you require.

Thank you for keeping the union strong.



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