

Request for emergency motion at the AGM

COVID-19 Coronavirus: a Socialist Health Association response.

29th February 2020 the chairman of the Commons Health Committee, and former Tory health secretary, Jeremy Hunt said that we need to consider the 'social and economic trade-offs' we are willing to make to contain Covid-19.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady has said:

Employers have a duty of care to support workers affected by coronavirus. No one should have to worry about making ends meet if they have to self-isolate or if they fall ill. They should be able to focus on getting better.

The threat of coronavirus shows why sick pay should be a day one right for everybody. It's not right that millions of UK workers miss out on this protection. The Government must ensure everyone gets statutory sick pay, however much they earn.

The SHA strongly supports the view of the TUC and urges this scheme is extended to those on 'self employment' contracts – part of the 3 million plus 'Gig economy'. We would argue further that employers should make up SSP to the average pay of workers to ensure they are under absolutely no financial pressure to attend work while they are unwell and may inadvertently pass on the disease.

Should the coronavirus outbreak spread significantly everyone will be expected to respond putting the interests of the community first. Undoubtedly workers will volunteer long hours and take on exceptional responsibilities. This will increase the risk of errors which will need to be balanced against the risk of failure to treat patients in a mass outbreak. We urge professional bodies to be aware of this.

The SHA congratulates trade union and Labour leaders for engaging with the government and employers and instructs our incoming leadership to move very rapidly to promote this position through forceful lobbying, online petitions and other appropriate means.

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Mark Ladbrooke