

Update on COVID-19: Practice Nurses

Brief note relating to primary care – pay cuts

- Some primary care employers are asking their staff to take a 20% pay cut because of the impact of COVID-19 on their revenue.
- In the last 24 hours, large numbers of members working in primary care have approached us about this.
- Some have also been asked to cut their work hours or, variously, take annual leave, sick leave or unpaid special leave. Alternatively, they will face redundancy.
- All of this may appear incongruous when the health sector is facing the prospect of seriously inadequate staff resources, impossible workloads to cope with COVID-19, and is taking measures like calling in retired health professionals (nurses, doctors and allied health professionals).
- Under employment law, primary care employers have some ‘good faith obligations’, as well as a duty to act ‘reasonably’.
- Some primary care employers are applying for the Government COVID-19 wage subsidy. To be eligible, they must have taken active steps to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. This could include talking to their bank, or requesting a rent holiday for their premises, and suchlike. Additionally, they “must make best efforts to retain employees and pay them a minimum of 80% of their normal income for the subsidised period”.

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/covid-19-support.html#null>

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/documents/eligibility/emergencies/covid-19/wage-subsidy-and-leave-payment-employer-support-factsheet-25-march-2020.pdf>

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