



Dear Members and Supporters, in particular those who are employed by **CVS**,

Last week Derek Jones, the BVU's industrial officer within Unite, and I, had a productive and positive conference call with Richard Fairman (CEO) and Helen Finney (HR Director) of CVS Group Plc. We primarily met to discuss furlough arrangements for employees, after feedback from yourselves that CVS is not participating in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS, or furlough).

Richard and Helen made clear their priority and focus on staff wellbeing, and although they are not using the CJRS at this time, have outlined their alternative policies, as detailed below. The BVU and Unite support the right to furlough for all caregivers, so that this option can be taken for those who require it. Please see further details of the campaign can be found here.

However, we are particularly pleased that CVS are offering **full pay** to all employees who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and require shielding. These employees may be requested to work from home, either supporting their own team, or supporting elsewhere around the business, but are all eligible for full pay from the company at this time. We think this is an excellent policy, and we hope other companies within the sector will follow suit.

CVS are also offering a number of options for those with dependents at home, whose care-giving duties have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, including:

- Flexible working patterns and changes to shift days or times
- 1 additional day of annual leave for every 4 days of annual leave used for caring responsibilities
- Reduced working hours, with access to a hardship fund for lost pay through reduced hours

The BVU does not believe use of annual leave is a sustainable policy for accommodating care-giving duties, as this can lead to burn out and exhaustion. CVS agree that this should only be used for a proportion of annual leave, and employees should not be left in a situation where they have no annual leave to use later in the year.

We are aware from your feedback that these policies are not always being offered in every clinic, by every line manager, and that sometimes well-meant policies from head office don't filter down to all employees. However, we have assurances from Richard and Helen that they want to support you if you are struggling at this time – therefore we suggest that if you are struggling to get the support you require from your direct practice management, that you contact the BVU and we will put you in touch with Helen.

We hope to continue to develop and foster a positive working relationship with CVS management, and feedback your concerns (and praise), so that we can continue to support you as best as possible.

In solidarity,

**Suzanna Hudson-Cooke**  
Branch Chair, British Veterinary Union in Unite