



METROMAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

ANDY BURNHAM
MAYOR OF
GREATER
MANCHESTER

Rt Hon. Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
BEIS

Rt Hon. Matt Hancock
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care

By email

1st April 2020

Dear Secretaries of State

Re: Supporting businesses, protecting jobs and defeating COVID-19

We are writing to you on behalf of residents, businesses and frontline workers in the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and beyond to urge you to provide greater clarity on the guidance that businesses need to follow to keep their workers safe.

Many of our local businesses, large and small, are pulling together and doing everything that they can to support our communities through this crisis but a minority are failing to adhere to PHE and Government guidance on social distancing.

Despite repeated calls to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives, some employers are refusing to treat the situation with the seriousness it deserves and not keeping their staff safe and healthy.

Unfortunately, the Cabinet Office guidance for businesses states that guidelines need to be followed only *'where possible'*:

'Employers who have people in their offices or onsite should ensure that employees are able to follow Public Health England guidelines including, where possible, maintaining a 2 metre distance from others.'

This is leading to a lack of clarity and provides a 'get-out' clause for some employers who are choosing not to follow the rules. Our top priority now has to be the health and safety of our residents, and by doing the right thing now we will be supporting our economy in the medium and long term.

In recent days, social media has been awash with stories and images from unsafe workplaces and we have received hundreds upon hundreds of reports from concerned employees and members of the public who are worried about businesses flouting Public Health England guidelines.

Workers are worried that they are being forced to work in places where the 2 metre self-distancing rule is not enforced, where there is a lack of hand sanitiser and cleaning and hygiene measures and they then return home to an elderly mum or dad or their family, making them vulnerable to exposure to the virus.

This is unacceptable.

Both of us have been in touch with those companies who have been identified to seek evidence and reassurance that they are taking all possible steps to protect the wellbeing of their staff.

But we need Government to act to remove the ambiguity that the 'where possible' phrasing has introduced. Not only will this take away a lot of unnecessary worry for people scared about their loved ones getting sick, it will also reinforce the Government's own 'Stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives' message by helping to stop the spread of the disease.

This crisis is bringing out the best in so many people and many businesses are doing the right thing. Our communities are pulling together, following Government advice and doing their bit to help fight the Coronavirus.

We are asking you to please support them and tighten the guidance to ensure that all businesses are operating in a way that ensures they are keeping their workers safe and healthy.

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

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Andy Burnham
MAYOR OF GREATER MANCHESTER

Steve Rotheram
MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL CITY REGION