

Scottish Government Guidance on social distancing

April 4th 2020

STUC strongly welcomes strengthened Scottish Government Guidance on social distancing and condemns UK Government's approach.

The STUC has strongly welcomed strengthened Scottish Government Guidance on social distancing while voicing growing concerns over the UK Government approach which could put further lives at risk in the pursuit of short-term economic gain.

Roz Foyer, STUC General Secretary Designate said:

"We strongly welcome this new guidance. The Scottish Government has responded to the demands we made on behalf of workers in Scotland. It clarifies what work is considered essential and provides for engagement with unions in all sectors to ensure that safety standards are met. It indicates that we have a Scottish Government that is listening to the very real health and safety concerns of our members. This toughened up guidance reduces the wiggle room for employers to circumvent the rules. We will now seek to ensure that these rules are applied forensically in every sector of the economy."

This follows guidance issued yesterday stating that 'With the exception of some non-essential shops and public venues, we are not asking any other businesses to close – indeed it is important for business to carry on.'

"We are deeply worried that this signals a return to the Prime Minister's favoured 'herd immunity' experiment which is inconsistent with calls this weekend from medics that people should stay indoors despite the good weather."

The UK approach also contrasts starkly with the approach of the Government in Wales where our colleagues in the Wales TUC have been successful in having and a whistleblower line established and where steps are being taken to introduce a new law making it a criminal offence for employers to breach the 2-metre distancing rule.

"Our reps are working day and night to tackle major issues in the workplace with businesses failing to close, many workplaces still not implementing distancing guidance, and employers still failing to provide adequate PPE. We intend to use this new Scottish guidance, in conjunction with public authorities, to challenge every instance of dangerous practice

we encounter and to ensure a consistency of approach across all sectors of the economy.”

Notes

Scottish Government Guidance 4th April <https://www.gov.scot/news/social-distancing-guidance-for-business/>

UK Government Guidance 3rd April <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>