



Department for
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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your letter of 5 June raising the matter of people with diabetes who are concerned about returning to work.

The Diabetes UK survey highlights some worrying statistics about how safe and supported diabetics feel in the workplace. It might be helpful if I set out some of what we have put in place to make workplaces as safe as possible.

On 11 May, the Government published guidance for businesses to help make workplaces as safe as possible. This sets out that where people can work from home, they should work from home. Where this is not possible, businesses will need to consider how to ensure social distancing and hygiene measures. The full set of updated guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

I would like to reassure you that unions were involved in developing the guidance, alongside businesses, business representative organisations, Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). We believe we have been clear about the steps businesses should take and how employees should be involved in the process.

Information on steps businesses should take to ensure the workplace is as safe as possible, including social distancing is included in the guidance. Every business is unique, and each employer will need to consider what COVID-19 means for their organisation. It is for each business to carry out its own risk assessment, in consultation with their workers and unions, to inform the actions they should take to reduce the risks of COVID-19.

Clinically extremely vulnerable people have been advised to shield until the end of June, and Government is keeping that under review. The updated guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19.

Clinically vulnerable people who are at higher risk and moderate risk from COVID-19, which includes those with diabetes, have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing. Employers should help these individuals work from home if possible. If clinically vulnerable people cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest available on-site roles, staying 2 metres away from others wherever possible. If they have to spend time within 2 metres of other people, employers need to carefully

assess whether this involves an acceptable level of risk. This is set out in the guidance I referred to above.

Employers have a duty to conduct a risk assessment in consultation with workers and unions where applicable, to make sure their concerns can be taken into account. If your constituent continues to have concerns, he can raise them with any union safety representatives, or ultimately with the organisation responsible for enforcement in your workplace, either the HSE or the local authority. Where the HSE identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of enforcement actions.

When people living with diabetes are experiencing difficulties at work or when returning to work, the Government would encourage employers to engage constructively with workers, either directly or with unions, and try to find solutions that are agreeable to all. In addition, this approach is advocated when some employees, whether through specific vulnerability, family caring responsibilities or an abundance of caution may be reluctant to re-enter a workplace even though the employer feels it is safe to do so.

I hope this response is reassuring.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Callanan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lord Callanan