



Work and Pensions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 8976 Email workpencom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/workpencom

From the Chair

Mark Lloyd
Chief Executive
Local Government Association

1 February 2021

Dear Mark,

I am writing to you following recent reports that, despite Government advice that people should only leave their home for work where they cannot reasonably work from home, some employees have reported being pressured by their employers to return to their workplace. Others have reported being told to return to work in businesses that have remained open despite being “non-essential”.

Despite some employees reporting that their workplaces are still not Covid secure, the Committee has seen reports that the Health and Safety Executive has not taken any enforcement action against employers during the current lockdown. It would be helpful to have answers to following questions on action taken by local authorities:

- 1. In your view, are local authorities in the best position to enforce the closure of premises that are in breach of Covid regulations? Do local authorities need any additional powers to carry out this work?**
 - a. If not, where should responsibility for this lie?**
- 2. Under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No3) Regulations 2020, local authorities have the power to close or restrict access to individual premises. Can local authorities use this power to close a premise on the grounds that the individual working there may be at risk?**
 - a. In your view, do local authorities have sufficiently robust powers to close workplaces where employees may be at risk?**
- 3. Local authorities can issue a “Coronavirus Improvement Notice” to businesses that are failing to fulfil any of the provisions in the relevant regulations. In your view, how effective has this measure been at requiring employers to ensure that their premises are Covid secure?**

4. What guidance has the Government provided to local authorities on using their powers to close workplaces that may be unsafe? In your view, is there a need for more detailed guidance?
5. Given the current lockdown and number of coronavirus cases, do local authorities have the resources and staffing levels they need in order to investigate and take action against premises that may be operating in breach of Covid regulations?
6. We have seen evidence that some local authorities take different approaches to enforcement of Covid regulations than others. Who, if anyone, is responsible for ensuring that local authorities take a consistent approach?
 - a. What guidance or support, if any, does the LGA provide to local authorities on enforcement of the regulations?

It would be helpful to have a response by Friday 12 February.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Timms', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee