



Petitions Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel 020 7219 7614 Email petitionscommittee@parliament.uk
Website www.parliament.uk/petitions-committee

Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and
Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

30 March 2020

Dear Alok and Rishi

I am writing because of the enormous public interest in coronavirus, which has resulted in more than fifty e-petitions on coronavirus being published to date, signed by over two million people. We are receiving hundreds of petitions on coronavirus on a daily basis, which show there is a lot of anxiety and concern about the support available to people affected by the outbreak, and the Government's response to the outbreak.

Following the large number of petitions on coronavirus we asked the people who had signed these petitions what questions they most wanted answers to. On Wednesday we held an evidence session with representatives from the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Education, and the Department for Work and Pensions, putting many of these questions to Ministers and the Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

This was an extremely useful session, but the public also suggested a number of questions which are the responsibility of other Departments, including yours. I am therefore writing to ask you to respond to the following questions, which came through most strongly from our public engagement:

Financial support to self-employed people

How quickly will support for self-employed people be made available?
What is being done for people who can't wait that long?

Financial support for individuals

Will all employees whose work is affected by the outbreak be covered by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme? If not, what support is available to employees who are excluded?

What is the Government doing to try and ensure payment holidays are available for crucial household bills, including rent, utilities, insurance and loan repayments, many of which will increase while people are working from home?

Will the Government be considering some form of Universal Basic Income to provide financial security during the coronavirus outbreak?

Advice to businesses and individuals

What is the Government doing to produce and make available more detailed and practical guidance be available for individuals and businesses who are unsure what financial support is available to them and how they can access it?

Financial support for sectors

What timescales of ongoing disruption should businesses be planning for?

What specific support will the Government offer to the creative, events and hospitality sectors, which have been especially hard hit by government measures

Given the constantly evolving nature of the current situation, I would be grateful if you could provide a response to the above by Friday 3 April, so we can make these available to the public as quickly as possible.

I hope we will be able to continue the dialogue as the situation progresses and particularly as the usual parliamentary mechanisms for raising these issues have become more restricted. This might involve further sessions with Ministers and officials, and asking your Department to provide updated answers to the public's latest questions at regular intervals.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Catherine". The script is cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'C'.

Catherine McKinnell MP
Chair of the Petitions Committee