



**Department for
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& Industrial Strategy**

Lord Callanan
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Dear Chris,

I am writing in response to the query you raised at the Covid-19 and Business Statement repeat on the 13 May 2020.

With regard to testing, it is our priority to ensure that everyone who needs a test can get one. Following the publication of the Government's testing strategy, capacity has rapidly expanded. Everyone aged five and over with symptoms can now be tested for COVID-19 in the UK. Further information can be found at www.gov.uk by searching for 'coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested'.

We wanted to make the process of accessing a test faster and simpler. This is why we have set up a new online portal for booking a test, opened 50 regional testing sites across the UK and introduced a home-testing solution, which is now providing tests to thousands of people every day, completely free of charge. Home tests are couriered directly to one of the Government's labs for analysis and results are sent directly to the individual's mobile phone, as well as being added to their NHS patient record.

With regards to Risk assessment, it is important for business to resume but only where it is safe to do so. Sectors of the economy that are allowed to be open should be open, and workers who cannot work from home should travel to work if their workplace is open. HSE has produced guidance to help control the risks associated with running a business at this time which can be found here (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/working-safely-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>).

HSE has also worked closely with BEIS and others on the development of sector specific guidance to support the introduction of measures to reduce the risk from coronavirus in the workplace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)

It is a legal requirement for employers to carry out a risk assessment, and this should address the risks of Covid-19 to inform decisions and control measures. There is a duty on employers to consult their employees, and unions where applicable, as part of the risk assessment and to share relevant information.

Whilst some employers may choose to involve third parties, it is important to note that employers know their own business best and there is no requirement for an external body to be involved. Businesses with more than 50 employees are being encouraged by the Government to make their risk assessments available online.

There is no requirement risk assessments to be signed off or approved by the enforcing authority (HSE or the Local Authority), but HSE is developing plans for carrying out proactive checks of workplaces to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect workers from COVID-19 in line with its usual risk-based approach to identifying workplaces to inspect. In addition, HSE continues to address reported workplace concerns with employers, including those relating to employees with a heightened risk from Covid-19. Genuine concerns about health and safety which cannot be resolved through speaking with the employer or trade union should continue to be reported to the relevant enforcement agency.

An additional sum of up to £14 million has been made available to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to support their advice and regulatory activities, such as extra call centre employees, inspectors and equipment. HSE is currently developing plans and as more businesses return to work, it has begun carrying out proactive checks to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect workers from COVID-19.

I hope that my response has answered your query.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

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

Lord Callanan