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Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle
House of Lords

21st July 2021

Dear Baroness Bennett,

Thank you for your question at the debate on 5th July 2021 brought by Lord McKenzie of Luton on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) report published on 23rd May 2021 '*RIDDOR, Covid and underreporting*'. Following the debate, I hope the noble Lady is reassured that Government takes reporting under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) very seriously.

I promised to write to you on the points you raised during the debate. You suggest that of the 52,000 proactive site visits relating to Covid-19, only 12,000 were conducted by HSE trained inspectors. You asked if ventilation was considered during those visits made by outsourced contractors and if the outsourcing damaged the quality of service that people received.

Last year, early in the pandemic, HSE scaled up its regulatory activity and broadened its reach by introducing spot check calls and visits to workplaces, which were undertaken by trained and approved partners. This is in addition to the spot inspections that were already being carried out on businesses by HSE inspectors. As of July 5th 2021, HSE had conducted over 275,000 Spot checks in total; which includes 98,109 spot check visits completed by HSE partners and a further 17,519 inspections conducted by warranted HSE inspectors.

Spot checks are a staged process with an initial call or visit to assess the level of awareness a business has of the relevant Covid-19 guidance and the control measures they have in place. The spot check visits are carried out by third party partners, who ask a series of questions, which were developed by HSE inspectors, and carry out a visual check on site focussing on the control measures that have been put in place by businesses. Where there are concerns about these measures, they will be considered further and, where appropriate, referred to an HSE inspector to carry out a follow up inspection.

This approach enables HSE inspectors to focus on more complex Covid-19 work in addition to investigating reported concerns and incidents in all business sectors. It has also allowed HSE to significantly increase its proactive work to check, support and advise businesses on the implementation of control measures to minimise transmission of Covid-19 at work, whilst also supporting local authorities, and the sectors they regulate.

HSE keeps all its guidance under review so that they can reflect the latest thinking about control measures. The need for good ventilation became more evident during 2020 as the scientific knowledge around Covid-19 transmission, including the role of aerosols, developed. This knowledge has evolved since the initial spot check question set was compiled. Consequently, ventilation guidance for businesses was published on the HSE website in December 2020 and the content included in the spot check questions from early February 2021.

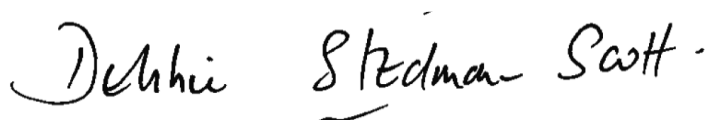
HSE has revised the spot check questions for businesses to specifically ask whether they have considered ventilation in their premises, and what measures they have taken to improve it.

Alongside this, HSE has further updated and expanded the ventilation guidance available on the HSE website ([Ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/ventilation/covid19/)) taking account of the recent research published by the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) around use of Carbon Dioxide monitoring as a means of identifying poorly ventilated spaces.

HSE works closely with other government departments to ensure sector specific guidance available to businesses contains clear and consistent advice around ventilation.

A copy of this letter will be sent to all the peers who took part in the debate and I am also placing a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Stedman-Scott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name "Stedman".

BARONESS STEDMAN-SCOTT
MINISTER FOR WORK AND PENSIONS (LORDS)