

3195/PL/MJ

8 July 2021

Head Office
Voyager Building
2 Furness Quay
Salford Quays
Manchester
M50 3XZ

T 0161 224 2804/249 2400
E enquiries@usdaw.org.uk
www.usdaw.org.uk

Paddy Lillis
General Secretary

By Email

Kwasi Kwarteng
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Dear Mr Kwarteng

Updated Covid Measures and Guidance

Usdaw is deeply concerned over the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday, 5 July, that the requirement for face coverings and social distancing in retail stores will be withdrawn from 19 July.

Face coverings and social distancing have been key measures protecting workers across the retail sector. These measures have clearly been highlighted within risk assessments that Usdaw has conducted in partnership with many retailers. Wearing a face covering and adhering to social distancing in crowded places are not merely personal choices, but an important aspect of protecting other people. Retail workers are required to interact with large numbers of people as part of their job. To protect this workforce from the risk of infection and requirement to self-isolate, the Government must maintain the requirement for face coverings and social distancing.

Whilst retailers may be able to attempt to enforce their own face covering policies, in the absence of a legal requirement, as has already been highlighted by the British Retail Consortium, this is likely to result in further significant increases in abuse, threats and violence towards retail workers. Despite having to deal with an horrific increase in violence and abuse, these key workers have continued to attend work and support the country throughout the crisis. It would be a shameful act for the Government to let them down at this time.

We are aware that BEIS is currently preparing workplace guidance ahead of changes to restrictions coming into effect from 19 July. We believe that this guidance, and the Government's public facing statements, must be clear, that face coverings and social distancing protect others, including public facing workers, and are key measures in stopping the spread of infection. Furthermore, we implore the Government to reverse its decision and retain the requirement for face coverings and social distancing across retail.

It is essential that the Government guidance highlights the importance of ventilation, regular cleaning, and adequate sick pay as key methods of tackling rising levels of infection.

Head Office
Voyager Building
2 Furness Quay
Salford Quays
Manchester
M50 3XZ

T 0161 224 2804/249 2400
E enquiries@usdaw.org.uk
www.usdaw.org.uk

Paddy Lillis
General Secretary

2

There are also many clinically extremely vulnerable workers (particularly those with compromised immune systems), along with pregnant women who have not yet been able to receive both doses of the vaccine, awaiting clarity on how the lifting of restrictions will affect them. This guidance needs to be shared as a matter of urgency.

Usdaw is more than happy to provide support and assistance in preparing the Government's updated workplace guidance.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely



PADDY LILLIS
General Secretary

cc Paul Scully, Parliamentary Under-Secretary
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy