

Business Secretary appeals to everyone to stay calm and carry on the good work

Our country and economy need all our support in tackling the coronavirus pandemic. This is a shared national effort and workers and businesses, across the country, have answered the call to action.

Workers across all industries and sectors are making a hugely valued and critical contribution to the resilience of our nation. Whether it is the millions of people working from home, or the army of workers in distribution centres, supermarkets, transport, construction and manufacturing across the country, you are all playing your part in keeping Britain moving, so that as a nation we can support our fantastic NHS workers on the frontline of this pandemic.

Worker Safety

I want to recognise and pay tribute to those efforts. We appreciate just how tough the situation is. The government has asked people to take unprecedented action by staying at home other than for four exceptions – to buy essentials, for one form of exercise a day, to attend medical appointments, or for work which cannot be done from home.

Safety has always been our number-one priority – and throughout this crisis, we have followed the scientific and medical advice. The government has provided guidance on how those who cannot do their work from home can continue to operate safely in the workplace. I want everyone to be assured that if they are in their workplace, keeping our economy going, they know what they need to do to play their part in reducing the spread of coronavirus. Many employers are already taking measures to ensure the safety of their workers.

Supermarkets, for instance, have put down two-metre markings on shop floors, installed protective screens for cashiers and are disinfecting stations for trolleys and baskets. Construction firms have changed shift patterns and numbers on sites to maintain social-distancing rules. Without the valiant efforts of builders and engineers, who have worked flat out, vital infrastructure such as the NHS Nightingale hospital would not have been built in record time.

Stepping up

We have also seen gin distilleries and breweries like Brewdog start developing hand sanitiser to help meet the unprecedented demand at this time, and staff in distribution centres are keeping the public stocked up on essential items.

These are just a few examples of businesses and workers from across the UK that are stepping up to protect our people and economy. It reinforces the fact that businesses are a force for good as we tackle the coronavirus pandemic. It is crucial that when we overcome this crisis, as in time we will, the UK's economy is ready to bounce back and businesses are in a good position to move forward.

And all of those who have had to go to work – to stack shelves, to keep phone lines connected, to drive our trains or to build vital infrastructure – deserve the understanding of others as they go about their work. Instances of abuse being thrown at these people are completely unacceptable – they are keeping us safe, keeping us fed and keeping us connected.

While our fantastic NHS workers and the wider carer community are rightly at the forefront of our minds, I want to pay tribute to all those who are working to support them by keeping our economy going. You are doing your bit to deliver for our country. Times are tough – and we have harder times ahead of us. But I know that, together, we will pull through.