

Reopening job centres 'more PR than policy'



Security guards are amongst those occupations with the highest covid-19 death rates

GMB, the union representing job centre security guards, says rushing to reopen job centres is more PR stunt than well thought out policy.

The union calls on Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Therese Coffey to put job centre staff first.

The DWP have produced a risk assessment which creates more questions than answers, without adequate answers on PPE, handling unacceptable customer behaviour and how the policy of maintaining 'open doors' will be appropriately managed.



Security guards have some of the highest death rates from covid-19, while many are employed by private contractors offering little or no sick pay – leaving many with no choice but to come into work even if they are sick.

Nadine Houghton, GMB National Officer, said:

"Rushing to reopen job centre's feels like a PR stunt rather than a well thought out plan.

"The DWP would do well to remember that security guards are amongst those occupations with the highest covid-19 death rates – and a significant proportion of job centre security guards will be from BAME backgrounds and at increased risk.

"Ministers must ensure adequate protections are in place to allow them to return to work safely.

"GMB members stand ready to support that vital work, but we must remember that high numbers of job losses and an economy emerging from lock down could lead many clients feeling frustrated and anxious.

"We have seen what happens when front line key workers do not get adequate PPE and support from employers.

"We must not allow Job Centre staff to be exposed to potentially dangerous work."

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