

Union Improvement Notice

This improvement notice is issued on behalf of **Unison, Prospect, GMB, and Unite** unions and is issued by accredited Safety Representatives.

It is issued to **Sir James Bevan** as the **Chief Executive of the Environment Agency** with ultimate responsibility for Health and Safety across the organisation.

Under the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSWR) 1999** the employer has a responsibility to risk assess the workplace and practices undertaken by employees.

We believe that under the legislation there is a responsibility to:

- Identify what could cause injury or illness (the hazard)
- Decide the likelihood of that risk being realised (causing harm)
- Take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this is not possible, control the risk
- Review all assessments, in the light of any new developments

For the purposes of this notice there are no specific premises as it applies to the whole of the estate.

The combined trade unions welcomes the approach that has been taken since the outbreak of Covid-19 and the risk assessment processes that have been put in place.

However on behalf of the combined trades unions **Prospect, Unison, Unite, and GMB** do not believe that enough action has been taken to control the risk of the hazard (Covid-19). Particularly In the light of developments such as the new variant of COVID-19, which is known to significantly increase the risk of transmission there is, under the **MHSWR**, a legal requirement and urgent need to review the risk assessments for workplaces, those working in the field and those undertaking inspections on third party premises. This is in order to ensure consistent standards are applied across the organisation.

As you are aware from our joint meetings held regularly over the last 10 weeks the TU side believe there are affordable, reasonably practicable measures that can be put in place to reduce the risk of infection. These include but are not limited to:

- Making it compulsory to wear face coverings in communal areas at all workplaces
- Improving social distancing, and reducing contact between work bubbles, by for example staggering arrival and departure times.

To date the TU side has not received any indication that management is prepared to consider these measures.

Therefore we are now issuing you with this union improvement notice, to in the light of the new COVID-19 variant and known increased risk of infection, review, consult and re-issue all risk assessments explicitly recognising the increased transmissibility of the new variant of Covid 19, and put in place, as a minimum, the following measures.

- Introduce the compulsory wearing of face coverings in communal areas, and any other areas where there is a risk of communal transmission
- Improving social distancing and reducing contact between work bubbles, by for example staggering delivery and collection times.

We are also request a written response from you by **26 January 2021** informing us of how you intend to implement the above, and any other measures that would reduce the risk of infection.