

PPE standards aren't inclusive. They can be.

- Employers are legally required to provide "suitable" and "adequate" PPE, but many, especially women, disabled and ethnic minority workers, are put at risk by ill-fitting PPE
- Legislation exists (PPE at Work Regulations 1992, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974), but in practice the wording is weak and enforcement lacking. Parliament can change that.
- BSI 30417: Provision of Inclusive PPE, is endorsed by GMB as the first dedicated standard, and we call for it to be embedded in guidance.

Legislative & Regulatory Proposals

1. Redefine "suitable PPE" in regulation 4 of the PPE at Work Regs 1992

"PPE must be demonstrably suitable, adequate and inclusive.

'Inclusive' means correctly fitting, accessible and appropriate for all workers, taking account of variations in body size, shape, gender, ethnicity, disability, neurodiversity and work role."

2. Mandate fit, suitability and accessibility assessments

Introduce a new Regulations 4A

"Employers must conduct a documented fit, suitability and accessibility assessment for every worker required to use PPE"

3. Embed BS 30417 into statutory guidance

Formally reference the standard in HSE guidance as the benchmark

4. Amend section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act

"...and ensuring that safety equipment, including PPE, is inclusive, correctly fitting, and does not create additional risks due to poor fit."

5. Increase HSE funding

The HSE has reduced resource and requires funding for proactive inspections, trained inspectors and enforcement data publication.

How are workers effected?

GMB has found ill-fitting PPE is an issue effecting most people, with interim survey results (194 GMB members, 56% women, 44% men) revealing two thirds have experienced insufficient PPE effecting their ability to work safely. The top issues reported are:

1. Uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time
2. Too large/too tong
3. Restricts movement

The impact is workers report feeling uncomfortable, unappreciated and unsafe, with 78% believing better fitting PPE would improve their performance and safety at work.

GMB has found a lack of enforcement, unclear employer liability and issues with supply chains are common drivers for ongoing safety issues:

- Over half of respondents had raised issues with PPE at work, but only 1 in 4 saw their employers take action as a result.
- Half of GMB members said they'd had to buy their own PPE, but only 1 in 10 of those got their money reimbursed from their employer.
- 4 in 10 cited their employer had issues getting supplies of fitting PPE.

What can MPs do?

AMEND LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE Table amendments to H&S statutory instruments. Push inclusive PPE wording in reviews and codes of practice.

ASK MINISTERS When they will embed BS 30417 into HSE guidance and procurement frameworks? What steps will be taken to update HSWA 1974 and PPEWR 1992? How will HSE funding increase to enforce inclusive PPE?

CHAMPION PUBLIC PROCUREMENT Require all contracts involving PPE use to meet BS 30417. Ensure suppliers demonstrate compliance.

Inclusive PPE can enhance workplace safety and productivity, increase domestic product supply and demand and improve recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups. Support PPE fit for all!

For further information please contact:

lynsey.mann@gmb.org.uk or melanie.bartlett@gmb.org.uk