

UK Government's Admission COVID Is Not Categorized as a 'Serious' Workplace Risk Is 'Beyond Belief'

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The government's admission that Covid-19 has not been categorised a "serious" workplace risk was described as "beyond belief" today.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has three categories of risk - serious, significant and minor.

Employment Minister Mims Davies said in a written statement that Covid-19 has been deemed by the HSE to be a "significant" risk to workers, as its effects are "non-permanent or reversible, non-progressive and any disability is temporary."

The HSE has received 134,000 complaints since the pandemic started but issued just 192 enforcement notices (0.1 per cent).

Andy McDonald, Labour's shadow employment rights and protections secretary, said:

"Given that almost 113,000 people have died from Covid-19 and as many as one in five people are suffering from the effects of 'long Covid,' it is beyond belief that the government does not consider the virus to be a serious risk to working people.

"With workplace health and safety enforcement almost non-existent and after a decade of cuts that has left agencies under-resourced, the government must urgently recategorise Covid-19 as a serious risk and bring in new safety rules and enforcement to protect workers' lives."

In the Commons, Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced that travellers required to quarantine in hotels in England from Monday - nearly a year after the pandemic hit Britain - will be charged £1,750 for their stay.

British nationals or residents returning from 33 "red list" countries will have to spend 10 days in one of 16 government-designated hotels and take two Covid tests.

Mr Hancock also announced fines of up to £10,000 for those who fail to quarantine. Arriving

travellers who lie on their passenger locator forms face up to 10 years in jail.

During the Commons session, Plaid Cymru MP Hywel Williams, asked whether Mr Hancock would commit to increasing sick pay to “enable working people to self-isolate safely.”

Mr Hancock said that there was a £500 self-isolation payment for those on low incomes who cannot work from home.

Shadow health secretary Jonathan Ashworth noted that Mr Hancock had “boasted of the £500 payment” last Tuesday, but that over 70 per cent of requests for financial support are rejected.

Four in 10 people who needed financial support to self-isolate at the end of 2020 said that they could not access it, a new Red Cross survey suggests.

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Featured image: A bus decorated with a rainbow and NHS stickers passes a Coronavirus related advert on a billboard in Falkirk, Central Scotland (taken from Morning Star)

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