

# Coronavirus – A joint statement with The Partnership on Health and Safety in Scotland

This is an extremely worrying time for businesses and workers. We know many workers, union reps and employers have questions and concerns about safe working – especially for those continuing to attend a place of work away from their homes.

This statement by the Partnership on Health and Safety in Scotland<sup>1</sup> (PHASS) is intended to clarify the position. The health and safety of workers remains paramount. Employers are and must continue to provide workers with information about risks to their health and the actions their employers must take.

We have high expectations of how fair work principles should be applied during the current crisis. This means an approach where workers, trade unions and employers work together constructively to reach the right decisions on all workplace issues that arise throughout this crisis. The dimensions of fair work as defined by the Fair Work Convention: effective voice; security; respect; opportunity and fulfilment, applied to the current context, offer a framework for taking these decisions.

Social distancing is a key public health measure supported by the Scottish Government to reduce the spread of infection but certain businesses are required to close by law. Businesses unsure of the guidance should visit: <https://www.gov.scot/news/social-distancing-guidance-for-business/>. Those that can safely stay open, keeping the country running, must also follow government guidance.

Most employers are going to great lengths to ensure social distancing. PHASS wishes to publicly support these efforts. But if it comes to the HSE's attention that employers are not complying with the relevant public health guidance (by enabling social distancing when it is practical to do so before personal protective measures), HSE will consider a range of actions ranging from providing specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices, including prohibition notices. Local authorities also have enforcement powers in specific premises under health and safety legislation and also powers – including to be able to close non-essential businesses – under new public health Coronavirus legislation in Scotland.

Where a worker has a genuine concern about health and safety which cannot be resolved through speaking with their employer or trade union, they should contact the relevant enforcement agency – either their local authority, or the HSE through <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>

<sup>1</sup> British Occupational Hygiene Society, CBI Scotland, , Federation of Small Business, Scotland, Health and Safety in the Voluntary Sector Scotland, Health and Safety Executive, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, Professional Organisations in Occupational Safety and Health in Scotland, Public Health Scotland, Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland, Scottish Council for Development and Industry, Scottish Government, Scottish Hazards, Society of Chief Environmental Health Officers, Scotland, Society of Personnel Directors, Scotland, STUC.

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