

How could ministers have not known sick pay was a massive coronavirus infection risk?



GMB Union informed Ministers as early as March that inadequate sick pay was a massive coronavirus infection risk in the care sector.

The union wrote to Health Secretary Matt Hancock on March 29 and Care Minister Helen Whately multiple times to warn them giving people a perverse incentive to come into work sick or while self-isolating would help spread the deadly virus.



Despite this, England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty today said "we hadn't recognised what in retrospect are obvious but were not recognised at the time..... Eg, people who were working at multiple homes. People without sick leave etc."

Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer, said:

"We wrote to the Health Secretary raising concerns that social care had been excluded from initial PPE guidance, excluded from regular and universal testing and denied access to full pay should workers need to be off work. They can't pretend they weren't aware.

"Common sense will tell you if people on already low wages are told they won't get paid if they have to take time off sick or to self-isolate, they have no other option than to go into work ill and risk spreading the virus around.

"If ministers had read and responded to our warnings they would have known this. They could have acted to save many lives.

"This Government should be ashamed they have neglected the care sector since the start of this pandemic - to say now that they did not recognise the issues faced by the workforce is an absolute insult."

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