

Gill Furniss MP

Paul Blomfield MP

Olivia Blake MP

Louise Haigh MP

Clive Betts MP

Miriam Joy Cates MP

House of Commons

SW12AA

9 October 2020

Dear Gill/Paul/Olivia/Louise/Clive/Miriam,

I write today to express the continued, indeed intensifying, concern from our membership with regards to the state of the test and trace system.

The results of the Quarterly Economic Survey – the UK’s largest independent survey of business sentiment and a leading indicator of UK GDP growth – were published last week and showed that business conditions remained weak in the third quarter of 2020. The results also showed that 46% of firms reported decreases in domestic sales, 47% reported decreases in export sales and 45% of firms reported a decrease in cash flow.

Many already struggling firms anticipate reduced demand or being forced to scale back operations as a result of further local or national restrictions. Any such decisions should be taken on the right data and with due consideration to local economic needs. There must be commensurate financial support for affected businesses who need to change the way they operate through no fault of their own. In addition to ongoing support, confidence must be built in the test and trace system to minimise the externalities of any restrictions.

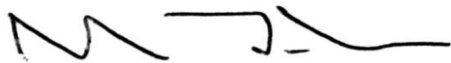
Establishing a fully operational test and trace system will open up industries currently forced to close or reduce capacity or opening hours and will ensure that as many businesses, educational institutions and community organisations as possible can function effectively. Without this, companies in a wide range of sectors, but especially those in retail, leisure, hospitality, and tourism in your constituency will inevitably cease trading, experience job losses, or continue to operate but at reduced capacity.

Our Chamber and businesses within our membership support the calls of the British Chambers of Commerce for the Government to go further and faster in developing its test and trace system. The Government could do this by:

- Linking more types of test, including rapid testing with follow-ups, to the NHS test and trace system
- Using the Government's purchasing power to support businesses in accessing, at a reasonable unit cost, routine testing for employees
- Utilising private sector and university partners to increase test-processing capacity
- Devolving resources and responsibilities to local and regional partners

I hope that we can count on your support in pushing the Government to successfully operationalise test and trace and would welcome further discussion about other measures which could restore business confidence.

Yours Sincerely,



Matt Jackson

President

Sheffield Chamber of Commerce

