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Vicky Ford MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Henry Faure Walker
Chairman, News Media Association
By email: santha@newsmediauk.org

16 June 2020

Dear Henry,

Thank you for your email of 30 March, addressed to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, about the granting of work permits for young people during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Your letter has been passed to this department and I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area. I apologise for the delay in responding.

May I begin by wishing both you and your colleagues well in these challenging and troubling times.

The distribution of newspapers is a key activity during the current outbreak. Distributors are concerned that their ability to ensure that papers are delivered is jeopardised by some local authorities that are refusing all applications for employment permits for young people of compulsory school age, and/or withdrawing existing permits.

It is for authorities to decide on individual cases, and safeguarding children's wellbeing is rightly their priority. They should, however, also take account of employers' measures to safeguard young workers and whether these are enough to address any safeguarding concerns, and decide case-by-case rather than impose a blanket ban. We hope that authorities and distributors can find ways for young workers to work in safe conditions.

Thank you for writing about this important matter. I hope this reply is useful.

Yours sincerely,

Vicky Ford MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families