

Rt. Honourable Boris Johnson  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

17<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## **COVID-19: Rights for pregnant women**

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you to urge you to introduce legislation to protect the health and safety, and rights of pregnant women who are working during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

According to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must ensure the nature of the work pregnant women do and working conditions must not put the pregnant mother or baby's health at risk. Employers are therefore required to carry out workplace risk assessments and do all that is necessary to remove or reduce any of risks that pregnant women may face at work.

Following government advice published on the 16 March 2020, those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 include those who are pregnant. Social distancing measures for pregnant women are therefore crucial in ensuring they reduce the social interaction between people and reduce the transmission of the COVID-19. Central to this advice for pregnant women who are working include working from home where possible, and that employers are encouraged to support this measure.

However, for employers looking for guidance on how best to support pregnant women from COVID-19, there is not one mention of how to do so in the Government's 'COVID-19: guidance for employers'. Employers need explicit and clear guidance on how to ensure provisions for working from home for pregnant women are made available as a priority. In cases where working from home is not possible, pregnant women should be placed on authorised leave from their work on full pay until the health risks and implications of COVID-19 have been eliminated, and with no detriment to their employment.

I ask your Government to demonstrate your commitment to the health and safety, and the workers' rights of pregnant women by introducing legislation to guarantee such additional rights for pregnant women during COVID-19. This would ensure employers abide by the measures, make the necessary health and safety provisions, and protect the rights of pregnant women.

Pregnant women should not be risking their health or their baby's health and cannot rely on employers being 'encouraged' to support measures to protect their health and safety during COVID-19. This practice must be clearly mandated by the Government.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope pregnant women urgently receive the reassurance and additional rights they need in order to follow the stringent measures advised by your Government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Rickhuss', written in a cursive style.

**Roy Rickhuss CBE**

**General Secretary**

Cc: Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary

Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, Minister for Women and Equalities

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care