

To The Secretary of State for Health,

House of Commons, London

SW1A 0AA

Monday 19th July 2021

Dear The Rt hon Sajid Javid,

We are writing to you as a group of academics, healthcare professionals, politicians, charities, campaigners and MPs who are deeply concerned about the safety of pregnant women. A poll conducted by Pregnant Then Screwed with over 9,000 pregnant women on Friday 9th July found that 41% have not had a single dose of the vaccine. Only 21% have had two doses of the vaccine. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and The Royal College of Midwives also expressed concern last week that the combination of restrictions easing from today, an increasing prevalence of COVID-19 in the community, and hesitancy to get vaccinated, will lead to a further increase in infections among pregnant women.

Whilst pregnant employees are encouraged to continue following the [occupational health guidance](#) to ensure they are safe in their workplace – and it remains a requirement for employers to carry out a risk assessment with pregnant employees to ensure a safe work environment - the most recent 'Working Safely during Covid-19' Government guidance states very clearly that social distancing guidance no longer applies in the workplace and that employees no longer have to work from home. This coupled with guidance that no longer makes it a legal requirement to wear masks in public, exposes this vulnerable group of women and their growing baby to a huge increase in risk.

Pregnant women are the only vulnerable adult group who have not been prioritised for the vaccine. Some people at high risk from COVID-19 can get an earlier appointment for their 2nd dose (at 8 weeks instead of 12 weeks) but pregnant women are not included in this group, even though they are a vulnerable group.

Fewer pregnant women have been vaccinated due to the original guidance, reversed in April, which suggested vaccines were not safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Research from the UK has found that should a pregnant woman become infected with Covid19 in her third trimester and develop symptoms, her baby is twice as likely to be born preterm, which can cause lifelong complications, and there is an increased risk of pre-eclampsia, needing emergency caesarean, and higher rates of stillbirth. She is also more likely to be admitted to [ICU](#). Data from the UK Obstetric Surveillance System ([UKOSS](#)) has found more than 100 pregnant women have been admitted to hospital in each of the last two weeks with COVID-19 and one in 10 of these women need intensive care. Crucially, no pregnant women who have

received both doses of vaccine have been admitted to hospital since the vaccination programme began. Most of those admitted recently have been unvaccinated, with only five women admitted who had received a single vaccine dose.

Pregnant women are scared for their safety and more must be done to reduce misinformation and increase vaccine take up among this group. With restrictions now relaxed, many are choosing to remain indoors if they can, to reduce the risk of potential infection. Some pregnant women have been given conflicting and misleading advice about the vaccine, leading to high rates of anxiety and high levels of vaccine hesitancy amongst this group. Indeed, Pregnant Then Screwed research found that 75% feel anxious for their safety now that restrictions have been lifted. You can read about some of those experiences [here](#).

This is an alarming situation which demands urgent action. Please could you detail to us in your reply:

1. Whether data is being collected and published on vaccine hesitancy and take up among pregnant women?
2. What the process is for ensuring health professionals (a) are discussing with pregnant women the risks and benefits of the covid-19 vaccine and (b) have up to date information on the risks and benefits of the vaccine?
3. What steps are being taken to reduce misinformation and vaccine hesitancy among pregnant women and increase take-up?

We are calling on you to take the following steps to ensure pregnant women are effectively protected and supported.

1. Prevent the further spread of misinformation about the risks and benefits of the Covid19 vaccines in pregnancy by ensuring all health professionals and those in vaccine centres are given the most up to date research and data, and they should be encouraged to have proactive conversations with pregnant women about the vaccine.
2. Urgently take steps to reduce the gap between the first and second dose of the vaccine for pregnant women from 12 weeks to 8 weeks.
3. Design and deliver a Government-led campaign to encourage pregnant women to get vaccinated
4. Enhance the Government guidance: *Working Safely During Covid19* to include a specific section on pregnant women which stipulates that they should work from home where possible, must be enabled to remain 2 meters away from others at all times (including their commute to work), and they must be equipped with appropriate PPE. If this is not possible then they must be suspended from work on full pay, in line with existing health and safety regulations.
5. Extend the furlough scheme for pregnant women until 2022 so that all employers can reclaim 80% of the cost of suspending a pregnant woman on safety grounds.
6. Ensure the HSE are collecting data on breaches of health and safety with regards to pregnant women and that they are taking enforcement action where necessary

7. Allow vaccination for those under the age of 18 if they are pregnant.

Yours Sincerely,

Name	Organisation
Joeli Brearley	Founder and Director, Pregnant Then Screwed
Gill Walton	Chief Executive, Royal College of Midwives
Dr Edward Morris, Gynaecologists	President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and
Felicia Willow	CEO, Fawcett Society
Mary-Ann Stephenson	Director, Women's Budget Group
Frances O'Grady	General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress
Sophie Livingstone MBE	CEO, Little Village
Justine Roberts	CEO, Mumsnet
Dr Clare Wenham, Economics and Political Science	Associate Professor in Global Health Policy, London School of
Adrienne Burgess	Joint CEO/ Head of Research, The Fatherhood Institute.
Dr Helen Pankhurst	Centenary Action Group

Members of Parliament

Name	Party
Wera Hobhouse MP	Liberal Democrat
Rupa Huq MP	Labour
Mick Whitley MP	Labour
Kim Johnson MP	Labour
Angela Crawley MP	SNP
Rosie Duffield MP	Labour
Claire Hanna MP	SDLP
Derek Twigg MP	Labour
Valerie Vaz MP	Labour
Yvonne Fovargue MP	Labour
Tim Farron MP	Liberal Democrat
Barry Gardiner MP	Labour

Gareth Thomas MP	Labour and Cooperative
Ian Byrne MP	Labour
Sarah Olney MP	Liberal Democrat
Mohammad Yasin MP	Labour
Claudia Webbe MP	Labour
Caroline Noakes MP	Conservative
Stella Creasy MP	Labour and Cooperative
Diana Johnson MP	Labour
Layla Moran MP	Liberal Democrat
Daisy Cooper MP	Liberal Democrat
Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP	Labour
Caroline Lucas MP	Green
Emma Lewell Buck MP	Labour
Angela Eagle MP	Labour
Dan Jarvis MP	Labour
Debbie Abrahams MP	Labour
Tony Lloyd MP	Labour
Kevin Brennan MP	Labour
Liz Saville Roberts MP	Plaid Cymru
Christine Jardine MP	Liberal Democrat
Alison Thewliss MP	SNP
Wendy Chamberlain MP	Liberal Democrat