



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

23 October 2020

Dear Chairs and Chief Executives of NHS Trusts,

Re: Maternity restrictions as a result of COVID-19

I hope you are well. May I first thank you all for the substantial and enduring efforts Trusts have taken to protect patients and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. NHS hospital staff have saved lives and protected our most vulnerable. Thank you.

I also want to thank all those Trusts who have taken robust steps to ensure that while hospitals remain COVID-19 secure, pregnant women are able to be accompanied by a birth partner at scans and during all stages of labour. This is in line with Government guidance and accords with the advice of The Royal College of Midwives and The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Moreover, ensuring balanced provisions for pregnancies has, in many cases, helped mothers preserve their mental health, prevented a great deal of maternity-related trauma, and supported the best possible clinical outcomes for mother and baby.

However, there are unfortunately some Trusts that have not implemented the Government guidelines, and this has caused unacceptable distress to many women. I am therefore writing to ask whether your Trust has implemented the relevant Government guidelines, and what steps you are taking to adhere to them in full if your Trust has not done so already.

Similarly, I write to urge all Trusts considering re-imposing restrictions as a result of the rise of cases not to do so. This course of action would not be supported by maternity practitioners, and any indication about what advice your Trust is following would be much appreciated. The majority of women in their third trimester, and indeed their households, are shielding as a result of the increase in COVID-19 cases. It would be wrong to re-impose restrictions, when women are asking for one person from their household or bubble to support them during all stages of labour and the 12- and 20-week scans. During the national lockdown last Spring at least one hospital did not restrict partners and did not have a single outbreak of COVID-19, so this can be done safely.

As always, I look forward to working with you to ensure that pregnant women in every part of the country get the care and support they need and deserve at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alicia Kearns".

Alicia