

IS IT SAFE FOR YOU TO GO TO WORK?

After last Sunday's government announcement the current situation may look quite confusing for workers. While many are asked to return to their workplaces the Coronavirus outbreak is far from being under control.

The first thing you need to know is that **legally your employer can't force you to go back to work if you believe is not safe for your health**. More specifically, under **Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996**, employees have the right to remain away from the workplace if, in their opinion, the prevailing circumstances represent a real risk of serious and imminent danger to health and safety.

What's the situation in your workplace? Are you able to keep at least 2 metres apart from your work mates? Is your employer providing adequate PPE (Personal Protective equipment, such as masks, gloves, etc)? Have you or any of your colleagues had the virus? Have you been tested? If the answer to any of this questions is no, you have good reasons to be careful and to avoid putting you or your family at risk by staying at home. If you don't feel safe to go to work then don't go. State your reasons in writing and send an email to your manager, cc-ing HR.

However, Section 44 is not magic and laws can be tricky. It's not uncommon for bosses to ignore health and safety and they may decide to go through an expensive legal process that not everybody can afford.

Joining a Union might be a good idea but at the end of the day the only real solution to exploitation in the workplace is collective organising among workers. If you want to protect yourself and your colleagues, don't just rely on the letter of legislation, organise!

Our power is in the numbers. A boss can isolate an individual to make an example of. What they can't do is make an example of 20, 100, 1000 people at once and deal with the fuss caused by a large number of workers shaming them on social media, picketing, blockading the phone lines and email with massed call and queries etc.

Talk to your fellow workers and discuss the different ways to pressure your bosses. If you don't know where to start or you need help don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

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