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*Protecting human rights
in childbirth*
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Birthrights
Union House
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0300 400 30 400

Sent by email

The Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
CC: Dr Caroline Johnson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

21st September 2022

Dear Dr Coffey

Making the NHS the 'best place in the world to give birth'

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. As leading representatives of the maternity sector, we hope to work with you to ensure the delivery of a world leading, safe, personalised, equitable, and high-quality rights respecting maternity service.

In the 2019 Conservative Manifesto your party committed to making the 'NHS the best place in the world to give birth', which we welcomed, together with the 2021 Health and Social Care Committee recommendation to increase investment in maternity services to £250-300 million.

This is now critical to addressing the poor maternity care which has well-evidenced long term and ongoing physical and mental health implications for those giving birth, their babies, and their families. Today, on the day that the independent investigation into East Kent maternity services was due to publish its now-delayed final report, the maternity sector is calling for urgent and meaningful intervention from the Government.

We ask you to continue building on your actions to date by committing to the following:

- 1. Accept the Health and Social Care Committee recommendation** to increase resources across the NHS and set out a workforce plan with measures to increase

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retention and support for staff. The long-standing staffing crisis is putting pressure on maternity services. Midwives are leaving in record numbers due to being unable to give the care they are trained to give, while there are shortages of other parts of the maternity workforce, including obstetricians, sonographers, and neonatal staff. The Ockenden report, published this year, also outlined how short staffing played a significant role in the scandals that occurred at Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital.

2. **Renew your commitment to implementing the recent Women's Health Strategy** that seeks to be ambitious in its approach to improving the quality and accessibility of services and information around women's health.
3. **Ensure that the learning and recommendations are taken forward from the Maternity Transformation Programme (Better Births)** (including the rollout of continuity of carer as a default mode of maternity care), the NHS Long Term Plan, the Ockenden report and the upcoming East Kent Hospitals Maternity Services report) to improve the quality of maternity services and outcomes.

We would be delighted to meet with you to discuss our collective work and impact to date and ways we can work together for a maternity service that delivers quality, safe, and rights respecting maternity care.

Yours sincerely

Francesca Treadaway, Policy & Engagement Director, Birthrights

Kath Abrahams, Chief Executive, Tommy's

Ruth Bender Atik, National Director, The Miscarriage Association

Catherine Benhura, Founder & Director, Mum's Pride CIC

Ros Bragg, Director, Maternity Action

Christina Brown, Founder & CEO, The Motivational Mums Club

Joeli Brierley, Founder and Director, Pregnant then Screwed

Jo Dagustun, AIMS

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Professor Soo Downe, University of Central Lancashire

Dr Alan C Fenton, Consultant Neonatologist, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust

Dr. Alain Gregoire, Honorary President and Founding Chair, Maternal Mental Health Alliance

Dr Kathryn Gutteridge, Midwifery Unit Network

Gill Harrison, Professional Officer (Ultrasound), The Society and College of Radiographers

Clea Harmer, Chief Executive, Sands

Elizabeth Hutton, Chief Executive, Kicks Count

Sandra Igwe, Founder & CEO, The Motherhood Group

Kay King, Movement Director, White Ribbon Alliance UK

Professor Jenny Kurinczuk, Director, National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit (NPEU)

Dr Michael Lane FRCGP, London Maternity Lead, Royal College of General Practitioners

Judy Ledger, CEO & Founder, Baby Lifeline

Caroline Lee-Davey, Chief Executive, Bliss

Shauna Leven, Chief Executive, Twins Trust

Nicky Lyon, Co-founder, Campaign for Safer Births

Angela McConville, Chief Executive, National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

Mary Newburn, Convenor, Charities' and Service Users' Maternity Continuity of Carer Network

Ayala Ochert, Co-Chair, Better Breastfeeding

Elliott Rae, Founder, Music Football Fatherhood

Laura-Rose Thorogood, Founder and Director, LGBT Mummies

Maureen Treadwell, Trustee and Co-Founder, Birth Trauma Association

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Nikki Wilson, Chief Executive, Make Birth Better
Carina White, Co-Founder, Black Mums Upfront

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