



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Maria Caulfield MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Primary Care and Patient Safety*

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By email to: bapm@rcpch.ac.uk

14 October 2021

Dear Helen,

Thank you for your letter of 20 July 2021 to my predecessor Nadine Dorries, regarding the need for a National Neonatal Safety Champion. I apologise for the delay in responding to your letter.

I have recently started as the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care). My responsibilities include maternity care.

I would like to thank you and the British Association of Perinatal Medicine for all your work to improve standards of perinatal care. I'm particularly pleased to hear of your work with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health as well as the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to support and guide neonatal practice during the COVID pandemic.

I would also like to underline how committed I am to patient safety, eradicating avoidable harm and making the NHS the safest place in the world to give birth. The Government's Maternity Ambition is to halve the 2010 rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies occurring during or soon after birth by 2025. The ambition also includes reducing the rate of pre-term births from 8% to 6%.

The NHS Long Term Plan includes new measures to improve safety, quality and continuity of care that will help achieve our ambition. We have already made good progress in reducing the number of neonatal deaths. According to the Office for National Statistics, there has been a 29% reduction in the neonatal mortality rate for babies born over the 24-week gestational age of viability. However, we are aware that more work is needed to achieve our ambition by 2025.

I'm glad to hear that you have reviewed the updated Maternity and Neonatal Safety Champions toolkit and the Maternity and Neonatal Safety Improvement Programme. The refreshed national Maternity and Neonatal Safety Improvement Programme ensures that themes emerging from learning nationally are turned universally into changes to clinical practice, behaviour and service models locally.

I agree that multidisciplinary working is essential to ensure safer care for both mothers and babies. It is also important for maternity, obstetric and neonatal services to work together to share expertise and help improve outcomes.

Therefore, I have asked officials to look into the processes required for appointing a National Neonatal Safety Champion who would work alongside the Obstetrics and Midwifery Maternity Safety Champions as soon as is practicable.

I would like to finish by asking you to share my thanks to all the organisations who have highlighted the need for a Neonatal Safety Champion and their continued work to improve maternity and neonatal safety and care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria', with a stylized flourish above the name.

**MARIA CAULFIELD MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PRIMARY CARE**