



October 2020

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about maternity services and care for families that have experienced the loss of their baby. Indeed, I have been involved with issues around this subject for most of my time as your MP and one of the first debates I held in Parliament was on baby loss.

I therefore wholeheartedly agree that every woman and their baby should receive personalised, high quality care. One of the key commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) published in January 2019 is to make the NHS one of the safest places in the world to give birth. The Government has set out a range of new measures to deliver its ambition to halve the rates of stillbirths, neonatal deaths and brain injuries that occur during or soon after labour, and maternal deaths by 2025. To help meet this target, I'm pleased we are recruiting 3,000 more midwives.

The Government has appointed two expert national maternity safety champions and established an £8 million Maternity Safety Training fund to support safety training for all maternity staff. A new Health Care Safety Investigation Branch will carry out high quality investigations in maternity care and new maternity ratings will be published across England to help identify those areas needing improvement.

I understand that losing a much-loved and wanted child or having a sick or premature baby can take an emotional and physical toll on any parent and the Government has committed to investing £365 million between 2015/16 and 2020/21 to improve specialist perinatal mental health services. I am pleased to say that the Government has announced that every single stillbirth, neonatal death, suspected brain injury or maternal death will be independently investigated.

The Government is giving women more choice, making services safer and helping to shape maternity care for years to come.

Women from the poorest backgrounds and mothers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups are unfortunately at higher risk of their baby dying in the womb or soon after birth. Through the long-term plan, the NHS will accelerate action to achieve 50% reductions in stillbirth, maternal mortality, neonatal mortality and serious brain injury by 2025. An independent evaluation of the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle, which supports the ambitions set out in the Better Births Strategy, has shown a 20% reduction in the stillbirth rate at maternity units where it was implemented.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**

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The NHS is rolling out the care bundle to every maternity unit in England, with an expansion focusing on preventing pre-term birth. These measures seek to reduce the discrepancy in maternity experiences for women from different areas and backgrounds.

The Department of Health is funding Sands, the stillbirth charity, to work with charities and royal colleges to produce a National Bereavement Care Pathway, which will reduce the variation in quality of maternity and bereavement services throughout the NHS. This will cover a range of circumstances, including miscarriage, stillbirth, pregnancy terminations for medical reasons, and neonatal death. I understand that these new standards have been rolled out nationally since October 2018.

Additionally, NHS England has been guiding maternity services on the introduction of the Better Births recommendations and is embarking on a national programme to seek feedback from families who lose a baby, in order to develop the most appropriate and modern bereavement services.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**