



October 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about baby loss and parental bereavement. This issue unfortunately affects many people, and I offer my sympathy to those who have suffered miscarriages, stillbirths, or the loss of a child. I applaud my colleagues who have recounted this painful experience in their lives in Parliament to raise awareness of baby loss and inspire changes in policy. It is an issue I have been involved with since I entered Parliament in 2010 and was the subject I held my first ever “Westminster Hall Debate” on nearly a decade ago.

The UK is one of the safest places in the world to give birth. However, I know that the Government recognises that there is still more to be done. The Department of Health and Social Care has set out a range of 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 relative to levels in 2010.

Since 2010, the stillbirth rate has reduced 19.3%, the neonatal mortality rate for babies born over the 24-week gestational age of viability has reduced by 36%, and the proportion of babies born preterm has reduced from 8% in 2017 to 7.7 per cent in 2021.

Where progress to reduce adverse outcomes has been slower, the Government has introduced several targeted interventions, such as the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle and the Brain Injury Reduction Programme.

Since 2016, the Government has provided more than £250,000 to SANDs, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity, to work with other baby loss charities and royal colleges to produce and support the rollout of a National Bereavement Care Pathway to reduce the variation in the quality of bereavement care provided by the NHS.

I welcomed the publication of the Women’s Health Strategy in July 2022 that made several commitments related to baby loss and maternity care. This included a pledge to introduce a pregnancy loss certificate in England as recommended by the interim update of the independent Pregnancy Loss Review. The Government has announced that a new Certificate of Pregnancy Loss will be available for bereaved parents to apply for from October this year.

The final report of the Independent Pregnancy Loss Review, ‘Care and Support when baby loss occurs before 24 weeks gestation’ was published in July. The report makes 72 recommendations for improving the quality and experience of care for miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar



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pregnancy and terminations of pregnancy for medical reasons. Alongside this, the Government has published its response which outlines the immediate steps being taken to improve care for pregnancy loss.

All parents who experience pregnancy and baby loss and would like specialist psychological support should be able to access it. I can assure you that the Government is committed to expanding and transforming mental health services in England so that people, including those affected by the loss of a baby, get the help and support they need.

The NHS Long Term Plan seeks to increase mental health support funding by £2.3 billion per year by 2023/24. As part of this I know that care provided by specialist perinatal mental health services will be available from preconception to 24 months after birth.

The Government is focused on ensuring that bereaved parents feel able to navigate the complexities of the healthcare system and will put an emphasis on supporting them through their grief, recognising their loss, acknowledging their pain and ensuring they feel heard.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY