



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Nadine Dorries MP
Minister of State for Patient Safety,
Suicide Prevention and Mental Health

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

020 7210 4850

PO-1266149

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

29 October 2020

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 October to Matt Hancock on behalf of your constituent, **Ms Kristina Cross** about maternity services during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We know these are challenging times for everyone, and even more so for pregnant women and new parents, like **Ms Cross** who are understandably likely to feel more worry and stress during this time of pandemic and lockdown.

The Department has worked with colleagues in NHS England and NHS Improvement, and the Royal Colleges to produce guidance for healthcare professionals and for pregnant women and their families. This means that there may be some changes to how, when and where women can attend essential routine appointments and how safe care and support are given. Pregnant women will be told about any changes by their local maternity service.

Their local maternity team may reduce routine appointments, provide more home visits or deliver some care and support over the phone or by video to reduce the number of times people need to travel and attend hospital/clinics. Women will be informed of any changes to their care in advance.

The latest questions and answers guidance is available on the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) website, www.rcog.org.uk, by searching for 'covid-19 virus infection and pregnancy'.

Please note this guidance is regularly reviewed and updated as new evidence emerges.

Furthermore, the Department is funding several studies researching the impact of COVID-19 on maternity and neonatal care to ensure rapid learning and the best care possible for women and babies during these uncertain times.

The new *Framework to assist NHS trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services* was published on 8 September. We expect NHS trusts to use this guidance and consider as a priority how

access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women can be reintroduced as soon as possible whilst maintaining the safety of all service users, staff and visitors. The framework can be found at www.england.nhs.uk by searching for its title.

The Chief Midwifery Officer, the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer for England and the National Clinical Director for Maternity and Women's Health wrote to all NHS Directors of Nursing and Heads of Midwifery in England on 19 September. This correspondence thanked the Directors for the fact that the majority of services have quickly implemented this guidance and relaxed visiting restrictions, and reinforced the instruction that these changes must happen now so that birth partners are able to attend maternity units for appointments and births.

I hope this reply is helpful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Dorries', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

NADINE DORRIES