



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Department for Business,
Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E enquiries@beis.gov.uk
W www.gov.uk

Our ref: N10#2020/30248
Your ref:

01 October 2020

Catherine McKinnell MP
Chair, Petitions Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your letter dated 22 September regarding the Government's response to recommendations made by the Petitions Select Committee in respect of their inquiry into an online petition to extend paid Maternity in the light of Covid-19. I note that the Committee has secured a provisional date for a Westminster Hall debate and I look forward to discussing this matter further at that time.

I am pleased to inform you that my officials met with representatives of the baby group sector on 23 September, along with colleagues from the Department of Health and Social Care. This was an opportunity to understand the challenges facing this sector and to provide reassurance that Government is supportive of the baby and toddler group sector while emphasising the importance of maintaining social distance measures in order to protect lives, including those of parents and their children.

As you mention in your letter, there is a very wide range of classes and groups which are informally referred to as baby and toddler groups. There is a wealth of Government guidance available and each group should follow the guidance which best reflects the service they are offering.

For example, support groups for new parents are exempt from the legal gatherings limit of 6. Exemptions guidance has been published¹. Support groups can take place anywhere other than private dwellings, but to be a support group falling within this exemption it must be organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body. A maximum number of 15 people can attend such groups, excluding anyone who is working in facilitating the group or attending for work purposes. Children are included in the group of 6 limit. There are also guidelines for indoor play areas, issued by The British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions, covering the need for social distancing and thorough cleaning.

I wholeheartedly agree that baby and toddler groups are important to parents and very young children and would like to reassure you that Government is working hard to make sure that groups can reopen safely for everyone.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>

I hope you find this information helpful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Scully', positioned above the printed name.

PAUL SCULLY MP

Minister for Small Business, Consumers & Labour Markets
Minister for London