



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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

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The Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee

6 May 2022

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your correspondence on 1 March 2022 and for expressing interest and support in the recently announced Maternity Disparities Taskforce. I hope the information below answers your questions about the Taskforce.

As you are aware, I announced the plans to establish a Maternity Disparities Taskforce on 23 February 2022 to tackle disparities for mothers and babies and reduce maternal and neonatal deaths by improving access to effective pre-conception and maternity care for women from ethnic minorities and those living in the most deprived areas. We know that improving women's health in the run-up to pregnancy and improving the support they receive are vital to improving health outcomes for mothers and their babies.

The Taskforce's membership is wide reaching, bringing together experts from across the health system, government departments and the voluntary sector to tackle disparities in maternal and neonatal outcomes. I recognise the importance of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders. The first Taskforce meeting took place on 8 March 2022 and included representation from several government departments, NHS England and Improvement, various Royal Colleges, the Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK, the National Child Mortality Database, and other key stakeholders.

I also recognise the importance of ensuring that the voices and views of women and patients are represented within the Taskforce. To ensure this, I have invited the Health and Wellbeing Alliance Maternity Consortium to be a Permanent Member of the Taskforce with three seats allocated per meeting. The Maternity Consortium is co-led by Tommy's and Sands and includes the National Maternity Voices, FiveXMore, Muslim Women's Network UK, LGBT Mummies Tribe and the Pregnancy and Babies Charities Network. I have included the Maternity Consortium as a Permanent Member to ensure that voices of a range of charities are heard in the Taskforce.

The Taskforce will look to build on already existing systems to improve pre-conception health and early access to maternity services. The Taskforce will examine learning from existing interventions such as those in the NHS Long Term Plan, Equity & Equality Guidance for Local Maternity Systems, Family Nurse Partnership, and the NHS Core20PLUS5 approach to reduce

health disparities. As part of this, the Taskforce will explore workforce related issues, and structural racism and racial bias.

Although the Maternity Disparities Taskforce will not have a specific timetable for reporting or making recommendations, it will seek to drive ambitious reductions in disparities by monitoring data, research and delivery of existing interventions, supporting the spread of 'what works well', identifying new challenges, and influencing system partners to continuously improve and holding them to account for agreed actions.

In setting up this Taskforce, I envisaged it to be ambitious and a place to collectively strive to deliver real change. To that end, the Taskforce meetings will be held every two months for 90 minutes. This will keep the important issue of maternal disparities at the forefront of our minds and ensure we are constantly looking to progress. The meetings will be a platform to analyse key priorities, delivery of actions, focus on specific themes, and look at emerging evidence of systemic issues and new approaches to address them.

We are hoping to hold the second Taskforce meeting on 16th May 2022 where the Terms of Reference will be discussed and formalised with members. Following this meeting and agreement with members, we plan to publish the Terms of Reference for the Taskforce.

I hope the above information has given you an appropriate overview of the aims and purpose of the Taskforce.

I hope this letter has been able to answer your questions and has reassured you of the positive impact the Taskforce strives to bring to mothers and babies and tackle maternal disparities across England.

Yours sincerely,

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

MARIA CAULFIELD MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PRIMARY CARE AND
PATIENT SAFETY