

Nadia Griffin – Written evidence (PRT0079)

I wanted to send something across around preterm birth. I am not a healthcare professional, but I am the Coordinator for the Black Country Maternity & Neonatal Voices Partnership which engages with Neonatal families around their experiences of Maternity & Neonatal Care. I also have a lived experience, having had 27 week twins 11 years ago and volunteer for Bliss supporting parents as a Bliss Champion and advocating for them where I can.

The one thing that seems to come out time and again about a Neonatal experience is the lack of understanding and education provided to parents and the fact that the Maternity & Neonatal divisions work separately in the care they provide to families. Until this is addressed and Maternity staff are fully aware of the implications of babies being born in the wrong hospital that does not have the provision to provide adequate care for these preterm babies, then women and birthing people will continue to be uneducated and unsupported when they do present at hospitals at risk of preterm birth.

In the Black Country we have been made aware of the work of Professor Don Sharkey and his work around transferring exutero, these really premature babies and driving home the importance of them being transferred inutero. The under 27 week pathway is looking to ensure that the right babies are born at the right time in the right place, however any approach to this needs to include Maternity staff as well, given the importance of ensuring that the women are at the correct hospital and when they are advised to go to a Level 3 Neonatal Unit, they are not turned away by the Maternity staff as it is not the hospital they have booked at.

As for the socioeconomic inequalities I think consideration needs to be given to pregnant women to ensure they are allowed time off from work

to attend scheduled and possibly urgent appointments, but also to ensure they can get there and can afford to either travel or pay to park at the hospital. The cost of having a Neonatal Journey is well known and the Neonatal Care Leave Act will hopefully go some way to alleviate the pressures for those that are eligible for it, however there will still be certain families that will not be eligible for support and that will have carried over from their pregnancy as well. If the bus fare or travelling just to go and be checked is beyond your reach then these women will not attend until it is really urgent or possibly too late.

I understand that there are priority areas of research, but actually, just going back to basics and looking at educating all families, ensuring pregnant women and birthing people feel supported by their employers when they are pregnant and that they can afford to be checked might go some way to mitigate some issues.

Making sure that Maternity & Neonatal work together, not just on paper but in reality. Where there is a high likelihood of preterm birth, that the Neonatal Teams are brought in and can counsel and meet the parents and be involved in that already hugely stressful process to try and just calm things down. There is nothing worse than learning in the middle of so much chaos that your babies need to be transferred, not just down the corridor, but to a hospital 10 Miles away or more. This goes against supporting the women and birthing person to ensure they have a support network around them as well.

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