



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Steve Brine MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care

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Your Ref: ZA30091

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Sir Mark Hendrick MP
By email to: mark.hendrick.mp@parliament.uk

1 2 NOV 2018

Dear Sir Mark,

Thank you for your correspondence of 19 October on behalf of a number of your constituents about GP contracts and postnatal mental health checks.

I appreciate your constituents' concerns.

I met Nick Wilkie, Chief Executive of the National Childbirth Trust (NCT), on 15 October to discuss the charity's concerns about postnatal mental health and the inclusion of the six-week maternal postnatal check in the General Medical Services contract.

We have asked for the NCT's concerns to be considered in the contract negotiations for 2019/20. Any changes to GP contracting arrangements to specifically include the requirement to carry out the six-week maternal postnatal check need to be negotiated with the General Practitioners Committee of the British Medical Association, as part of the annual contract negotiations. The details of those negotiations are not generally discussed until an agreement on the way forward has been reached. However, GPs are still required to provide the appropriate postnatal services to their patients.

More generally, promoting good maternal and perinatal mental health is a priority for this Government. We are committed to improving services so that women are able to access the right care at the right time and close to home.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance on postnatal care agrees that the six-to-eight week appointment by GPs is a particularly crucial element of postnatal care. NICE guidance is clear that this check should incorporate an assessment of how a woman has made the transition to motherhood, including her mental health.

We are investing £365million in perinatal mental health services, and NHS England is leading a transformation programme to ensure that by 2020/21 at least 30,000 more women each year are able to access specialist mental health care if they need it. A key element of NHS England's perinatal mental health transformation programme is to increase awareness and skills across the workforce, including GPs. The toolkit published by the Royal College of General Practitioners in July 2016 aims to support GPs in caring for women with perinatal mental illness and is an important contribution in this area.

In May this year, NHS England confirmed that new and expectant mothers will be able to access specialist perinatal mental health community services in every part of the country by April 2019.

NHS England is working with Public Health England and other partners to improve postnatal services.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Brine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

STEVE BRINE