

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

6th March 2019

Dear Constituent,
RE: PREMATURE BABIES.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of premature babies; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

I understand that having a sick or premature baby can take an emotional and physical toll on any parent and I recognise that well-organised, effective and responsive neonatal care can make a vital difference. That is why the Government is committed to the provision of high quality neonatal services established on evidence-based good practice.

The Government has provided over £37 million in capital funding over two years to improve facilities in maternity and neonatal care units across the country. This included projects to create parent accommodation with bedrooms, kitchen, and sitting areas and en-suite bathrooms to provide a comfortable environment for parents and their families.

The Government is working hard to make the NHS one of the safest places in the world to give birth. In 2015, a national ambition to halve the rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries occurring during, or soon after birth, by 2030 was announced. To support this, the Government provided £2.24 million to enable trusts to buy monitoring and training equipment to improve safety in maternity and neonatal units. The Department of Health and Social Care is also investing over £1 million in training programmes to make sure staff have the skills and confidence they need to deliver world-leading safe care.

Additionally, the Government has committed £365 million between 2015/16 and 2020/21 to improve specialist perinatal mental health services. In 2016, the independent National Maternity Review set out several recommendations designed to make maternity care safer and give women greater control and choice. A Maternity Transformation Programme Board has been established to drive forward this vision for maternity services.

The Government currently has no plans to extend Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for the parents of premature or sick babies who spend time in neo-natal care. SMP is designed to help working women during pregnancy and after childbirth by providing a measure of earnings replacement, enabling them to stop work for a reasonable period around the birth to prepare for, and recover from, childbirth. Working women are generally able to choose when they want their payments to begin and this ensures sufficient time off to allow for different situations, including instances where babies are delivered at an earlier date and where babies need hospital care following birth.

The Government will work with NHS England to consider the recommendations of the Bliss report. Ministers will continue to work closely with Bliss and others to improve neonatal services, so that all premature and sick babies receive the best possible care.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE