



*Protecting human rights
in childbirth*

Registered address:
Birthrights
The Apex, 2 Sheriffs Orchard
Coventry CV1 3PP
0300 400 3400

6th August 2024

Dear Mr Streeting,

We are writing from the charity Birthrights, which seeks to protect and uphold the human rights of all women and birthing people in the UK.

The widespread racist and Islamophobic violence over the weekend and into this week have been heartbreaking and terrifying to witness. We know that more attacks are planned over the coming weeks.

We are deeply concerned that there may well be women and birthing people who are due to give birth imminently in areas that are being targeted by the far right, resulting in a significant risk that:

- women and birthing people choosing a home birth (protected under article 8 of the Human Rights Act) will be told that it is unsafe for a midwife to attend their birth
- women and birthing people in labour may not feel safe to leave their home to birth in their local hospital or birth centre
- women and birthing people may not be able to access other community-based care including postnatal home visits, the timing of which are absolutely critical

Both of the first two risks increase the possibility of women and birthing people feeling their only option is an unassisted birth.

Within this context, we are writing to ask what action you are taking to work with hospitals and Trusts to ensure that maternity staff are safe and that they are able to reach women and birthing people in their communities.

We urge NHS Trusts to proactively reach out to women and birthing people in their communities about their plans to ensure continued access to care. This means taking extra steps to get maternity teams out to people in their homes and helping women and birthing people to reach hospitals and birthing centres safely, without harm.

We hope to hear from you soon on any action you are taking to ensure the rights and safety of women and birthing people during pregnancy and birth

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and the immediate post-natal period are centred in how maternity services respond to this crisis.

Yours sincerely,

Shanthi Gunesequera and Janaki Mahadevan
Co-CEOs, Birthrights