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Date: 26 June 2025

The Rt Hon West Streeting
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

VIA EMAIL ONLY: west.streeting.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Mr Streeting,

Re: National Maternity Investigation

We write on behalf of numerous bereaved families whom we represent.

On 23 June 2025, as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, you announced a rapid national investigation into NHS maternity and neonatal services, and the establishment of a National Maternity and Neonatal Taskforce.

Despite the tragic circumstances which have led to this investigation, on behalf of our clients we welcome your announcement that a focus area of the investigation into issues facing maternity care in England is that of the devastating inequalities that women from Black and minority ethnic and deprived backgrounds face. Our clients, many of whom come from such backgrounds, have suffered bereavement, physical and psychiatric injury, all of which is often compounded by racial discrimination.

Contemporary research continues to raise alarm about NHS treatments delivered to women of Black and Asian backgrounds. For instance, in 2021, MBRRACE-UK¹ reported that “*For babies of Asian and Asian British ethnicity: stillbirth and neonatal mortality rates are both around 60% higher than for babies of White ethnicity*”. In addition, MBRRACE-UK² have further found in 2020 that “*while stillbirth rates have reduced by over 16% and neonatal mortality has reduced by 11% between 2013 and 2018*” and “*the rates of death are falling more slowly among these babies*”

¹ MBRRACE-UK_Perinatal_Surveillance_Report_2019_-_Final_v2.pdf

² Microsoft Word - MBRRACE-UK Perinatal Surveillance Report 2018 - final v2

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compared with White babies, suggesting national safety initiatives are failing to reach many women from higher risk ethnicities”.

In May 2022, Birthrights published the findings of the “Systemic Racism, not Broken Bodies” Inquiry. It found that *“feeling unsafe during maternity care was the most prominent theme....Participants in our inquiry told us that racism and racial discrimination has a direct impact on their sense of safety”* and that *“Black and Brown people do not feel safe during their care, regardless of clinical outcome”*. They further found that *“racist attitudes and behaviours by caregivers- manifesting as stereotypes, microaggressions and assumptions about risk based on race- are having a serious detrimental effect on people’s maternity experience”*. One of their key calls for action is to *“put Black and Brown women and birthing people in control of their care and respect their dignity, choices and concerns”*.

The inequalities that these women – and our clients - face in maternity care are well-recognised and well-documented, and have had devastating impacts on our clients mentally, emotionally, and physically. We urge the investigation team to shine a spotlight on the life-changing inequalities that minority women face, in what is one of the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

As we know from past investigations and inquiries (for example the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in which we were involved on behalf of the parents), tackling racial discrimination is a catalyst for structural, lasting change and a better system for all.

The NHS, as it takes all of us from cradle to grave, deserves the change that you are now leading. With a focus on race, this investigation has the potential to leave a lasting, positive legacy on our public healthcare system, which touches so many lives every day. We invite the investigation team to face the issue of racial discrimination in the NHS and propose and implement guidelines and recommendations to eradicate any discriminatory practices facing women like our clients.

In announcing an investigation like this, our clients believe they are on the same page as you, in wanting a fairer, safer, and more sustainable maternity and neonatal care system and one which you and your department can be proud of having brought about.

Our clients wish to discuss how we can assist you through this Inquiry through a meeting with you and your team. We have copied in Baroness Lawrence OBE who we know continues to have a keen interest, and involvement in, matters affecting racial inequality. Together with Baroness Lawrence we have the legal expertise and experience of tackling institutional racism, and clients who despite their tremendous loss, would be willing to inform your Inquiry so that no other families will suffer the loss and heartbreak they did.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Imran Khan and Partners
Solicitors

Cc: Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon OBE