

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-603
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/00088/15

William Powell AM
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Chair - petitions committee
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31 January 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 9 January regarding Emma Jones's petition in relation to the care of babies born after 22 weeks gestation.

This is of course a very sensitive issue, and I am not aware of all the details of Emma Jones's case, beyond those she has provided in her letters. I would like to clarify my earlier comments to explain that clinically speaking resuscitation describes the need to support breathing where a baby is unable to continue breathing unaided. The details provided suggest that her child was unable to continue breathing independently and would therefore have required resuscitation, and that is why I referred to resuscitation in my previous letter.

To expand on my letter of the 31 October, whilst the care of the mother and her baby will always need to be individualised, clinicians are guided in their judgements by current guidance, in this case that would be the British Association of Perinatal Medicine and the Nuffield Council Guidelines. These guidelines are based on extensive evidence and set out current best practice, and they are reviewed and updated to take account of improvements in clinical care. Both guidelines consider that resuscitation of babies below 23 weeks should only be carried out in exceptional circumstances.

An appointment has been offered for Emma to discuss these issues with the Welsh Government Professional Adviser for Maternal and Child Health, Dr Heather Payne, but no response to this offer has so far been received. This offer of course still stands and I would encourage Emma to take up this offer. Of course, the clinicians involved in the delivery of

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Emma's baby would be best placed to discuss the precise issues relating to that birth, and the decisions made subsequently.

In response to your enquiry on behalf of the committee, as to whether "medical assistance should be given to babies born alive and breathing", my view is that for babies born before 23 weeks of gestation the position is both difficult and nuanced. I consider that decisions need to be made by the clinicians involved, in discussion with the parents whilst taking account of the current best guidance practice.

Best wishes,

Mark

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