

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/01358/15

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
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21 May 2015

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 23 April regarding Petition P-04-0603 'Helping Babies to Survive at 22 weeks'.

It remains the case that, despite medical advances, the care of extremely preterm babies is very challenging. Health boards follow guidance from both the British Association of Perinatal Medicine and the Nuffield Council. The current guidance does not prohibit resuscitation of babies at any age, but the guidance reflects the sad reality that babies born under 23 weeks have very low chances of survival.

Whilst the care of the mother and her baby will always need to be individualised, current guidance suggests that it would be standard practice for resuscitation not to be carried out under 23 weeks, considering the overall long-term best interests of the baby.

Following our previous correspondence, Ms Emma Jones took up the offer of a meeting with my officials Heather Payne, senior medical officer for maternal and child health, and Edward Rees, head of obesity prevention and children's health. The meeting was very positive and my officials have already taken forward Ms Jones' helpful suggestions about what parents want from clinicians when they experience such a sad situation.

The all-Wales neonatal and maternity networks were asked to undertake a piece of work on this topic.

They have drafted clinical guidelines and a patient information leaflet for use in decisions about the resuscitation of babies at the clinical limits of viability, the situation Ms Jones faced with her son. These documents are undergoing joint review by all the relevant groups, professional and service user and Ms Jones will be approached to share her views on the material. The networks envisage finalising these documents ready for dissemination and use throughout Wales following their executive meetings in July 2015.

I hope you and Ms Jones will feel this is a practical and constructive response.

Best wishes,
Mark.

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