

Maternity discrimination puts vulnerable women and babies at risk, says human rights charity Birthrights

(Embargoed until 00.01 Wednesday 31 August 2016)

Birthrights (the human rights in childbirth charity) welcomes the recommendations of the Women and Equalities Committee report today, which highlights a concerning rise in maternity discrimination and calls on the government to make ambitious and detailed plans to tackle it.

Speaking in advance of the report's release, Birthrights chief executive Rebecca Schiller said, "women at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum are at the greatest risk of having a still-birth, dying in childbirth or suffering a range of complications. It is vital that the law protects these women - some of whom are in casual, agency work or on zero hours contracts where they are unable to access protected time for vital antenatal appointments. If vulnerable women cannot attend antenatal appointments because of concerns about missing work, this may put them and their babies at serious risk.

"Maternity rights are an important part of tackling health and social inequalities and ensuring that all women have access to safe, high-quality maternity care. Birthrights fully supports Women and Equalities Committee's report and hope that steps to tackle discrimination are put in place with urgency. Human rights in pregnancy and childbirth are of paramount importance and Birthrights believes that all women are entitled to respectful maternity care that protects their fundamental rights to dignity, autonomy, privacy and equality."

ENDS

For further information please email press@birthrights.org.uk or call 0300 400 3401.

We can provide spokespeople.

Notes to Editors:

Birthrights is the UK's only organisation dedicated to improving women's experience of pregnancy and childbirth by promoting respect for human rights. We believe that all women are entitled to respectful maternity care that protects their fundamental rights to dignity, autonomy, privacy and equality. We aspire to advance the human rights and lawful treatment of all child-bearing women.

What we do:

- Provide free, accurate and accessible legal information and advice on human rights and the law relating to childbearing women.



- Campaign on respect for women's rights in childbirth as fundamental human rights that maternity-service providers are legally obliged to respect and fulfil.
- Offer advice, assistance and training to caregivers, professional or otherwise.

Birthrights promotes women's right to receive evidence-based care that conforms to the best medical and midwifery standards. We do not hold views on clinical issues arising in maternity care.

Birthrights is a charitable incorporated organisation. Our registered charity number is 1151152. You can read more about our work on our [website](#) and read our press coverage [here](#).

