BY EMAIL

25th May 2017

Dear Ms Hervé,

**Maternal request caesarean sections**

We are writing to you to ask that you consider carefully your policy on maternal request caesareans and the information you give to women regarding this policy. It has been brought to our attention that you are stating in a publicly available leaflet that your Trust does not carry out maternal request caesareans and that any such requests will be referred to other Trusts.

You will be aware that current NICE guidelines state that women who request a caesarean section should be referred to a health professional with perinatal mental health expertise to help address anxiety ‘in a supportive manner’. If after discussion and an offer of support, a vaginal birth is not an acceptable option, then a caesarean section should be offered.

If your policy diverges from NICE guidelines you will need to provide good reasons for this. You will also be aware that as a matter of law, all NHS Trusts must provide individualised care that takes into account each women’s personal circumstances. While Trusts may use guidelines to guide the decisions of their staff, these guidelines cannot be applied inflexibly and care must be tailored to the needs of each woman. A target for a caesarean rate is not a justification for disregarding an individual woman’s needs and applying a blanket policy indiscriminately could leave you open to legal challenge.

If we can help you at all with revising your policy, or with finding appropriate wording to communicate this revised policy, please do get in touch.

We look forward to your response.

With kind regards,

Rebecca Schiller

**Rebecca Schiller**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Birthrights**

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Cc Dr Bruno Holthof - CEO