



**birthrights**

Protecting human rights in childbirth



NATIONAL  
Maternity  
Voices

Networking Maternity Voices Partnerships in England



**Sands**

Stillbirth & neonatal death charity

**Twins  
trust.**

**We support  
twins, triplets  
and more...**

**ARC**

Antenatal Results & Choices ●

Dear Gill,

Thank you very much for your considered response of the 9<sup>th</sup> April. I have discussed this with National Maternity Voices, Sands, Twins Trust, and Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC), who have signed this letter, and we appreciate your time in looking at this and coming back to us.

Birthrights as a charity, continues to have concerns that a Trust applying your guidance might be open to challenge, for not adequately considering the needs of women and their families, in deciding how scans should be conducted.

Nevertheless, as a group of organisations, we would like to understand more fully the concerns of the ultrasound professionals, and work with them via you to find a way forward that balances their needs with those of women, pregnant people, and partners,

We recognise that trusts are not bound by your guidance, but the feedback we are receiving from families suggests that sonographers are turning to your guidance to inform their practice, and as a result are quoting your guidance to explain their decision not to involve partners in scans.

This issue is one of great concern to women, pregnant people, and their partners. As you rightly say, scans need to be safe in order to be diagnostic, and families also want their scan to be properly carried out, in order that any anomalies can be picked up and they can be fully informed about their baby's wellbeing.

We would like to work with you to address the concerns of both your members and of women, pregnant people, and partners, to ensure that scans are meeting everyone's needs and rights.

Therefore, we are asking if you would enter into discussions facilitated by National Maternity Voices to work towards a further iteration of your guidance, that would

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Patron: [Nadine Montgomery](#)



recognise not only your role in protecting ultrasound professionals, but also the need to consider the needs and rights of women, pregnant people, and partners, and be proportionate and reasonable for all.

We believe that failing to involve partners is a significant restriction of the rights of both the woman or pregnant person and their partner.

The key concerns of this group are as follows:

- There is the potential for any woman to receive devastating news during the course of a scan, and it is not possible to identify all of those women in advance. There is a huge difference between a partner being on the phone at that moment and being called afterwards, even if only moments later, as she will then have to explain the bad news before she can get any support.
- Women who have had a difficult experience in the past, particularly if they have experienced a previous pregnancy or baby loss, are understandably very anxious about experiencing a scan on their own. Sands report an increasing number of families contacting them about this issue in the past week. ARC report that women are less agitated when they have the support of their partner at the other end of the phone and are therefore in fact easier to scan.
- Partners are being allowed to video-conference into other ante-natal appointments, and therefore other areas have managed to overcome the issue of phones and devices being vectors of infection. It would make sense to assume that the issue is then also surmountable for scans.
- Once the novelty of a change in practice is overcome we can see no reason why partners being on speaker phone is significantly more distracting than having a partner in the room, and no clinical reason not to allow this. We

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- would hope that using speaker phone would also allay any concerns relating to taut abdomens. A short loop of the scan could then be captured at the end of an appointment.
- Finally, we would welcome your help in putting the record straight that there are no data protection issues involved in partners video-conferencing into scans, as has been reported. Calls do not necessarily need to be recorded, but if they are, the sonographer does not have to appear in any footage and the data from the scan belongs to the individual being scanned.

We would very much like to work with you during this unprecedented pandemic to find a solution that suits both your members, and the women, pregnant people, and partners that we represent.

Coproduction of guidance and services is a key tenet of the Maternity Transformation Programme, and Maternity Voices Partnerships are a key part of this work, specialising in bringing together families and professionals to coproduce maternity services. Emma Taylor, of National Maternity Voices, is happy to facilitate a meeting so that we can all work together to coproduce a solution to this issue, specific to this time of crisis.

We want to understand your concerns, and can share with you women's experience of scan appointments, and the experience of sonographers who are facilitating ways for partners to remain involved.

Please will you work with us on this, to find a way forward on your guidance that balances the needs and rights of all involved, and recognises the specific crisis situation in which we are all working currently?

Yours sincerely,

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