# *Template email for writing to your MP – add the address to a printed letter but this is not necessary if sending by email*

[MP’s name

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Postcode]

[Date]

Dear [MP’s name],

As someone who has been affected by meningitis, I am writing to ask you what is being done to ensure meningitis isn’t missed by health professionals locally in [area where you live] and nationally.

Around half (49%) of children with the most common cause of bacterial meningitis are sent home after their first visit to a GP and not admitted to hospital.[[1]](#endnote-1)

National recommendations say that parents/carers of children with early non-specific symptoms should be given 'safety netting' information before they are sent home that includes information on meningitis and sepsis. In reality this is not always given. Research published in 2017 found that 30% of young infants with bacterial meningitis received inappropriate pre-hospital management which resulted in delays in seeking help.[[2]](#endnote-2)

In addition, existing safety netting information is not standardised and so varies in its advice across the country. It may not pick up both sepsis and meningitis, and it is not monitored or evaluated to ensure it is delivered to parents by health professionals.

An expert Meningococcal Working Group was established in January 2018 at the request of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care with a view to improved assurance of early diagnosis and treatment of meningitis. The group recommended that patients and carers should be empowered with appropriate knowledge so they can seek further advice and assessment if concerned. The recommendation stated that it should be recorded in the patient’s notes that this information has been provided, and there should be mechanisms in place to monitor and audit that this is taking place: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningococcal-working-group-report>

However, it is unlikely this will be taken forward without an audit of current practice. This week, Meningitis Research Foundation has launched a report calling for improved safety netting.

The recommendations in the report include:

1. Audit of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guideline nCG102 *‘Meningitis (bacterial) and meningococcal septicaemia in under 16s: recognition, diagnosis and management’* and accompanying Quality Standard QS19 *‘Meningitis (Bacterial) and Meningococcal Septicaemia in Children and Young People’* [see *appendix 1.4*] to determine the true level of safety netting information being delivered to parents.

## Varied, local sepsis and meningitis safety netting resources [*appendix 1.3*] to be combined and a national standard template agreed for health professionals to use.

## A national campaign and central resource hub for parents to enable them to access safety netting information easily.

## Existing national Quality Measures for safety netting [*appendix 1.4*] to be developed into metrics used by the Care Quality Commission during inspection to ensure safety netting advice is delivered to parents.

## Education and training materials in development by Health Education England should include consideration of safety netting information in the context of infection prevention and control and antimicrobial resistance and stewardship.

Far from using NHS resource, implementing these recommendations could help free up GP’s time. GP’s are often the first point of call for parents with a sick child. However, without safety-netting advice being given if a child is sent home, multiple contacts can be made for a relatively well child. Studies show safety netting advice reduces re-attendances and that parents want and need explicit and consistent advice for appropriate home management of their unwell child.[[3]](#endnote-3)

[You can add one or two lines highlighting your personal story and why this matters to you].]

Would you be able to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social to ask for these recommendations to be implemented?

Thank you for your help with this matter, I look forward to your response.

Best wishes,

[Your name]

[Your address]

1. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(06)67932-4/fulltext [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/7/8/e015700.full.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Maguire S, Ranmal R, Komulainen S, Pearse S, Maconochie I, Lakhanpaul M, Davies F, Kai J, Stephenson T. On behalf of the RCPCH Fever Project Board (2011) Which urgent care services do febrile children use and why? Archives of Disease in Childhood 2011 (online June 3) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)