



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

News release

Monday December 14

## **Mental health plight of hundreds of families with twins and triplets revealed**

Families with twins, triplets or more have faced unprecedented levels of stress and anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic with 79% saying it had taken a toll on their mental health, a survey by the charity Twins Trust has revealed.

With multiple birth pregnancies high risk, some mums-to-be were given bad news as they faced scans alone without the support of their partner.

Pregnant women told us they were, and still are, anxious about the prospect of giving birth alone and are concerned about a lack of face to face contact with healthcare professionals.

In a survey of 2,327 families, 47% of women said they had a partner with them at 'some scans' while a staggering 40% were on their own.

Nineteen per cent of women received bad news at a scan and 32% said they did not feel well supported after getting bad news.

*"I was advised that there may be a problem with the growth of one of the twins and was asked to make a decision on the spot whether to go for premature c-section. I was advised that there were pros and cons of any decision and I didn't feel that it was my decision to make as I was not qualified to make informed choices and to accurately weigh up the risk. This was especially hard without discussion and support from my partner and family."*

Forty per cent of families with newborn babies said they had one, two or more in neonatal care and with the Covid restrictions in place it remains a 'postcode lottery' if parents were allowed to spend the same amount of time with each twin or triplet as a singleton parent.

Some families had to fight with the hospital to ensure they spent enough time with their babies.

*"I had no visitors or support for the six days after giving birth on the ward with my two girls. It was incredibly isolating and exhausting. I look back on it and do feel like it was a hard trauma for me to endure."*

*“No visitors, yes that’s understandable. But your partner is not a visitor! Inhumane to expect a mother to do this alone without her partner. Especially with twins after a c-section, I needed physical help that the midwives just didn’t have the capacity to give!”*

*“Two babies, two adults. Why couldn’t one see one while the other parent saw the other? Each singleton baby got one adult, but my twins had to share.”*

*“I didn’t get to see them for three days. Then we couldn’t only see them one at a time. Meaning for three weeks we didn’t get to see them together. They also didn’t get to see our faces. Staff laughed when I cried because I wanted to be able to hold them together.”*

*“Restrictions changed during the seven weeks babies were in NICU but mostly there was a restrictive system meaning my husband and I were each allowed to see the boys 90 mins a day (separately).”*

Keith Reed, CEO of Twins Trust, said: “This is sadly what we had feared during the height of lockdown, and since the survey was conducted last month we know some things have improved, but not by enough.

“Firstly, we call on the Government to ensure all NHS hospitals give parents of twins, triplets or more adequate time with their babies in neonatal care as parents are not visitors.

“Secondly, we urge the Government to allow partners to attend all scans of mums having twins or more. Multiple births sadly remain high risk pregnancies and having support at scans is crucial as there is often more information to take in and reflect upon.

“It is devastating to see how much this pandemic has affected the mental health of our families and our Family Support Service saw an increase in referrals of 159% over the summer and remains extremely busy.

“We stepped up during a time when health visitors were stretched and continue to do so.

“We are here to support multiple birth families, assisted by Norland Nannies, or through Twinline, our freephone listening service where trained volunteers, who are all parents or twins or triplets, can help or signpost callers to further support that maybe needed, including mental health support.

“Sometimes talking through issues with a volunteer who knows what it’s like can help relieve anxiety to such a degree that professional mental health support is not needed.”

The survey also showed that families with older twins, triplets or more said the rule of six was unfair and that ‘school bubbles’ were inconsistent throughout England with children being placed in different classes therefore increasing the potential virus spread.

*“It seems odd that we can have one identical twin isolating as their school bubble has been asked to isolate and the other one can technically carry on all their activities even though outside of the classroom they spend the majority of their time together (activities, shared bedroom, playing at home).”*

Keith added: “We have written to the Education Minister in England and Wales seeking clarity and guidance on twins or triplets staying in the same bubble in years R to 6 to minimise the risk of exposure to Covid-19.

“To date, no guidance has been forthcoming.”

### **Case study – Gemma from Hull**

“Being a first time and older mum at 42, we were so excited to be expecting twins,” said Gemma, whose husband Dan was not allowed to come to any of the scans, which Gemma said “was pretty devastating for both of us”.

“It was also upsetting when I was spoken to about Down’s Syndrome – if Dan had been there I am sure the decision whether or not to have an amniocentesis would have been somewhat easier to make, but I had to go home and talk to him about it.

“It still upsets me that he could not be part of the whole process.

“I did have fantastic care from Hull University Teaching Hospital where I had the twins and we jointly made the decision not to have the amnio, but all this added to the stress of expecting MCDA twins during the height of the pandemic.

“I saw a consultant sonographer every two weeks but we ended up paying for a private scan just so Dan could see the boys.

“Dan works in the NHS, I’m a police officer so we do fully understand the restrictions, but it was very hard to go through.”

Cooper and Jacob were born on September 14<sup>th</sup>. Cooper arrived naturally weighing 4lb 13, but Jacob (4lb 8) got stuck and when they could not find a heartbeat Gemma had to have an emergency c-section.

After spending a week in hospital, they were allowed home and now looking forward to their first Christmas together.

### Notes to Journalists

For further information on multiple births please contact Alyson Chorley [alysonchorley@twinstrust.org](mailto:alysonchorley@twinstrust.org) or [pressoffice@twinstrust.org](mailto:pressoffice@twinstrust.org) call 01252 332344 / 07791 383494.

### More survey results

66% are worried about the impact of Covid on their children’s mental health

55% cite not being able to socialise properly as being the main worry for their children

43% of those with school age children are worried about the impact on learning

12% are unhappy with the school bubbles

Twins Trust is the only UK-wide charity dedicated to improving the lives and wellbeing of families with twins, triplets or more. Representing 20,000 members and 100 local clubs in the UK, Twins Trust provides help and support to both parents and professionals to meet the unique challenges faced by multiple birth families. We invest in research to save lives, change lives and create better futures for multiple birth families. We also run a unique quality

improvement project at Maternity Units to encourage and help with adherence to NICE QS46.

For further information, please visit [www.twintrust.org](http://www.twintrust.org)

1. Follow us on: Twitter/Facebook/Insta @twintrust
2. For confidential and emotional support for families with multiples, please call Twinline which is staffed by trained volunteers that are parents of multiples and can offer support on sleeping, feeding, crying, behaviour, discipline, school issues or special needs. It is free to call on 0800 138 0509 and is open Monday to Friday from 10am–1pm and from 7pm–10pm.