



News release

24<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## **Depression and anxiety in families falls significantly following intervention from Twins Trust experts**

Hundreds of parents with twins, triplets or more have significantly improved their wellbeing and mental health when faced with challenging family circumstances, including bereavement thanks to a unique support service.

An evaluation of the Family Crisis Support Service, run by Twins Trust, in partnership with Norland College, shows how successful it has been in allowing families to address their challenges and make significant improvements to family life.

Using the HADS\* scale, parents moved from feeling severely depressed to moderate, and from moderately anxious to normal on the scale.

During the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a 159% increase in use of the service which was adapted to help families virtually – either through video calls or over the phone.

Before Covid, a trained childcare support practitioner from Twins Trust or a volunteer qualified nanny from the prestigious Norland College, would visit a family in their home offering practical and psychological support.

Following intervention from the Family Crisis Support team the improvement in daily family living activities such as sleep, routine, getting out and about and feeding is significant, and the evaluation showed that stress levels improved significantly.

Helen Regan from Twins Trust said: “We are here for families who are in dire need – they are either struggling with mental health challenges, struggling with ill health, coping with bereavement or other extreme extenuating circumstances.

“These families have exhausted all other avenues of help and have nowhere left to turn.

“We knew we were helping families thanks to anecdotal evidence, but this evaluation report has shown the statistically significant levels of how our interventions are helping.

“In using the HADS measure, which quantifies levels of anxiety and depression, we moved parents on the scale from feeling severely depressed to moderate and from moderately

anxious to normal. This can alert us to specific early intervention focus of support, resources and signposting to other agencies.

“There is much to celebrate in this first evaluation, the support for parents of multiples and the contribution to child health and wellbeing, is invaluable.

“Without funding and volunteers, these families would be left in despair with nowhere to turn.”

Families of twins, triplets or more often face more challenges than singleton families, Multiple pregnancies and birth are medically complex and can be of greater risk to child and parent health.

Twins and triplets are often born prematurely, which can lead to higher mortality, for mums there can be an increased risk of pre-eclampsia and worse mental health outcomes.

After birth, social isolation, emotional anxiety, sleep deprivation and worries about finances can be a common occurrence.

During Covid, this intensified, and Twins Trust had to react quickly to adapt the service to help more families who need support but without going into homes because of current restrictions.

Helen added: “There is no other supportive service like this for families of twins, triplets or more, and we are hugely grateful for the support we receive from Norland College to run this but we also rely on donations to keep the service running.”

Dr Janet Rose, Principal of Norland, said: “We are delighted to continue supporting the Family Crisis Support service during these difficult times.

“Our recent evaluation evidences a service that successfully offers practical support to parents of multiples in crisis.

“Since partnering with the Twins Trust to set up the award-winning service in 2014, our nannies have volunteered over 3,000 hours of specialist support to families in severe need.

“We are so proud of our nannies who continue to volunteer their time to this vital service and, in so doing, are making a real difference to the lives of children and families living in unbelievably challenging circumstances across the UK.”

A mum faced with mental health challenges finding it difficult to cope with her twins, said: *“I struggle to put onto words how much this service has helped me! I am at a point now, as a result of the help I received, where I enjoy my twins immensely.”*

One mum said: *“When we were feeling overwhelmed and exhausted the support worker came into our home and gave expert advice and support to help our family cope better.”*

Another parent explained: *“She (support practitioner) gave me hope and a bit of confidence when nobody else did.”*

Helen added: "We are here for new mums in hospital, new parents who are isolated at home because of the restrictions and we can offer help with feeding, weaning, establishing routines and other challenges faced by families with more than one baby or toddler to care for."

## **Case study**

### **Anna**

Moving from one part of the country to the other whilst pregnant with twins, caring for a sick husband then have your dream house fall through the day before you move, was exactly what first time mum Anna had to endure.

"I always thought I could cope with everything life threw at me," said Anna, who is a university researcher and lecturer.

"But it all started to get too much, and a few months after the boys were born in March 2019, I realised I needed help."

Anna and husband Michael were looking forward to starting a new chapter of their life in Norfolk. But the day before they were due to move, their seller had other ideas.

This bombshell happened just two weeks before the boys were due, effectively leaving the couple homeless.

If that wasn't stressful enough, Michael became increasingly unwell with ME which he was diagnosed with in 2017 and needed extra care.

"I've always worked, consider myself well educated, independent and not always particularly good at admitting I was not coping. I would have difficulty accepting help from other people," said Anna.

"When the twins were four-months-old we had to move house again. I had some support from family and Home-start before the move, but afterwards we were mostly on our own for six weeks.

"But with two newborns and my husband becoming so unwell, I needed support.

"I was expressing milk regularly as I desperately wanted to feed them but couldn't, we had a limited but disrupted routine, they weren't sleeping well, and I wasn't sleeping.

"So, Gemma from Twins Trust came in to help at just the right time; it was a godsend and made me realise how close I was to burning out.

"She made me realise I was putting everyone before myself, which is natural, but then I was not functioning well as a result.

"She helped me get the boys into a good sleep routine, which meant I slept. Whilst I was pushing myself to keep breastfeeding, she listened to me with understanding and empathy and that helped me to understand that it was OK to stop expressing.

“Her kindness, thoughtfulness and compassion gave me confidence. Her physically being here made everything OK and she looked at what I was doing already and just simplified the process.”

The family were then referred to the local Children’s Centre and assigned a support worker. Michael went into a care home for respite and the local council helped with installing a wet room at their home as he was now increasingly using a wheelchair.

“If any twin or triplet family out there needs that extra support, I would encourage them to reach out to the Family Support team at Twins Trust. Even if they think things are not bad enough for them. The help is there. My Health Visitor referred me, but you can self-refer.

“The boys are now 18 months and into absolutely thriving. Sadly, my husband remains unwell - but we are coping and I know I can phone Twinline for any further support.”

### **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.

You can read the full evaluation here. [www.twinstrust.org/health-reports](http://www.twinstrust.org/health-reports)

\*HADS is the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale which is commonly used to determine the levels of anxiety and depression that a person is experiencing.

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.twinstrust.org](http://www.twinstrust.org)

1. Follow us on: Twitter/Facebook/Insta @twinstrust
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.

### **About Norland**

Norland College was founded in Norland Place, London, in 1892 by Emily Ward and has been at the forefront of childcare training ever since. The education at Norland has always been progressive. Today’s students’ study for a BA (Hons) degree in Early Years Development and Learning alongside the prestigious Norland Diploma, a unique qualification which teaches the practical skills it takes to become a Norland Nanny.

Famous for their best in class standard of training and their iconic uniforms, Norland-trained early years professionals are employed worldwide through the Norland Agency as Norland Nannies and Maternity Nurses. They command the highest salaries in the industry, clinch the most sought-after posts and enjoy a busy life often working for high profile clients. With a degree behind them, many Norland Nannies also progress into other professions that involve working with children, including teaching. Norland Nannies are also provided with their own recruitment agency, Norland Agency, to ensure that graduates have outstanding employment opportunities upon leaving the College, and throughout their careers.

For further information about Norland, visit [norland.ac.uk](http://norland.ac.uk).