

Act now or more twin babies could die says multiple birth charity

The reduction in both stillbirth and neonatal death rates for twin babies over the two year period 2014 to 2016 has not been sustained, it has been reported today.

Tamba, the twins and multiple birth association, says urgent action needs to be taken in order to save more twin and triplet babies' lives.

According to data produced by MBRRACE-UK in its [Perinatal Mortality Surveillance Report: UK Perinatal Deaths for Births from January to December 2017](#), twin stillbirths increased by 13% (*page 165, table 41) in 2017 and twin neonatal deaths increased by two per cent (*page 166, table 42). The change in rate is between 2016 vs 2017.

Since the start of MBRRACE-UK in 2013 data had shown that there had been a reduction in both the stillbirth and neonatal mortality rates for twins.

Over the five years 2013 to 2017, the twin stillbirth rate has reduced by around a quarter from 9.03 to 6.99 per 1,000 total births whilst the twin neonatal mortality rate had reduced by nearly a third, from 8.01 to 5.45 per 1,000 live births.

Despite these reductions the increased risk of mortality associated with twins compared to singletons is almost double for stillbirths (1.93 in 2017) and over threefold for neonatal deaths (3.53 in 2017).

For neonatal deaths in twin babies, just under 60% have a reported neonatal cause, with a third of all neonatal deaths reported as extreme prematurity. Singleton neonatal deaths have a reported neonatal cause in around 40% of babies and only one in ten of all neonatal deaths reported are due to extreme prematurity.

Keith Reed, CEO of Tamba, said: "This is a wake-up call to all maternity units in the UK. Our research has proven that having a specialist team delivering care in accordance with the multiple birth NICE guidance reduces stillbirths and neonatal admissions."

Tamba's Maternity Engagement Project was launched in 2016 in a bid to drive down stillbirths and neonatal deaths whilst helping ensure all obstetric units adhere to the NICE multiple birth guidance.

Keith added: “Our own results from this world-first project speak for themselves. In our report [NICE works](#) published in April 2019, we were able to show that if all maternity units in England followed suit, neonatal admissions in multiples could be reduced by 1,308, emergency c-sections by 634, resulting in a saving for the NHS of £8 million.

“Delivering care in this way is now in the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle version 2 and in NHS contracts. We have a team in place to help units improve their care and will be approaching every unit in the UK. It’s time to act otherwise more babies lives will be unnecessarily lost.”

Tamba says it would expect to see the results from its project show up in national data in the next 18 months.

MBRRACE has recommended that in order to achieve various UK Governments’ ambitions, renewed efforts need to be focused on implementing existing national initiatives to reduce stillbirths and continue the slow but steady decline in neonatal mortality rates observed since 2013.

They say particular emphasis should be placed on reducing preterm birth, which affects many twin, triplet and higher order births. Up to 60% of twins are still born prematurely (source: <https://maternityaudit.org.uk/filesUploaded/NMPA%20Clinical%20Report%202019.pdf>)

Notes to Journalists

For further information on multiple births please contact Alyson Chorley alysonchorley@tamba.org.uk or pressoffice@tamba.org.uk or call 01252 332344 / 07791 383494.

Tamba is the only UK-wide charity dedicated to improving the lives and well-being of families with twins, triplets or more. Representing 20,000 members and 150 local clubs in the UK, Tamba provides help and support to both parents and professionals to meet the unique challenges faced by multiple birth families.

1. For further information, please visit www.tamba.org.uk
2. Follow us on: Twitter https://twitter.com/tamba_twins_mb
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/twinsandmultiplebirthsassociation>
Instagram https://www.instagram.com/tamba_uk/
3. 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.