



# Together, #WeAreSands

Sands Impact 2022-2023

Saving babies' lives.  
Supporting bereaved families.





# Welcome

**After launching our strategy in March 2022 where we outlined Sands' vision to create a world where fewer babies die and where anyone affected receives the best possible care and support for as long as they need, this year we focused on delivering work that would help us achieve this.**

Key to achieving our vision is the understanding that we can't do this alone. When we work collaboratively and bring together our skills, expertise and experiences, we can do so much more.

Working together with our wonderfully committed local Sands groups across the UK, and with our volunteers, campaigners and fundraisers, we have made such a difference. We have done everything from creating much-needed reports and recommendations to improve maternity safety, to calling for and winning campaigns about better training for healthcare professionals and a commitment for more midwives to be recruited to the NHS. We have also grown our local peer-to-peer support and expanded our online support, and now more people can access Sands and all we offer in a way that works for them.

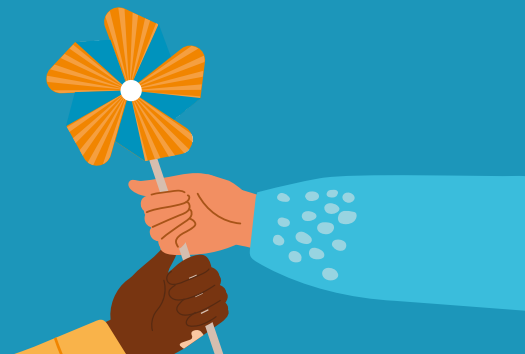


**Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this work, Together We Are Sands, and together we can save babies' lives and support bereaved families.**

**Clea Harmer, Chief Executive Sands**

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# The year in numbers



**779,304**

people accessed our pregnancy and baby loss support, and our safer pregnancy advice



**224**

volunteer-led support services in communities across the UK, including 90 monthly support groups and 39 Sands United Football Clubs



**20,504**

employees reached through work place training



**6,652**

training and learning opportunities for healthcare professionals



**5,890**

e-actions sent by campaigners to elected representatives and decision makers



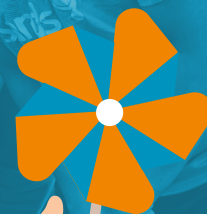
**90**

research studies supported



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# Building an inclusive, accessible community



*"Pregnancy loss and baby death affect the lives of over half of adults in the UK. Yet it can be a lonely, isolating experience. The Sands community walks alongside anyone affected by this loss. We provide support that puts each person's individual needs front and centre in a way that endeavours to respect differences, to make sure everyone feels comfortable seeking support at any point during their grief journey. By making space for personal stories we aim to give bereaved parents and families a sense of understanding and community."*

Jen Coates, Director of Bereavement Support and Volunteering Sands



## Welcoming everyone who needs our support

### Extending support within Black and South Asian communities

Bereaved parents in Black and South Asian communities, where baby loss rates are some of the highest, also tell us of stigma, taboo and isolation. That's why we introduced more online support groups for Black and South Asian families, providing a safe space for shared understanding and support for people like Vanisha.



*"In sharing the nuances of baby loss in our shared culture (faith, extended family/community and shame),... my own experience was better reflected and felt more understood."*

Vanisha, bereaved mum reflecting on our monthly support groups

### **Improving support for speakers of languages other than English**

Translating our Bereavement Support Book into nine languages has made a vital resource accessible to more parents whose baby may die or whose baby has already died.

### **Making support more accessible for everyone**

A new 'easy read' version of our Bereavement Support Book helps guide people with limited literacy or living with learning disabilities through this difficult time.



### **Compassionate support for parents choosing to end pregnancy for medical reasons**

After hearing from parents who made the difficult decision to end their pregnancy and were unsure about available support, we have added more information about termination for medical reasons (TFMR) in the Bereavement Support Book. Parents experiencing this challenging situation told us they often feel judged at a time that's already frightening and can be lonely. Sands strives to support everyone experiencing pregnancy and baby loss in all circumstances.

## **Proactively bringing people to Sands**

### **Reaching bereaved parents wherever they are**

Many parents feel that meeting others who have experienced the death of a baby can offer real understanding. But sometimes it might not be possible for them to attend a Sands local support group or they may feel more comfortable talking about their experience online or from their own home. Our online meetings are a valuable source of support for any bereaved parent, and they've been set up to provide support in a way parents tell us work best for them. That's why we've added separate groups especially for men, Black parents/families and parents and families from South Asian communities.





## Putting people's needs first

### Helping parents care for their baby in a way that fits with their faith

Alongside our Memory Boxes, we introduced Muslim Care Boxes which include faith-specific items. Bereaved parents tell us their baby will always be a part of their family, and Sands Memory and Care Boxes are a special place to keep meaningful items collected before and after saying goodbye to their babies. The boxes and their contents help the parental bond live on and make sure their baby is forever part of the family's story.

### Evolving how and where we work for the biggest impact possible

Sands' work in local communities continues to gain momentum. Recognising Sands must grow and change to meet the needs of bereaved parents, we're altering and increasing support for families. While continuing to work at local and national levels across all four nations, we're also prioritising geographical areas and higher-risk groups.

Our campaigners are crucial to raising awareness of the status quo for some families and bringing about change, so we ran a survey of our campaigners to understand more about how they'd like to be involved. We have since established a campaigners' e-newsletter to bring them closer to our work. Over two-thirds told us they would like to share their story

to inform our campaigns and fifty per cent are willing to contribute to materials. We are very grateful to the nearly 1,000 campaigners who shared their views to help us develop our campaigning.



## Raising awareness of our cause and work

### Baby Loss Awareness Week 2022

Stopping isolation in its tracks and making understanding and support for bereaved parents more forthcoming means breaking the silence around pregnancy loss and baby death. Alongside Sands, over 120 like-minded organisations came together for this year's Baby Loss Awareness Week. Together, we raised the conversation around baby death and created a space for bereaved parents, families and others to remember their babies, share experiences and feel supported.



### Highlights of Baby Loss Awareness Week



The campaign received over

**1,770** media mentions  
more than ever before



Sands was mentioned

**237** times  
in the media

Sands & Bauer Media radio partnership resulted in over

**40** mentions  
across local radio and associated online news websites, including interviews with Sands staff and six bereaved parents who have been supported by Sands

**Together,** we're helping bereaved parents find comfort in shared experiences.

*"It's a good feeling to know that along the way with events like Baby Loss Awareness Week, we're helping others too."*

Annika, bereaved mother to Gypsy



## Sands Awareness Month 2022



Sands is a powerful community. And together, we save babies' lives and support bereaved families. This year, we helped the Sands community connect with others so more people understand the impact of baby loss, why Sands exists and what we do.

The community told us about their #MySandsConnection, shared their stories, attended Sands Garden Day alongside other bereaved families, fundraised with family and friends, donated to support our work and chose to become volunteers.



**100,181**

**Baby Loss Awareness  
Week page views**



**72.6m**

**people reached  
via the media**



**3.8m**

**people reached via  
Sands-specific media**



# Together, #WeAreSands

**8 stories**   
shared in the media

**1.3m**   
people reached with  
Together, #WeAreSands

  
**4,800 views**  
of the Together,  
#WeAreSands video

  
**858 dedications**  
in the Sands Digital  
Summer Garden







### Amie's #MySandsConnection

Amie's daughter Charlotte was stillborn at 37 weeks in 2015. She found the care she was given by the hospital at the time helped her and her partner on their bereavement journey and has gone on to set up a Sands support group in her home town.

*"My immediate bereavement care was excellent. I was taken great care of when delivering my daughter and had lots of memory making opportunities with her following her birth.*

*However, my bereavement care once I left hospital was just a few phone calls from the bereavement midwife but otherwise nothing. Counselling lists were at least six month waiting lists. So I found and used the Sands forums, my family and good friends as my support."*

Amie, bereaved mother to Charlotte







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# Saving babies' lives

*"Many baby deaths could be prevented through investing in research and standards of care. That's why we support pioneering research, drive improvements in maternity safety and work to reduce inequalities to make the UK the safest place in the world to have a baby. Parent voices and lived experiences inform that research, shape our campaigns and sit at the heart of our education and training, leading to better care and fewer babies dying."*

Kate Mulley, Director of Research, Education and Policy Sands

## Collaborating and learning

**Together,** we're making change possible.

*"Input from Sands is invaluable. It helps ground research in real-life experiences of women, links results to other projects and researchers and undoubtedly plays an important role in dissemination and adoption of results."*

Raya, researcher at Newcastle University





### **Strengthening research for the biggest impact on saving babies' lives**

We supported over 90 research studies, working with researchers, healthcare and care professionals to understand more about why babies die, to make care safer and to improve support after loss. From input into research funding applications to developing and designing studies and facilitating bereaved parents sharing their experiences, we continue to invest our expertise in research that puts bereaved parents' voices at its heart, to make the biggest difference to parents and families.

### **Demonstrating the impact of research studies and parents' voice**

With an expanding portfolio of research studies, we built a new system that closely tracks the progress and impact of all the research we support. This ensures we are focusing on high-quality studies that make the biggest difference and makes it possible to showcase where parents' voices are contributing to the evidence base.

Via our [website](#) you can see in an instant all the research we support and find details about the difference we're making in the areas of most interest to you, whether it's around environmental factors that may impact baby deaths, or the support that bereaved fathers and partners may need in the workplace.



## Examples of some research projects:

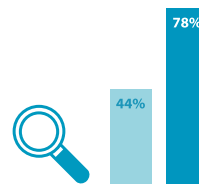
### i-choose project

We amplified parents' voices by making it possible for them to feed into a research project whose aim was to agree what key aspects of parents' experiences need to be measured in all research related to bereavement care after stillbirth.

### DISCERN study

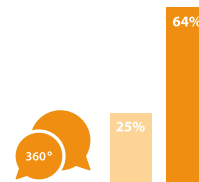
The study aimed to understand what would improve open disclosure to harmed families when things go wrong in NHS maternity care. When units are not honest about poor care it can compound parents' experience of harm. As a collaborator on the study led by King's College London, Sands has ensured parents' experiences are captured at every stage of the study. We also consulted on an animation which will be included in training on open disclosure conversations and processes for healthcare professionals.

wrong, we can work with healthcare professionals to ensure care is improved before, during and after pregnancy. So we have focused our efforts on ensuring parents' voices about what happened are included in any review, to get a 360-degree view of their care to understand if safer more personalised care might have saved their baby. Through a free 90-minute webinar, we trained up to 30 healthcare professionals every month. From chaplains to student midwives and neonatologists we guided them in engaging and communicating with bereaved parents about the review process. Thanks to our work as a key member of the Perinatal Mortality Review Tool (PMRT) - the UK's national system for reviewing care - we were able to highlight that at least two deaths a day might be avoided with safer, more personalised care.



**Since the training was launched the number of parents who know about review has doubled from**

**44% to 78%**



**Those offered the opportunity to share their perspectives of their care through a 360-degree review of what happened has increased from**

**25% to 64%**

## Learning from parents' perspectives about why their baby died

For many parents the most pressing question when their baby dies is why? Understanding what happened is key for them, and for services to improve. By learning from when things go

## Parent insight guiding our future focus

Parents' voices shape our work, from the training and education for healthcare professionals to policy changes and our research focus. Making sure their voices are heard and lessons are learnt from their experience also gives bereaved parents the chance to leave a lasting legacy for their baby. The newly established Sands Insights Core Group brings together bereaved parents who use their experience and knowledge to influence where our focus should be for the biggest impact and what we need to do to create a wider, more inclusive parent network.

*"The Insights parents helped to shape an evidence-based framework for health professionals' education, setting out the skills and competencies they'll need to learn about to deliver good bereavement care."*

*We also made sure the parent's voice was heard as part of a national data collection programme in collaboration with MBRRACE (Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK), making it a priority to highlight places where there may be concerns about care safety. Through our input, we keep a focus on ensuring the data is used to reduce baby deaths."*

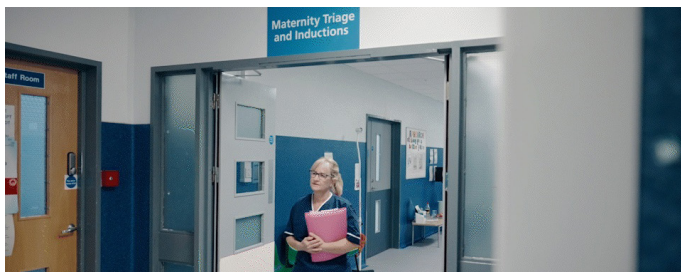
Janet Scott, Joint Head of Saving Babies' Lives, Sands



## Adding parents' voices to the crisis in perinatal pathology

There is an acute shortage of perinatal pathologists in the UK. As a result some bereaved parents are waiting more than six months to find out why their baby died and most baby post-mortems are taking over three months. Parents are left in limbo, unable to move on with their grief and without the information they need to plan another pregnancy. By raising strong concerns with policy makers and service providers at multiple levels in England, we have pushed hard to ensure parents' needs are included in service changes and that information and training provision for healthcare professionals around baby post-mortems is addressed. By making parents' voices heard, we're highlighting the real impact of the current crisis in perinatal pathology. We continue to work on this issue to change outcomes for more families.

## Improving safety in pregnancy, birth and the neonatal period



### Successfully campaigning for safer staffing

We jointly delivered the Safe Staffing campaign during Baby Loss Awareness Week. A report published by two parliamentary groups and supported by Sands focused on maternity and baby loss, showed NHS maternity services are understaffed, overstretched, and too often letting down women, families, and staff. With the [All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Baby Loss and Maternity](#), and with the help of the Sands and wider baby loss community, we called on the government to tackle the staff shortage in maternity services, impacting safety and bereavement care. Together with 3,500 people contacting their MPs and 25 of those MPs talking about the issue in Parliament, we influenced the government's commitment to hiring an extra 2,000 midwives in England and to a long-term and independently verified workforce plan.

*"Over 3,500 people sent letters to their political representatives in all four nations of the UK for our Safe Staffing campaign. The government's announcements show what our community can achieve by making our voices heard regularly in the long term."*

Jess Reeves, Head of Public Affairs and Campaigns

### Securing policy change that will save more babies' lives and tackle inequalities

The [Sands and Tommy's Joint Policy Unit \(JPU\)](#) continued its mission to reduce inequalities in care that leave babies at higher risk of dying depending on their parents' postcode, ethnicity and income. We're committed to making sure pregnancy loss and baby death stay high on the political agenda and achieving policy changes steeped in research and evidence to eliminate inequalities, improve care and save babies' lives.

### The Saving Babies' Lives report

Our inaugural report took shape this year, bringing together data from different sources for the first time to show the extent of pregnancy loss and baby death across the UK. It aims to put the spotlight on recent trends and evidence, as well as gaps in our understanding. The report will set out key areas where action is required by government and policymakers to reduce rates of miscarriage, stillbirth, pre-term birth and neonatal death. The Saving Babies' Lives report launched in May 2023.





## National review of failings

The Ockenden review and East Kent reports highlighted serious failings within individual maternity services, and there is a growing recognition that similar issues are affecting services across the UK. Through our policy and research work, the JPU aims to identify and highlight the key changes needed to save more babies' lives. To support this, we're reviewing various reports and reviews to identify consistent themes that need to be addressed at a national level. Learning from every tragedy and making sure history never repeats itself sits at the core of our work to save babies' lives.

## Improving maternity care through the Maternity Consortium

Sands and Tommy's co-led the Maternity Consortium into its second year. Using our collective expertise, we join national and local voices behind a common agenda: to reduce health inequalities for families throughout the pregnancy journey from pre-conception through the first year of a baby's life.

In its second year, the Maternity Consortium led projects to:

- › **Share learning from the Starting Well Health and Wellbeing Fund:** We hosted two webinars and developed two written case studies sharing learning, good practice and lived experience from the Starting Well projects, which are local programmes funded by the DHSC focused on

reducing health inequalities from pre-conception up to two and a half years.

- › **Support maternal mental health services and perinatal mental health teams to deliver inclusive and accessible services:** We delivered three events tailored to feedback from services to support education, networking and improved practice.
- › **Address inequity in neonatal care (led by Bliss):** After engaging with healthcare professionals and families and an extensive literature review, Bliss created a 90-minute webinar for healthcare
- › **Understand women's lived experience of children's social care during pregnancy and early motherhood:** Birth Companions engaged with women to understand their experiences of children's social care involvement during their pregnancy and in the first two years of their child's life. They produced a short insight report and a webinar to share the findings.

## Developing tools designed to drive better outcomes for families

Through our continued [membership of MBRRACE-UK](#) (Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK) and as part of the collective of organisations committed to the ongoing development and

adoption of the [Perinatal Mortality Review Tool \(PMRT\)](#), we're building a better understanding about where and why babies and mothers die every year. This vital information supports health services across the UK in delivering and improving care.

- › Work continues building the principles of the National Bereavement Care Pathway (NBCP) into the PMRT. By capturing the quality of bereavement care when a baby's death is reviewed, we're helping inform and drive much-needed changes.
- › The ongoing development of the PMRT is setting better standards for reviews and parent engagement as part of the Maternity Incentive Scheme for England set up to reward trusts that meet safety actions designed to improve the delivery of best practice in maternity and neonatal services.
- › Newly developed online interactive maps established as part of the MBRRACE collaborative show how local maternity units perform in baby deaths, enabling greater transparency and visibility for the public.

### **Keeping safe maternity care on national agendas in all four nations**

We continued to work at a UK-wide level to keep safe maternity care on the agenda, collaborating with other charities as part of the Pregnancy and Baby Charity Network, and as part of

One Voice along with other key charities and Royal Colleges. In addition we continue to identify where and how we can make the biggest impact and meet the needs of each country through involvement in external programmes.

### **England**

Through membership of the [Maternity Transformation Stakeholder Council](#) we fed into the development of the new Maternity and Neonatal 3-year Delivery Plan which aims to deliver safe, personalised and equitable care. We continued to jointly chair the [Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group](#), calling on the government to publish a strategy outlining how to get back on track to meet its target to reduce the number of women who smoke during pregnancy. We also contributed to version 3 of the [Saving Babies' Lives Care Bundle](#) which included an element on diabetes in pregnancy.

As a member of the Steering Group of the [National Child Mortality Database \(NCMD\)](#) we continued to support its work gathering information on all babies and children who die in England, including a report evidencing the deaths of one in three children under the age of 18 are due to health problems during pregnancy, labour or soon after birth.

### **Scotland**

We continued to support best practice in reviews and investigations after a child or baby dies through our work with [National Hub Scotland](#). We were also part of the [Neonatal](#)



[Mortality Review Group](#) which continues to look at the reasons behind the sudden rise in neonatal deaths in Scotland in 2021/2022.

As a part of the [Scottish Perinatal Network Serious Adverse Events Review Group](#) we were involved in ensuring that parents and families were compassionately included in review processes.

### **Wales**

Through membership of the [Welsh Maternity and Neonatal Network](#) we continued to raise the importance of considering safety and perinatal mortality reduction, and in September 2022 presented at the Welsh Safety Summit in Cardiff ensuring the perspectives of bereaved parents were included.

### **Northern Ireland**

Although work in Northern Ireland continued to be challenging in the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive, in our role as part of the Northern Ireland Maternal and Infant Group (NIMI) we continued to influence the work programme to ensure a focus on perinatal mortality.





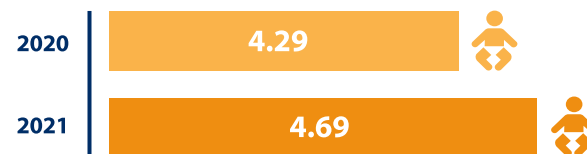
## Campaigning

Stark inequalities remain in the rates of baby death in the UK, especially when looking at ethnicity and socio-economic deprivation together.



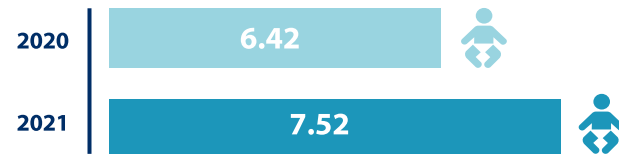
### In 2021

**There were increases in stillbirth rates for babies born to mothers from the most deprived areas (from 4.29 to 4.69 per 1,000 births from 2020 to 2021)**



### In 2021

**For babies of Black ethnicity (from 6.42 to 7.52 per 1,000 births from 2020 to 2021), leading to widening inequalities**





**From 2016 to 2020**

**From 2016 to 2020, babies of Black African ethnicity in the most deprived areas are**

**3x more likely to be stillborn**

**than white babies from the least deprived areas (8.10 compared to 2.78 stillbirths per 1,000 births)**

**From 2016 to 2020**

**From 2016 to 2020, babies of Pakistani ethnicity in the more deprived areas are**

**3.5x more likely to die**

**shortly after birth than white babies from the least deprived areas (4.14 compared to 1.26 stillbirths per 1,000 births)**



## **Listening to bereaved parents to better understand inequalities**

This year, we launched The Sands Listening Project to complement the MBRRACE confidential enquiry into Black and Asian women's care before and after their baby's death. Through focus groups and interviews, we're hearing from more than 50 parents about their experiences and are learning lessons to improve maternity safety and close the gap in inequalities. Our findings will be shared with maternity professionals, policymakers and others with the power to make change. In December 2023, we'll release our report alongside the MBRRACE enquiry, ensuring all voices are heard.



**Together,** we're creating lasting change.

*"We both have gained so much from Sands. Not only do we feel recognised as Asian bereaved parents but it's given us a purpose, and we now want to do more in Joshan's legacy."*

Bhavna, bereaved mum to Joshan



## APPG

Sands is the secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Baby Loss which brings together MPs and Peers from across parties to work on this vital issue along with other organisations, government departments, healthcare professionals and bereaved parents.

The APPG's overall aims are to develop policy that supports families dealing with the grief of baby loss, and to prevent it happening in the first place. It aims to raise awareness of what more can be done by the government, Parliament and other agencies to help those affected, and reduce the risk of baby loss.

**Together,** we're improving support from healthcare professionals.

*"I still relive the moment the nurse asked me if I wanted to hold him and that my answer was that I didn't know. I wish a nurse or midwife sat me down and asked – would you like to discuss what could happen and what it could be like..."*

Christina, bereaved mum to Torin

**3**

## Ensuring good bereavement care and support



*"The right care and support at the right time should always be available for all families who experience pregnancy loss or the death of their baby, regardless of who they are or where they live. And we're committed to working with healthcare professionals and workplaces to ensure the highest quality care is available. We continue to build Sands' capacity and capabilities, bridging gaps in care and support across the UK and addressing inequalities with universally accessible, evidence-based support online, over the phone and in person."*

Clare Worgan, Head of Training and Education Sands

## Supporting families

### Providing compassionate bereavement support

Parents and families are at the heart of everything we do. From making sense of pregnancy loss or why a baby died to finding comfort through shared experience and remembering babies as part of the family, we continue to evolve our support to meet bereaved parents (importantly, including the longer ago bereaved), siblings, families and others wherever they are on their journey.



## Resources shared



**12,849** 

Bereavement support books for every stage of the journey

**5,039** 

Birth certificates recognising babies not entitled to a legal certificate

**2,315** 

Care boxes to create and keep safe, precious and lasting memories

**462** 

Support booklets for parents long-ago bereaved

**821** 

Baby detail books for recording baby's name, weight, hair colour and more

**4,349** 

Hand and footprint kits to create memories

**6,538** 

Bereavement packs

**218** 

Tracing a baby's grave booklets for parents

## In-person and online support



**14,750**

people coping with pregnancy loss or the death of a baby are part of our Facebook support group



**926**

bereaved parents received peer-to-peer support for the first time through our online community



**2,978**

parents and family members were supported through our email support service



**2,461**

people accessed bereavement support via our telephone helpline

**Together,** we're improving support from healthcare professionals.

*"Sands was my lifeline in the immediate months after Aidan's death. I desperately needed to feel as though I wasn't the only mother going through this horrendous heartache. So I joined the online forum and started talking about what had happened and connecting with other bereaved parents."*

Katie, bereaved mum to Aidan



## Developing stronger support locally



**31** 

**new befrienders trained so more parents can access emotional peer support over the phone or in person**

**90** 

**support group meetings every month across the UK, doubling face-to-face support, making it more accessible than ever before**

**39** 

**Sands United football (SUFC) teams helping bereaved dads and other family members break their silence after a baby has died**

**21** 

**new SUFC volunteers and over 200 football sessions every month means a bigger support network for men and their families**

**5+** 

**activity-based support groups helping people find in-person support in ways that work for them, including two choirs, an art workshop, a running group and several 'walk + talk' sessions**





**Together,** we're helping bereaved parents feel understood.

*"I felt a massive void and traumatised by what had happened to me. When I came to Sands, I realised I was not alone and the befrienders understood exactly what I was feeling."*

Ritu, bereaved mum to Ram, Nina and Suraj

## Leading the way to drive improvements in bereavement care across the UK

### Ensuring bereaved parents know where to turn for support

Increasing the number of Sands Hospital Liaison Volunteers (HLVs) to over 90 means we can improve the quality of bereavement care provided to families. HLVs are a vital link between hospitals, Sands UK and local Sands groups and bereavement services, making sure hospitals know where to signpost and bereaved parents know where to turn for compassionate support.



### Establishing excellent bereavement care as standard in NHS trusts: National Bereavement Care Pathway

Excellent bereavement care should be an expectation for every family, whoever and wherever they are. Sands leads and delivers the [National Bereavement Care Pathway \(NBCP\)](#) which works to improve the quality and consistency of bereavement care received by parents in NHS trusts after pregnancy loss or the death of a baby. Adoption of the pathway is gaining pace, with more hospitals committed to providing high-quality bereavement care every time a baby dies.



## England

- › A further six NHS trusts signed up to the NBCP, taking the total in England to 115 of 128 trusts and achieving our target of 90%.
- › We delivered a series of six face-to-face NBCP implementation workshops across England, with an additional workshop delivered online. Over 250 healthcare professional delegates attended.
- › The NBCP toolkit launched. The toolkit is a set of four best practice modules on the NBCP website, designed to equip healthcare professionals when working with bereaved families.
- › Nearly 300 healthcare professionals attended our workshops and over 3,500 NBCP e-learning modules were completed.

## Scotland

- › Five NHS boards in Scotland are now early adopters and have been piloting the pathway across their units and services in hospitals and the community.
- › The relaunch of the NBCP in Scotland after the pandemic was started, including plans for a national learning event for over 300 healthcare professionals.
- › The pathway is mandated in Scotland and plans have been developed to support all boards in adopting the NBCP in 2023/24.



## Wales and Northern Ireland

- › Discussions continued in both nations and plans are afoot for further development.



**Together,** we're working towards excellent bereavement care for every family.

*"Evelyn was born sleeping on 1st April 2019. Tiny but perfect. The care we received was brilliant. However, there are currently no bereavement midwives in our area, which meant we were left to navigate our way through funeral planning, post-mortems and grief by ourselves."*

Bereaved mum to Evelyn

### **Increasing diversity amongst Hospital Liaison Volunteers for more inclusive support**

Hospital Liaison Volunteers (HLVs) are often advocates for parents facing the loss of a pregnancy or death of their baby, making sure their experience of maternity care and bereavement support is recognised. To make sure all families feel at ease, we have improved inclusivity amongst our HLVs to better represent the diverse communities we support.





## Equipping professionals and volunteers with the skills and knowledge they need

### Bereavement training delivered:



**2,852**  
healthcare professionals



**307**  
company employees



**126**  
volunteers



**9**  
counsellors



**20,504**  
employees through access to our  
Bereavement in the Workplace materials

### Embedding bereavement care training into professional development

More bereaved parents will get better support from clinicians because of improved signposting to Sands bereavement training and resources for healthcare professionals. This year, we trained more than 90 Hospital Liaison Volunteers (HLVs) - vital volunteers working within UK hospitals acting as a link

between healthcare staff and Sands quality assured training and education.



### Evolving evidence-based training

Sands training is designed for anyone working with parents and families at any time during the perinatal period and beyond. We have a range of training opportunities available for experienced staff and students alike. This year more than 3,000 professionals accessed our training services. The professionals we have trained come from a wide range of professions, including maternity services, mental health services, social services, charity sector and public sector.





Sands training is steeped in evidence, supported by lived experience and recognised as excellent. So our educational and learning resources are continually evolving to ensure our approaches incorporate new knowledge and support best practices, putting bereaved parents at its heart.

- › In 2018 Sands campaigned for bereaved parents to be included in the provision of mental health services. We were successful in that campaign and have now gone on to provide specialist training for these mental health practitioners.
- › Two new training programmes developed for counsellors and therapists, adopting a new training model and being endorsed by the Counselling and Psychotherapy Awarding Body (CPCAB). The programme will be piloted in 23/24.

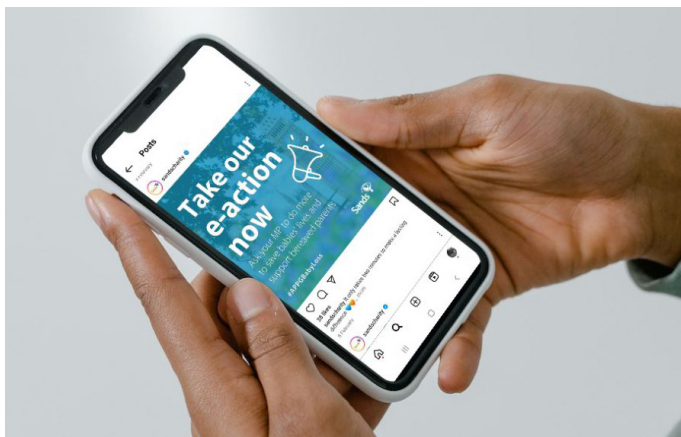
- › Sonographer and ultrasound practitioner training focussing on their specific, often overlooked role in parents' experience of pregnancy loss and baby death.
- › Refreshed training for student midwives with new content, digital learning tools, and formatted to be deliverable to large groups, meeting the needs of universities taking in more student midwives than before to address NHS staff shortages.





## Making bereavement care training a priority across NHS trusts

A recent Sands survey revealed less than half of UK NHS trusts and boards make bereavement care training available to all healthcare professionals providing care for parents following pregnancy loss or the death of a baby. Staff deserve to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to offer the best bereavement care and shouldn't feel unprepared due to lack of training. So we called on our Sands community to help us bring about change. Our campaigners sent over 1,000 emails contacting 142 trusts and board chief executives using our e-action urging them to address the situation. As a result, 50 trusts responded telling us about their plans.



In September, NHS England also announced £1.3 million funding for trusts across England to improve bereavement care, including training.

## Enabling conversations about pregnancy loss and baby death in the workplace

Three new learning films are helping employees navigate difficult conversations and feel more confident supporting bereaved colleagues. Making workplaces compassionate and supportive environments for anyone affected by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby means better mental and physical wellbeing for bereaved employees. But staff tell us they often don't know what to say or how to support colleagues. Alongside digital guides now available in 12 languages, easy-read and large print formats, the films are helping start conversations and raising awareness of pregnancy loss and baby death in the workplace.



4

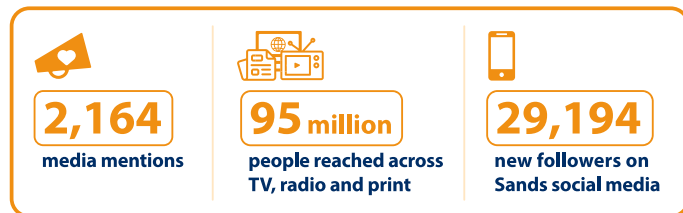
# Growing sustainably



*"Bereaved families are at the heart of everything we do and we are determined to make the greatest possible difference now and in the future. It is thanks to our supporters and partners that we are able to support more families and save more lives. Thank you."*

Daniel Brett-Schneider, Director of Income and Engagement Sands

## Using every opportunity to raise awareness



### Sands in the spotlight

Sands was one of six UK charities to benefit from the Good Morning Britain 1 Million Minutes campaign to help eradicate loneliness across the UK through volunteering.

More than 700 people pledged their time to help Sands, including offering to Walk and Talk with someone bereaved,

raising awareness of our Bereavement in the Workplace training, and supporting Sands United FC.

Sands United FC also featured on Good Morning Britain and played a match against a celebrity team.

Everyone who pledged their time made a real difference to the thousands of bereaved parents, grandparents, siblings and other family members who can feel alone and isolated in their grief.

Thanks to national on-air and online coverage, the prevalence of baby loss and its impact on families was put in the spotlight, taking us another step closer to breaking the silence around baby death for good.









**Together,** we're helping dads find support after their baby has died.

*"We decided to set up Sands United FC Farnborough. We supported 30 dads in the first year through football, social events and walks. This group has been inspiring and created new friendships. This is not a team. It's a family!"*

James, bereaved dad to Ethan and Oscar

### Starting more conversations about baby death

Sands Voices of Baby Loss podcast went live this year and trended at no. 6 in the wellbeing category. The [podcast](#) shares the experiences of people from across all parts of the baby loss community, from bereaved parents to healthcare professionals, researchers and volunteers. The podcast offers support and information on a wide variety of topics including men's mental health, dealing with grief and LGBTQA+ challenges, and aims to bring about much-needed change to save babies' lives.

### Reaching new audiences

Singer and songwriter Lewis Capaldi released a new version of his video for his hit song 'Pointless' telling the story of

bereaved dad and Sands United FC founder Rob and wife Charlotte. The [video](#) has been viewed more than 73,000 times. Thanks to Lewis and his team at EMI sharing the story behind the football club set up to support men after a baby has died, more parents and families know where to find support and how they can help Sands be there for anyone coping with the death of their baby.



## Amplifying our voice

We continued to build our Sands Ambassador community with nurse, midwife and community activist Donna Ockenden joining us. Donna's years of experience and public profile mean she is uniquely positioned to make a real difference to our work. In particular, to raise awareness of both the need for equal access to excellent bereavement care and support and of the right of every mother to expect safe maternity care for herself and her baby.

*"Sands is working hard to improve care, in partnership with the NHS and UK governments. Donna's knowledge about which initiatives are working on the ground and what actions are outstanding from previous enquiries will enable Sands to target support to those hospitals that need it to provide the best, safest care possible."*

Clea Harmer, Chief Executive of Sands







## Fundraising focus: The highlights

### Sands community

We could not achieve all we do without our extraordinary Sands community. Year after year, our supporters go the extra mile to make sure we can continue our vital work. Every penny and pound takes us one step closer to fewer babies dying and making sure every bereaved parent and family gets the right support at the right time. We are truly grateful to everyone who supported Sands this year.



### Sands fundraising team

It was a year of sustainable growth for the fundraising team. Launching new campaigns, growing corporate partnerships, developing exciting new events, identifying new funding opportunities, supporting thousands of fundraisers and so much more has built our income-generating activity on firm foundations.

Thanks to our much-valued supporters, we had a tremendous fundraising year, raising £7,025,509 – 5% ahead of 21/22 and setting another income record.







### Phenomenal fundraising through crowd-drawing events

Families and friends came together at home, across communities and virtually to take part in Sands events.

### Facebook events

Thirteen Facebook events fostered an online community of Sands supporters across the UK. The virtual events united and connected people with a shared interest and keenness to support Sands' work. As well as raising much-needed funds, the online events created opportunities for peer support through new networks.

### Challenge events

The Starlight Walk continues to go from strength to strength, welcoming first-time walkers and returning supporters. And our local Sands support groups played a vital part in the success of the events across the UK. This year saw the launch of a new flagship walk in Bristol, bringing together over 250 people remembering babies no longer with us and shining a light of hope for bereaved parents and families.



*"It's such a special event that raises awareness and gives some time to reflect on the sad experience we've all shared. It's good to feel you're not alone and can do something positive for this amazing and much-needed charity."*

Starlight Walk participant and bereaved parent

This year's Ribbon Run participants pulled out all the stops – more than doubling last year's fundraising! Ribbon Run occurs every year during Baby Loss Awareness Week and sees thousands of people come together to remember their babies and raise funds for Sands. This year, people ran, walked and jogged between 5km and 15km at home, in the gym, around the park and elsewhere.

### First-ever legacy campaign launch

Gifts in Wills to Sands help continue our lifesaving work. Every legacy, no matter the size, is a lifeline for babies yet to be born and for bereaved families. That was the message in our first-ever legacy fundraising campaign launched this year. [Leave a gift in your will](#). Across our online platforms and e-communications, we're urging people to consider leaving a gift to Sands after they've taken care of loved ones. New and updated resources help simplify the Will writing or updating process. And our free Will offer means leaving a legacy gift to Sands won't cost a penny.

### Welcome to Wrexham

Wrexham AFC player Jordan Davies and wife Kelsey launched a fundraising appeal for Sands in January 2022. They chose to fundraise for Sands in recognition of the support they received after the death of their son, Arthur. The couple were supported by Sands and health professionals at Wrexham Maelor Hospital and spent precious time with Arthur in a bereavement suite funded by Sands.



In October 2022, Jordan and Kelsey bravely shared their devastating story in episode 12 of the popular documentary series, Welcome To Wrexham. They spoke out in memory of Arthur, and in doing so helped to raise awareness of pregnancy and baby loss, and championed the support Sands provides to a huge audience. Working with the production team, we secured signposting to Sands for anyone impacted by Jordan and Kelsey's story.

Jordan and Kelsey's fundraising and awareness raising efforts were boosted thanks to generous donations and public support for their appeal from the Hollywood celebrity owners of Wrexham AFC, Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney. We are incredibly grateful for the support for Sands from everyone at Wrexham AFC.



### **Befriender programme expansion thanks to funding boost**

A generous pledge from The ScottishPower Foundation will see our Befriender programme expand and diversify to reach more people and in ways that work best for bereaved parents and families. While Sands has over 394 befrienders across the UK, we're not able to support everyone who needs us. With The ScottishPower Foundation's help, we will increase support in locations where we know it's needed most and develop our resources to welcome people from all backgrounds and cultures.

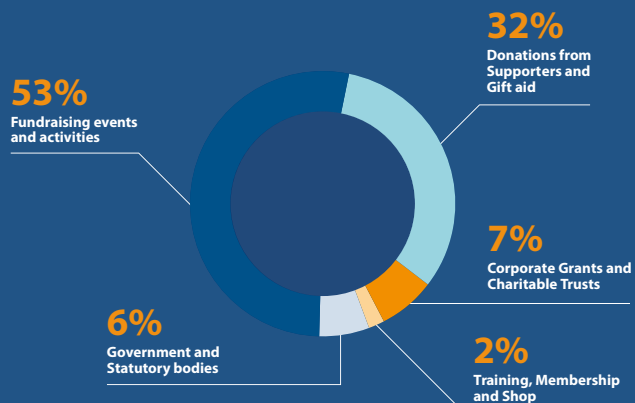
### **Increasing compassionate workplaces with support from the DHSC**

Thanks to a pledge from the Department of Health and Social Care, we can support more employers to build compassionate and supportive work environments for colleagues coping with pregnancy loss or the death of their baby.

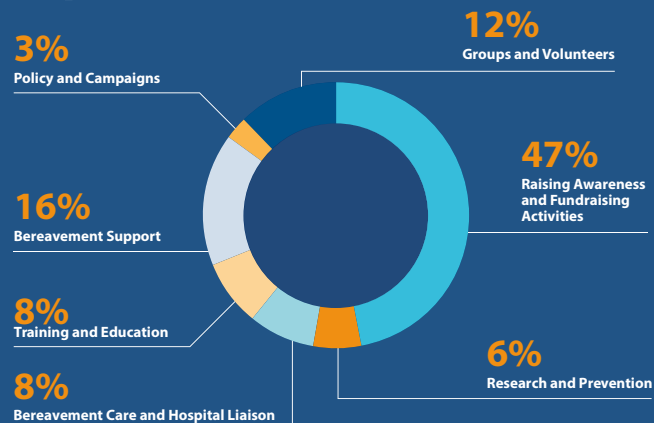
Sands Bereavement in the Workplace training helps managers and colleagues understand pregnancy loss and baby death, find the words to support bereaved staff and navigate relevant employment law through a tailored blend of expert-led live webinars, online learning modules and digital toolkits.

## Finance focus: The highlights

### Income 2022/23



### Expenditure 2022/23







## Looking ahead

Growing our network of volunteers, partnerships and professionals all committed to saving babies' lives and supporting bereaved families is key to us continuing to build on the successes of this year. By doing so we'll be able to do everything from starting more football teams to recruiting an increasingly diverse group of volunteers to work with hospitals and parents, to influencing policies and practice to bring about change and help make maternity care safer.

We know we're doing our work in a challenging economic environment, but we will test and trial new ways to generate much needed income to support our plans and help us achieve our goals in the year ahead.

I'm excited to see how our work to support better bereavement care in workplaces across the UK will grow in the year ahead, allowing us to create more compassionate and caring organisations. I'm also looking forward to the recommendations from the Saving Babies' Lives Report published by the Sands and Tommy's Joint Policy Unit being implemented; working together in this way we will save more babies' lives.



**Together we're committed to creating a better future, where fewer babies die and support is available to anyone who needs it, always.**

**Oliver Reichardt, Chair of Board of Trustees Sands**



# Thank you

**We're doing all we can to bring about the day when no baby dies. But we can't do it alone.**

That's why we collaborate with parents, professionals, researchers, donors, fundraisers, campaigners, government departments, parliamentarians, Royal Colleges and other organisations to create the change that's needed. And until that day comes, we rely on you to help make sure the right care and support is there for every bereaved family, whenever, wherever and however they need it.

So thank you. Thank you for everything you have helped make possible so far. And for all you might do for parents, families and babies in the future.

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## Thank you to our partners:

Aberdeen City Council  
Acquis Insurance Management  
AkzoNobel ICI Paints  
Amey  
Andy & Beckie Harrington  
Asian Miscarriage Hub  
Aspect Capital Limited  
Association of South Asian Midwives  
Bedford County Council  
British Association of Perinatal Medicine  
Burnley and Nelson United Reformed Church  
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Care  
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Department of Health and Social Care  
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EG Foundation  
Enterprise Holdings Foundation  
Eversheds Sutherland  
Eversheds Sutherland (International) Charitable Trust  
Five X More CIC  
Health and Social Care Northern Ireland  
Held in our Hearts  
Himmat Collective

Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management  
Institute of Health Visiting  
Kingswood Group  
Knit your Socks Off  
Kristina Martin Charitable Trust  
LGBT Mummies  
Livingston James Group  
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales  
Man2Heart  
Masonic Charitable Foundation  
Maximus Foundation  
MBRRACE-UK Collaboration  
Midland Expressway Limited  
Millennium Oak Trust



# Thank you

Mills Carpentry, Building & Maintenance Ltd  
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 Morrisons Foundation  
 Mothers of Angels host Sunday Tea  
 Multrees Investor Services  
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 Muslim Bereavement Support Services  
 Muslim Women's Network UK  
 National Child Mortality Database  
 National Hub Scotland  
 National Maternity Voices  
 NBCP Charity partners in England and Scotland  
 Neonatal Nurses Association  
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 The Basil Samuel Charitable Trust  
 The Henhurst Charitable Trust  
 The Hudson Charitable Trust  
 The James Inglis Testamentary Trust  
 The Light Fund  
 The Motherhood Group  
 The Samworth Foundation  
 The Sir James Reckitt Charity  
 The Stair Guys  
 The Stanton Ballard Charitable Trust  
 The Stewarts Foundation

Wellcome Trust  
 Welsh Government  
 Wesleyan Fund  
 Worcester City Council Bereavement Services



# #Together, WeAreSands

Support us and make an impact.

If you'd like to support our work to save babies' lives and support bereaved families, you can:

**Donate:** [sands.org.uk/donate](https://sands.org.uk/donate)

**Volunteer:** [sands.org.uk/volunteers](https://sands.org.uk/volunteers)

**Campaign:** [sands.org.uk/campaigns](https://sands.org.uk/campaigns)

**Corporate support:** [sands.org.uk/corporate](https://sands.org.uk/corporate)

**Leave a gift in your will:** [sands.org.uk/legacy](https://sands.org.uk/legacy)





## If you need our support:

Visit our website [sands.org.uk](https://sands.org.uk)  
Call our helpline on 0808 164 3332  
Email [Helpline@Sands.org.uk](mailto:Helpline@Sands.org.uk)

Find your local support group  
Join our online community  
Download our app

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