

# The next Welsh government must commit to saving more babies' lives and supporting bereaved parents



sands 

Saving babies' lives.  
Supporting bereaved families.

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# Introduction

In May 2026, Wales will elect the next government. The winning party will be responsible for health care in Wales for the next four years – including maternity, neonatal and bereavement care.

This baby loss awareness week (9-15 October) a group of bereaved parents, supported by Sands, have launched a **petition** calling on the next government to adopt ambitious targets to save more babies' lives in Wales and to ensure that all bereaved families can access high quality bereavement care.

## What are targets and why should the government adopt them?

The stillbirth rate in Wales has been consistently higher than the rate for the rest of the UK. There has also been a lack of sustained progress in reducing the rate of babies dying shortly after birth in Wales.

In 2015, the government in England adopted targets to reduce rates of stillbirth and neonatal deaths by 50% by 2025, compared to 2010.

Whilst it is unlikely the targets will be met, they have helped to keep politicians focused on improving maternity services – which has helped to save babies' lives.

The Sands and Tommy's Joint Policy Unit (JPU) have proposed new targets for all nations in the UK to align under, with an expiry date of 2035. This includes:

- A stillbirth rate of 2.0 stillbirths per 1,000 total births.
- A neonatal mortality rate of 0.5 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births for babies born at 24 weeks' gestation and over.
- Eliminate inequalities in these outcomes based on ethnicity and deprivation.

Focussed on matching the best performing countries in Europe, if met these targets would have a **significant impact**.

By 2022, the stillbirth rate in England was **23.5% lower** than the 2010 rate and the neonatal mortality rate was **25.0% lower**.

Over **1,000** babies in Wales may have survived if stillbirth and neonatal mortality rates had been the same as the best performing countries in Europe between 2019-2023.<sup>2</sup>

## Key messages

- There has been a **lack of sustained progress** in reducing stillbirth and neonatal death rates in Wales.
- The Sands and Tommy's JPU have proposed ambitious targets to **match the best performing countries** in Europe.



# Improving support for bereaved parents in Wales

When a family experiences baby loss, they must be able to access the high-quality bereavement care they need.

This includes:

- Receiving care from staff who have had bereavement care training
- Access to bereavement rooms
- The opportunity to make memories with your baby
- Being given information on, and referral, to specialist psychological support if needed.

Where someone lives and their background can affect their chances of getting the care and support they need. **The next Welsh government must commit to supporting Health Boards to implement a National Bereavement Care Pathway for Wales.** This should include mandating it, to ensure all Health Boards provide high quality bereavement care across Wales.

**Currently, Cardiff and Vale are the only Health Board providing a specialist psychological support pathway for pregnancy and baby loss.** This must be evaluated and replicated across Wales to ensure all bereaved parents who need it have access to specialist psychological support.

## Key messages



- All bereaved parents must be able to **access high-quality bereavement care.**
- The next government must commit to **supporting Health Boards to implement a National Bereavement Care Pathway** for Wales.
- The next government in Wales must commit to **evaluating the specialist baby loss psychological support pathway** in Cardiff and Vale and expanding it to all Health Boards across Wales.



## How you can help



**Sign the petition** - add your name to the parent petition and share the [petition](#) with your friends and family



**Contact your local candidates** - ask them to commit to adopting targets to save babies' lives and ensure all bereaved parents in Wales can access high-quality bereavement care. [We can provide a template letter.](#)