

PREGNANCY
& BABY
CHARITIES
NETWORK

PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 2200 hrs, Tuesday 14 April 2020

UK baby charities warn vital services for women and families at risk of closure.

Charities working to support parents and families and to save babies' lives during the COVID19 outbreak are warning that their vital services will soon cease to exist without urgent financial support from the Government.

There is a high likelihood that without financial support the result will be charities being forced to cut services to around one million expectant mothers and new families and to those affected by pregnancy and baby loss.

These cuts will come at a time of unprecedented demand with more than two thirds of those same charities expecting demand for their services to increase dramatically in the coming months.

The Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network is now calling on Government and NHS England to ensure that its members benefit from the £750m package announced by the Chancellor last week to keep struggling charities afloat during the coronavirus pandemic.

A survey of its members by the Network found that 74% of charities providing direct support to women and families expect to cut their front-line services for women and families in the coming months.¹

The COVID-19 outbreak is affecting families across the UK who need the support of the pregnancy and baby charities more than ever, due to increased isolation and fear and the unprecedented pressure on the NHS, which needs to focus on caring for those suffering from the effects of coronavirus.

The money would make a crucial difference to charities that support the Maternity Transformation Programme and the National Ambition to reduce baby and mothers' deaths and brain injury by half by 2020 and preterm births by a quarter. Equally, it would be a lifeline for charities providing crucial information and support for people whose physical and mental health are directly impacted by reductions and restrictions in maternity services.

Keith Reed, Chair of the Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network and CEO of Twins Trust, said:

“The package of support announced by the Chancellor is welcome but we are yet to see any details of how it will be allocated. Our charities are plugging the gaps in care for women who are giving birth during the outbreak, saving babies lives now, and stepping up to support families and NHS workers when a baby dies.

“Many of the charities that the NHS relies upon to deliver support to families have already begun cutting frontline services because of their perilous financial positions. This is having a detrimental impact on families across the antenatal and postnatal period including those with babies in neonatal care. This situation is likely to get significantly worse in the coming days.

“All the charities are acutely aware of the central role they need to play in supporting families as NHS services respond to the current national emergency. All stand ready to deliver but many are being forced to withdraw support for families due to financial challenges. This situation will only get worse without Government intervention.

“We need a suitable package of support in days not weeks, so that we can continue to contribute to the response preventing parents from accessing acute care at a time of strain in the National Health Service and provide specialist services to parents.”

Clea Harmer, Chief Executive at Sands (Stillbirth and neonatal death charity) and Vice Chair of the Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network, said:

“Those affected by the death of a baby will need the support of charities like Sands now more than ever. Our free helpline is also hearing from women who are pregnant again after losing a baby, and their anxiety is only made worse by the threat of the virus.

“Sands, along with other charities in the network, are also here to support all NHS staff working in hospitals, both to equip them with the confidence and skills to care for families when the worst happens, but also to offer support for the staff themselves.

“One concern shared by anyone caring for pregnant women and their families is that mothers receive the information and care that is needed to ensure the safety of them and their baby. Not getting the right care and support could have a significant impact on the rate of stillbirth in the UK, which has been falling in recent years.

“If there is no financial support available to see charities through this difficult time then we will not only be unable to offer this immediate help, but it is possible that we will not survive to continue our invaluable work supporting parents and families after the death of a baby, improving bereavement care, and helping to save babies lives.”

Many of the Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network members have specific information for women, families and health professionals affected by COVID-19.³

-Ends-

For further information, please contact Adrian Brown at Sands on 07748 047337 or media@sands.org.uk

Notes to editors:

1. Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network members were asked to complete a short survey asking them to share in confidence their funding situation, demand for their services and future plans. A summary of the 21 replies received between 25th to 30th March 2020 is available on request.
2. The Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network represents UK charities whose focus includes one or more of the following:
 - To reduce the number of babies who die during pregnancy, birth or in the early weeks of life;
 - To reduce morbidity in newborn babies and improve care for these babies and their parents;
 - To improve care throughout the path to parenthood; before, during and after pregnancy and after losing a baby or pregnancy.
3. **Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network – COVID-19 specific information:**

Aching Arms

Support and information from Aching Arms [Aching Arms and COVID-19](#)

Action on Pre-Eclampsia

Action on pre-eclampsia have provided up to date information on pre-eclampsia and COVID-19 which can be accessed at www.apec.org.uk Our helpline remains open on 01386 761848 or info@apec.org.uk

Antenatal Results and Choices

Information and support on choices following diagnosis of fetal anomaly via email info@arc-uk.org. Parents should give a phone number if they want someone to call them. If urgent, call 07875480076 See [ARC support continues](#)

Best Beginnings

Best Beginnings' free NHS approved [Baby Buddy](#) provides pregnant families and new parents with 24/7 support, including daily information, access to more than 300 films and other interactive features to support their mental and physical health. Via the "Get Help" button within Baby Buddy you can link through to many other charities and the 24/7 #BabyBuddyCrisisMessenger. The #BabyBuddyCrisisMessenger can also be accessed by texting BABYBUDDY to 85258

Read the latest COVID19 information and guidance and link to a page with details of support offered by many other charities [here](#).

Bliss

Emotional support via email hello@bliss.org.uk and information for parents of babies in neonatal units. See [Bliss COVID-19 information](#)

Child Bereavement UK

Support and Information for families and professionals via Helpline 0800 02 888 40; email support@childbereavementuk.org; LiveChat www.childbereavementuk.org; series of [short guidance films](#) and [Coronavirus information](#).

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Information and support via call-back helpline 020 7733 2653 and email ept@ectopic.org.uk. FAQs on [ectopic pregnancy and Covid-19](#).

Group B Strep Support

Information on group B Strep before, during and after birth provided online www.gbss.org.uk, by email info@gbss.org.uk and helpline (weekdays 9-5) 0330 120 0796. Information on [coronavirus and group B Strep](#)

ICP Support

The most up to date research-based information, and support to women with cholestasis of pregnancy during Covid-19 via supportline **07939 871929** and/or social media support groups. <https://www.icpsupport.org/support.shtml>

The Lullaby Trust

Information and support on safer sleep during Covid-19 period via helpline 0808 802 6869 or email info@lullabytrust.org.uk. More information and FAQs at [Coronavirus and caring for your baby](#)

Miscarriage Association

Support via phone 01924 200799 (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) and email info@miscarriageassociation.org.uk and online support. For information on reduced or changing access to NHS services see [Coronavirus and miscarriage – your care](#).

NCT

Information and support for expectant and new parents on [COVID-19 and pregnancy, birth and parenting](#).

Infant feeding support line, providing personalised support for breastfeeding, formula feeding or a combination of both. Call 0300 330 0700 (every day from 8am to midnight, including bank holidays).

Find [courses and workshops](#) or [local activities and meet ups](#) that are being hosted online in a live and interactive way.

Petals

Providing specialist online counselling for women and couples who have experienced pregnancy and baby loss. For information on Petals and COVID-19 [Petals and COVID-19](#)

Sands – the stillbirth and neonatal death charity

Support for parents and for healthcare professionals via Sands' freephone Helpline 0808 164 3332 and email helpline@sands.org.uk - see [Sands is here to support you](#) . In addition, information on [changes that impact bereaved families](#) and [bereavement care and Covid-19](#)

Tommy's

For information from Tommy's on COVID-19 [Tommy's -pregnancy-and-coronavirus-information-pregnant-women-and-new-mums](#)

Twins Trust

For the latest information on multiple pregnancies and support for families and professionals during COVID-19 <https://twinstrust.org/a-message-from-twins-trust-covid-19.html>

4. The Pregnancy and Baby Charity Network includes medical research charities such as **Borne** (www.borne.org.uk/) and **Genesis Research Trust** (genesishresearchtrust.com/) that help find new treatments to reduce infant mortality and morbidity through premature birth, miscarriage and other pregnancy complications, and **The Kit Tarka Foundation** (www.kittarkafoundation.org/) which works to prevent newborn baby deaths from neonatal herpes through research and education.

