#15babiesaday initiative to raise awareness that 15 babies die every day

Thursday 15 June, 2017

On Thursday 15th June Sands (Stillbirth and neonatal death charity) will erect washing lines with 15 baby grows hanging from them, in iconic locations around the UK to provoke a discussion as to why 15 babies die before, during or shortly after birth every day in the UK.

The locations will include the Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge, Cardiff City Hall, Edinburgh Castle, Scottish Parliament and Belfast City Hall.

On average, one baby dies every 90 minutes in the UK. While the number of deaths has fallen in recent years, this is no time to be complacent. We are moving three times slower than some other European countries to save lives. The rate of mortality also varies hugely from region to region, reflecting a map of poverty and health inequality. This postcode lottery is unacceptable.

Dr Clea Harmer, Chief Executive of Sands (Stillbirth and neonatal death charity), said: “The aim of #15babiesaday is to not only highlight the unacceptable fact that 15 babies die before, during and shortly after birth every day in the UK, but also to encourage the public to talk about baby death which is often a taboo subject.

“I hope that the washing lines containing 15 babygrows that will be seen in many prominent locations across the UK, will help provoke debate and discussion as to why do so many babies die and what can be done to reduce this number. We are determined to ensure that every bereaved parent gets the care and support they need and deserve.”

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) is supporting #15babiesaday. Midwives will be promoting the initiative on social media by using the hashtag on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and on their LinkedIn accounts. Commenting, RCM’s Director of Midwifery, Louise Silverton said**:** “The RCM is supporting Sands with their latest campaign #15babiesaday as we believe that it is crucial to work together to reduce antenatal stillbirths and avoidable baby deaths.

“There are initiatives and training already being carried out across the UK to improve the rates of unavoidable baby deaths, but we need to ensure midwives have the time to do a thorough initial assessment of a woman, as well as ongoing risk assessments. This is where continuity of care and carer can play a crucial part and maternity services should also be reaching out to those women who are only engaging with maternity services late into their pregnancy.

“We also must ensure that there are enough bereavement midwives in place to ensure that parents and families get the support they need. Our hope is that all bereaved parents receive the same level of care and support regardless of where they live in the UK.”

What you can do to help

During Sands Awareness Month the charity is also inviting people to get involved by downloading a list of 15 themed fundraising ideas from their website and take part in a fundraising activity, set up a regular donation or simply change their profile picture on social media pages to the #15babiesaday logo.

Single donations to Sands #15babiesaday, can also be made by texting BABY15 followed by the desired amount to 70070. Donations in £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10, up to a maximum of £30 per day are accepted. For example, to donate £10, text BABY15 £10 to 70070.

Sands supports anyone affected by the death of a baby. It has a commitment to reduce the number of a baby deaths through research and prevention campaigns.

For further information on Sands Awareness Month and #15babiesaday visit: www.sands.org.uk/get-involved/sands-awareness-month

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Notes to editors

Picture – A washing line of 15 babygrows which demonstrates the number of babies who die before, during and shortly after birth in the UK every day.

For further information, please contact Lee Armitt, Press and PR Officer in the Sands press office on 020 3897 3412/07587 925411 or media@sands.org.uk

About Sands

Sands is the leading stillbirth and neonatal death charity in the UK. They work nationally to reduce baby deaths through promoting better maternity care and funding research. They have a programme of training and a wide range of resources designed to support professionals to improve the bereavement care they provide following the death of a baby, and they provide a comprehensive bereavement support service both nationally through their helpline and locally through around 100 regional support groups based across the UK. Further information can be found at www.sands.org.uk

THE FACTS IN 2017

1. 15 babies die every day in the UK either before, during or shortly after birth[i].
2. Every day 4 babies die around their due date[ii]. Many of these lives could be saved with improvements both to care and to our understanding of why babies die and how to protect them.
3. Every year around 900 babies die or have a severe brain injury as a result of something that goes wrong during labour and birth around their due date[iii]. The majority of these tragedies could be avoided.
4. While the number of deaths has fallen in recent years, this is no time to be complacent. We are moving 3 times slower[iv] than some other European countries to save lives.
5. Research shows that when a baby dies before it is born and close to its due date, in six out of ten cases that death might have been prevented with different care[v]. In 2015 alone, 600 opportunities to save a life were missed OR Since 2015 when the government announced its ambition to halve baby deaths, 1200 opportunities to save a life have been missed.
6. Families are too often sent home with poor explanations about their baby's death. If hospitals don't adequately investigate what happened, how can lessons be learned? Yet research shows that there is no local review of care for three-quarters of stillbirths at the end of pregnancy[vi], and even where reviews had been carried out few follow national guidance or involve parents.
7. The safety and quality of maternity care across the UK continues to be a postcode lottery. The rate of mortality varies hugely from region to region[viii], reflecting a map of poverty and health inequality.
8. One in 150 births ends in the death of a baby. With better information, women can be empowered to help minimise the risks and make the right choices for them about their pregnancy.
9. One in 5 stillbirths is associated with smoking[ix]. In some parts of the UK up to one in four women smoke during pregnancy, yet some health care providers can't afford support services for women to help them stop. The slashing of Public Health budgets is having fatal consequences.
10. How can the governments fulfil its plans for better and safer maternity care without the capacity to deliver it? Ever-increasing pressure on the maternity workforce is threatening safety: England alone needs 3,500 more midwives[x].

How can hospitals fulfil their legal Duty of Candour[vii] to be honest and clear about care that should have been better if they have not examined what happened?

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[i] MBRRACE-UK surveillance report on 2015 data

[ii] MBRRACE-UK surveillance report on 2015 data

[iii] RCOG Each Baby Counts, Key messages from 2015 report

[iv] Lancet Stillbirth Series 2016

[v] MBRRACE-UK Confidential Enquiry into Normally-formed Antepartum Term Stillbirths, 2015

[vi] MBRRACE-UK Confidential Enquiry into Normally-formed Antepartum Term Stillbirths, 2015

[vii] http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/regulation-20-duty-candour

[viii] MBRRACE-UK surveillance report on 2015 data

[ix] MBRRACE-UK surveillance report on 2015 data

[x]

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