



Impact Report 2014/15



Our mission

Sands is the stillbirth and neonatal death charity.

We support anyone affected by the death of a baby, work to improve bereavement care and promote research and prevention strategies to reduce the loss of babies' lives.

Our vision

Our vision is for a world where fewer babies die and when a baby does die, anyone affected receives the best possible care and support for as long as it's needed.

Our purpose

We have three core pillars of work:

- 1 We support anyone affected by the death of a baby
- 2 We work in partnership with health professionals to ensure that bereaved parents and families receive the best possible care
- 3 We promote improvements in practice and fund research that could help to reduce the loss of babies' lives.

Our values

We are compassionate, dedicated and strive for excellence in everything we do. Our aim is to provide inclusive and informed support; our response is individual and sensitive. Our working relationships are collaborative, based on trust, integrity and respect. We are passionate about sharing and improving knowledge.

In 2014 we launched our three year strategy to help us take our vision and purpose forward and we identified five key priority areas to define our work:

- ▶ Better support
- ▶ Improving bereavement care
- ▶ Effective organisation & increased revenue
- ▶ Fewer baby deaths
- ▶ Bigger, better profile.

Our Impact Report helps to demonstrate the achievements that Sands has made towards our three year strategy in 2014/15. It gives examples of achievements made to improve our support to anyone affected by the death of a baby and the progress that we have made towards our ultimate goal of reducing the loss of babies' lives. We hope that it demonstrates the breadth of the work that Sands does, and the potential for future improvements both in care and prevention, which would not be possible without your generosity.

Over 5,700 babies were stillborn or died within the first four weeks of life in the UK in 2013

Contents:

Welcome from our Acting Chief Executive	4
What we have achieved:	
Bereavement support services	5
Helen's story	7
Improving bereavement care	9
Allan and Laura's story	11
Research and prevention	13
Financial review	15
Looking forward:	
Chair's report	17
Key objectives for 2015/16	19
Funding priorities for 2015/16	22
Thank you	25
Our Trustees and Senior Leadership Group	29

"Thank you for being there when I need you, it's a massive comfort, Sands is amazing." Mum

Welcome from our Acting Chief Executive

2014 saw the launch of our new three year strategy; focussing on our three aims, this helps ensure we continue to work towards a world where fewer babies die.

To help us to deliver on our strategy, we have developed our organisation structure, bringing in a number of new roles to ensure we have the full range of skills and resources we need.

Always mindful of using our resources in the most effective way, ensuring high standards and being accountable to stakeholders, we have been looking closely at how we as an organisation operate.

We have started reviewing our services and operating procedures to ensure we safeguard the charity's assets and provide effective services and will continue to embrace developments and partnerships that help us to do this.

This year has seen more access to support through our national helpline and online forum, more amazing work and dedication from Sands Groups and supporters, developments in our Network structure and our new Royal College of Midwives (RCM) accredited Bereavement Care Training for Professionals, to name just a few achievements.

We have finally seen a reduction in the overall rate of baby deaths in the UK. The final 2013 data for stillbirths and neonatal deaths, released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), shows that the overall rate of baby deaths – 7.3 per 1,000 births in 2013 – has declined since 2003.

This year has also seen a number of important initiatives emerge including; the launch of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' *Each Baby Counts* project focused on reducing intrapartum deaths and injury; the development NHS England's Care Bundle; and the Stillbirth Research Priority Setting Partnership.



Nevertheless in 2013, every week in the UK 110 babies died before or during delivery or within 28 days of being born. The UK rate remains high compared with other European countries so we have continued to support and fund research looking at key areas.

This is still a tough economic climate for charities to operate within. Government funding, although welcome, remains a very small percentage of our income so we are very grateful for the incredible generosity of our fundraisers and supporters.

We are developing our funding base to enable us to continue to deliver on our strategy and hope that 2015 sees further positive improvements across all areas of our work.

Thank you to all our volunteers, staff, trustees and supporters; we are one organisation working together towards the same goals and we really value and appreciate the contribution everyone makes towards this.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Abela".

Judith Abela

What we have achieved: Bereavement support services

Always there

Our bereavement support team at Sands make themselves available to the pain and suffering of others. They don't intend to cure, to heal or even know, they just have the intention to be there. This is why they sit each day at the end of a phone and a computer, to help and support grieving parents, their families, friends, and anyone affected by the death of a baby.

Our helpline started in a bedroom over 30 years ago and it is still as vital now as it was back then but today our role is more complex. We now support people on the move and using new kinds of technology. The support is the same, the mediums vastly different, requiring new skills and approaches to be there for...

- ▶ the mother who has just delivered her baby. She wants to stay on the phone and describe her little baby to us and just be held in that space...
- ▶ the grandmother who has called us after finding out her unborn grandchild has died. She wants to help but is unsure how...
- ▶ the father who has contacted us by private message on Facebook while he is sitting with his partner on the labour ward waiting for his stillborn baby to be born...
- ▶ the mother who sometimes emails, sometimes calls, often from home but one day from her exercise class where the sight of a pregnant lady has caught her off-guard...

During the past year we have:



Registered **1,453** new users to our online support forum



Trained **107** befrienders



Held over **1,000** support group meetings



Responded to **2,491** calls and **2,636** emails from bereaved parents and their families and friends.



Expanded our library of support booklets disseminating over **78,000** items including our *Always Loved Never Forgotten* memory boxes



Joe and Heather Strom with their daughter Georgia who died from a severe heart defect 40 days after birth in 2014.

"Thank you so much for your kind words. No-one has ever spoken to me in your kind and caring way before and you don't know how much that means to me."

Long-ago bereaved mother

Ensuring access to information

Our booklets and website have been greatly expanded and give bereaved families easy access to information they might need in the immediate aftermath of their baby's death as well as support in the months and years to come. During 2014/15 we updated and published three new support booklets and all 13 of our support booklets are now available to download directly from our website as well as being free to order from our online shop. Our *Always Loved Never Forgotten* memory boxes continue to help bereaved parents across the UK create precious memories of their babies.

Support from those who know

Our Sands Groups continue to provide essential local support to families within their communities. They offer bereaved families the chance to meet, gain support and share their experience. Our volunteer befrienders also provide support at a local level by meeting face-to-face or chatting over the phone. During 2014/15 we helped establish 11 new Groups and provided training to 107 new and existing befrienders allowing us to reach even more families across the country.

Remembering together

Our 2014 Sands garden day and remembrance event and our 12 Christmas *Lights of Love* services were again well attended and provided an opportunity for parents to come together and collectively remember their babies.

"You have given me tools to work with and also guidance and understanding, much needed."

Grandmother

Helen Largan's son Jacob was stillborn on 4th November 2011.

This is Helen's story:

In 2011 we were delighted to discover that I was pregnant with my second child (my husband Mike's first child) and apart from horrendous morning sickness, all seemed to be going well. Aaron (aged 8) could not wait to meet his long awaited brother or sister, due in January 2012. However, at 31 weeks I began to become concerned when I could not feel baby move. After a visit to the hospital on 2nd November 2011, we were devastated to learn that our baby had died.

This was something we never imagined could happen. Jacob was born two days later on 4th November and was so beautiful and absolutely perfect. We spent a day with Jacob and loved spending time with him, doing normal things like tucking him into bed and singing to him. The hospital was unable to find any reason for him dying.

In the weeks/months following losing Jacob, we did not know what to do, how to carry on, although somehow we needed to for our son Aaron. After a few weeks (I think) I discovered the Sands forum. I think this was when I realised that we were not alone on this terrible journey. I felt it really helped to be able to communicate with other bereaved mums and found that I would spend most evenings on the forum. It was the only place where I felt understood, other than when talking to my husband about Jacob. I keep in touch with some of the ladies I talked to in those early months and I believe they will be friends for life.

Although my husband, Mike, was not on the forum with me, I think he appreciated the support I was receiving when he too was struggling and did not know how to help me. After a few months, I persuaded him to join me at the nearest Sands support meeting (approximately 40 minutes drive). We were both apprehensive, however from the first meeting I felt like I had found somewhere that I belonged. The people at Durham Sands understood 'the new me' and all the different feelings and emotions I was going through. They also wanted to listen to our stories about our precious Jacob and that truly meant the world to me. I was a Mummy again and wanted people to know all about Jacob. The meetings led me to have two hours a month given purely to Jacob, which I like to call my 'Jacob Time'.

We continued to go the monthly meetings for the next couple of years and formed a strong bond with many of the other parents and befrienders. I was asked if I had considered becoming a befriender and after a little consideration Mike and I both decided to do the training. We were having to travel quite a distance each month to the support meeting and were aware that there was a large area of the north east that was not covered by a support group.

In the meantime, I had given birth to our baby, Sophie, and by pure coincidence, had met another bereaved mum at a local baby group. As we got to know each other, we began to discuss setting up a new a Sands Group together. Sands also put us in touch with two other bereaved mums and together we established Teesside Sands.

Teesside Sands held its first meeting in October 2014 and at the first meeting and each meeting since, we have had good attendance. As well as our monthly support meetings, we are trying to provide other more informal opportunities to meet up and provide support and have so far held a family meet up and walk in a local country park, as well as a recent evening meal.

Teesside Sands has also begun to forge links with two local hospitals and one of our aims for the future is to be able to work alongside the hospitals to ensure local bereaved parents receive the best possible care, by helping to provide midwife training courses and assistance with bereavement suites.

"...I discovered the Sands forum. I think this was when I realised that we were not alone on this terrible journey. I felt it really helped to be able to communicate with other bereaved mums..."



Baby Jacob stillborn on 4th November 2011.



What we have achieved: Improving bereavement care

In the event of bereavement, the care a family receives can make an immense difference to how they cope in the weeks, months and even years ahead. We lead the way in improving bereavement care when a baby dies by working closely with healthcare professionals. We provide training and information and set the benchmark for high quality bereavement care that all families should receive.

Driving change through training

In 2014 we launched our Royal College of Midwives (RCM) accredited bereavement care training programme for midwives, student midwives and multi-disciplinary groups. In 2015 we went on to expand our training programme to include doulas. Our training programme includes full-day and half-day workshops and features the voices and experiences of bereaved parents. All of the 51 training workshops delivered during 2014/15 received excellent feedback: "This course has done wonders to alleviate my fears around stillbirth and neonatal death" and "getting a parent's perspective was really valuable." Sands Groups played an important role in supporting our new training programme and during the year they funded or part-funded just over 50% of the workshops we delivered.

Setting standards in care

We also continued to disseminate best practise points in bereavement care through the *Sands Guidelines for Professionals*. We distributed over 700 copies through our workshops. Planning began in 2014/15 for the next edition of this flagship publication.

Empowering and inspiring midwives

Our 2014 joint Sands, Bliss, RCM conference: *Uncertainty and loss in maternity and neonatal care* helped increase understanding of bereavement care best practice and its importance amongst midwives and healthcare professionals. Attendees came away better understanding the experiences of women and their families. They also gained new insight into the neglected areas of maternity care and how to improve bereavement care for parents and staff. Feedback included comments such as "informative, very inspiring and worthwhile" and "interesting, eye opening, humbling and empowering".

Delivering practical improvements

Sands Groups are instrumental in providing practical improvements to care at a local level. They fundraise and provide their local hospitals with memory boxes and new equipment such as Cosy Cots (resuscitation units) and Cuddle Cots (cot cooling systems that can be used in the mother's room and allow parents longer with their baby). Many have also contributed towards the establishment of bereavement rooms at their local hospitals allowing parents a place to spend time with their baby. For example in 2014 Gwynedd Sands ran a series of fundraising events and raised £13k to buy a Cosy Cot (resuscitation unit) for Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor and North and East London Sands raised £4,500 towards a hospital bereavement room by holding pub quizzes.

"Amid all the sadness and despair the hours with our son home were peaceful and are forever in our hearts. We lay with him on our bed with his teddy, touching him, crying with him and looking at his tiny hands and feet. A ray of sunshine came through the little window and shone on his face. We will always remember that moment with our perfect son and are thankful to the midwives for making it happen." Mum

"I visited a lady who had a stillbirth not long after I had been on the [Sands training] course and felt much better able to support her, especially using the baby's name and talking more at length about the baby and how she could build memories." Midwife



In 2014/15 we trained over 900 health professionals through our new RCM accredited bereavement training programme.

Allan and Laura's daughter Penny was stillborn on 16th July 2011.



Laura Clark who ran the Yorkshire Marathon 5 months after giving birth to her second daughter Grace.

This is Allan and Laura's story:

My wife Laura and I had never heard of Sands and why should we, we were expecting a "beautiful healthy baby girl". That was the quote from the midwife on the Thursday when Laura had her routine scan at 39 weeks and we saw Penny moving around. What happened three days later totally changed my life and my outlook on the world.

We were both in the army and after the scan I left Laura for the week to go to Bath for work. While I was there Laura called and told me that they could not find a heartbeat for Penny and she had passed away before we got a chance to cuddle her. I don't remember the journey back.

The next few days were the hardest of our life and all our army experience could not prepare for the grief and loss that we felt. Everything happened so quickly and we could not comprehend what was going on.

Laura gave birth to Penny four days later. Cold Cots at the hospital allowed us to spend time with her and I was able to take some photos. The midwives helped me through. They were amazing, so caring, they even came to the funeral – that meant so much.

Our first contact with Sands was via a leaflet we were given at the hospital but we didn't want it and threw it away. After three weeks of blundering around not knowing which way to turn we attended our first Sands meeting. It happened to be at the house of the midwife who gave us the leaflet.

The meeting was an eye-opener. There were nine people in one room who got how we felt and were telling us what we were feeling was normal. When we left the meeting we felt drained. For the first time we had spoken about Penny to people who did not look away when we mentioned her name. They didn't say "I don't understand" or "I can't imagine how you feel". They just nodded and said "it's ok to feel the way you do, it's normal".

"...if ever we need someone who understands, then they are there to help. They have made our life bearable again and the group gave us the hope to try again."

Four years on the pain is still here but not as raw. The journey has been made easier by the people we met in our first York Sands meeting: nine strangers who we didn't know anything about but were willing to share their most heart-breaking stories and let us know that we are normal and not alone. That may sound dramatic but the impact the members of our Sands Group made on us has allowed us to find the strength to get up off the floor and start to live again.

They have been a vital part of our journey. We don't all live in each other's pockets but if ever we need someone who understands, then they are there to help. They have made our life bearable again and the group gave us the hope to try again. We have since been blessed with another daughter, Grace. Grace has been a great diversion but Penny will always be in our thoughts.

I now volunteer as a parent speaker at Sands bereavement care training days for professionals. I talk to midwives and other healthcare professionals and share my experience to help explain the deep impact the death of a baby has and how they can help. I know first hand the difference they can make, how they can help you cope - ours are like friends now.

Laura and I also fundraise for Sands. Laura has run the Yorkshire Marathon and a 10k run and of course, our friends from York Sands were there cheering her along.

Sands is a club that you don't want to join, but if you do have to join the support they give you is amazing.

What we have achieved: Research and prevention

Sometimes people think that babies die because the baby has not developed properly and so could not live. But this is not the case for most deaths. In fact, only one in ten stillborn babies has a congenital abnormality (sometimes called a birth defect) that means he or she couldn't live. Sands supports research to help answer the questions that surround stillbirth and neonatal death. Our aim is to reduce the numbers of babies' deaths in the UK.

Funding research

During 2014/15 we provided: funding for three new research studies, ongoing funding for a further three studies, and non-financial support for over ten more projects. In 2014/15 Sands made a commitment to invest over £120,000 in high impact research projects including:

The AFFIRM trial

(April 2014 – 2018): Led by Professor Jane Norman head of Edinburgh's Maternal and Fetal Research Centre, the aim of the study is to trial the introduction of new parent information and an agreed health professional response to changes in fetal movements reported by parents in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England. Reduced fetal movements are associated with increased risk of stillbirth. A similar study in Norway saw a 30% fall in stillbirth rates. The AFFIRM trial hopes to demonstrate a strong impact on outcomes with a view to changing clinical guidance for caring for pregnant women in the UK, although its impact is likely to be worldwide.



Midlands and North East England Stillbirth Study

(October 2013 – 2016): This study is led by Dr Alex Heazell, who as Clinical Director of the Maternal and Fetal Health Research Centre at the University of

Manchester and Co-Chair of the International Stillbirth Alliance's Scientific Committee, is a leading stillbirth researcher. The study aims to see whether mothers' activities in late pregnancy, including how she sleeps, have an effect on stillbirth risk and whether there is any relationship between them. The study builds on work in New Zealand and could provide the evidence for the development of a new public health campaign for mothers.



Economic evaluation of the cost of stillbirth

(November 2014 – April 2015): Sands supported the 2011 Lancet Stillbirth Series which had a major influence on our lobbying of all four UK Governments to prioritise stillbirth reduction. The Lancet has now commissioned a follow-up publication that includes a Sands-funded study to investigate the economic and social costs of stillbirth. In a resource-restricted health care system, this study is timely and the data has considerable potential to provide a strong rationale for investing in new interventions to reduce the loss of babies' lives.



Non-financial support

Researchers increasingly see Sands as a key partner organisation for finding study participants and providing patient input. We are co-applicants or are on research advisory groups for a number of major research trials and studies.

Long-term commitment

We also work to change the delivery of maternity care, to improve practice and reduce variations in care. This wide-ranging work has real potential to save lives right here and now. During 2014/15 we continued to engage with experts and policy makers and are now working collaboratively with all four UK governments, the Department of Health, the NHS, the Royal Colleges and other professional bodies, research institutes, training bodies and charities.

During 2014/15 we:



provided ongoing/new funding for 6 research studies and provided non-financial support for over 10 further studies



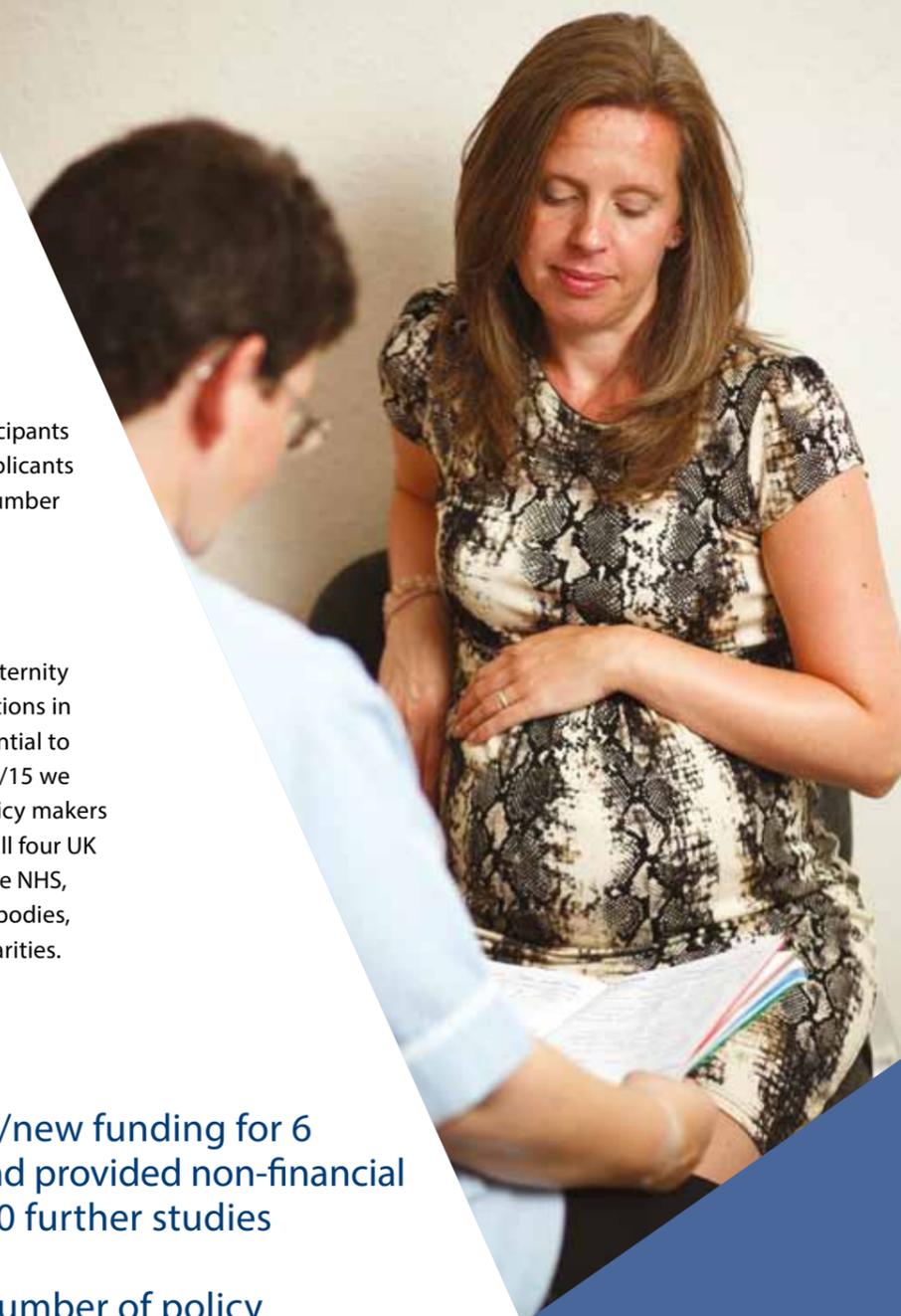
contributed to a number of policy initiatives and research steering groups



responded to 6 public health consultations

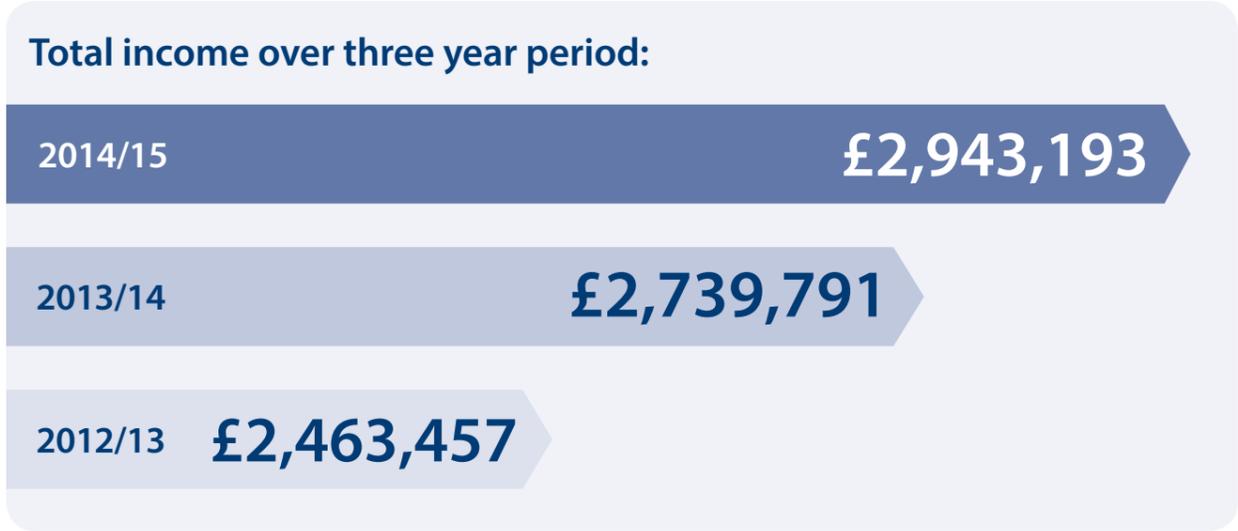
"I have worked with the Sands research team since 2009 on a series of projects. Partnership with Sands has been invaluable in facilitating parents' involvement in research."

Dr Alex Heazell, Senior Clinical Lecturer and Consultant Obstetrician, University of Manchester



Financial review

Sands' income continues to grow year on year; having grown by an average of 9% since 2012/13 to a figure of now just under £3M:



This tremendous achievement is due to the continuing hard work of our staff and to the many parents, families, friends, supporters and volunteers who work tirelessly to raise the money necessary to achieve our objectives. Income from fundraising initiatives was complemented by other activities to support our core aims, such as bereavement care training.

As well as increasing income, Sands managed to hold its expenditure below the £2.9M threshold, resulting in a net surplus overall of £47k for the year end. This compares to an overall deficit of £200k recorded for the year ending 2013/14.

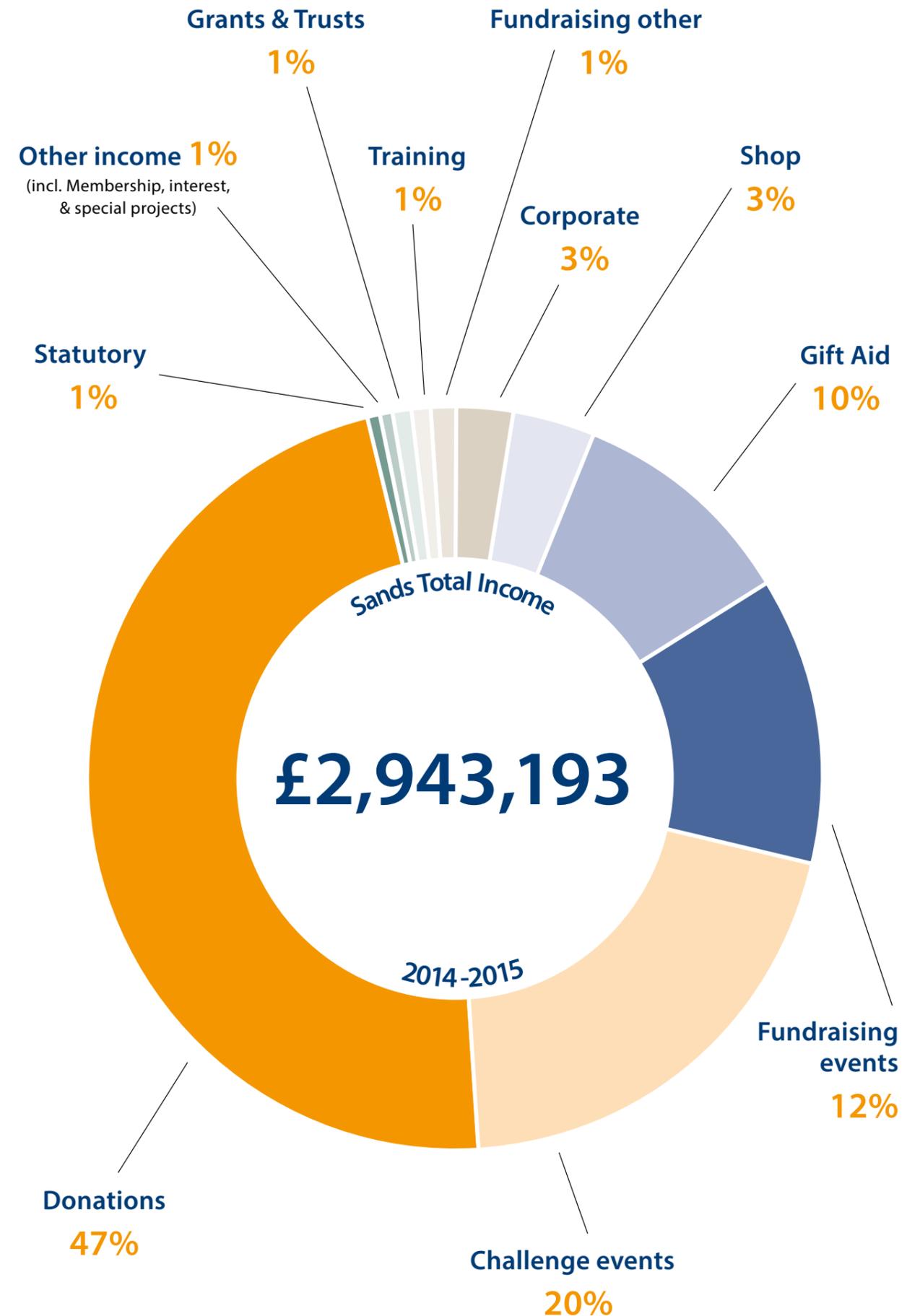
In addition to continuing to deliver on prior year commitments made relating to research, Sands issued new research grants totalling £73k in 2014/15 and has deferred a further £68.1k of restricted research funding to 2015/16 which will form the basis of our new Research Fund.

Reserves policy

Sands needs to hold an appropriate Reserve Fund to ensure continuity of services in the event of a loss or delay of funding and maintain the ability to meet unforeseen costs. Currently, Sands' total reserves, excluding the value of fixed assets and restricted funds held, are held at an average which is in excess of six months' running costs. The Trustees will be reviewing Sands' Reserves Policy in the coming year with a focus on identifying and utilising surplus reserves to fund the achievement of our core objectives, in line with Charity Commission guidance.

Sands continued to improve its internal capacity through recruitment activities, resulting in an increase in the average number of full time equivalents by seven; mainly to support the delivery of Sands' business plan, in line with strategy and the ongoing development of Sands Networks at national level. It is important that we continue to recruit staff that are sensitive to the charity's aims and are supported appropriately to deliver quality and value in their roles.

Significant improvements have been achieved through the Networks and volunteering teams, notably in the area of accounting for Group activity, due to the increasing awareness of the statutory role of the Charity Commission and associated need to submit Group Annual Returns by the relevant deadline. This work was supported by the internal audit function at Sands.



Looking forward: Chair's report

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and the hard work and commitment of Sands staff and volunteers we have been able to achieve some significant milestones in 2014/15.

In particular, on behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank Neal Long for his dedication and commitment as our Chief Executive over 18 years. During his time Neal has played a pivotal role in developing the charity and we wish him all the best with his retirement. Sands is now in an excellent position to go from strength to strength in 2015 and beyond.

There are three key areas where we, with the continued commitment of our supporters and volunteers, will continue to make a real difference in 2015/16:

Improving bereavement support services

It is both a Department of Health and NHS priority to overcome barriers to care and ensure equality of access and, as a key national provider of bereavement care, Sands is committed to improving the accessibility of bereavement care services in the UK.

Next year we will continue to develop and improve the support offered through our much-needed helpline, online forum and social media platforms and will be seeking opportunities for collaboration to ensure that our services are more accessible to those who need our help, including black and minority ethnic groups and those at higher risk of stillbirth and neonatal death.

Work will also continue to review our volunteer befriending services, where we are aiming to reach those most in need of our support, and to strengthen our national Network structure to support our local Groups.

Improving bereavement care

In 2015/16 we will be building on the excellent reach of our bereavement care training. While still working closely with the Royal College of Midwives, we are expanding our horizons to include training for GPs, doulas and health visitors among others.



The growing UK commitment to reduce stillbirths and neonatal deaths

Sands truly believes we can prevent more babies from dying in the UK. Whilst we have seen a reduction in the number of stillbirths and neonatal deaths, there is still a long way to go to reach the standards achieved by other European countries. If the UK could reduce its rate to that of Sweden or Norway, 1,000 more babies would survive every year.

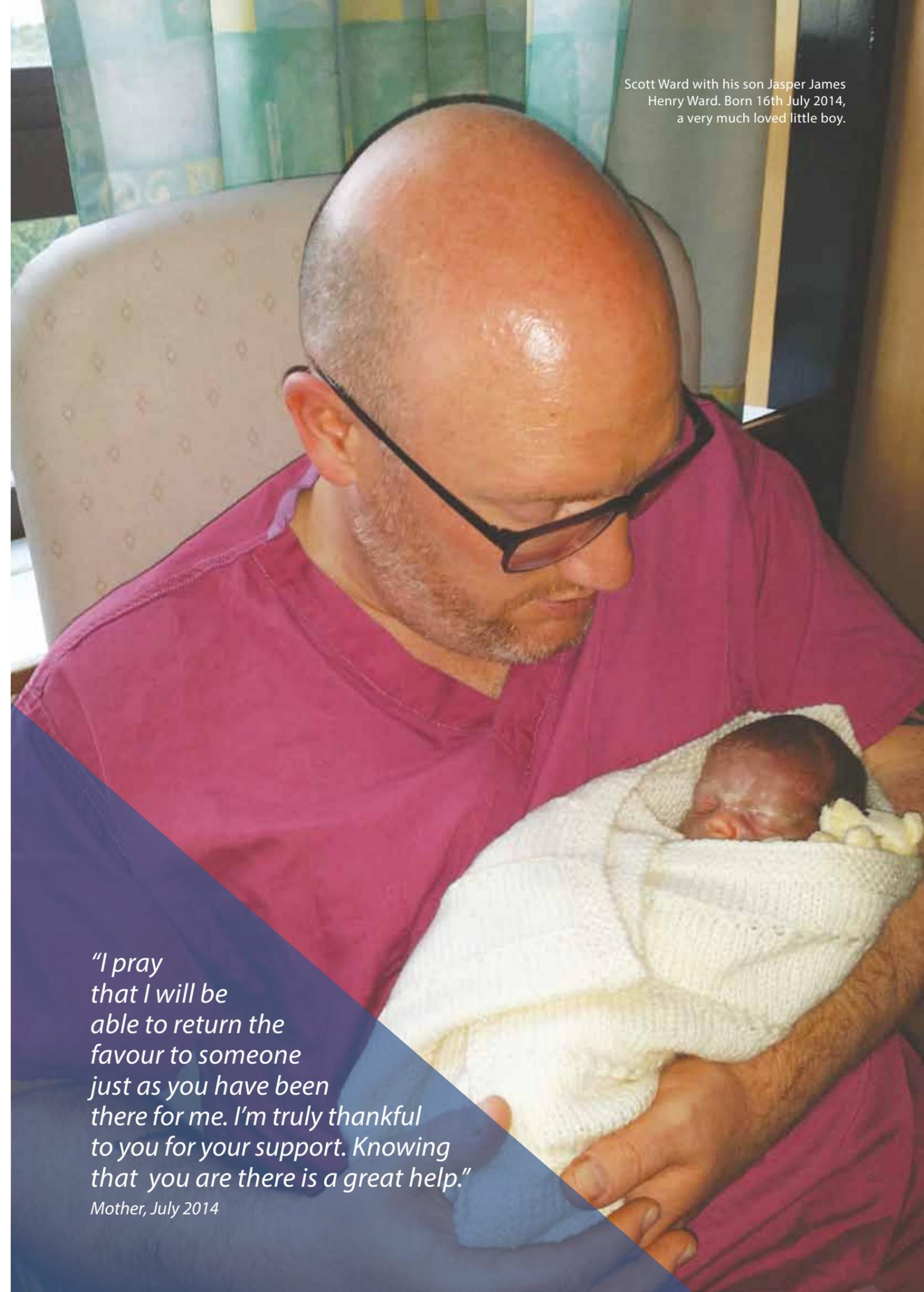
Therefore, Sands is developing a Research Strategy in 2015/16 and is working towards launching a new Research Fund in 2016/17.

Just as importantly, Sands continues to play a key role in collaboration with all four UK governments. These efforts, include work Sands has initiated on clearer public health messaging around stillbirth risk and standardised perinatal mortality review, so that every baby death is investigated to understand what went wrong. By working with the NHS across the UK, we can help make a sustained reduction in baby deaths a reality.

Thank you for your support in helping Sands to come this far. We look forward to continued successes next year.

Angela McCafferty

Scott Ward with his son Jasper James Henry Ward. Born 16th July 2014, a very much loved little boy.



"I pray that I will be able to return the favour to someone just as you have been there for me. I'm truly thankful to you for your support. Knowing that you are there is a great help."

Mother, July 2014

Looking forward: Key objectives for 2015/16

Our key objectives for 2015/16 continue to focus on the key priority areas identified in our 2014-2017 strategy. We are focused on putting those affected by the death of a baby first through our work to improve bereavement support services, improve bereavement care and prioritising our work to ensure few baby deaths.

Our three core pillars

1

Bereavement support services

- ▶ Develop and improve our support offered through the helpline, online forum and social media platforms
- ▶ Work towards achieving the Helpline Partnerships Quality Standard
- ▶ Continue to update and expand the range of Sands support literature including Sands memory boxes
- ▶ Following on from our Asian Outreach project we want to continue to be more accessible to ensure anyone affected by the death of a baby receives support with a focus on black and minority ethnic groups
- ▶ Ensure Sands volunteer befrienders provide a high quality and accessible service.

2

Improving bereavement care

- ▶ Promote and provide best practice in bereavement care throughout the UK by:
 - ▶ Developing and improving high quality training and resources
 - ▶ Improving access to Sands training
- ▶ Maintain the momentum and influence on bereavement care in the UK
- ▶ Begin the review process for the *Sands Guidelines* and *Audit Tool for Health Professionals*.

3

Research and prevention

- ▶ Develop the foundations for a new Sands Research Fund to launch in 2016/17 to encourage and support research into stillbirth and neonatal death
- ▶ Contribute towards a sustained reduction in perinatal deaths across all four UK countries
- ▶ Develop agreed public health messaging about stillbirth risk and resources to deliver those messages effectively to both families and health professionals
- ▶ Disseminate information about reducing perinatal deaths to our stakeholders, including the public, the NHS, politicians and policy makers
- ▶ Advance work to turn the Department of Health/ Sands perinatal mortality review data set into a web-based tool accessible to all units.

These core pillars are underpinned by the following two key areas:

1. Fundraising and Communications

- ▶ Continue to sustain our income growth which includes the amazing fundraising efforts from our national Network of Sands Groups.
- ▶ Develop a bigger, better profile.

2. Groups

- ▶ Ensure all Sands Groups are well supported and managed to provide high quality and accessible services within the three core pillars of Sands.
- ▶ Ensure Sands Network structure develops to support the work of Sands' Groups.

Simon and Chloe Baker with their baby Solomon who died during labour on 28th October 2010 at 33 weeks and 5 days.

"I can't thank you enough for just being there and helping me. Knowing we've a place to come really is comforting."

Father

"I would have been lost without your kind words."

Aunt

Looking forward: Funding priorities for 2015/16

We are committed to supporting anyone affected by the death of a baby and promoting research to reduce the loss of babies' lives. Here are some examples of our funding priorities in 2015/16:

Our three core pillars

1 Bereavement support services
The helpline is an integral part of our bereavement support services. In 2015 we are working towards achieving the Helpline Partnerships Quality Standard.

 **We are seeking to raise £120,000 to support both the essential costs and the development of our national Helpline services.**

Volunteer befriender training:
Sands places a high priority on the quality of the befriending provided by our local volunteer Groups. Having been affected by the death of a baby themselves, the support a local volunteer befriender can give is invaluable. We aim to provide local access to our national befriender training scheme to more bereaved parents and their families.

"In the last year I have befriended around 20 - 30 people in different ways, some through group, some via email and some on the phone. I've spoken to mums, dads, aunties, a few grandparents and also friends.

So many say that speaking to someone who has been through it gives them hope that they will find another day where they can smile again." Befriender

During 2015/16 we are planning a review of our befriending service in order to qualify for the Approved Provider Standard (APS), a national quality standard specifically for befriending and mentoring schemes.

 **In 2015/16 we are seeking £50,000 to pay for the core running costs and development of our much-valued volunteer befriender training scheme.**

Supporting Sands in your community:
Our UK wide network of over 90 Sands Groups play a key role in implementing Sands' objectives at a local level. Run by volunteers, Groups offer a range of services for bereaved parents and their families, such as offering befriender support, working with local hospitals to improve care and providing facilities such as a special room, holding memorial services and creating memorial gardens. We are also working with potential volunteers in 16 other locations including parts of the country that still have little support.

Sands has ten regional Networks each with its own Network Coordinator covering Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, North East, North West, East, London, South East, South West and West England. The Networks enable Groups to offer support, share good practice and develop a coordinated approach in implementing our objectives.

 **In 2015/16 we are seeking £58,000 to fund the essential costs, and development of, our Networks.**

Looking forward: Funding priorities for 2015/16

2 Improving bereavement care

In 2015/16 we want to ensure we continue to support and enable health professionals to provide care to bereaved parents and their families to the highest standards of quality and safety and ensure that bereaved parents are at the centre of all decisions.

Specifically in 2015/16 we are seeking funds of £47,900 to:

- ▶ support the continued development and expansion of our accredited bereavement care training to a wider range of health professionals, including GP's, junior doctors and student midwives
- ▶ develop an e-version of the Sands Audit Tool.

3 Research and prevention

In 2015/16 Sands continues to fund high quality research projects that have the ability to significantly impact the rates of stillbirth and neonatal death in the UK. For example:

The Prediction of Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes (POPS) study led by Professor Gordon Smith at the University of Cambridge (2013-2016): This study has already produced some impressive results in its aim to develop new evidence and identify scanning measurements and regimes which are effective in detecting poor fetal outcome and predict stillbirth risk.

Now in its final year, funding will enable the research team to investigate the combined use of ultrasound and blood biomarkers together as predictors of risk. Together this study has the potential to refine and improve predictive accuracy and lead to a combined test that will identify more at risk babies and ultimately help to save babies' lives. Sands is funding £50,000 of the final year of this study.

Sands Research Fund: In 2016/17 we will be launching a new Sands Research Fund and are seeking to raise £300,000 a year to do this. We will be inviting high calibre research institutions from across the UK to submit an application for funding for projects.

The Sands Research Fund will focus on these areas:

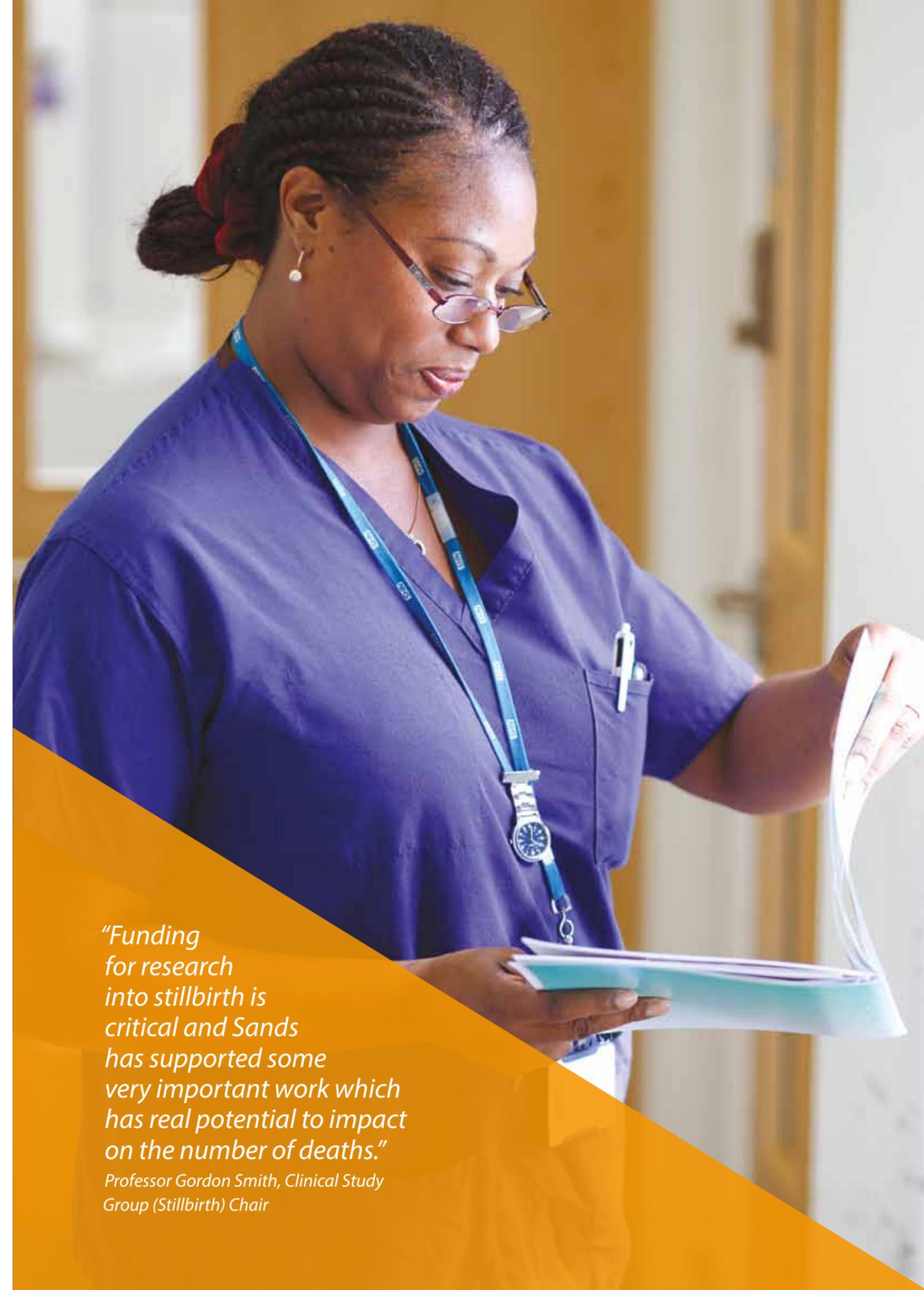
1. understanding causes of stillbirth and neonatal death
2. identifying pregnancies at risk of perinatal deaths and improving interventions to manage those pregnancies
3. defining good bereavement care.

"Our midwife was completely honest about every step after being given the news that our daughter had died. We will be forever grateful to her for the care provided during that devastating time." Mum

Applications to the Sands Research Fund will go through a rigorous selection process, the criteria for which will be published on our website in advance of the fund's launch. Priority will be given to applications that demonstrate potential to generate robust evidence that can lead to changes in clinical practice and where appropriate we will prioritise research where the most deaths might be prevented.

"Funding for research into stillbirth is critical and Sands has supported some very important work which has real potential to impact on the number of deaths."

Professor Gordon Smith, Clinical Study Group (Stillbirth) Chair



Thank you

None of what we have achieved would have been possible without the help of so many. Thank you to...

Our fundraisers who have made regular gifts and extraordinary efforts from running marathons, jumping out of planes and climbing mountains to baking cakes, shaving their heads, releasing balloons and holding fantastic fundraising events.

Our volunteers who tirelessly give their time free of charge to run our support groups, act as befrienders, not forgetting knitting and crocheting blankets for our *Always Loved Never Forgotten* memory boxes.



Thank you to Dani Giles who set up Ava's Sweet Dreams Team following the death of her daughter in September 2014. Dani and her family have already raised over £10,000 by taking part in a series of challenges ranging from road races to mountain climbs.

Thank you to Elaine Turnock who has recently knitted her 200th blanket for us to go in our much-loved memory boxes.



Thank you to Alison Gibson who took on the challenge of the 2015 Great Manchester Run and raised over £900 – a phenomenal effort for a first time fundraiser and runner!

Thank you to Susan Catterall and team who took part in the DiFC Superhero run in May 2014 and raised £1,923 in memory of Susan's grandson Lucas.



Thank you to Bobbie Jackson who raised a fantastic £7,831 at a fun-day in memory of her son Tyler.



Thank you to Alfie Jeanes who aged 10 years climbed Snowdon last November in memory of his big sister and little brother and raised over £600.

Thanks to Bradley Hewitt who organised a 7-a-side charity football tournament at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium in memory of his nephew Albie. He raised a staggering £47,844.



Thanks to Dan Hubbard and his wife who have been fundraising for us for many years in memory of their daughter Isabel. This year, with only 3 months to go, Dan stepped in to replace one of our London Marathon golden bond runners and went on to raise a brilliant £10,037.

Thanks for Josie Teather-Lovejoy who took part in the 2015 London Marathon in memory of her son Isaac and 40 other babies for whom she wore pink and blue ribbons tied around her waist. She raised a brilliant £3,712.



Thank you

Thanks also to...

Our research participants who take part in research studies, respond to surveys and Facebook requests for stories and experiences to illustrate issues, and to include in research submissions, reports and presentations.

Our corporate partners and their staff for fundraising and supporting Sands so generously.

Our professional partners who kindly collaborate with us and give us invaluable support in the work that we do including partners in governments in all four UK nations, the Department of Health, the NHS, the Royal Colleges and other professional bodies, research institutes, training bodies and charities.

Our staff and trustees who frequently work beyond the call of duty driven by their passion and empathy for others.



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*"Your advice and help has been
invaluable. I now know how to
go forward." Aunt*



Constance (Nancy) Rice who died at 2 days old on
31st December 2011 following a blood clot in the
placenta which led to her being starved of oxygen.

If you would like any further information or support please contact us or visit our website.

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Enquiries: 020 7436 7940 info@uk-sands.org

Website: www.uk-sands.org

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