

The Welsh Government
must turn words into
action to save babies'
lives and support
bereaved families.



sands 

Saving babies' lives.
Supporting bereaved families.

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Introduction

The latest data from [MBRRACE-UK](#), shows a continued lack of progress in saving babies' lives across Wales, whilst too many bereaved parents still report being unable to access the care and support they need.

In October 2025, a group of bereaved parents, supported by Sands, launched a campaign calling on the Government to adopt ambitious targets to save more babies' lives and to ensure all bereaved families get the care and support they need.

Following the 2026 election, now is the time for Welsh Government to take action to save babies' lives and support bereaved families.

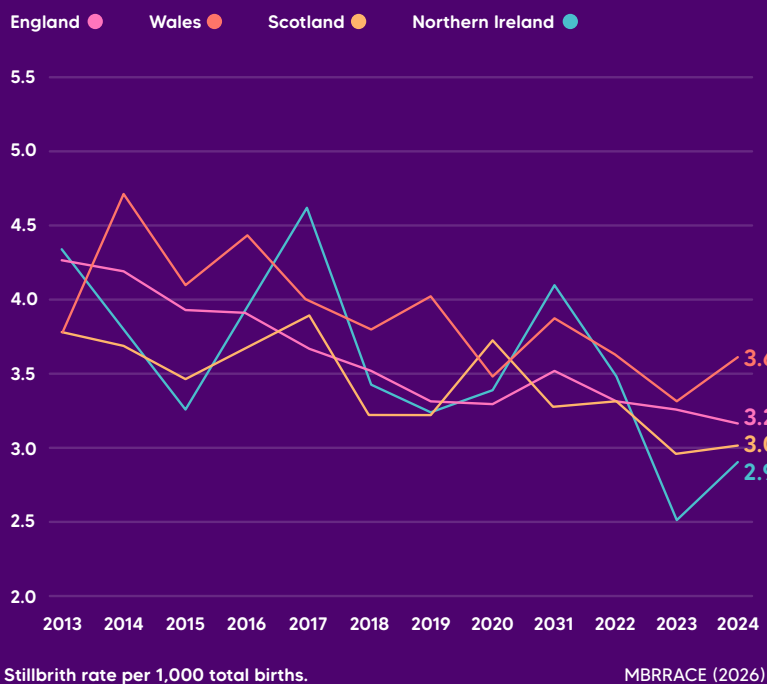
Why targets matter

In 2024,

Wales recorded the **highest rates** of stillbirth across the UK for a third consecutive year.¹



Stillbirth rates across the four nations 2013-2024



And for the first time, analysis from the Sands and Tommy's Joint Policy Unit shows that between 2022 and 2024 Wales had the highest rates of baby deaths in the UK (when looking at rates over a rolling three-year average).

We know that other countries in Europe are already achieving much lower rates. 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 2019-2023.²

Figure 1

¹State of the nation report | MBRRACE-UK

²Analysis of Euro Peristat and ONS data by the Sands' and Tommy's Joint Policy Unit.

Stillbirth rates across the UK are significantly higher than the best performing country in Europe in 2019



Data showing the stillbirth rate in each of the four UK nations, 2024, compared to the best performing rate in Europe, Estonia, from 2019.

MBRRACE (2026)

Figure 2

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:

- 1 A stillbirth rate of 2.0 stillbirths per 1,000 total births.
- 2 A neonatal mortality rate of 0.5 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births for babies born at 24 weeks' gestation and over.
- 3 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**.



Key messages

Adopting targets will ensure Government make baby loss the priority it needs to be and shows a clear commitment to being held accountable.



Bereavement care

We are pleased that National Bereavement Care Pathway Cymru (NBCP) was published in June 2026 to ensure compassionate, consistent, and high-quality care following pregnancy loss or the death of a baby.

This is only the beginning of improving bereavement care in Wales, as hospitals implement the standards they should also be continually improving. Health Boards will need ongoing commitment and resource from the Welsh Government to ensure staffing and NHS estates can deliver high-quality bereavement care.

Mental health support

Mental health support is different from bereavement care and it's vital that decision makers are aware of the difference.

Every Health Board should have specialist mental health support pathways for bereaved families. But currently in Wales, there is only one doing this.

In 2025

Over

80%

of bereaved parents from across the UK told Sands that they felt they needed mental health support. But only

5%

in Wales were able to access this through the NHS.³

Whilst an evaluation of the Onnen service in Cardiff will help to inform a national roll-out, the wait for this should not prevent work to develop services in every Health Board from getting underway.



Key messages

Sands is calling for all Health Boards in Wales to have specialist mental health care pathways for bereaved families, which are available to all bereaved parents no matter how long ago their loss occurred or their experience of loss.

The Government must provide Health Boards with the support and resource they need to sustainably embed the NBCP standards in every hospital and every department where women and birthing people receive care during and after pregnancy or baby loss.

Ways you can help:

Contact your MSs, you can use our template emails to ask your MSs to write to the Cabinet Minister and Deputy Minister:

- [To improve mental health care in Wales](#)
- [To call for targets to save babies' lives](#)



³Lost in the system: bereaved parents experiences of mental health care following baby loss | Sands