Sands
Stillbirth & neonatal death charity

Sands' vision, purpose and priorities

2014 - 2017

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Introduction from the Chair and Chief Executive

This is a strategy for growth

Sands' primary focus is the loss of babies' lives and the impact of that loss on everyone affected – parents, families, health professionals.

Sands exists to support anyone affected by the death of a baby, to improve the bereavement care received by parents and families, and to promote research to reduce the number of babies dying.

Everything we do should be focused around those three aims.

The services we run, the public health messages we promote, the way we raise money should all support these aims.

This direction gives us clarity

It sets out our five key priority areas that will define all our work:

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

By focusing on these key areas and measuring our success, we will have a bigger impact on lives.

We are ambitious

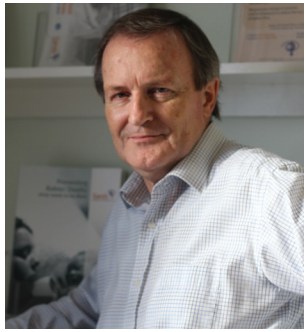
Over the last strategy (2011–2014), we've increased our income. We have directly funded £500,000 of high-quality research. We have made a significant impact at government level in all four UK countries, making stillbirth an issue of national priority and driving action to start to reduce deaths.

We want to be bold. We're all here to make a difference and to make change happen. We believe we will reduce the number of babies dying, we believe we can improve the care parents and families receive and we know we can improve the support provided to anyone affected by the death of a baby.

We will deliver

We will use every penny we are given in the best way we can. We have great people who always deliver results and recognise the privilege of working towards a great vision.

Angela McCafferty
Chair



Neal Long
Chief Executive

Sands' vision, purpose and priorities 2014 – 2017

Five key facts: stillbirths and neonatal deaths

- Every day, 11 babies are stillborn and six newborn babies die – that's 6,500 baby deaths a year.[1–4]
- One in every 200 babies delivered in the UK is stillborn (that is, the baby has died during pregnancy or birth any time from 24 weeks of pregnancy onwards).[3]
- One in every 350 babies born in the UK dies in the first 4 weeks of life.[3,5]
- The percentage of pregnancies that end in stillbirth has remained largely unchanged in the UK for the past 20 years.[1–4, 6–12] Meanwhile, other high-income countries have achieved significant reductions in stillbirths in recent years, demonstrating more can be done.[13]
- In around one in three stillbirths the exact reason for the baby's death is unclear and the death is described as 'unexplained'.[14] This is because we don't fully understand the causes of stillbirth. More research is needed.

Sands' vision

Sands' vision is for a world where fewer babies die and when a baby dies anyone affected by the death receives the best care and support for as long as they need.

Sands' purpose

Sands' purpose is to: support anyone affected by the death of a baby; work in partnership with health professionals to ensure that bereaved parents and families receive the best possible care; and 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.

Better support

We want a world where parents and anyone affected by the death of baby get the best support and care possible.

6,500 babies die in the UK every year.
That's 17 a day…

This means for every 200 births, one set of parents goes home with empty arms.

The death of a baby has a profound and lasting impact on parents and the wider family. We know this from the many voices we have heard and the thousands of families we have supported over the past 36 years.

So from 2014 we are going to focus on…
Supporting and developing our network of local groups to work in partnership to deliver the best possible support to parents and professionals.

This means we will:

- Evaluate the range, inclusiveness and accessibility of our support services.
- Review and develop our group network structure and ensure an annual conference is held in each network to share best practices.
- Develop our network structure to ensure our local groups have the support, training and guidance to provide appropriate and accessible support services.
- Identify a Sands' 'link person' for every maternity unit, to create more awareness of our support services within every unit.
- Collaborate with other charities and organisations to ensure anyone affected by the death of a baby gets the best care possible.

Improving bereavement care

We want a world where the families of babies who die receive the best possible bereavement support and care from health care professionals.

So from 2014, we are going to focus on…
Promoting 5 key ways for maternity units to provide high quality bereavement care for parents whose baby dies, before, during or shortly after birth:

1. **Royal College of Midwives (RCM) accredited bereavement care training:** for all staff who care for bereaved parents.

2. **Bereavement care midwives:** all parents should have access to a specially trained midwife.

3. **Dedicated bereavement room:** away from the sound of live babies and celebrating families.

4. **Bereavement care literature:** support booklets for parents and resources for professionals.

5. **Post mortem consent package and training:** specially trained senior practitioners, who can discuss the options with parents based on the Sands post mortem consent package.

This means we will:

- Deliver high-quality RCM-accredited, bereavement care training to 3,000 midwives throughout the UK (around 10%).
- Promote our training in every maternity unit throughout the UK.
- Develop and deliver high-quality bereavement care training to other professionals who provide support and care for bereaved parents and their families e.g. GPs and health visitors.
- Revise the Sands Guidelines for Professionals to ensure they remain an essential benchmark for good practice, and make them available online.
- Develop a national bereavement care pathway to ensure a consistent standard of care throughout the UK.
- Develop bereavement care awards for best practice.
- Identify a Sands link professional in every maternity unit to liaise with their local Sands group.
- To work in partnership with professionals to ensure that all maternity units aim to provide our 5 key ways of providing high-quality bereavement care for parents and their families.
- Provide Bereavement Support Packs free of charge to hospitals and promote the practice of providing memory boxes to all bereaved parents.

Effective organisation & increased revenue

Effective organisation

We want a world where Sands is the most effective organisation working to reduce perinatal deaths and minimise the negative impact of stillbirth and neonatal deaths, where our staff and volunteers become a more effective and integrated organisation that speaks with one voice.

So from 2014, we are going to focus on…
Having the right people, in the right place, at the right time, supported by fit-for-purpose processes and technology.

This means we will:

- Ensure we continue to expand our staff team and volunteers with the very best people.
- Develop consistent staff recruitment and retention practices.
- Develop a comprehensive volunteer strategy to ensure effective recruitment, training, support and guidance for Sands volunteers.
- Deliver effective and performing teams through a clear organisation and leadership structure.
- Support and promote the health and well-being of staff and volunteers through the implementation of strategic and comprehensive health and wellness approaches.
- Produce and maintain an up-to-date staff information handbook for all members of staff.
- Develop and integrate an HR information system with self-service options for staff.
- Identify staff training requirements through an effective performance management process.
- Develop a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Ensure our 'back office' processes are efficient and accurate.
- Review the operation of the shop and develop a plan to increase efficiencies in customer service.
- Ensure that all governance across the organisation reflects best practice, employment law, health and safety requirements, and financial and statutory compliance.

Increased revenue

We want a world where Sands is more effective at encouraging, supporting and thanking all those who fundraise for Sands and has the income to deliver its aims.

So from 2014, we are going to focus on…
Reaching a fundraising target of £4 million by March 2017.

This means we will:

- Develop and implement a tailored fundraising experience from first contact through to our acknowledgement and thank you.
- Welcome fundraisers to the Sands community and provide information on events and progress.
- Partner with corporate sponsors to build socially and financially valuable relationships.
- Develop our trust income.
- Grow our legacy income.
- Develop relationships with major donors.

Fewer baby deaths

We want a world where fewer babies die.

- **In around one in three stillbirths the exact reason for the baby's death is unclear and the death is described as 'unexplained'.[14] This is because we don't fully understand the causes of stillbirth. More research is needed.**
- **One-third of stillborn babies – that's around 1,200 babies every year – die after a full-term pregnancy (37 or more weeks).[14]**
- **Every year, 500 babies die from an intrapartum-related event (that is, something that happened during labour).[14]**

So from 2014, we are going to focus on…
Building on our work to deliver a sustained reduction in stillbirths by focusing on the areas where we can have the greatest impact.

This means we will:

- Continue to grow Sands' research fund and develop our research strategy with the aim of funding new high-quality research projects while continuing to support the excellent studies we already fund.
- Bring stillbirth experts together to share knowledge, optimise the quality and impact of new research studies and encourage more funders to prioritise stillbirth research.
- Drive national work to implement good-quality, standardised perinatal mortality review for all babies, so lessons are learned.
- Support good-quality national data collection and confidential enquiries into specific groups of deaths.
- Continue to play a lead role on the national steering groups set up to reduce stillbirths by each of the four UK Governments.
- Work with clinicians' groups to make intrapartum deaths a 'never event'.
- Develop a public health campaign to inform mums-to-be and health professionals about stillbirth risk.
- Promote effective, evidence-based methods for identifying poor fetal growth, in local, regional and national clinical settings.
- Promote strategies for increasing post-mortem uptake.
- Work to improve the quality of perinatal post mortem data.
- Support the International Stillbirth Alliance (ISA) conference (September 2014, the Netherlands) for international experts to share learning.

Bigger, better profile

We want a world where all parents-to-be, parents and health professionals know about and trust Sands.

So from 2014, we are going to focus on…
Being heard by and listening to all parents-to-be, parents and health professionals.

This means we will:

- Identify internal and external Sands' audiences and create a communications plan for each audience.
- Increase our profile by expanding our external links with ambassadors, and corporate and major donors.
- Organise an annual high-profile event.
- Develop a professional, pro-active presence on all appropriate social media platforms.
- Continue to be the leading voice on issues relating to stillbirth and neonatal death.

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Sands supports anyone affected by the death of a baby and promotes research to reduce the loss of babies' lives

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