The MBF is very grateful to all those who have supported our work over the past year.

Our thanks for financial contributions go to:

Hammersmith Hospital Special Trustees
Henry Smith’s Charity
Garfield Weston Foundation
The Ratcliffe Foundation
The John Avins Trust
Lord Austin’s Charity

Also to the many individuals who have made personal donations, which are greatly appreciated.

We also thank:
The staff of Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital who have been unstinting in their support, help and encouragement.

Members of Ealing & Chiswick; Teddington; Central; Wandsworth and South West London Twins Clubs who so willingly share their experiences with expectant parents at the Prenatal Meetings.

Infotex UK for their support in maintaining and updating the MBF website.

We would also like to thank the parents who have kindly allowed the use of their photographs in this Report.
Letter from our Chairman

As a father of identical twins, I know something of the joys as well as the problems that can arise for multiple birth families. Yet the help and advice so badly needed by many families is still not as widely available as it should be.

My fellow Trustees and I are delighted with the progress made by the MBF in its second year as an independent charity. As ever, the challenge remains to make sure that sufficient funding is available to fulfil our ambitious plans for the future but I am confident that over the next year the MBF will continue to go from strength to strength.

Michael Fea
Chairman

Letter from our Director

The Multiple Births Foundation is needed more than ever. The most recent figures show that the multiple birth rate in the UK is the highest on record, with 15 out of every 1000 deliveries being twins or more. The Foundation aims to support families with a multiple birth through working with professionals to raise awareness of how to meet their special and particular needs.

This year our work has expanded in many directions. The MBF Membership scheme has been re-launched, bringing together parents and professionals and forming the basis of a network for learning from the families and sharing professional expertise. Building on the parent professional partnership is crucial to the development of the services for multiple birth families and we are extremely grateful to all who contribute to the MBF work in this way.

The small MBF team continues to give dedicated, enthusiastic commitment to our work. Margie Davies is developing the midwifery services and Rosie Ticciati’s Twins Clinics provide a model for the special support and advice needed by multiple birth families. Marion Paterson, as Administrator, undertakes ever more tasks as the work grows. Elizabeth Bryan, our medical consultant, is a constant supporter and advisor. The local London Twins Clubs are also very much part of the team; they provide panels of parents for the exceptionally popular meetings for expectant parents held at Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital.

This year has seen significant steps towards our goal of all multiple birth families having access to the best possible professional help and support.

Jane Denton
Director
The Year in Review

As the MBF continues to work towards higher and more consistent standards in the care of multiple birth families, we have been encouraged by the increasing interest from professionals.

The MBF Work with Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital

Good progress has been made in the development of Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital (QCCH) as a national centre for multiple births. A survey of parents who had twins or triplets at QCCH between 1st January 2001 and 31st August 2003 (385 in total) revealed that many felt their care had been excellent but others had suggestions for improvements.

A steering committee, the MBF & QCCH Multiple Births Review Group, comprising representatives from all hospital departments, MBF staff and parents of twins and triplets, are working to implement the recommendations made in the report of the survey.

A Specialist Senior Midwife for Multiple Births has recently been appointed at QCCH. This is a major step in establishing a model for optimum care and several hospitals have expressed interest in this. A key part of the role will be working with the MBF and hospital staff to implement the recommendations from the patient survey and ensure that the MBF Guidelines are put into practice.

MBF Clinics

All twins or more born at Queen Charlotte’s and Chelsea Hospital are routinely offered an appointment, when the babies are 3-4 months old, for the specialist multiple births clinic run by MBF Health Visitor, Rosie Ticciati. We are very grateful to all the staff of the David Harvey Children's Centre for their warm welcome and help.

Over the year 85 new families have attended and 64 have repeated visits. Rosie has also held 276 telephone consultations, which are particularly appreciated by the many parents who find travelling difficult.

Education and Information

The MBF website (www.multiplebirths.org.uk) receives an average of 1,500 visits per week from parents, professionals, research workers and the media. The most common enquiries relate to zygosity testing, prenatal meetings and the biology of twinning. The demand for MBF publications continues to grow. At least half the orders are now through the website.

One of the most important aspects of the work of the MBF is raising professional awareness of the needs of multiple birth families. The MBF lecture on multiple births is now an established part of the curriculum for the student midwives at Thames Valley University.
Margie Davies regularly participates in the courses organised by Maternity Nanny Training.

This year, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has published a leaflet, based on the original MBF publication, ‘Avoiding Multiple Births: Deciding how many embryos to transfer’. It has changed its policy on embryo transfer to limit the number of embryos transferred in women under 40 years old to two.

The MBF staff continue to lecture widely at distinguished gatherings both in the UK and overseas. Elizabeth Bryan lectured at meetings of the British Medical Ultrasound Society, the Swedish Perinatal Society, the 1st National Spanish meeting on Multiple Pregnancy, the Edinburgh Science Festival, and the Western Canada Perinatal Conference and conducted multiple birth workshops in Vancouver.

Jane Denton has continued to lecture at the assisted conception course at Bourn Hall. The MBF lecture on the risks and implications of multiple pregnancies will be included on the new Bourn Hall web-based course. Jane Denton is also involved with the development of an RCN Distance Learning Course in infertility for nurses at all levels from primary care through to the specialist centres.

Prenatal Evening Meetings

The MBF evening meeting ‘Preparing for Twins and Triplets’ is always booked to capacity. To meet the growing demand, the number of meetings for 2005 has been increased.

In the past year, 46% of parents were booked at Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital. The remainder came from 33 different hospitals. We are delighted that so many parents find the talks helpful but they also clearly demonstrate the need for similar local meetings that are accessible to all parents and grandparents expecting twins or more.

International Congress on Twin Studies

The 11th International Congress on Twin Studies was organised by the Danish Twin Registry in Odense, Denmark. It is always a pleasure to meet colleagues with the common interest of multiple births. The wide-ranging presentations, variety of expertise and splendid organisation by the local committee made it an excellent meeting. Jane Denton presented a paper in the session “Controversies in Obstetric Issues” on reducing multiple pregnancies from IVF and Margie Davies spoke about maternity services for twins and triplets, reporting on the MBF survey of patients from Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea Hospital. Elizabeth Bryan led a session on Psychosocial Issues in Families with Multiple Births.

Antenatal Screening in Multiple Pregnancy

As medical techniques and knowledge of genetics develop, ever more complex situations face parents and professionals. As yet there is no national guidance on antenatal screening in multiple pregnancy. The MBF has many enquires from confused parents who have been given conflicting information.

In July 2004, a seminar was organised by the MBF and the London Region Screening Committee to explore the current situation and the training needs of professionals. Presentations covering the clinical, psychological and parents perspectives were followed by working groups who discussed and made recommendations on “what topics should be covered in the National Screening Committee policy for multiple pregnancies”.

A full report was submitted to the National Screening Committee. The MBF is also working with the Down’s Antenatal Information Screening Implementation Group to develop patient information for women with a multiple pregnancy.
Research and Looking to the Future

Research

The MBF collaborated with the Institute of Child Health, London, in a twin study on the effects of birthweight on later vascular and cognitive function. The findings are due to be published shortly. The MBF will continue to collaborate with the research team, led by Dr Atul Singhal, during a second stage of this study.

Jane Denton is on the Steering Committee for the project to establish a European Twin Births Registry. The Registry would be of enormous value in conducting collaborative research into many aspects of multiple births. Funding is currently being sought from the European Commission.

Looking to the Future

The achievements over the past year are steps in the right direction but much remains to be done to help ensure the delivery of consistently high quality services for multiple birth families. The National Service Framework (NSF) for children, young people and maternity services, recently published by the Department of Health, focuses on a cultural change promoting child and family-centred services to improve the health and welfare of mothers and their children. The emphasis is on equal, high quality and integrated health and social care appropriate to individual needs from pregnancy through to adulthood - exactly what the MBF seeks to achieve for multiple birth families. The NSF reinforces the MBF aim for a nation-wide strategy and we will continue to work with the NHS, local authorities and other agencies to implement changes and share good practice.

Over the next year, the MBF will focus together with the staff of Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital on developing a model of excellence. It also aims to set up a nationwide network of professionals with a special interest in multiple births to work together in sharing good practice and promoting high standards in hospitals and the community.
Membership

The MBF Members are steadily increasing. We are delighted to welcome so many new professionals and parents. For only £15 per annum, Members receive the Annual Report and a newsletter (twice yearly) with news of MBF activities, book reviews, latest research and fundraising events, and 10% discount on publications. Details of how to join are available on the website at www.multiplebirths.org.uk.

Donations and Gift Aid

The MBF relies on charitable donations to support the essential work described in this Annual Report. Your help and support could be crucial in ensuring the services of the MBF continue. Donations can be made very easily through our website at www.multiplebirths.org.uk.

The MBF is also registered for the Gift Aid scheme, which means that for every pound you give we can claim an extra 28 pence from the Inland Revenue, helping your donation go further. Please make sure that you fill in one of our Gift Aid forms – you will only need to do it once.*

*To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax or capital gains must at least equal the amount we will claim in the tax year. If you pay a higher tax rate you can claim further relief in your Self-Assessment return.

Financial Information

This financial information is an extract from the financial accounts of The Multiple Births Foundation for the period 1st September 2003 to 31st August 2004.
MBF Staff

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Director

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Medical Consultant

Margie Davies RGN RM
Midwifery Liaison Officer

Marion Paterson MA
Administrator

Rosie Ticciati RGN HV
Health Visitor and Counsellor

Patrons

Mr Michael Buerk
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