



Newsletter

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- Just over half of units provide special parent education for parents expecting a multiple birth
- Half have no written information about their own hospital services for multiples.
- Only 1 in 6 have antenatal classes specifically for multiple births

Issue Number 5

“Supporting Professionals Supporting Families”

Spring 2006

Dear MBF Member

BIG LOTTERY FUND GRANT FOR THE MBF

We are delighted to announce that the MBF has been awarded a research grant of £141,000 from the Big Lottery Fund. It is gratifying that it has now been finally recognised that multiple births have special requirements.

The grant will fund a joint project with the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit to produce evidence based professional guidelines and information for parents on feeding multiple birth babies up to one year of age. As many parents are only too well aware, the knowledge and skills of midwives, health visitors and other professionals varies greatly in preparing, teaching and supporting mothers to feed more than one baby. Parents as well as professionals will be involved in the project. To ensure that they are easy to use in practice, and will not just sit on shelves getting dusty, the guidelines and information will be piloted in maternity units before final publication.

The MBF survey of UK maternity units (summarised on pages 2 & 3) is helping us to identify where services for multiple birth families could be improved. Preparing parents to care for twins or triplets is essential. We know, not only from the survey, but also from the many enquiries we receive, that the provision of prenatal education in a multiple pregnancy is generally inadequate. Addressing this need will be the first objective for our work with the members of the new Specialist Network for Multiple Births, which was launched last year. We are also looking forward to working jointly with Tamba on this project.

Raising funds to ensure these exciting developments continue remains a priority. We are very grateful to all those who have supported us with donations this year but we still need to raise more to give the MBF a secure future. Any help you can give would be much appreciated.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Best wishes
Jane Denton
Director



Prenatal Evening Meetings

Dates for 2006: **Wednesday, 14th June 2006**
Wednesday, 26th July 2006
Wednesday, 6th September 2006
Wednesday, 18th October 2006
Wednesday, 29th November 2006

The evenings are from 7.30pm until 9.30pm.
They are held in the Seminar Room, Hammersmith House, behind Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital, Du Cane Road London W12
Healthcare and other professionals are welcome
Suggested donation of £2 per head
Essential to phone **0208 383 3519** to reserve seats

If you have suggestions, articles or comments for the next MBF newsletter please contact the MBF Administrator, Marion Paterson.

The Multiple Births Foundation
Hammersmith House Level 4
Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital
Du Cane Road, London, W12 0HS
Telephone: 0208 383 3519
Fax: 0208 383 3041
E-mail: mbf@hhnt.nhs.uk
Website: www.multiplebirths.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1094546
Limited Company No. 4426289

Multiple Births and Maternity Services: Summary of a survey by the Multiple Births Foundation

One of the key aims of the Multiple Births Foundation is to improve the awareness of professionals so that they can provide better care for families with twins, triplets or more. The enquiries received by the MBF and Tamba, the parent led organisation, indicate that there is an enormous variation in the provision of care in the maternity services for multiple birth families.

To help address this problem, the MBF is establishing a Specialist Network for Multiple Births, focusing initially on midwives and health visitors. Through this network members will be able to share their experience and expertise and help with standard setting, audit and research, thereby underpinning the development and improvement of practice.

As a first step the MBF undertook a survey to find out what is currently provided through NHS maternity services in the UK. A questionnaire, devised with the help of Tamba, was sent to the Directors of Midwifery Services of all the 292 UK maternity units. We asked about the number of deliveries of multiples in each unit; what information was provided for parents about multiple pregnancies and births; whether there were any guidelines or care pathways specific to multiple pregnancy, specialist multiple pregnancy midwives or twins clinics. In addition to the local information, we asked whether and how MBF and Tamba services were used. Finally and crucially, each unit was invited to nominate a representative to be the MBF contact and participate in the Specialist Network.

Contributions continued to arrive for over two months beyond the September 2005 deadline but they were worth waiting for!

Results

Questionnaires were sent to 292 UK Maternity Units. Replies were received from 102 units giving a response rate of 34.9%.

Number of multiple births (twins and triplets)

The overall multiple birth rate in the units ranged from 0.02% to 2.5%. 10 units had less than 1%, 61 had between 1% and 2% and 11 had a rate between 2% and 2.5%. Triplets were delivered in 47 (46%) of the units, ranging from 1 set in 24 maternity units to 12 sets in 1 unit. (Figure 1.)

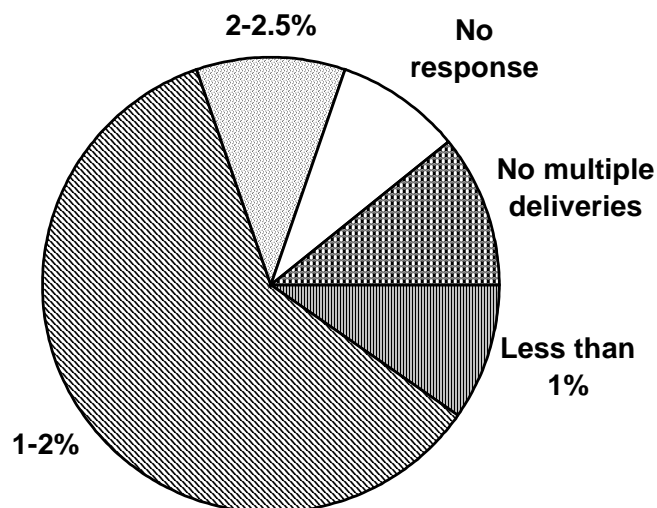


Figure 1. Rate of multiple births (twins and triplets)

Information about Support Organisations

79% (81) gave out information about Tamba and 28% (29) about the MBF services.

Specialist Multiple Births Midwives

Only 8% (8) of the units have a dedicated specialist multiple births midwife in post.

Guidelines, care pathways and standard operating procedures specifically for multiple births

69% (70) had some form of standard procedures to follow for multiples, 26% (27) had nothing specific and 5 did not reply.

Clinics for Multiples Births

16% (16) had antenatal clinics specifically for multiple births but only one had a postnatal clinic for follow up after the birth. One unit had a Paediatric clinic for premature twins only but the respondent was unsure of the number of multiples delivered annually in that unit.

Contact with twins clubs

49 (48%) had links with local twins clubs, 49 reported no links and 4 did not respond.

Parent Education and Information

Although 52% (53) of units provided parent education specifically for those expecting a multiple birth, only 33% (34) said they gave written information about their own hospital services for multiple births. 50% (51) had no written information about their own hospital services for multiples and the rest did not respond to this question. (Figure 2.)

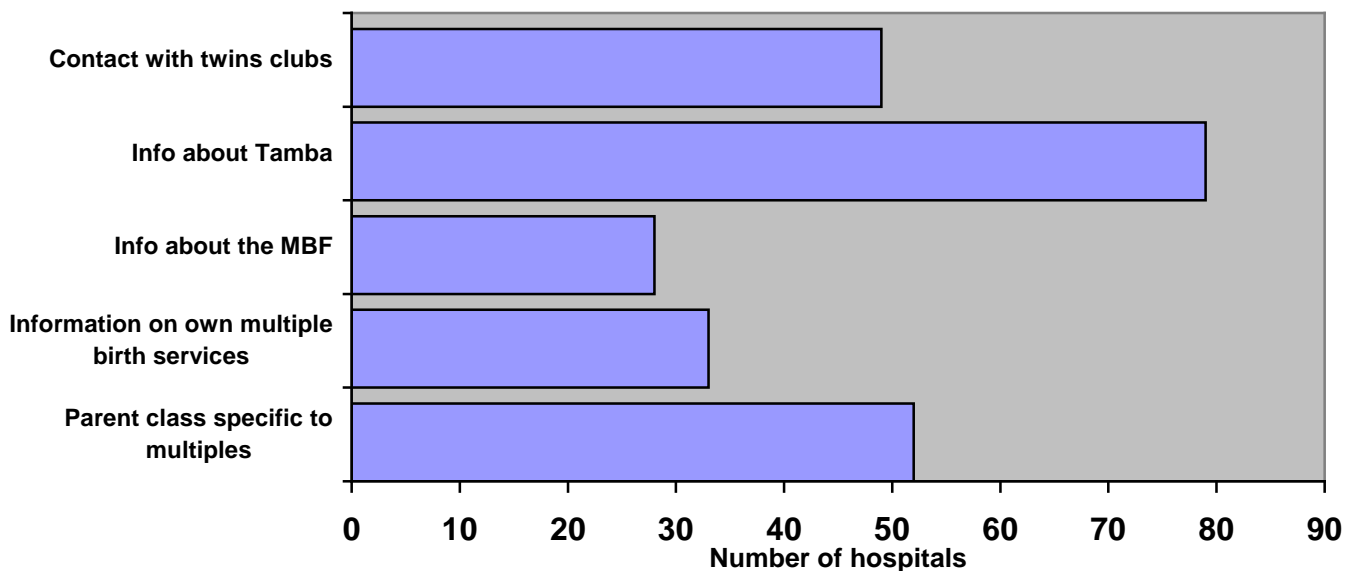


Figure 2. Parent education and written information specifically about multiple births provided by maternity units

Conclusions

In order to encourage participation, the survey was kept brief and thus collected limited details. However, it did succeed in providing essential basic information.

It appears that few units have comprehensive services for parents expecting a multiple birth. Information about the hospital services for mothers expecting twins and triplets, and parent education on multiple pregnancy and the care and development of multiple birth children could be greatly improved.

The wide use of Tamba information was good news but it seems that links with the local Twins Clubs could be strengthened.

The most encouraging outcome of this contact with so many maternity units was their enthusiastic response and the subsequent establishment of the Specialist Multiple Births Network. As a result, the MBF now has a UK wide group of over 100 midwives who have a particular interest in providing and improving services for multiple birth families. We are looking forward to working with the Network members and Tamba to make some much-needed changes.

Congratulations and thank you, Uncle Ewan!

Riley and Brodie Murray were born in January 2005 after a complicated pregnancy due to twin to twin transfusion syndrome. Tragically, Brodie died at 11 weeks old. Trudy and Dale Murray, the boys' parents, tell us that his brother Riley, despite some health problems, is "a very bright little boy and a ray of sunshine to everyone he meets".

He also has a wonderful Uncle Ewan who recently went on a sponsored diet to raise money for Ninewells Hospital Special Care Baby Unit, where the boys started their lives, and the MBF.

Uncle Ewan lost an amazing 3 stone and raised £600 in total.

Many thanks to the Murray family and especially Uncle Ewan for the donation of £50 to the MBF.



Uncle Ewan and Riley Murray

GREAT NORTH RUN 2006

MBF supporter (and triplet) Georgina Stokes and her father, Peter, have volunteered once again to run in aid of the Multiple Births Foundation in the Great North Run on 1st October 2006. In 2003 they raised over a £1000 for the MBF in sponsorship money.

Georgina said: "I became involved with the MBF through my Mum. She is a Health Visitor and has been involved from the very beginning with the Foundation.

She acted as a voluntary Health Visitor for the 'super twins' clinics for about 6 or 7 years. My involvement was going to these clinics, with my triplet sisters, during school holidays/breaks to amuse/divert the children who were attending these clinics. I especially enjoyed lunches and seeing so many triplets and quads all together. I decided to take part in the Great North Run as a personal challenge and to raise funds for the MBF".

The MBF are very grateful to Georgina and Peter for both the time and effort they are making on behalf of the MBF. If you would like to support Georgina and Peter please keep an eye on the fundraising page on the website at www.multiplebirths.org.uk for online donations. We will also keep you notified of their progress.



HAMMERSMITH HOSPITAL SPECIAL TRUSTEES

The MBF is grateful to the Hammersmith Hospital Special Trustees for their generous donation of £5,000. This money will be used towards developing the multiple birth services at Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital on the Hammersmith site.