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trust.**

We support  
twins, triplets  
and more...

# Multiple Matters.

Autumn Edition | September 2021



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distance!**  
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.....  
**Big bed time**

On making a smooth transition from cots  
.....

**Help at hand**

Checking in with bereaved triplet dad  
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# Welcome

## letter from the chair of trustees

In June we bade Keith Reed, our CEO of 14 years, a fond farewell. And I'm delighted to be able to share the news that from 8 September we have a new CEO: Shauna Leven.

Shauna is a human rights lawyer, campaigner, and strategist with over ten years' experience in senior management roles in the UK charity sector. She is also mum to two-year-old twins. At Twins Trust, Shauna will bring together her leadership experience with her personal passion for helping families of multiples.

Shauna spent the summer getting to know Twins Trust so she can hit the ground running with a fresh perspective and lots of ideas. She's excited to bring together her leadership experience with her passion for helping families of multiples at Twins Trust.

We are excited to welcome Shauna and I know you, our loyal members, will find her inspirational.

Elsewhere in the magazine I was delighted to read about how we continue to campaign for better maternity care (page 4). We now have a web page dedicated to Twins Clinics – see if your local hospital has one.

On page 20, you can read how triplet dad Steven is getting on. We supported Steven five years ago when his wife, Rachel, passed away suddenly when his girls were just 10 months old – they're now going into Year One at school.

And finally, a huge, huge thank you to everyone who took part in the 10K Walk for TTTS in August – such a fantastic achievement.

Krista Pound



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# Multiple Matters.

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Our cover stars this issue are Ethan and Jasmine Fung.

[www.rebeccalouisephotography.co.uk](http://www.rebeccalouisephotography.co.uk)

Twins Trust's individuality policy encourages the development of multiples' individual identities, for example by dressing them differently. Whenever possible we use photographs that promote this policy.

# Latest ROUND-UP

## Pushing for specialist care

### Campaign presses case for more Twin Clinics

Twins Trust has been making sure that hospital trusts and health boards throughout the UK deliver the best possible care for women expecting twins, triplets or more, following publication in January of the MBRRACE confidential inquiry into stillbirth and neonatal deaths.

You may remember that the report found that more than half the 80 twin deaths reviewed were potentially preventable with better care – a finding we highlighted to more than 100 hospital trusts and health boards, as well as in the media.

We also wrote to CEOs and heads of midwifery at units with no Twins Clinics – something the report recommends every hospital should have. Plus we used Freedom of Information rules to find those with one

or more poor outcomes, and wrote to them as well. We also alerted MPs whose constituencies included hospitals that had failed to come up to standard. We even contacted units with a Twins Clinic and no poor outcomes just to make sure they had implemented all the key recommendations from the report.

“More than half the 80 twin deaths reviewed were potentially preventable with better care”

### GOT A TWINN CLINIC?

How does your local hospital fare when it comes to Twins Clinics? Twins Trust is creating a new function on our website whereby anyone expecting twins, triplets or more can see if their local hospital has a Twins Clinic. Visit [twinstrust.org/twin-clinics.html](https://twinstrust.org/twin-clinics.html) for a list that will update regularly.



### MPs URGED TO ACT

#### Motion calls for better policy after stillbirths report

In June, the SNP's David Linden submitted an Early Day Motion – effectively a request for a debate – to parliament on our behalf calling for recommendations from the MBRRACE Perinatal Confidential Enquiry report on stillbirths and neonatal deaths in twin pregnancies to be explicitly highlighted in national policies. The EDM also called for local maternity units across the UK to make improvements as a matter of urgency.

Visit the campaigns page of our website to see how you can help highlight this EDM with your local MP.



Christina and her family are looking forward to their holiday prize

## Raffle winners!

Congratulations to the winners of our Twins Trust Grand Raffle 2021, which was drawn in June and raised £11,676 to help our work supporting multiple birth families.



Eurocamp winners Sarah and Tom with Lexia, Blakely and Ella

Sarah Hughes, who scooped our top Eurocamp holiday prize, told us: “I never win things like this, so to win first prize is just amazing! I’ve been a supporter of Twins Trust since discovering I was pregnant with my identical twin girls last January. It was the first website I found (whilst Googling in a panicked daze on my way home from the eight-week scan!) and has been an invaluable source of information and support ever since.”

Christina Hoghton, who won a £200 Haven Holidays voucher, told us: “We’re over the moon and the kids are so excited to have a holiday. It’s a really tough time for charities so I was pleased to support the great work of Twins Trust, and who

doesn't love a good raffle?”

She added: “Henry has cerebral palsy and epilepsy so we’re acutely aware of the extra help and support many twin and multiple families need, and the invaluable support the charity is able to give them.”

Thanks to Christina, Sarah and all of you who took part in the raffle and helped raise funds to support our families.

# £50,000 for Mini First Aiders

## Twin mum's business attracts TV show investment

When husband and wife team Kate and Matt Ball pitched for an investment on top BBC One show *Dragons' Den*, it was a family affair.

Kate and Matt run Mini First Aid courses for Twins Trust and were joined on the show, which aired in June, by four of their six young children – the couple have two sets of twins. After a tense pitch, they secured an investment of £50,000 from crafting entrepreneur Sara Davies.

Kate said: "Mini First Aid provides first aid classes for all the family, so it seemed only fitting that we took some of our own family along with us to the Den. Bringing our youngest set of twins was just one step too far though."

Kate set up Mini First Aid, which provides first aid classes for parents and carers, in 2014, soon growing it as a franchise, with husband Matt, across the UK. Then Covid came along.

"We worked our socks off to raise brand awareness online, but in terms of the expansion we'd planned for the business, that came to a grinding halt," said Kate.

Mini First Aid wasn't eligible for government lockdown cash, but Kate took out a Covid Bounce Back Loan and some franchisees were able to access financial help.



Mini First Aid's Kate and Matt are parents to six children, including two sets of twins

With Sara Davies' investment, Mini First Aid will concentrate on the retail side of the business – first aid kits in funky spotted bags, baby proofing packs and family travel kits.

**Mini First Aid classes offered by Twins Trust are tailored to families with multiples and delivered live on Zoom by parents of multiples. They cost just £20 and give members the confidence to know what to do in a medical emergency. Visit our website for news of courses this Autumn and Winter Courses ([twintrust.org](http://twintrust.org)).**

## COMFORT FOR BEREAVED PARENTS

Twins Trust Bereavement Support Group (BSG) has created "certificates of birth" to comfort bereaved families and provide a precious keepsake for a baby or babies who are sadly no longer here.

Registration is legally required for babies born alive or who die shortly afterwards, and babies who are stillborn after 24 weeks are included on a stillbirth register. A baby born showing no signs of life before 24 weeks, however, cannot be registered, which can add to the distress of bereaved parents.

Sharon, who runs our BSG, said: "Our certificates have been beautifully designed and will leave a lasting memory. Whilst these are not official documents, we know from the many bereaved families we support that having keepsakes is very important, and these certificates can be placed in memory boxes or with other documents at home."

A member of the BSG, Sally, said: "Although they will never be forgotten to us, this recognition for our babies' life, however short, is important. They were our little people and for them to be considered as any other baby means the world to us as their parents."

Email our BSG on [bereavementsupport@twintrust.org](mailto:bereavementsupport@twintrust.org), or visit [twintrust.org/birth-certificates](http://twintrust.org/birth-certificates)



## AUTUMN GIVEAWAYS...

### MICRO SCOOTERS

Micro Scooters are a cleaner, greener way to explore, as they're designed with replacement parts so they're fit for a lifetime of scooting, rather than ending in landfill.

We have two Eco scooters (made from recycled fishing nets) and two eco accessory sets (from recycled bottles) to give away. Just email your name, address and membership number to [giveaways@twintrust.org](mailto:giveaways@twintrust.org) with "Micro Scooters" in the subject line by 30 September. Winners are the first names out of the hat after the deadline.



### SUPERSPROGS HOODIES

Supersprogs Hoodies are designed by twin mum Daisy to support tandem feeding, with maximum comfort and discretion when breastfeeding in colder climes. They're made from organic cotton and packaged without plastics. To celebrate the company surviving one of the toughest years for a business to launch (good riddance 2020!), Daisy is giving

away up to three gorgeous hoodies from the Supersprogs range ([www.supersprogs.com](http://www.supersprogs.com)). Just answer to the question: What special feature do the hoodies have in order to deal with baby sick-ups? Email your answer with your name, address and membership number to [giveaways@twintrust.org](mailto:giveaways@twintrust.org) with "Supersprogs" in the subject line by 30 September. Winners are the first names out of the hat after the deadline.





# 'I wouldn't change a single decision'

**Katherine Rose on bringing herself and her babies safely through TTTS**

“Looks like there’s a friend in there,” said the sonographer. No hesitation in breaking that life-changing news. It was clear even to my eye: two little foetuses.

Only a week earlier, my partner Joel had said, to calm me, “Katherine, I promise you, it’s not twins.”

But my later ultrasound scan felt different. There was another doctor there and lots of quiet exchanges. She measured the babies meticulously. I asked, “Is everything OK?” She said: “I’m a bit worried, let’s have a chat.”

It was explained to us that one twin had a much larger amniotic sac – an indication they were receiving more blood through connecting blood vessels in the placenta. This can happen when twins share a placenta: I was carrying identical twins with one placenta and two amniotic sacs. They had Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS), which puts both babies’ lives at risk. Surgery gave them a 30-40 percent chance of survival; without it, they had almost no chance.

Two weeks later I awaited laser ablation surgery on a ward of full-term women about to have C-sections. I was

19 weeks pregnant; I wondered where I would be in 20 weeks’ time.

The operating theatre was full of people. I remember feeling like I really, really didn’t want to let these people do what they were about to do to me, to my body, to my babies. They were to make a small hole in my uterus, put a laser on the end of a long stick in between my two babies, and laser shut the vessels which connected them, drawing a line down the middle of the placenta, dividing it in two.

I was told the placenta was in a good place for them to access and see what they were doing. Joel could see a screen showing the placenta and probe; I could not. At one point I remember laughter – a tiny hand had crossed the screen, making it look like one of the babies was waving.

It took 90 minutes. The time passed with beeps each time the laser was activated. Inside me.

They shut the vessels one by one, and drained out a litre of fluid from the larger sac. My doctors were smiling. I was taken to a ward for recovery, and to wait to find out if my babies had survived.

Home from hospital:  
Aven, left, and Reed



“I didn't want to let these people do what they were about to do to me, to my body, to my babies”

I spent that night in hospital. I was supposed to sleep. I missed my three-year-old son.

At 8am, before Joel had returned, I was called for the scan. She pressed the instrument onto my now much smaller pregnant belly. Two tiny bodies came into view. “There's one heartbeat... and another.”

I could barely allow myself to believe or be happy until she added: “They're doing great, I'm really happy.”

I clutched her wrist hovering above my belly and burst into tears. I didn't know what was going to happen next, but for this moment at least it was good news.

Each week from then on, was a triumph. After laser ablation surgery, there's a chance of further complications and premature labour. I was told to keep an eye out for leaking amniotic fluid, unexplained bleeding, sudden ballooning of the belly. Each week I became more excited and terrified at the same time. I was scared to feel confident. But the longer my pregnancy endured, the more I loved them, and the more I wanted them both to survive and to have each other.

We went from weekly ultrasound scans to fortnightly – a good sign. The twins' amniotic sacs were of comparable size and they were growing at a healthy rate. Each scan felt positive. I came to expect the same good news: they're doing well.

I braced myself for birth. The doctors wanted to deliver at 34 weeks. This seemed very early. But any decision-making about my body and this pregnancy had been firmly in others' hands. I imagined, if I got to 34 weeks and felt happy, that I would try to convince anyone who would listen to leave them in there. I wanted my body to hold them for as long as they needed. But I also knew that nobody takes a baby out of a body early unless it's absolutely necessary.

Amazingly, I stayed pregnant. The boys weren't even small for their gestation as twins sometimes are, and at 34 weeks I was scheduled for my C-section to ensure they were delivered before any complications developed.

The doctors explained that early babies can have trouble breathing, and they would probably be put straight onto oxygen machines. I wasn't likely to see or hold them.

They said not to worry if we didn't hear them cry – they call the breathing of a premature baby “grunty”. I wanted to carry on being their breath, but I also wanted to see them and know we did the right things for them. I trusted the doctors – and I was tired of thinking about questioning or pushing back on their advice.

Finally the moment came. I held on to Joel. As the staff attended just another day at the office, the radio played Simply Red – “Fall from the stars”, he sang, and before I knew it, the threshold was crossed from imaginary, indescribable astral plane, to Earth as we know it: I heard a loud, healthy cry from my first baby boy. And to my utter astonishment, after everything we had been through, I could barely believe it, but a second loud, healthy cry emerged from within me, within the same minute! And two new humans entered the world, healthy, strong, and breathing on their own.

The boys spent just eight days in special care. Aven and Reed are now funny, mischievous toddlers and great friends, and I am so grateful for the amazing care we received to save their lives. I wouldn't change a single decision we made on the way. ●

Despite their run-in with Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome, Aven, left, and Reed are now strong and healthy toddlers

## Help and info

### Pregnancy

- Find out what antenatal care you should have at [twintrust.org/care-checklist](https://www.twintrust.org/care-checklist)
- We're here to support you. Please get in touch if you have questions about the care you are receiving at [maternityengagement@twintrust.org](mailto:maternityengagement@twintrust.org)
- Visit our website at [twintrust.org](https://www.twintrust.org) for more on finding out you are pregnant with multiples, to read our free guide on TTTS, and to book our antenatal courses or Preparing for Parenthood class
- Talk to expectant parents on Twins Trust's Community Forum
- Reach out to our Twinline listeners, all parents of twins and triplets, who are happy to lend a friendly and understanding ear on 0800 138 0509 (10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm, Monday to Friday) or email [asktwinline@twintrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twintrust.org)



Big sister Elsie with Monte and Lottie, who are now chatty, happy preschoolers

**Born at 24 weeks, Monte and Lottie have overcome a host of difficulties and are thriving**

**By Alyson Chorley**

Skin-to-skin contact with her beautiful daughter Lottie, who was born weighing just 1 lb 3oz at 24 weeks and two days, is what helped Lottie survive, says Bradford mum Anna.

Lottie's twin brother, Monte, was born just 1 oz heavier. Anna, husband Ben and the twins' big sister Elsie, who was just six when they were born, were told to say goodbye to little Lottie as she was so poorly.

"She'd fought hard, well they both were fighting, Monte in Leeds Hospital and Lottie in Bradford. But on Christmas Eve and then again a week later we were told there was nothing more that could be done for Lottie and after 26 days of suffering with a pneumothorax [collapsed lung], we were asked to consider taking her off life support.

"Her drain was replaced, and she was given a little bit of morphine, so she was not in pain and I was able to hold her for the first time, skin-to-skin. My husband and I took turns holding her for the next two days, we didn't want to let her go.

"Then she suddenly turned a corner and the chest drain stopped bubbling and her pneumothorax finally resolved – it was so emotional. She wanted to survive."

The twins still faced many health problems, and the family were constantly told to prepare for the worst. Monte had a



# Small beginnings



perforated bowel and had been moved to Leeds when he was three weeks old for a stoma, so Ben and Anna had been spending a day each at different hospitals so one of them was always with the babies.

If that wasn't hard enough, they had their daughter Elsie to think about. She stayed with family, but desperately wanted her brother and sister to come home. "We were lucky that the local hospice was able to provide a wonderful play counsellor for Elsie. We'd tried to shield her from the worst elements, but the counsellors helped her deal with what was happening."

“ I hope sharing my story gives hope to people – things can work out in the end ”

Other health scares for the twins followed. Lottie developed necrotising enterocolitis (NEC), a serious condition that can affect newborn babies where tissue in the bowel becomes inflamed. She was taken to Leeds Hospital, where her brother was, for life-saving bowel surgery and a stoma. Both had blood transfusions and then came bleeds on the brain and



“After 127 days in hospital we were able to bring them home together on the same day”

heart valve problems. Monte had a collapsed lung and a hyper-inflated lung, and both were on ventilators for weeks.

“They were tube-fed, on oxygen and in incubators up to their due date, then we came back to our local hospital in Bradford for transitional care. I did a combination feed of breast and bottle, then onto the bottle with milk I had expressed whilst they were in hospital,” said Anna.

“After 127 days in hospital we were able to bring them home together on the same day, which was amazing.

“We were warned that they faced living with many disabilities, which is hard to hear, but both of them are doing amazingly well under the circumstances.

“They’re three-and-a-half now and we know that Monte is sadly partially deaf, but he has a hearing aid, and we are waiting for treatment for glue ear. His speech is slow because of this.

“Lottie has mild cerebral palsy, but she does not let that hold her back. The most worrying thing is the developmental delay as that’s still an unknown to some extent. Both are extremely happy, chatty, lively toddlers who are doing really well at pre-school so we will take each day as it comes.



“I hope sharing my story gives hope to people. Never give up – things can work out in the end. To think that Lottie in particular might not have made it is hard to think about to this day. We were saying our goodbyes and she wanted to live. We couldn’t imagine life without either of them now. They are truly amazing and Elsie is a wonderful big sister.” ●



Anna believes skin-to-skin contact made all the difference to her vulnerable newborns

## Help and info

### Babies

- Download our Parent’s Guide to Neonatal Care at [twinstrust.org](http://twinstrust.org), where you can also hear triplet mum Anna talk about her experience of neonatal care and share her top tips
- Visit [twinstrust.org](http://twinstrust.org) to read more about bringing your babies home, getting help, looking after your own wellbeing, as well as feeding, routines, sleep, development, bonding and individuality with babies
- Visit Twins Trust’s Community Forum to share parenting tips and discuss common concerns
- For a list of clubs registered with Twins Trust and to find your nearest one, visit the website and search under ‘Clubs’
- Reach out to our Twinline listeners, all parents of twins and triplets, who are happy to lend a friendly and understanding ear on 0800 138 0509 (10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm, Monday to Friday) or email [asktwinline@twinstrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twinstrust.org)



**Moving on from cots involves a lot more than changing the furniture. Sleep expert, health visitor and twin mum Harriet Gibbs offers tips for a smooth transition**

**M**oving from a cot to a bed is a huge milestone for children – and parents. It may feel as though they were newborns only a moment ago, and now they’re becoming little people with their own ideas – and the potential to get up to and in to anything.

The change is often heralded by children trying to climb out of their cots, often at around 18 months. There’s nothing wrong in keeping children in cots for longer if they’re not trying to climb out – and the transition will be easier once they’re better able to understand it. So initially, when your little ones start climbing out, you can try popping them back in with a firm “no”. If this doesn’t work, though, it’s probably time to transition to beds.

Some parents prefer toddler beds as they take up less space (particularly as you’ll need two or more); others move straight to single beds. Unlike many toddler beds, normal single beds don’t have built-in safety guards to stop children falling out in the night. You can always fit one, or some parents put a duvet or pillows on the floor to provide a soft landing.

Do have a think about safety. Your children will be able to move around unsupervised and potentially without your knowledge once they’re in beds rather than cots, and you need to be confident that the room won’t present opportunities to come to harm. Check the floor is clear to avoid trips; cover radiators; lock windows and ensure all electrical items are out of reach and plug sockets covered. If you’re concerned about furniture being climbed on and

pulled down or toppling over, do secure it to the walls. A good way to check for hazards is to crawl or kneel in their bedroom for a toddler’s eye view – you’ll more easily spot hazards visible to them at their eye level that might otherwise get missed.

One other common hazard is the cords that hang from blinds. While deaths from accidents involving blind cords are rare – one or two a year since 2001 – there are plenty more near misses. Research by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents shows that these accidents most often happen in bedrooms and with children aged between 16 months and three years. ROSPA recommends removing blind cords altogether.

“A good way to check for hazards is to crawl or kneel in their bedroom for a toddler’s eye view”

When the day finally comes, the transition to beds can be a big deal, and you’ll want to make it a positive experience. It’s a good idea to put the new beds where the cots were to avoid confusion if they do wake up and go wandering in the night. Some parents install a stair gate at the doorway from the outset to avoid nighttime excursions.

Make sure that any comforters make the transition, too – cuddly toys or special blankets are all the more important



## Help and info

### Preschool years

- For top tips on moving from cots to beds, visit [twinstrust.org](http://twinstrust.org). Twins Trust has a webinar on sleep for parents with twins, triplets or more aged from 12 months old up until the age of 5 who are experiencing challenges. You can book via the 'Courses' tab at [twinstrust.org](http://twinstrust.org)
- Make contact with other parents via local twins clubs, listed on our website under 'Clubs', or via the Community Forum at [twinstrust.org](http://twinstrust.org)
- Reach out to our Twinline listeners, all parents of twins and triplets, who are happy to lend a friendly and understanding ear on 0800 138 0509 (10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm, Monday to Friday) or email [asktwinline@twinstrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twinstrust.org)

when something big is changing. If your children use sleeping bags, they might prefer to keep these for a while for the sake of familiarity.

Talk to your little ones about their new bed. Some children love the idea of a "big boy" or "big girl" bed, but others aren't so keen. Trying to get them involved, such as in choosing a new duvet cover and pillow, can help them come round to the idea and give them a sense of control.

It's best to stick with existing bedtime routines. Be careful about developing new sleep associations: with the newfound freedom of a bed, they may ask you to lie down with them. Whatever you decide on that, you'll need to be consistent in your approach.

There may be some difficult first nights, but usually once the children are settled to sleep they'll be able to stay put for the duration – and so will you. ●

“Cuddly toys or special blankets are all the more important when something big is changing”



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# The IVF pioneers



Researcher Lucy McDonald has been seeking the lost voices of women who had pioneering IVF treatment

Lucy with her twins, Orla and Max



“Do twins run in your family?” It’s a common question for a pregnant mum, or a dad of twins in the playground lunging between two separate swings. What is the question asking?

Do they want to know how much of a shock it was to see more than one blurry bean shape at that first scan? Or, perhaps, how many identical sets of smiles there are in each family portrait? Or, sometimes, are they asking if these twins are “natural” or not?

“Natural” is a funny sort of word to use about the very real and ordinary children that the parents of multiples live with, whether their children are a result of fertility treatment or not. A family have the eye-poking, hair-pulling, laughter-cackling experiences of natural childhood however they arrived.

But it’s easy to see where the questions come from. Since the 1970s, fertility treatments have resulted in both a boom of multiple births, and changes to who can have children and how.

To me, this piece of medical and technological history was particularly intriguing. Whilst studying history at Royal Holloway University of London, I decided to do some research – starting at the Churchill Archives Centre at Churchill College in Cambridge, where I read the letters, newspaper clippings and notes left by Sir Robert Edwards, a physiologist who would later win a Nobel Prize in 2010 for his development of IVF.

Edwards worked alongside gynaecologist Patrick Steptoe and laboratory technician and early embryologist Jean Purdy. They were racing against teams in Australia, Italy and the United States to achieve the first “test tube baby”, while facing scepticism and a lack of support from the British medical establishment.

It wasn’t only the medical establishment who were uncertain about new developments in fertility treatments; there was worldwide anxiety about what this could mean for society. Like the availability of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s and the Divorce Reform Act of 1969, new reproductive technology had the potential to disrupt traditional family units, and the religious and conservative establishments were concerned. Even Cold War concerns crept in: what dangers could this rapidly developing technology pose in the hands of hostile states? Producing human drones for war? Clones of dictators? Genetically engineered populations?

The birth of healthy baby Louise Brown in 1978 was celebrated across the world, however, as were the many births that followed. Edwards kept newspaper clippings showing the excited parents and bouncing babies. Headlines announced the first twins born in the UK via IVF in 1982, and the first



Dr Robert Edwards, Jean Purdy and Patrick Steptoe at the birth of Louise Brown, the first IVF baby, in 1978

triplets in 1984. In the years that followed, there was celebration of the first 1,000 babies born through Britain’s first IVF clinic, Bourn Hall in Cambridgeshire.

As I read the glowing profiles of happy families, I wondered what it was like to be a pioneering patient in the early days of IVF. Was it as exciting as it appeared in the newspapers? Did they feel like scientific pioneers? Did they boast about it or keep their treatment a secret?

“Less responsible clinics would transfer eight eggs to boost success rates”

Unfortunately, treatment wasn’t available to everyone. At Bourn Hall, Edwards spent time advocating for NHS provision of IVF, writing to the Cambridgeshire health authority directly – concerns around access, cost and provision were issues from the start. However, notably missing from access to early IVF treatment were any single, unmarried, or gay women. Women undergoing treatment were referred to as “newlyweds” by the media and were clearly expected to be in traditional heterosexual marriages – so reporting seemed to uphold the patriarchal family values that had worried the establishment.

In my research so far, I haven’t been able to find a record of explicit policies within clinics against other groups, but it is clear that doctors and scientists were sensitive to conservative and religious fears around IVF. This meant that they were hesitant to treat people outside of traditional heterosexual marriages, especially under the glare of media attention.

Edwards himself, however, dismissed these fears within the burgeoning IVF industry, pointing out that lesbian and celibate women were already having children without IVF. Radical women’s health centres were already providing guidance and advice on

sperm donation and the complexities of managing parenthood at a time when same-sex relationships were not legally recognised.

Radical women’s groups were also questioning IVF itself, and the difficult experiences some women were undergoing in order to conceive. They questioned whether, with its low success rates, IVF was quite the happy success story portrayed by the media.

It was, of course, the treatment’s low success rates that led to the boom in multiple births. By 1989, more than ten years after Louise Brown’s birth, Edwards was still estimating a success rate of just 10-15 percent per egg. Transferring three or four embryos was recommended to try and achieve a 30 percent success rate for the cycle of treatment. Less responsible clinics would transfer eight eggs to boost success rates, and Edwards refers to unscrupulous clinics transferring up to 12 embryos. It’s not a surprise that, as a result, multiple pregnancies increased.

As treatment has improved and official guidance tightened, the numbers of embryos being implanted has reduced to a maximum of two for women under 40, and three for those over 40. Patients in the 1970s and 80s experienced treatments far cruder than today, enabling the gradual refinement of procedures. It was these women patients, instrumental in the development of this technology, that I felt were missing from the archive, and whose experiences deserved to be recorded as a pivotal part of medical history.

As part of my research, I have now interviewed patients who received treatment for infertility in the 1980s and 90s. The testimony of these women will now be preserved at the Churchill Archives Centre alongside Edwards’ papers, and put together in an audio story. ●

To listen to the stories of these medical pioneers, contact Lucy at [Lucy.Mcdonald.2018@live.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Lucy.Mcdonald.2018@live.rhul.ac.uk), follow @ivfpioneers on Instagram, or visit the project website at [patientpioneers.wordpress.com](http://patientpioneers.wordpress.com)



# Life, death and **tricky** **conversations**

**How do you explain death to children – and should they come to funerals?  
By Crawford Pollock from Memorials of Distinction**

**M**any children have faced bereavement or become more aware of death due to the pandemic, but it's still the case that adults often avoid talking to them about death, largely out of a fear that it will make them sad or anxious, and out of a wish to protect them.

But having open, honest discussions about death can help young people cope with and process loss, as well as realise they are not going through it alone. So what is the best way to tell a child about death?

Children need simple and logical information when someone has died to help them understand what has happened. You don't have to over-explain the details, but remember to be clear: children will fill in any blanks with their imagination, and that may result in something very far from the reality of the situation.

Encourage children to share their thoughts. Death may be a completely new topic for them, so first, check what they understand it to mean. You don't have to wait until someone in the child's life has died to bring the topic up. Use any opportunities that arise to help your child understand the practicalities of death.

Dr Marianne Trent, a clinical psychologist, advises:

"Death needn't be scary. I'd just stick to facts that can be built on logically as the child grows up. Death is an unavoidable consequence of life and I try to include aspects of it in day-to-day life. If you're out and about and you see a dead bird or animal, I would talk about it in simple terms. This can be helpful if a sudden death occurs because the child then already has a reference point for death existing. Give the child lots of opportunities to ask questions, because I'm confident that they will have many."

## **WHAT ABOUT FUNERALS?**

Parents may want to protect children from the physical and emotional strain of a funeral, but allowing children to be a part of the funeral rituals can be an important part of their own grieving process.

When children are allowed to attend funerals, they are part of the goodbyes and so don't have to wonder what happened to the person that died. If your child is old enough to know what's happening, it is generally best to give them the choice and respect their decision.

Funeral attendance became more difficult during the



## HOW DO CHILDREN REACT?

The way children understand and react to death will vary with age. When they're upset, younger children may revert to immature behaviours or have outbursts, whereas school-age children may have difficulty concentrating or experience feelings of sadness, anger or guilt. Children don't always vocalise their feelings, so watch how they act and make sure to check in with them. The most likely response for all children, however, is to have lots of questions.

Dr Trent said: "Do be prepared for the questions and for the fact that they might catch you off guard. Please don't be afraid of showing your emotions in front of your children. Children will also make sense of death and dying by looking at their own most important people, this might include asking questions about whether you or they or someone else will die."

It's normal for children to experience a wide range of emotions in response to death, but it's important that parents recognise when a child is responding normally or when they may need help.

## USING THE RIGHT WORDS

"Death" and "dead" are not new words for children – they may see dead creatures in the garden or dead flowers. What's important is to help them make the association that these words can refer to people too.

Avoid euphemisms such as "a better place" or saying that the person is "sleeping" or "lost", as this can be confusing or even frightening to children. Although it can be tempting to use these softer descriptions of death, it's important to use simple and direct language that is appropriate to their age and level of understanding.

Dr Trent suggests that "simple facts and exact phrasing are best. If someone has died of cancer or a heart attack then I would use those terms and then break them down into concepts that the child understands. All of us die eventually because our hearts stop pumping and then our brain doesn't get enough oxygen, so I think if you're lost for words you can just stick to those very basic facts." ●



“Death may be a completely new topic for them, so first, check what they think it means”



pandemic because of the additional emotional pressures and limits on numbers who could attend. According to Dr Trent: "This is a really unique decision for the family and of course for the child. Amid the pandemic, I think it is especially important to consider whether you want to include children at the funeral because attending can be a normal and important part of an adult's grief and a rite of passage that can support the grieving process."

Carole Henderson, from the organisation Grief UK, believes there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to children attending funerals: "Taking children to a funeral is a personal choice... It is still worthwhile talking to children about the ritual of funerals. If you choose to leave them out of the funeral, it can be helpful to ask them to draw a picture or write a note to the person who has died, so they feel part of the experience of saying goodbye. Should you choose to take a young child, spend some time talking to them about what to expect."

Parents must also consider if each individual child is emotionally prepared for the proceedings. This is the case now more than ever, with the added pressures of the pandemic and consequences for children's anxiety.



# Go the distance for Twins Trust!

Are you ready to run, swim or cycle to help fund our work for multiple birth families?

We're delighted to be stretching both our legs and our horizons at Twins Trust as our new events calendar gets under way.

With plenty to take part in across England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, you can join in as an individual, family, group of friends or with colleagues. It's great fun and makes a huge difference to the research, support and care our charity can deliver.

If you'd like to tour some of the UK's great cities you could take part in the Great Bristol Run (19 September), Great Manchester Run (26 September), and Great South Run in Portsmouth (17 October). These 10 milers and half marathons feature enthusiastic crowds to keep you going, and the best sights of each location.

And don't forget the "big daddy" of all runs, the virtual Virgin London Marathon (3 October).

Book your charity place with Twins Trust and complete the distance across one day at your own pace, wherever you like, and in your own style.

For a brilliant family day out, visit Colchester Zoo (10 October) and complete a half marathon around the animal enclosures.

Which of the inhabitants could you beat across the 13 miles?

For a great family autumn challenge in Scotland, the Tweed Valley Tunnel Run (16 October) offers stunning off-road trail running with 4km, 10km and 20km running routes, for those aged 11 and up. There is also a trail walk for all ages.

Riverside paths and stunning woodlands lead to hillside views, then comes a unique

surprise when the trail leaves the woods and dives into the 600m Neidpath railway tunnel, complete with lighting effects.

If you want to go the (longer) distance, we can offer you several options organised by Ultra Challenge, specialists in scenic walks, runs and jogs, from 10km to 100km. This year's night-time Halloween Walk (30 October) offers fancy dress fun and spookiness over 10km, 20km or a full marathon, from the dungeons at the Oval cricket ground, for ages 12 and up. We'll be inviting you to take part

in some other Ultra Challenges in 2022.

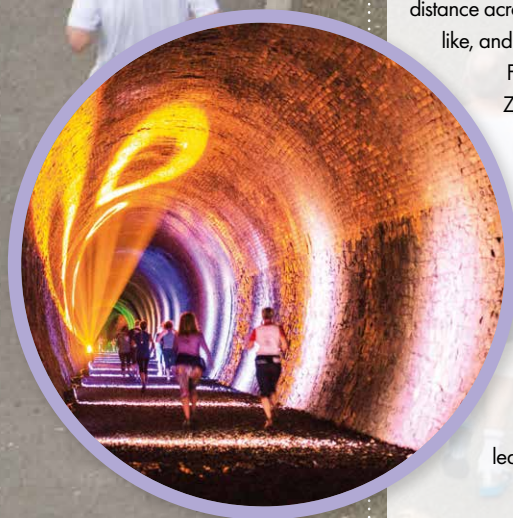
If you are more of a water baby, complete a half, one- or two-mile challenge at Swim Serpentine (18 September) in London's famous Hyde Park.

And for cyclists, we're looking ahead to December, when the Dirty Santa Mountain Bike challenge beckons in all its muddy glory! Enjoy 34km or 43km distances across the Surrey Hills – and have a specially brewed Dirty Santa ale afterwards.

You can see more details about these and other future events on the challenge event pages on our website. And do keep checking back, as we will be adding exciting new events.

We have charity places on some hard-to-access events, and differing registration fees and sponsorship targets. Many are free to enter. Why not aim to raise at least £150 and feature on our wall of fundraising heroes? All our participants receive a branded Twins Trust event t-shirt and oodles of support from our fundraising team. ●

“Do the virtual marathon across one day at your own pace, wherever you like, and in your own style”







# You did it!

## OUR FUNDRAISERS TAKE ON BEN NEVIS

A HUGE shout out to our amazing #TeamTwinsTrust who did a night climb of Ben Nevis last June.

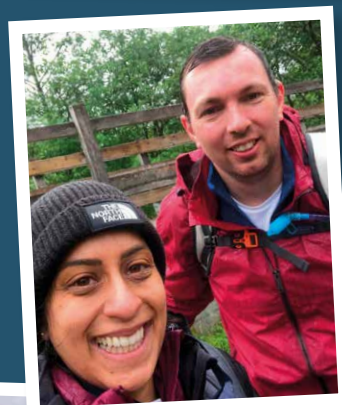
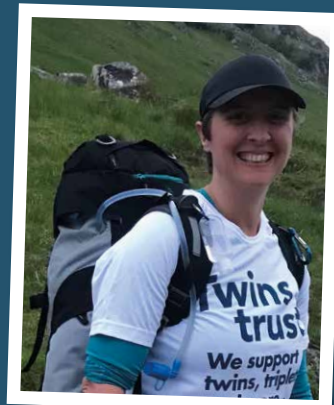
Our group of wonderful fundraisers took on the Ben Nevis Night Climb – a challenge to take “Big Steps for Small Feet”. They were joined by other baby and child loss charities on the 1,343m climb to the summit of the UK’s highest peak.

On an unforgettable night, they raised almost £13,000 for our Bereavement Support Group, who offer help to families who have lost one or more of their twins, triplets or more.

Among the intrepid walkers was Katie Shortt from Aldershot, mum to twins Amelia and Max. Amelia fought to survive after being born at just 1lb 7oz. She told us: “The Ben Nevis challenge was an amazing event and I was honoured to raise money for Twins Trust to allow them to provide such amazing and necessary support. It was a pleasure to meet so many lovely people, as well as to succeed in the climbing of Ben Nevis overnight.”

Lucie Wigley, Twins Trust’s events and community fundraising senior co-ordinator, also put on her walking boots to make the summit. She told us: “It’s been a privilege to be part of #TeamTwinsTrust team and meet everyone. It’s a very emotional journey to get to the top, but when things got tough we stuck together. I can’t wait to do it again!”

A new collaborative event is being planned for next year. If you’d like to take part, please do email [fundraising@twinstrust.org](mailto:fundraising@twinstrust.org) so we can keep you updated. ●



## GET IN TOUCH...

If you’d like to speak to the team about one of these events or your own fundraising activities, please contact [fundraising@twinstrust.org](mailto:fundraising@twinstrust.org). We’d love to support your efforts as part of #TeamTwinsTrust!

# PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

## BY HAVING A WILL

By having a legally valid Will you can safeguard your family's future and most importantly name guardians for your children – don't leave it to chance.

We offer a friendly and professional service. When it isn't possible to meet you in person, we can offer consultations by video. We can give you advice, take your instructions and draft your Will for you. If you have any queries and would like to speak to us, please call **020 8408 0836** or you can email **info@ewltd.com**

Special Offer price for Twins Trust Members  
**£115+VAT for a Single Will**  
**£150+VAT for Double Wills (spouses/partners)**

**Exclusively Wills**  
LIMITED

We have been drafting Wills for over 20 years  
and are members of the Society of Will Writers.

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# It's time for tots and tots of fun!

Brand new for 2021, our Tots' Breaks are tailor made for families with under 5s and pre-school children.



Twins Trust members can find their exclusive discount online at [TwinsTrust.org](http://TwinsTrust.org)

## The fun never stops for little ones...

4 night breaks from **£169<sup>^</sup>**

- Milkshake! Mornings
- Pipsqueak's Mouse House
- Puppet Theatre – We're going to the zoo
- Tots Bingo
- Make a Bear\*
- Magical Unicorn Crafts\*

### Plus so much more!



Images for illustrative purposes only. <sup>^</sup>£169 price based on a 4 night stay in the Elmstead Caravan at Highfield Grange Holiday Park, arriving on 6th September 2021, exclusive of the Twins Trust discount. Price is correct at July 2021.  
\*Chargeable activity. Activities vary by park/date please check when booking.





It's five years since  
Twins Trust stepped in to  
support widower and  
triplet dad Steven Park

By Alyson Chorley

# Help at hand

“We’ve had a lot of help and support since Rachel passed away, but at every little milestone we think of her”

A whole year of school has passed quickly for Steven Park, whose triplet girls Mollie, Poppie and Evelyn are about to head off into year one.

It was a bittersweet start of school for Steven and his girls, who lost their lovely mammy, Rachel, when they were just 10 months old.

“I was proud when the girls started school after, let’s say, a challenging lockdown period, but delighted to report that they did so well during their first year in reception, making friends and enjoying themselves,” said Steven.

“But obviously it was incredibly sad too because Rachel should have been the one dropping them off at the school gates with me.”

The couple had almost lost hope of having a family after four rounds of IVF, and were thrilled when Rachel became pregnant with triplets. The girls came on in leaps and bounds after their very early arrival at just 26 weeks in March 2016. They had a combined weight of just 5lb 2oz at birth and spent nine months in hospital, coming home just before Christmas.

But sadly, Rachel died suddenly of a heart attack after putting her babies to bed on Boxing Day. It was utterly devastating and a huge shock to the family.

Steven, who works as a chef at an Outdoor Education Centre in the Lake District, said: “We’ve had a lot of help and support from family, friends and charities like Twins Trust since Rachel passed away, but at every little milestone we think of her.

“When the girls put their school uniforms on for the first time, well, that really got me.

“The girls do get asked about their mammy and the school does a lot of work with a local bereavement charity in order to support them.

“Honesty is always the best option, and sadly it is a lot more common than people think, to lose a parent.

“We always talk about mammy and look at photos and memory boxes.”

During lockdown, Steven was furloughed, which allowed him to spend more time with his girls.

“It was difficult and lovely at the same time,” he said. “I ended up building a sandpit in the garden, and an outdoor mud kitchen which the girls absolutely love!

“Because they weren’t at school, I didn’t have any ‘work’ sent home for them so had to come up with ways to keep them entertained, and I’m lucky I have a nanny to help me too.”

Steven said it was his wife who first made contact with Twins



Trust (or Tamba, as we were called then) when she found out she was pregnant with triplets.

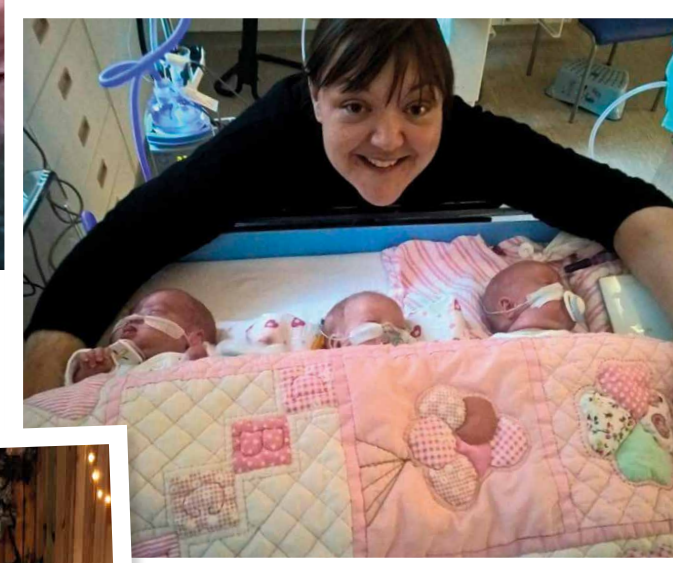
"I remember her being so pleased with the help and information she got. Then when she passed away you continued supporting me and I'm still in touch now with Gemma (Twins Trust's support practitioner), mainly for reassurance, which is great and makes such a difference."

Whilst Twins Trust provides emergency support to families via our Family Support Service, we are only a phonecall away for further support.

"Sometimes I just wanted to check something about sleeping or feeding, and Gemma is always on hand with brilliant, practical advice.

"I've done some of the webinars on behaviour and Gemma has been there to reassure me that things are going well.

"It is fantastic to know a charity like this exists specifically to support families with multiple births. There are questions I have about having triplets that I don't think anyone else could answer, so thank you!" ●



Above, newborns Mollie, Poppie and Evelyn with mum Rachel



Left, the girls with their dad, Steven

“It is fantastic a charity like this exists specifically to support families with multiple births”

## Help and info

### Triplets and more

- Join our Facebook group for parents of triplets and more for peer-to-peer support. Email [support-team@twinstrust.org](mailto:support-team@twinstrust.org) for more information or request to join [facebook.com/groups/1689151031102273](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1689151031102273)
- For more information on the Family Crisis support service and how it works see Family Support Service ([twinstrust.org](http://twinstrust.org))
- Speak to one of our Twinline listeners for a friendly listening ear to chat about raising your triplets and quads. Call 0800 138 0509 (10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm, Monday to Friday) or email [asktwinline@twinstrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twinstrust.org)

Rebecca, left, and Sophie

The teen years can be exciting and testing in equal measure. We hear from Alison Laing, a Tinline listener, her husband and twin daughters on how it was for them

“ I dreaded GCSE results – the contents were frankly irrelevant but it pitted the girls against each other ”

# Teen reflections

## ALISON WRITES...

Our lovely daughters are now 23. When I think back to their teenage years I remember it being a time when I worried about them in a way that we had done when they were much smaller. Over the first few years we had come to a vague kind of parenting consensus on what worked and tried (we thought!) to give both girls opportunities to work out what their interests might be.

They were not identical so it felt easy having them in different classes, though they seemed fiercely loyal. When I was pregnant I had decided not to use the word “twin” and had talked about having two babies; it seemed important to value and bond with two precious people.

During primary school, one was more interested in ballet, the other judo. One seemed more interested in books and climbing trees but was not interested in learning to ride a bike. One had piano lessons, the other wanted to learn the bagpipes. But there were lots of things they both enjoyed and that was fine too. They were both (and still are) kind and loving big sisters to their brother, who arrived when they were three.

But suddenly, somewhere around Year 9 or 10, it seemed to matter again – what they looked like, peer groups, friendship groups (sometimes shared but not always) and bookishness being measured (then compared).

I dreaded GCSE results – the contents were frankly irrelevant, but it seemed to pit the girls against each other. Even if we tried to recognise and celebrate their own special places and talents at home, the outside world looks for the obvious and is quick to assess and judge.

Teenagers are hard on themselves, too. I was grateful that

they took separate routes in sixth form: one did A Levels and the other the IB. I felt it gave them more space, but perhaps it just made it easier for me.

As I write this I realise I am not using their names; still a sign that I am not keen for anyone to decide on a quick version of Sophie or Rebecca. An intro will not do justice to their quirks and kindnesses. Those stories belong to them and are theirs to tell...

## SOPHIE WRITES...

It is possible I overlooked the support my twin gave me during my teenage years. Was she there experiencing every nasty pimple? Absolutely. Did she experience the same exam stresses as me but still take time for my teary bad days? Without a doubt. Did she tell me not to date the loser who kept dumping me (but I kept going out with anyway)? You betcha. With hindsight, I can appreciate that.

We are not identical, but in looking similar it often encourages people to search for our differences and shoebox us into categories to help them establish our differences. This was strong in secondary school and I think perhaps I was less aware of this than my sister, as areas such as sport, which carried more social recognition, played into my skill set more than the drive for academics, which I envied in hers.

It has been (and continues to be) important to us to create our own identities and this has been encouraged by our parents, who would ferry us to all sorts of separate after school clubs at all hours of the day. This gave us the opportunity to have our individual passions nurtured without comparison or competition. The only drawback is the



Dad Charlie, mum Alison, Sophie, Rebecca and little brother Marcus celebrate Sophie's graduation at home during lockdown last summer

“One had piano lessons, the other wanted to learn the bagpipes”



Rebecca, left, and Sophie aged 3

struggle we have to enjoy the same things. There are plenty of activities we both enjoy, but the instant there is comparison or competition one of us will throw a strop!

The confidence that comes with my twin's support is one of the most valuable benefits of being a twin. I have never, and believe I could never, feel alone because she will always be there for me – as I will be for her.

### REBECCA WRITES...

I have found that people like to categorise twins – “Oh she's sporty, so you must be the smart one”, or “Who's the tomboy twin and who's the girly one?”. These questions have always frustrated me, but at the same time, you find yourself trying to fulfil the expectations they create. My twin excelled at sport, so I felt I had to be good in other areas. This ended with me berating myself when I then did not perform as highly on exams as I wanted, sometimes leading me to resent her abilities when really, I was just jealous. The interesting realisation I've had since leaving school is that she experienced the same frustrations.

Being at school, especially a small one, means that everyone is aware of what everyone else is doing, so forming your own identity can be difficult. Both of us grew tired of friends assuming we came as a package.

Now, living apart and in different cities, we talk very regularly and are closer than ever. We have been able to take the time and learn what we enjoy doing together, and what will cause us to fall out (camping and tennis!). And at the end of the day, I know that no matter what, she is at the other end of the phone and will drop everything to help me.

### CHARLIE WRITES...

We use comparison as a technique to be able to position and understand all sorts of things in life. It happens between any siblings (I'm one of five) but is particularly frequent with multiples. “Which one is the elder/cleverer/more hard working/sportier/better reader?” were questions often asked. It's as if the behaviours and traits are fixed rather than being relative to the individual's development at any point.

We were lucky to be able to enrol the girls in separate classes at school. We try to give equality rather than matching gifts or time. Even so, that comparison trap is ever present: who has the better partner, the better job, the better haircut? Who has been in touch more frequently? Who needs more support?

Who cares! Are they happy, secure, making their way? What they need changes over time and is particular to them and the situation. Not only that, but their method of learning is different, so advice given to one would be ignored if given in the same way to the other.

So far, so good. But we are all always learning and we are learning as much from them now as they are from us. They seem happy in their own skins, but no doubt there are more adventures around the corner. It's a lovely journey to be on. ●

## Help and info

### Teenagers

- Read more about multiples birth children and adolescence at [twintrust.org/teenagers](http://twintrust.org/teenagers)
- Teenage multiples and their parents might be interested to read *The Same But Different*, a book on the challenges of growing up as a twin, by twin expert and psychologist Joan Friedman. Find out more at [www.joanafriedmanphd.com/the-same-but-different/](http://www.joanafriedmanphd.com/the-same-but-different/)
- Reach out to our Twinline listeners, all parents of twins and triplets, who are happy to lend a friendly and understanding ear on 0800 138 0509 (10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm, Monday to Friday) or email [asktwinline@twintrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twintrust.org)

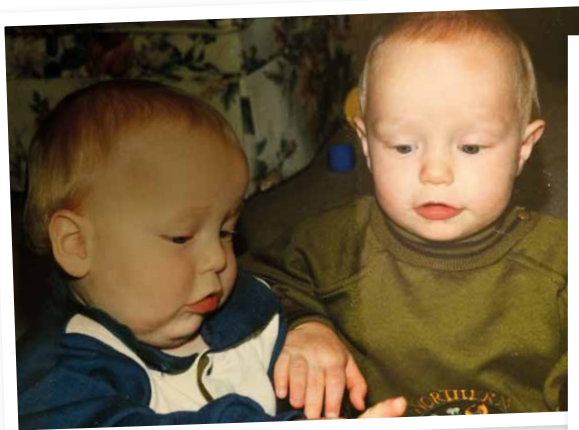
# Healthy competition



Twinline listener Jane Flint Bridgewater on how competition between multiples can have some very positive outcomes

Ben, Ame, Pete and Georgie





Ben's 2017 graduation in medicine at Cardiff was followed the next day by Pete's in Southampton

### Ben, left, and Peter on their first birthday

The relief we felt as older parents to have twins has remained a particular gift.

I'm a Twinline listener, and I remember once taking a call from a mother of preschool twins who were going through a hyperactive phase with relentless and competitive climbing. As we chatted, it became clear that there was a need to focus the nursery and pre-school on timely promotion and understanding of twin psychology. It made me recall when my twins Pete and Ben let go of the furniture and walked unaided on exactly the same day: they were always keeping up with each other's progress, pacing each other.

When my boys reached their teens, their individual inclinations – option choices at school for languages and other subjects – helped them to appreciate each other's talents. But they also benefitted from the other one's interests. Their approach to learning was different, but they learned from that difference, and subsequently from their varied training experiences. Gaming has always been an outlet for their competitive inclinations, too.

Our young men, now 28, have come to appreciate their companionship more fully as junior doctors. By choice, they pursued their training in medicine at different medical schools, Ben in Cardiff and Pete in Southampton. After that competitive childhood and adolescence, they were keen to show their independence during that first year away, but they also maintained their links.

"We rarely talk about medicine together" is a common statement, but actually, when we eat together as a family, chat on WhatsApp or talk on Facetime, it is evident that Pete and Ben share their clinical experiences. (As a retired doctor, the opportunity to give them some historical perspective is not lost on me either!)

Inevitably, Covid has played a huge role for both of them. They had planned to take a break to travel after their foundation years. Alas, that adventure fell in 2020. Pete and his girlfriend Georgie, also a twin, had set off to Thailand in early March, and managed to see some of Cambodia too before having to return

home as Vietnam, Bali and New Zealand closed borders. We had flown out to Siem Reap, intending to cruise between Cambodia and Vietnam, but the tour was cancelled as Vietnam closed its ports, and we just achieved a trip to Angkor Wat before being flown home. Ben and his girlfriend Ame had been in a camper van in the north island of New Zealand for just a week when urgent WhatsApp messages between the boys prompted a search for timely flights home – camper vans were all efficiently recalled by a government competently managing a global pandemic.

“Their approach to learning was different, but they learned from that difference”

After a pause for quarantine, both boys and Ame began working as locum doctors, the NHS being grateful to welcome back their travelling cohort to help in the Covid-19 pandemic. Come July, they managed a few days holiday together in the Lakes, meaning we could see Ben and Ame en route – the first time we had seen them since mid-February. Pete and Georgie had been living locally, shopping for us during our shielding. We operated a patio garden cafe during the summer, and the boys were both home for a meal with us near their birthday.

Ben began his core specialty training in August in internal medicine with regular stroke care in Merthyr Tydfil, but also duties on Covid wards when on call. He caught Covid in mid-October, isolating for the standard 10 days after positive test before returning to work. We

A near-to-birthday-meal on Jane's patio garden cafe



all kept in touch by FaceTime and WhatsApp. Pete, whose core speciality is psychiatry, developed his Covid nearly one month later in Dudley, when one of their psychiatric wards had 50 percent Covid-positive patients and staff. I was checking on them daily during their illnesses.

To have a twin in the same walk of life is an added bonus besides having friends or a life partner in the field. Their exchanges on junior medical life, rotas, and hot topics like personal protective equipment and Covid testing are lively.

Now both boys have passed their second part specialty exams, they are each pursuing interests in neuroscience – Pete as a psychiatrist, Ben as a physician in stroke and neurology in older people. They learn from each other as well as from their patients and colleagues. ●





# Ask Twinline

Carla from Twins Trust's family support team answers your questions on life with multiples



Carla with her daughters, Mia and Beau

## PROBLEM?

Why not write to Twinline and let our team of experts – all fellow parents of multiples – lend a listening ear?

Just email  
[asktwinline@twinstrust.org](mailto:asktwinline@twinstrust.org)  
We respond to all emails.



“ I do love my babies very much but I can't seem to find joy in anything ”

## CAN'T CARRY ON

I feel so guilty for even writing this as I have been longing to become a mum for so many years, but my triplets are just over six months old and I wake up with a sense of dread every morning. I am exhausted, irritable and I can't stop crying. I do love my babies very much but I can't seem to find joy in anything. From the minute I open my eyes to the minute I go to bed, every minute of the day is spent running around caring for the babies, I feel so isolated. My partner seems oblivious to how I am feeling and my family all think I am coping, but deep inside I just don't feel like I can carry on like this for much longer.

**A:** I am sorry to hear this, but I wish you could see how many emails we receive from other mums of twins, triplets and more, who feel just what you have described. You are not alone. I know it's hard to comprehend right now, but this is only how you are feeling at the moment. With the right support, medically and emotionally, you can feel better.

Raising triplets is incredibly hard, and due to the additional work load, sudden change in lifestyle, increased responsibility and lack of sleep, we do see a slight increase in postnatal depression (PND) in

mums of multiples compared to singletons.

That's the bad news, but the good news is you can do something about it. Have you reached out to your GP or health visitor? They will be very accustomed to mums asking for support with PND, and they can work with you to make you feel better. It may not be immediate, but stick with it (which I know can be difficult when life is so busy): it is so important that you find ways to make yourself feel better.

Also reach out to those around you. Be honest, and explain how you are feeling. I am sure that once they know, they will be keen to help however they can. And accept any help offered: as well as reaching out to your health professional, now would be a good time to find practical support. The charity Home-Start, at [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk), can provide practical support in your home or in a group setting, and they have helped many new parents find their feet. Please do also visit our website to access Twins Trust's PND Guide, at [twinstrust.org/let-us-help/pregnancy-and-birth/coming-home/mental-health.html](http://twinstrust.org/let-us-help/pregnancy-and-birth/coming-home/mental-health.html).

You can also reach out to our Twinline listeners – all parents of multiples themselves – who are happy to lend a friendly and understanding ear on 0800 138 0509.

## SAFE TO HAVE SEX?

Sorry to ask such a silly question, but I can't seem to get a clear answer. Is it OK to have sex when pregnant with twins? This is our first pregnancy after years of struggling to get pregnant so we want to avoid anything which might be harmful for the babies. The IVF clinic told us that it is best as a precautionary measure to abstain from sex for the first 12 weeks "just to be safe", but what about after that?

**A:** This is not a silly question – in fact, it's one we get asked frequently.

Check with your midwife or consultant as they will be aware of any risk factors unique to your pregnancy. However, the general advice is that your sex life can continue as normal if you don't have any medical concerns. An experienced midwife who specialises in multiple births told us that "if you are fit and well, with a healthy pregnancy, sex which is comfortable and pain-free is safe for you and your babies".

Avoid sex, however, if:

- your waters have broken
- here are any identified issues with your cervix
- you are in the final stages of a twin or triplet pregnancy
- sex is causing discomfort/bleeding/making you feel unwell in any way.

You may feel as your pregnancy progresses that you want to explore other ways of being close and intimate with your partner. We're all different, however, so it's important to do whatever works for you and your body.

More advice from the NHS can be found here: [www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/sex](http://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/sex).

“ The IVF clinic told us it's best to abstain for the first 12 weeks, but what then? ”

## IDENTICAL AUTISM?

After a year of assessments, we received the news that one of my 7-year-old identical twins has ADHD with borderline autism. This has thrown us – although we are looking forward to being able to get more support for him. My question is, should we be worried for my other twin? Is there more chance statistically that he will have similar issues?

**A:** I'm glad you and your family now feel you can access the right support for your son. Has your other son displayed any behaviour to lead you to believe that he may have autistic tendencies? If not, then try to just focus on the children as individuals with individual needs.

According to one of our honorary consultant educational psychologists: "Autism does seem to run in families, so there may well be a genetic component to it. However – and it's a big 'however' – we still don't know the causes of autism. Some syndromes that cause atypical development are known to be caused by missing or duplicated sequences of human DNA (and so have an identifiable genetic cause). So far no such DNA sequence that reliably causes autism has been identified.

"There are also some genes that are activated or deactivated by a person's environment, so it is possible that autism is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. What this means in practice is that it is probably more likely that a person is autistic if their identical twin is autistic, but it is by no means certain that both would be autistic, based on current knowledge."

If you have concerns regarding your other son, get them looked into. Try, however, to only worry if the situation actually arises – easier said than done, I know. It may help to chat to other parents of twins, triplets or more who have had similar experiences. You would be very welcome to join Twins Trust Special Needs Facebook group via [www.facebook.com/groups/180327475346498](https://www.facebook.com/groups/180327475346498).

“Try to just focus on the children as just individuals with individual needs”



## Twins Head Shapes Corrected in just 6 months

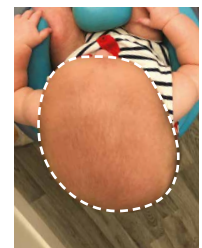
As is quite common with twins, Max and Oliver presented with plagiocephaly due to in-utero positioning and their head shapes were a mirror image of each other. Following **LOCband** treatment each boy's cranial asymmetry was reduced by 12mm and 13mm respectively to a head shape asymmetry of 5mm which is in the normal range.

Their Mum who is herself a reader of Multiple Matters commented: "When we learned that our twins had plagiocephaly, the London Orthotic Consultancy were recommended to us by a paediatrician. Right from our first appointment, our clinician, Sally, was both supportive and professional giving us the confidence to face the initially daunting prospect of having helmets fitted for our boys so early in their lives. To say that we are delighted with the service and results of the treatment would be an understatement!!"

If you are worried about the shape of your baby's head you can speak to one of our clinicians and book a **FREE** initial consultation during which your baby's head shape will be assessed and measured and treatment options discussed. Ring **020 8974 9989** or e-mail: [info@londonorthotics.co.uk](mailto:info@londonorthotics.co.uk)



Max Before Treatment



Oliver Before Treatment



Max After Treatment



Oliver After Treatment

The London Orthotic Consultancy  
**LOC**  
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 E: [info@londonorthotics.co.uk](mailto:info@londonorthotics.co.uk)  
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LOC Plagiocephaly treatment clinics. The LOCband treatment is also available at Hampshire Orthotics in Southampton and at Prestige Healthcare in East Barnet.

# Multiple joys

Pride in our children doesn't stop as they get older, though the occasions can get a tad more expensive...



Olivia, 7, with her twin siblings Ellia and Freddie on their fourth birthday



Ivy and Clara, 1, enjoying tea for two with their twin dollies



Born 11 weeks early, Martha (left) and Arwen (right), 5, with big sister Isla



James and Zachary, 9, winning an amazing Easter hamper in the school raffle



Victoria and Edward at her wedding, always remembering their triplet, David



Grayson and Chester, 3, trying on goggles for the first time



Joseph and Thomas, 1, all set for the Euros



Sky and James, 4, enjoying dressing up



Abbie and Maisie get ready to rock into nursery



Tommy and Riley on their first birthday



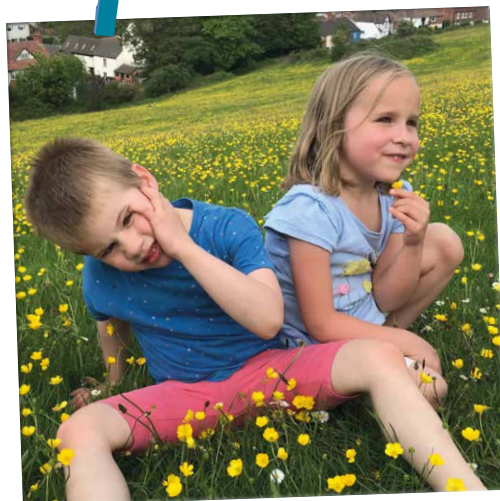
Chester and Juliana, 9 months, are getting more mobile and don't want mummy sitting down on her own!



Lucas and Isaac, 4, pleased to have completed their first kickboxing lesson



Mum with Lydia and Jesse, 16 months, and older siblings Maddie, 10, Jake, 8, Harley, 4, and Emmie, 3



Rebecca and Emma enjoying the sunshine shortly before their seventh birthday



Eadie and Felix, 7, with Annie and Alice, 11, in dominoes for school Maths Day



Vivienne and Spencer, excited for the first birthday party back after lockdown



Grace and Isabella's first camping trip at 18 months old



## SEND US YOUR SNAPS

We'd love to see pictures of your children as they mark special days or get outside for some fun. All we need is your photos – but please take pictures on a high resolution setting so they are good enough quality for print.

Email photos (jpeg files are best) to [multiplematters@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:multiplematters@hotmail.co.uk) with 'Photo Gallery' in the subject line and 15 words, including the children's names. Twins Trust has a policy of building individuality which is used to prioritise submissions.



# Letters

## SEND US A LETTER...

Why not write and tell us what you think of articles you have read in the magazine, or anything else important to you that's happening in the world of multiples?

You can email letters to the editor at [multiplematters@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:multiplematters@hotmail.co.uk) or post them to Twins Trust's office at Manor House, Church Hill, Aldershot, Hants GU12 4JU, marked for the attention of Rachael Claye. Letters may be edited.

“Mum and dad did such a great job and we are all very close”

## SIX TWINS...

Here at Twins Trust we like to know that we are able to reach out across the generations, so we were delighted to be contacted by a wonderful family which includes three sets of non-identical twins, all born within four years.

Jane and Richard Froggatt from Wadhurst, East Sussex are extremely proud of their children Jenny and Ian, born in May 1962; Peter and Alison, born in November 1964; and Nigel and Eric, born in April 1966.

Ian told us: “Money was very tight and I know mum used the same pram for all of us. There were lots of hand-me-downs. We did have help from Elsa, an au pair from Holland who come over to live with us and help mum out when we were very little.”

Amazingly, there are no other twins in the family and none of the siblings have gone on to have multiples. Jane and Richard also have nine grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

“Mum and dad did such a great job and we are all very close and speak in a family call every week. Dad turns 90 this year, which is wonderful, and mum will be 84,” said Ian.

Given Jane's expertise as a nurse and Richard's as a sheep farmer, they knew plenty about pregnancy and



realised time that they were having twins, even though there were no scans available in those days.

Ian told us: “It's great to see how your charity is supporting families with twins – I don't think mum and dad need to call on you for help now!”

## THANK YOU

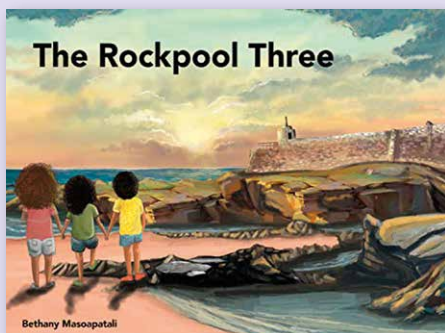
I'm a fairly new twins trust member and just received my first magazine, the June edition.

I wanted to say huge thanks, the magazine is just brilliant, I think it's the first magazine I've ever read all the way through, so helpful, informative and interesting!

Helen

# Book review

## Triplets by the sea



*The Rockpool Three* by Bethany Masoapatali is about triplet sisters who live by the sea in Portreath, Cornwall and go rockpooling to experience total freedom and fun.

Triplet mum and breastfeeding peer supporter Stacey Wood read this wonderfully illustrated new book to her girls Ava, Blakely and Lacey. Stacey said: “I found the book really quite good. And reading it to my triplets, they got so excited about hearing the word triplet in a book.

“The illustrations are fabulous, and the girls really enjoyed looking at the pictures. I found the wording sometimes a little too advanced for my girls and I had to explain a lot of the story, but it's lovely to do this.

“As this is the first book about triplets, I would love to hear another story about their adventures. Maybe there will be more to come.”

Author Bethany says the book is aimed at children

“They got so excited about hearing the word triplet in a book”



Stacey reads 'The Rockpool Three' to Ava, Blakely and Lacey

aged 4–8. She adds: “I am a triplet. Growing up, I felt I could not relate to most books as hardly any showed multiples. This is one of the reasons why I have written this book, to help children feel included and represented.”

The book is available on Amazon in paperback or as an e-book.

# Twins Trust discounters

Twins Trust has set up dozens of discounts exclusively for our members. Just visit the website at [twinstrustmultiplesavings.org](http://twinstrustmultiplesavings.org) for details of discounts on holidays, clothing, equipment and more, and for the codes to claim your money off. And of course, if you know of any organisation wishing to offer discounts to our members, then please do ask them to contact [luciewigley@twinstrust.org](mailto:luciewigley@twinstrust.org).

## NEW DISCOUNTERS

### Adrian Flux Learner Driver Insurance

[adrianflux.co.uk/extras/learner-driver](http://adrianflux.co.uk/extras/learner-driver)

Learning to drive can be costly with twins, triplets or more. As the UK's largest specialist motor insurer, Adrian Flux Insurance's learner driver policies cost from 75p a day, can be purchased a month at a time and will allow the driver to insure the car of a family member or friend without risking the owner's no claims bonus. What's more, for learner driver policies featuring twins, triplets and more who need to be on the same policy, Adrian Flux will waive any charges to add more than one driver. Just call 0800 085 5871.

### SmoochSuits [smoochsuits.com](http://smoochsuits.com)

SmoochSuits is a twin mum-run online store for all your babywear and accessories needs. We specialise in the incredible Bonds Wondersuits along with a fantastic selection of clothes, pyjamas, weaning products, teethers, muslins and much more. Visit the website or follow us on Instagram @smoochsuits. Twins Trust members save 10 percent.

### 9plus1 [9plus1.co.uk](http://9plus1.co.uk)

9plus1 offers a baby clothing rental service with 27 premium brads and over 600 items to suit all styles. Whether you want two of the same or different, we can offer you a wardrobe that grows with your baby. The subscription is hassle free, with reminders for when it's time to choose your next items. We will send a pre-paid returns package with every new order for you to send the previous month of clothes back to us. It really is as easy as rent, return, repeat. All clothes are made ethically and use organic materials – just email [hello@9plus1.co.uk](mailto:hello@9plus1.co.uk) quoting the discount code for 10 percent off. Twins Trust members can upgrade on the Occasions Subscription (six items) to Everyday Subscription (10 items) for the first three months.



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## RENEWING DISCOUNTERS

### B-Shirt [thebshirt.clothing](http://thebshirt.clothing)

Breastfeed with confidence with our award-winning Bshirt, a revolutionary breastfeeding top with no ties, clips or fuss, ethically made with organic cotton. The Bshirt is perfectly tailored for tandem feeding. Twins Trust members get 10 percent off their entire order.

### Clinkards [charlesclinkard.co.uk](http://charlesclinkard.co.uk)

Established in 1924, Charles Clinkard is an award-winning family-owned footwear retailer. Present your Twins Trust membership card in one of our 34 stores around the UK for 10 percent off kids' shoes.

### Nametags4U [nametags4u.co.uk](http://nametags4u.co.uk)

If you have more than one child the MultiStamp is perfect, with up to four names on one stamp. The stamp comes with special textile ink that goes through the wash over and over again – a quick and easy way to label clothes. Plus Sticky SupaTags, which can be stuck on shoes, bags, lunch boxes, beakers, bottles – even on clothing – and will go through the dishwasher and washing machine. Children love designing their own labels and making them unique. Members get a 15 percent discount.

### The Valley [thevalleycornwall.co.uk/child-friendly](http://thevalleycornwall.co.uk/child-friendly)

The Valley offers luxury 5\* Gold accommodation a few miles from Truro and Falmouth. Enjoy exclusive leisure facilities including heated pools and restaurant, with complementary baby/toddler equipment including books, toys and DVDs. Call 01872 862194 to book – members get a discount of 10 percent on any holiday outside school holidays, 5 percent on holidays during school holidays.

### SkyParkSecure [skyparksecure.com](http://skyparksecure.com)

SkyParkSecure is the UK's leading comparison website for airport parking. Compare prices, reviews, locations and facilities for hundreds of car parks that service 26 UK airports. Simply add your travel dates, departure airport and Twins Trust promo code for a list of options saving up to 35 percent.



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