

This is a really difficult column to write. It is hard because it is so sensitive and while it is about something that I have not personally experienced, I know others that have and I worried enormously that I would. June is Sands Awareness Month. Sands is the stillbirth and neonatal death charity and it wants to raise awareness about the tragedy that happens still too often in the UK.

As a MP you learn about issues that have never touched your life before. A few years ago the excellent folks at Kent Sands got in touch with me to lobby me about the issue of stillbirth, the equipment needed in our hospitals and bereavement care, or rather the lack of it. I met parents who had suffered the loss of their baby and I pledged to learn more about it and raise in Parliament the statistics that should shame us as a nation. I did both and slowly, over the course of the last Parliament and this, Government has made some changes. But they are all too small and much more needs to be done.

The knowledge I accumulated from meeting with Kent Sands and Abigail's Footsteps, another brilliant local stillbirth charity, frightened me. Throughout my entire pregnancy it was the issue I was most paranoid about, especially after my previous miscarriage and as older mothers are at greater risk. I'd cry myself to sleep some nights out of fear but when I raised this with the consultant she was rather dismissive. So I meticulously counted the kicks and thankfully all was fine.

Yet it won't be for more than 100 mothers per week and for them the support is not there. I hope you will support Sands in its awareness month and help break the silence and raise funds to provide services for the parents of rainbow babies.