

Towards reducing variations in infant mortality and morbidity: a population-based approach

David Field,^{1*} Elaine Boyle,¹ Elizabeth Draper,¹
Alun Evans,¹ Samantha Johnson,¹ Kamran Khan,²
Bradley Manktelow,¹ Neil Marlow,³ Stavros Petrou,²
Catherine Pritchard,⁴ Sarah Seaton¹ and Lucy Smith¹

¹Department of Health Sciences, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

²Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

³Institute for Women's Health, University College London, London, UK

⁴Public Health, NHS Leicester City, Leicester, UK

*Corresponding author

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

This report describes the results of research carried out over 5 years to understand why some babies are more likely to die or suffer damage at birth. We did this by:

- looking in great detail at the national information about births and deaths of babies
- looking at how well babies born between 4 and 8 weeks before their due date are managed both immediately after birth and then up to 2 years.

We found that babies born in poorer areas were much more likely to die before their first birthday because more babies were born too soon or were born with a very severe abnormality. When we looked in more detail, we found that women from poorer areas were more likely than women from affluent areas to continue a pregnancy when the baby has a severe abnormality rather than to opt for a termination. We also found that some of the differences in death rates between areas in England were because deaths of babies born very early are recorded differently.

People often think that babies born between 4 and 8 weeks early generally do well, but we found that:

- they often need help around birth
- they are more likely to have problems as they grow up than babies born at term (40 weeks)
- these babies are more likely to experience problems with development if their parents are poor
- each of these babies costs society almost £3000 more than a typical baby born at term.

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Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk

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This report

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