

## **Heading:** Infant Mortality

### **Introduction**

Infant mortality is an important health indicator as it offers supposition of the general population's health. Data on stillbirth and infant mortality is reported nationally and broken down to allow accurate reports for individual local authorities. The figures obtained are averaged over 3 years, as numbers are small which makes it difficult to identify trends or patterns in data. The collected data is expressed as a rate:

- The number of deaths per 1,000 births each year for stillbirths
- The number of deaths per 1,000 live births each year for neonatal and infant mortality.

The definition of infant mortality is used across the world and is split into three categories;

- Stillbirth- applies to a baby born after 24 weeks gestation of pregnancy, who shows no signs of life at birth
- Neonatal Mortality- applies to a baby that dies before 28 days of age
- Infant Mortality- applies to a baby that dies before a year of age

General improvements in health care have been linked to a decrease in Infant Mortality rates over the last 30 years. The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology have pledged to half the infant mortality rate caused by brain damage at birth by 2020 and specific changes to midwifery and neonatal practices have been made to support this.

### **National & Local Strategies (Current best practices) and Strategic Drivers/links**

[\*\*Antenatal Care \(NICE, 2008\)\*\*](#) – offers advice and information for pregnancy such as life style advice, antenatal and newborn screening programmes, management of pregnancy symptoms and breastfeeding. Antenatal care provision and entitlement is outlined and made available to the public.

[\*\*Maternity and Early Years – making a good start to family life \(Department of Health, 2010\)\*\*](#) – discusses integration of maternity and early years services enabling families to give their children the best possible start in life.

[\*\*Maternity Matters: choice, access and continuity of care in a safe service \(Department of Health, 2007\)\*\*](#)- concept of choice around the type of care that women receive, together with improved access to services and continuity of midwifery care and support.

[\*\*NHS Choices: Sudden Infant Death \(SIDS\) \(2015\)\*\*](#) offers information regarding reducing the risk of SIDS for families and professionals.

[\*\*Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust Maternity Patient leaflets\*\*](#) - offers up to date

advice and hospital protocol and policies on all aspects of pregnancy through to the postnatal period.

[The Healthy Child Programme \(HCP, 2009\)](#) - focuses on a universal preventative service, providing families with a programme of screening, immunisation, health and development reviews, supplemented by advice around health, wellbeing and parenting

### **What do we know?**

Research suggests there are both biological and social reasons for infant mortality, with evidence showing that good antenatal health and care is an important protection factor against infant mortality.

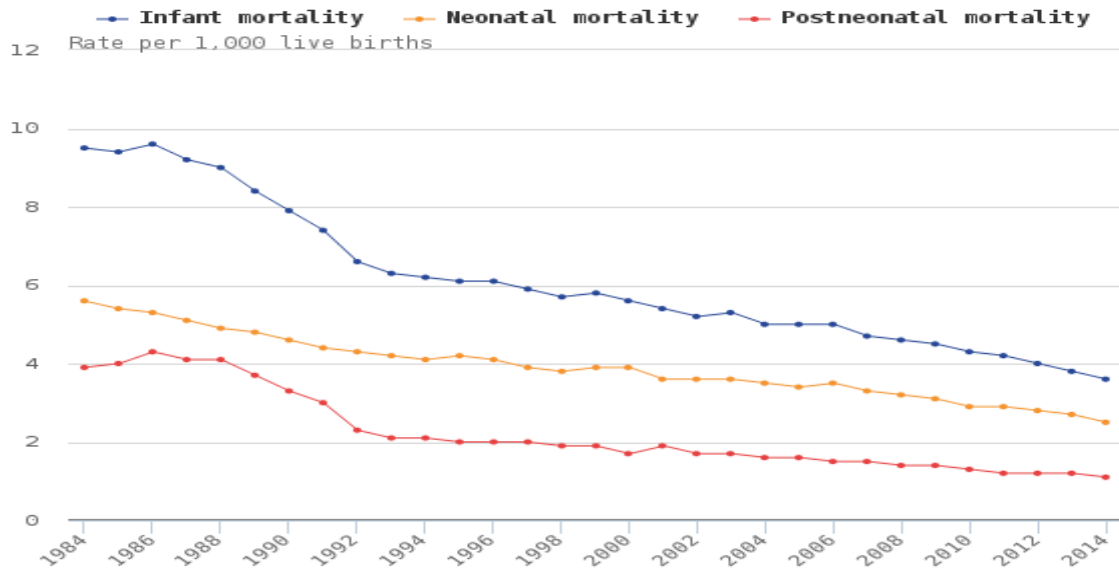
The main causes identified are complications from prematurity (a baby born before 36 weeks gestation), congenital abnormalities, lack of oxygen just before/after birth, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Infection.

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2016) released a paper that highlighted those infants who may have increased risk factors;

- Born into deprivation
- Low birthweight
- Smoking parents
- Poor nutrition in pregnancy
- Obese parents
- Birth outside of marriage
- Maternal age (under 20 years or above 35 years)
- Previous infant mortality in family

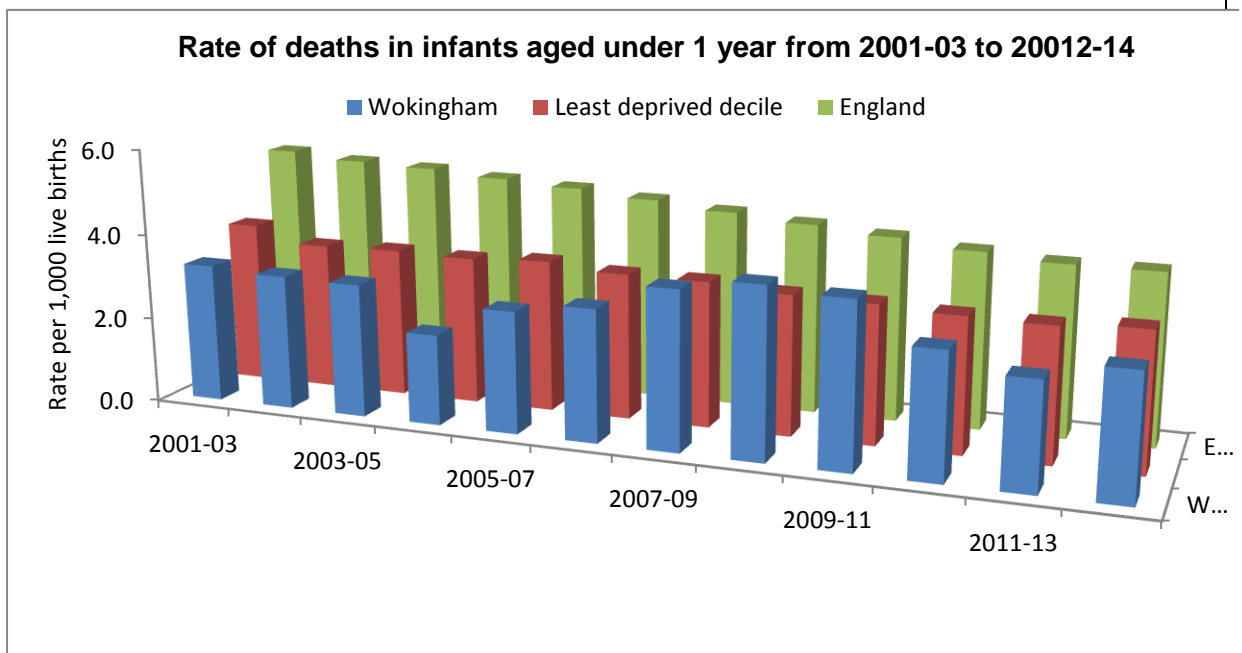
### **Facts, Figures, Trends**

There were 2,517 infant deaths in England and Wales in 2014. The infant mortality rate was 3.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, the lowest rate ever recorded in England and Wales and a decrease from 3.8 in 2013



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2015

In Wokingham The infant mortality rate is lower than the national and regional figures



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2015

In Wokingham, infant mortality rates showed an increase between 2005-7 and 2008-10. Since 2008-2010 this rate has been decreasing to the rate of 2.87 seen in 2012-14. Rates have remained lower than the England average and comparable to that of local authorities with similar levels of deprivation.

**What is this telling us?**

Improving access to antenatal healthcare, including the range of antenatal screening programmes, is essential in order to identify needs and risks to mothers and babies at an early stage.

## References

Office for National Statistics (2016) *Childhood mortality in England and Wales: 2014*. Available at:  
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/childhoodinfantandperinatalmortalityinenglandandwales/2014>

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2016) *Infant Mortality and Stillbirth in the UK*. Available at:  
<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0527/POST-PN-0527.pdf>

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**Update Due:**