footprints baby loss

twin triplet support

Termination for Medical Reasons in twin and triplet pregnancies

Personal Experiences Booklet

We know how unique the experience of finding out you are pregnant with twins and triplets is, and the emotions around this, only to discover at some point that there are complications and that a decision about whether or not to continue the pregnancy has to be made. This kind of baby loss can be complex. It often feels devastating and we hope this leaflet helps you to feel a little less isolated and lonely in your grief.

The leaflet is intended for families who have already had their Termination For Medical reasons (TFMR). If you are reading this leaflet before you have had the TFMR and would like advice and support from one of our volunteers who have also been through this experience, please email us at - support@footprintsbabyloss.org

We work closely with ARC (Antenatal Results and Choices) who also offer support in these circumstances. You can find a twin and triplet specific leaflet about TFMR on their website, which the Co-Founders of Footprints previously co-authored.
www.arc-uk.org/publication/tfmr-specific-to-twins-and-multiples/

Some families who have had a TFMR have shared their personal experiences in this booklet which we hope will provide some support to anyone else facing this situation. Please be mindful that this may be an emotional read, particularly if you have not yet had the TFMR.

Termination for medical reasons for both twins – a heartbreaking decision - Rebecca and George

“Please take a seat”
Those 4 dreaded words were when I knew something was wrong.

We found out we were pregnant in January 2022. We were ecstatic and when we went for our initial scan and found out it was Twins, we couldn’t believe it! We couldn’t wait to tell our family and friends soon after our 12 week scan, and I started to picture our life with our twin babies.

We went in for a routine 16 week scan and the midwife was scanning for what felt like an hour. I asked what we were having and she said twin boys! Soon after she wanted us to see the consultant for a second opinion. As the consultant scanned us for another 15 minutes he said the dreaded words “please take a seat”. I knew it wasn’t good news.

He said the short and long bones weren’t growing quick enough for the twins, which meant that their chests and throats weren’t developing. We were advised they were unlikely to make it through childbirth. Making the decision to terminate the twin pregnancy due to medical reasons was heartbreaking for us and our dream world had just shattered to pieces.

I kept questioning if I was making the right decision and the “what ifs”.

My husband and I broke down. Then the next day we spoke to someone from Great Ormond Street Hospital who looked at the scans. They explained the twins would die before I gave birth or they really wouldn’t survive very long after childbirth. The twins had skeletal dysplasia. They said it was up to us when we wanted to start the termination. From then on I didn’t want to be pregnant anymore, I felt so scared, alone and just in pieces.

A few days later, we went for the full termination. I wish I had had a bit more information before I went in because I think we went in quite blind to it. It all happened so fast.

I asked one of the midwives if I was going to have to push but I was told it was like period pains and I wouldn't have to. This wasn't the case.

The next morning at around 6am I gave birth to the twins. It was a really traumatic experience. My husband was there with me the whole time. He was really emotional but I had zero emotion. I was in pure shock the whole time and felt like I was in a little safe protected bubble in the hospital away from reality.

After the twins were born we spent some time with them and they gave us a memory box which had birth certificates and footprints of our little ones.

When we came out of hospital I completely broke down as I found it so hard coming back into reality and having to tell all my friends and family that we were no longer pregnant with twins. The thought of going into work and having to pretend I was okay was unbearable for me.

We had our little boys tested to see why this had happened and we got the results stating that it was just bad luck. That's what it was, bad luck.

I felt so alone and struggled for months, trying to go back to work and be "happy" and normal and seeing other people around me being pregnant, or getting pregnant.

Through our whole journey I found that talking about pregnancy loss is hard and a lot of people do not do it! which makes a lot of us feel very alone in the process.

This is why I find charities such as Footprints with Sharon and Suzie a safe space to really talk about how you feel and speak to others who have experienced the same things I had.

Experiencing a TFMR has been one of the hardest things we have ever been through and I hope this blog helps others to feel that you are not alone.

Poppy and Rosie's Story (TFMR of one twin)
By Hannah

Poppy and Rosie's story started with an unexpected pregnancy test. Another baby wasn't in the plan, but life had different ideas. At first, it was just shock and adjustment, but that changed quickly. A scan revealed not one, but two babies, turning surprise into a mix of excitement and nervous anticipation.

Everything seemed normal at first. The early scans showed two growing babies, and the family began preparing for life with twins. But at 16 weeks, a routine scan changed everything. The doctors diagnosed Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS), a dangerous condition where one baby received too much blood while the other didn't get enough. It was a life-threatening imbalance, and without intervention, the outlook was grim.

The doctors laid out the options, none of them easy. They could do nothing and hope for the best, attempt a delicate laser surgery to separate their shared blood supply, or make the unthinkable decision to let one baby go to give the other a better chance. There was no time to dwell. Surgery was the only real option.

The first round of laser surgery seemed to help. Then came another complication: Twin Anemia-Polycythemia Sequence (TAPS), a rare twin condition that causes one baby to become dangerously anemic while the other develops thickened blood. More choices, more risks. A second laser procedure was planned, but it didn't go smoothly. A blood vessel ruptured. The pregnancy, already a rollercoaster, took another sharp turn.

At 22 weeks, another devastating diagnosis came. Rosie had severe heart complications, something doctors had never seen in just one twin of an identical pregnancy. The outlook was grim. Specialists reviewed every possible option, but the reality was clear; she wouldn't survive. That left an unbearable decision. Keep going and risk losing both, or let Rosie go to give Poppy a chance?

On April 30, 2021, Rosie's heart was stopped. Signing the consent papers felt impossible. The weight of that decision was unbearable, but there was no other way. The procedure itself was agonizing. Lying on the table, knowing what was about to happen, was a pain beyond words. The moment the doctors confirmed it was done, a silence settled in that would never fully leave. Leaving the hospital that day, still carrying Rosie but knowing she was gone, was something no parent should ever have to endure.

For weeks, both girls were still there. One alive, one not. Explaining that to Millie and Reuben, the older siblings, was brutal. They had been excited for two sisters. Now, only one would be coming home.

At 27 weeks, Poppy was born at just 730 grams. Rosie was born too, silent and still. Poppy went to the NICU. Rosie to a tiny coffin.

Life after was a mess of grief and survival. Poppy was labeled "Twin 1," leading to painful questions. A small purple butterfly on her incubator signaled that she had lost a twin. Meanwhile, her older siblings were dealing with nightmares, anxiety, and the fear that Poppy wouldn't make it either.

Poppy is three now. She knows Rosie's name. She plays with her urn, talks about her, includes her in family life. Rosie may not be here, but she's part of every moment.

Losing a twin and raising the other is a life of contradictions. Joy mixed with grief. Milestones that feel both exciting and unfair. The decision to say goodbye to Rosie will always hurt, but it was made out of love.

For anyone facing something similar, you're not alone. The grief doesn't go away, but neither does the love. Poppy and Rosie will always be twins. Always together, in their own way.

To find out more information about Twin Anemia-Polycythemia Sequence (TAPS) please visit TAPS Support, one of our partner charities.

Termination for Medical Reasons – Both Twins
Mum of twin girls

In 2019, I found out I was pregnant with identical twins. It was my first pregnancy and discovering we were expecting two babies brought a whole range of emotions- delight, shock, fear, and everything in between. We were mindful that twin pregnancies carry a higher risk of complications, but as the weeks went on we were perhaps naively expecting to bring two healthy babies home in the distant future.

At my 12 week scan I lay on the bed with great anticipation as the sonographer ran the probe over my tummy. He was chatting away as he did it, commenting on the different measurements he was taking. Caught in my bubble of excitement, I didn't notice when he went quiet. He excused himself to have a quick word with a colleague and my husband and I were left in silence. It was then that I realised something was wrong.

The sonographer returned and told us that there was a significant disparity between some of the measurements between our babies. Instead of being sent home, we were directed to what I now refer to as 'the sad room'. Holding back the tears, we sat clutching each others' hands as a specialist midwife explained that the scan showed early signs of problems for our babies. We weren't given much more information, but were told the results of our blood tests would provide more detail and so it was a waiting game.

When we got home we felt utterly blindsided. We'd expected to be sharing the exciting news with friends and family that we were expecting twins. But instead we had to sit and wait to find out what the future held.

A couple of days later we received a phone call to tell us that the blood test looked positive; the risk to them wasn't as high as they thought. Absolutely elated, we rushed to share our news with a few close friends and family. However, the very next day we received another phone call, asking us to come into the hospital to meet with the twin consultant.

It was then that we learnt that the scans had actually shown that the twins already had early signs of Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS) and Twin Anaemia Polycythemia Sequence (TAPS) and other complications. The consultant told us that she had never seen a case like ours in her whole career, and warned us that we had unique circumstances that meant that should the babies become poorly- which was very likely as they were already showing significant signs of this- they wouldn't be able to carry out the usual interventions to try and save them. Our babies had a high chance of not surviving, or being born with severe disabilities if they did.

We were absolutely devastated. We went home and scoured the internet for similar stories of this happening to other people, medical research on the topic, information on potential treatments- absolutely anything to try and find more information, a solution, any hint of hope. It felt like surely there must be a way to fix this, somehow.

We'd been advised that our options were to just wait it out and see what happened, or terminate the pregnancy. However we were also told that we might be unable to terminate the pregnancy past 24 weeks, a legal cut-off that might apply to us if there wasn't a clear-cut diagnosis. This deadline added so much stress to an already stressful situation, and so we insisted on a referral to a tertiary hospital to see a specialist. There, we were scanned again, and the same news was delivered.

We were desperate to do what was best for our babies, even if that meant we didn't get to stay with them. At 16 weeks we made the heartbreaking decision that we couldn't take such a big risk for our babies. It was so difficult not having a definite diagnosis as we were constantly going back to the 'but what if...?'. However we knew that if we took that risk for our babies and the worst did happen, they would both be facing very hard and potentially painful lives. We couldn't do that to them, nor could we live with the guilt of knowing it was us who made that choice for them.

As I was so far along in the pregnancy I was told I would have to have a medical termination. I had to go into the hospital to take a pill to end the pregnancy and then return 2 days later to be induced. I found taking the pill the worst part of it all- until that point everything had felt like a joint experience that both my husband and I were going through together. But ultimately only I could be the one to actually go through with it all, and talking about it is very different to actually doing it. It all became so heartbreakingly real.

I wasn't at all prepared for the birth and had presumed it would feel like a 'bad period' as you so often hear; I hadn't realised I would be experiencing labour and birth. I was lucky to be able to stay in the hospital in a specially-designed room on the delivery suite for women experiencing loss and this really helped. As I was still relatively early in the pregnancy my body wasn't ready for labour yet, and so it took 7 rounds of the induction drug to get things started. It was a really long process and I found it quite painful.

I'd taken a little blanket that I wanted my babies to be wrapped in- one of the few things I felt I could do for them now. I spent a couple of days in hospital after they were born to recover as I had also needed surgery following the birth. I chose to see them both and spent time with them. It was then that I learned they were girls. I had always dreamt of having a little girl.

I can't describe the feeling of leaving the hospital with a memory box instead of my babies. Going home, seeing the door shut with them behind it and having to leave was the hardest thing I've ever had to do- the finality of it all. We just felt numb, exhausted, in shock.

Only our close family and a few friends had even known I was pregnant, and so we grieved mostly in silence. Termination for medical reasons wasn't really something you heard about and I felt a sense of guilt and shame surrounding it. I felt like my grief wasn't valid, as it was me who had made that decision, however much I would have done anything for a different outcome.

I found the support of the Facebook group and then the online support groups absolutely invaluable. I could be as anonymous as I chose, and over time I realised I was in a safe space and could share the details of my story more as time went on. There was no judgement here, only understanding, love and support. It was important for me to be able to share my story with others who have been through the same, or similar to me. I met other parents in the online groups and whatsapp groups who had also sadly lost babies due to TFMR. It was a huge comfort knowing I wasn't the only one, and I was able to express all my complicated feelings with those who have been there too.

Loss of our twin girls Sophie and Nina from IUGR after a TFMR of one twin at 19 weeks gestation
By Gavin

It's hard to know where to begin documenting the experience of the loss of our twin girls Sophie and Nina from IUGR after a TFMR at 19 weeks gestation but this is my story from the perspective of a husband and father.

I can only describe it as the cliched rollercoaster of emotions. I was just coming to terms with the shock of hearing we were having twins and beginning to get excited and envisaging how life would be with 2 more children to join our 4 year old and 2 year old when we received life-changing news. We were beginning to plan the practicalities every twin parent does I'm sure- "we'll need a bigger car, what will the sleeping arrangements be? How will nursery drop offs work?!"

I'll never forget the moment I was on a work call with my boss when suddenly I remembered Gill was still at an additional reassurance scan to check the twins. It was supposed to be straightforward and we had initially been informed she had a dichorionic pregnancy which would be relatively low risk so I didn't attend this one.

I thought it strange that she hadn't messaged to say all is still fine when I got that text - "can you call me ASAP please?"

I replied "yes, is it bad news?" to which my heart sank when she replied confirming it was. I wrapped the call immediately with my understanding boss and called her.

The conversation is a blur but Gill was upset and informed me that the scan had in fact shown they were monochorionic but that one twin was dangerously low on the growth centile chart and she was being advised to consider a TMFR soon. Then she said she was told they were going to be girls. What should have been a moment of joy and surprise was completely overshadowed by a sense of helplessness and worry whilst trying to understand the info she was relaying to me. Gill is medical so understands the implications and biological acronyms far better than me in these things!

I'm ever an optimist while Gill can be a worrier so my immediate reaction when it sunk in was that fearing the worst that we could lose both babies was not something I allowed myself to contemplate. "It won't happen to us".

I tried not to dwell on this and put the uncertainty to the back of my mind as we nervously waited for more weekly scans to monitor things.

I resigned myself to being there to support her as much as I could as we debated the medical options along with the morality and theological implications of TMFR.

But in the uncertainty I was challenging my own beliefs on this which took me back to my days studying a medical ethics course at Uni. Questions around what is best for both girls, the bigger, more viable twin as well as us as a family if intervention or non-intervention left one or both twins with profound life-debilitating disabilities all came up.

Ultimately I was of the view that it was Gill's call as it's her body but I would support whichever option she wanted to take. Fortunately we were on the same page and agreed that we would try to give them both the best shot at surviving and take things week by week. We weren't ready to give up on the smaller twin yet. (We later called her Nina meaning "little one" in Spanish and because it's a name our son really likes).

The scan the following week took an age to come round. Waiting in the ultrasound waiting room watching all these happy, excited couples or anxious alone mums was horrible.

It gave us some false hope as the dopplers looked good for both girls and Nina was showing some small but steady growth. The Consultant reassured us that there was no need to intervene yet and that on this growth trajectory many babies can survive, even if they need to be very premature. I regularly marvel at the advances of medical technology and I tried to stay positive for Gill, believing that it would be an uncertain path ahead but everything would work out ok.

I was comforted by stories of friends who were other twin parents or who knew others who had been through similar complications and had good outcomes with twins surviving and thriving even though they were very premature and used those anecdotes to give Gill some optimism in difficult times. We hoped we could get through each week with some positive news to eventually get to a viable age where, if needed, the girls could be delivered and then we knew what would follow could potentially be months of hospitalisation until they were strong enough to come home with us. But we were well aware of the risks that could cause to both and were acutely conscious that this may not be in the best interests of the bigger twin, Sophie.

However, this glimpse of hope only lasted a week as we were soon back to hearing the news that it was very unlikely that Nina would survive to a viable age, or at least not without a high risk of potentially severe complications which could also harm Sophie.

Within a few days we went to see another specialist who agreed and with their advice we took the heartbreakingly tough choice to go with a reduction to try and give Sophie the best chance. Hearing that there was a 10-20% chance she would not make it either was daunting but we felt we had to try and surely we would not be in the unfortunate statistics.

Knowing how helpless you are but also that Gill had to go through this having carried and felt them both moving was incredibly tough.

I'll never forget the anxiety and physical pain in my heart as I sat for what seemed like an age for 45 mins in a lilac bereavement room waiting for Gill to come out of surgery, mindlessly scrolling social media to pretend to take my mind off what was happening to my wife and our girls.

Then there was the unbearable wait overnight for the scan the next morning. Neither of us slept and the cold hard hospital floor of Gill's room didn't help. Even if it had been a luxury king-size, nothing could have let me sleep. The adrenaline and anxiety was palpable and we couldn't wait to just get into that scan again to feel the relief of hearing a heartbeat from Sophie.

But deep down, we had a nervous sense of foreboding. Gill couldn't feel any movements the next morning and the staff tried to reassure her that this was normal as the baby can be sedated too following the procedure, but I think we had a parental instinct and just knew.

When we got to that room, the wait for the news and the hopeless search for movement felt like an age and will live with me forever as we received the news from the consultant that Sophie had not survived either.

It was a crushing sentence that will never leave me. After processing the devastating news we just wanted to be back to hold our other kids. Driving the few hours home was awful and an array of emotions ran through us from rational explanation to regret, second-guessing and doubt to tears and anger.

This culminated in an overwhelming sense of anger when we parked up at our home to see a neighbour who had heard the news waiting to console us. We didn't feel like seeing anyone else before speaking to our kids and family and I wanted to see my parents.

My wife just wanted to be left alone and went to bed. After seeing my parents and the kids I collapsed in grief before going into organising mode to let work know etc. And for the coming days I fluctuated between crying, organising and just having a sense of wanting to support and protect my wife and other kids.

I knew no matter how hard I was finding it, I needed to be there and be strong for them.

I was very fortunate to have good friends who have been through their own traumas with loss in life who were there for me and I could speak to and message. There were lots of supportive messages and I was open with friends who had known we were expecting and/or facing complications.

It's cliché but I found talking and being open about my feelings really helped, as did writing it down in a message to people.

My mind soon turned to the fear of supporting Gill to hospital to deliver the twins a few days later. I began to catastrophize about losing her too and ruminate on what I'd do without her. Whilst I knew that was extremely unlikely I couldn't help but feel things can still go medically wrong and further bad luck could come.

The experience in hospital was not the traumatic experience we had dreaded. The midwifery staff were generally amazing, sensitive, respectful, compassionate and supportive. They really put us at ease and did not make the delivery seem like the devastating ordeal it clearly should be. Rather, we were made to feel like this was the moment to meet and say goodbye to our girls all at once.

Like every dad supporting the mother of the child in labour, I just wanted to do what I could to help put Gill at ease and be there for her. The sense of helplessness was awful though. At least seeing your wife in pain in a normal labour has with it the nervous excitement and expectation of a happy result at the end. Although that would not be the case this time, I was determined that we'd face it head on and get through this experience together and my role was just to support, listen and be strong.

Being an optimist, I was immediately determined to turn this episode into something that would make our family stronger and reinforce our appreciation for life and the health of our family.

I vowed that day that we would do something meaningful to commemorate the girls and ensure their conception, gestation and our grief had not all been for nothing and I was open with people about that.

That was the driver for us participating in Footprints Ben Nevis hike and our family hike of 24 miles from our first home in Edinburgh where our son was born to our new home. We were focused on turning this terrible period in our life into something positive to try and help others who have been through similar dark times. For me, I think that has helped process the trauma and allowed me to be open to the world about what we had been through so neither of us had to endure suffering in silence.

We had a very personal, private cremation service where we read poems and laid flowers for Sophie and Nina and we have also planted trees in their memory near our home where we have scattered their ashes so there is always a part of them we can remember there.

Personally I found this helpful and would encourage other bereaved fathers and parents to do something that they deem appropriate to remember their lost babies. It has helped me obtain some semblance of closure on that awful chapter in our lives, so I can compartmentalise it whilst never forgetting it.

From time to time, the tears come back, but that's ok, I've learned to embrace that and sometimes it makes me feel better to just let that happen and know it's a natural part of the grieving process.

I often think it's incredible that in previous generations, dads would just have been expected to go back to work the next day or immediately and it would never have been spoken of to others. I'm sure bottling their grief and trauma would not have been healthy.

Every man will cope in their own personal way but it's an important and positive development that it's now normalised to speak openly about how experiences like loss make us feel and that charities like Footprints exist to support.

"I felt isolated from the babyloss community following the TFMR as I was still pregnant, and isolated from the new mums in groups I met with our surviving twin."
-Mum to twin girls

"We were not referred for psychological support despite the traumatic nature of TFMR and the complexities of this being a twin pregnancy in the third trimester. Looking back, I find this shocking."
-Mum to twin girls

TFMR for one of my twins at 30 weeks
By Megan

When my partner and I found out I was pregnant I'd be lying if I said we weren't shocked, so you can imagine our faces when we found out it was twins. Once the shock wore off we began getting excited.

At each scan we had I never felt anxious, I was always so excited to see my little beans jumping around the screen.

That feeling however soon went once we had our 20 week anomaly scan. Twin A was healthy and the entire time the sonographer explained what was happening on the screen. She moved over to Twin B and the talking soon stopped. After further examination by another sonographer we were told they couldn't find our baby's CSP and we needed to be referred to fetal medicine.

I couldn't wait a week to find out if something was wrong or not so we paid to see a specialist at Harley Street who confirmed to us our baby has a missing CSP, severe fluid on the brain and that we would need an MRI to know how bad it is.

At 23 weeks I had my MRI and 2 days later I was called into hospital and told I had a short cervix that showed up on the MRI and needed to be admitted to have a stitch and put on bedrest. As I was in the hospital, they fast tracked the results and all hope and positivity I had left in me vanished. We were told the fluid on our baby's brain was so severe it was stopping his brain from growing. His chances of survival were so low.

Before making any big decisions, we asked if we could have another MRI so another one was scheduled when we were 28 weeks along. The results from that MRI showed nothing had improved, if anything it had gotten worse.

It was then we decided the best option for our son was to go ahead with a TFMR. Because Twin A was so healthy and thriving, we were told to wait till 32 weeks to give him the best chance at survival if I go into labour.

Feeling my baby moving around was so bittersweet. Each day was an emotional torment and I remember being inconsolable the night before the procedure knowing it was our last night together.

Due to my short cervix and the risk of preterm labour the Drs decided it was best I had the procedure early and I had my TFMR at 30 weeks.

At 31.5 weeks I went into labour and delivered Greyson and my sleeping angel Lucas.

I got to hold my angel in a basket and say my last goodbyes, it was so hard to see him but I didn't want to regret not holding him later in life. We had prints done and photos of him.

Grieving after a TFMR was very difficult for me. I was hit with guilt all the time. I was worried about telling people what happened in fear that they would judge me.

As awful as it sounds, I would often wish we just lost him naturally, rather than having to go through the agony of the TFMR.

I've now learnt that my grief is just as valid as anyone else. Lucas was very wanted.

By having a TFMR Lucas never had to endure any pain, he only ever knew the comfort of mine and his brother's heartbeats.

I'm forever thankful for this charity and these lovely ladies.

One of the most difficult experiences of my life (TFMR for one twin) - By Leah

In 2019 my husband and I were blessed with the safe arrival of our eldest son. I am a carrier of Fragile X Syndrome which resulted in symptoms of FXPOI (premature ovarian insufficiency). We had been advised that the chances of me becoming pregnant were slim, so we were feeling incredibly lucky to have managed to conceive naturally. We had chosen not to have an amniocentesis during the pregnancy due to the risks involved. So, when our son was born, he was tested for Fragile X Syndrome. We found out at a few weeks old that he had Full mutation Fragile X Syndrome and had therefore inherited the condition (there was a 50:50 chance as only one of my X chromosomes is affected).

Fragile X Syndrome is a genetic condition affecting around 1 in 4000 males and 1 in 6000 women. It can cause a wide range of difficulties with learning, as well as social, language, attentional, emotional, and behavioural problems. Some may experience connective tissue difficulties such as difficulty breastfeeding, hypotonia, hyper flexibility, flat feet, recurrent ear infections and mitral valve prolapse. Fragile X Syndrome is the most common inherited cause of learning disability (taken from the Fragile X Society website).

In 2021 we underwent IVF treatment. The plan was to then have PGD treatment to try and have a child who would not have Fragile X Syndrome. Unfortunately, during the IVF treatment no eggs were harvested. As a result, further treatment was not considered to be viable. This was really hard news to digest. We knew that we might not get many eggs due to me having very few follicles, and then that the chances of having healthy embryos after this were very slim. However, to not even get past the first hurdle was heartbreaking.

We were keen for our son to have a sibling so that he would hopefully have the benefits of that relationship. Despite the low odds for conceiving naturally that we had been given by the fertility consultant, we decided to try in the hope that the odds would be in our favour this time and if we did get pregnant the baby would receive my good X chromosome. To our utter surprise and joy in 2022 we found out that we were pregnant and at our 8 weeks scan we found out that I was carrying twins. What a lovely surprise this was!

At our 15 weeks scan we thought we were having a girl and a boy and as girls are less affected by Fragile X, we were planning not to have any further testing. Then at our 18 weeks scan we found out that I was in fact carrying two boys and we decided to have the amniocentesis to find out if they had Fragile X. Having the amniocentesis was tough – knowing the risks to our unborn children.

Initially the results we were given were that twin 1 was fine and that twin 2 had Fragile X. Then at our next appointment a few weeks later we were told that the genetic testing had actually discovered that twin 1 had another rare genetic condition called CNKSR2, and our consultant did not know much about it.

We were given an emergency appointment at clinical genetics and it was during this appointment when we learned the severity of CNKSR2 and just how bleak the prognosis would be for twin 1, our world fell apart. Then we faced the hardest decision we have ever had to make. We had to decide whether to continue with the pregnancy, terminate the pregnancy completely or have a selective feticide/TFMR of twin 1.

My initial reaction at our appointment at clinical genetics was that we would just continue with the pregnancy and do the best we can for our boys. However, we then had to consider what would be best for all our children, the fact that my eldest boy and twin 2 would both need additional support and how much suffering twin 1 might experience. We felt well and truly ‘stuck between a rock and a hard place.’

I had a midwife appointment at some point before the scheduled TFMR and she could not find a heartbeat for twin 1. I then rushed to the hospital for a scan, and all was fine. I had such mixed emotions during and after this experience. Part of me hoped that fate had taken this most agonising decision out of my hands.

At 31 weeks we had the TFMR. Having a large needle placed through my stomach into my womb and into twin 1 to stop his heart and knowing that during this process I had to remain as still as possible was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. I hope that one day I will be able to forgive myself, but for now I carry huge guilt.

At 37 weeks our twin boys were born by c-section. Twin 2 was actually born first followed by our sleeping angel, twin 1. Twin 2 needed support with his breathing and was taken to NICU straight from theatre. Not being able to be with him was incredibly hard. It did mean that we had time with twin 1 though, a chance to say goodbye. I had been anxious about seeing twin 1. We had been forewarned that he may be disfigured. I need not have worried, as soon as I saw him all I felt was love. Yes, he may have been a bit squished in the womb by his brother, but he was my boy and to me he was perfect. There was just an immediate instinct as a mother to love and want to care for him. Staff took twin 1 to NICU to be photographed with his brother and then we went up to the ward. We were in a private side room and staff were so supportive in giving us time to grieve and say goodbye to twin 1 at the same time as providing regular updates on twin 2 and switching our knitted bonding squares.

The grieving process has been extremely difficult, and once home I felt quite alone as a twin mum with a baby to care for and grieving for my twin that had died at the same time. Then I discovered Footprints Baby Loss and I found parents who truly understood my experience and I was able to talk openly without feeling that I might be judged.

It was the hardest, most painful choice — and it came from a place of pure love (TFMR of one twin)
Mum to twins

At 17 weeks, I found out my baby boy was terminally ill.
From that moment on, I lived in fear. Every day of pregnancy felt like waiting for heartbreak. I was carrying life while preparing for loss — planning a funeral while still feeling him move inside me. It was a nightmare I couldn't wake up from.

In the end, I made the heartbreaking decision to go through a Termination for Medical Reasons (TFMR) on the day I went into labour. It was the hardest, most painful choice — and it came from a place of pure love. I chose to protect my son from suffering, even though it meant breaking my own heart.

There's so much stigma around TFMR. Sometimes, it feels like people think we're not allowed to grieve because we made a decision. But I want you to know — if you're a parent who has walked this path — your grief is real. Your pain is valid. And you did what you did out of deep, unconditional love.

I didn't know where to turn until I found Footprints Baby Loss. Sharon and Suzie held space for me in a way no one else could. They understood. They didn't judge. They reminded me I wasn't alone — and that meant everything.

So, to any parent reading this: If you've been through TFMR, please know —
You are not alone.
You are not guilty.
You are still a parent.
And you are allowed to grieve.

The love we have for our children didn't die with them. It lives on — in our hearts, in our memories, and in the strength it takes to keep going.

Your story matters. Your baby matters.
And so do you.

The outcome of the appointment turned our world upside down (TFMR of one twin)
Mum to twins Poppy and Phoebe

In August 2022, myself & my husband couldn't believe our luck to find out after years of infertility struggles & a failed round of IVF that our 2nd round of IVF had been a success and we were having twins.

Our girls were monochorionic twins. This meant they shared a placenta & were at risk of Twin to twin transfusion syndrome (TTTS). Due to this, I had to have an ultrasound every 2 weeks. I spent the majority of my first & second trimester on high alert for TTTS, a common complication of Monochorionic twins. TTTS is uneven blood flow between the twins and if caught early & in its early stages it can be treated by surgery.

Approaching 29 weeks pregnant, I had just started to allow myself to relax.

We bought the cots, moses baskets, a double pram, 2 car seats.... but it wasn't to be.

My pregnancy had been fairly textbook for the majority of it. The girls were measuring small but there were no other causes for concern.

At my bi weekly 29 week scan, there were signs of TTTS – vast differences between the girls' amniotic fluid levels, more than a 25% size difference and abnormalities with blood flow through the umbilical cord. I was immediately referred to the MFM team at St George's London.

I was preparing myself for the fact that I would be delivering the girls very early as I was told by my local hospital that 29 weeks was too far along for TTTS surgery.

But the outcome of that appointment turned our world upside down.

In the space of 2 weeks we had gone from all ok to acute stage 4 TTTS. Stage 5 is when one or both babies pass away & the sudden shunt of blood flow can be catastrophic for the other twin.

That day we made the heartbreaking decision to opt for selective reduction or TFMR as it is also known.

At that point our daughter Poppy was in heart failure. She had swelling under the skin. Fluid on the heart, lungs & brain.

We were told we could deliver both babies but the only option for Poppy was palliative care.

Our surviving twin Phoebe was also very poorly & very small (estimated 1lb 3oz) so there were no guarantees she would survive either.

If by some miracle Poppy had survived, they could see she had suffered significant brain damage. This crossed a red line for us in terms of her potential quality of life- if she was to survive (which was highly unlikely)

There are details of that day I just can't look back on. The surgery itself is one I have only very vague memories of.

During the surgery Phoebe's heart rate began to plummet & suddenly a whole other team of people from the NICU appeared. Thankfully they were able to get her heart rate to normalise, but they later told us they were 1 minute away from getting Phoebe out.

I like to think that it was Poppy sending Phoebe back to us.

Only our very close circle of family know about the selective reduction. As far as anyone else is concerned, Poppy died as a result of TTTS- which is true but I have always been wary of sharing the fact this was due to TFMR. There is a very real fear of judgement and feeling of shame that comes with TFMR.

I came across Footprints baby loss, who offer support for bereaved families of twins and triplets. It's been so comforting to find others that have been in our situation- where we can share our experience without the fear of being judged.

What I have learnt to tell myself is that TFMR only comes from a place of unconditional love & wanting to do anything in our power to lessen your babies pain and suffering & It's certainly not something to feel ashamed of.

Thank you so much to our Footprints Community for sharing their babies with us.
We hope that by reading these stories and accessing our support at Footprints that you might feel a little less lonely and isolated.

"Footprints is the only charity that I have found that has a section solely for TFMR parents. Though I always felt welcome and validated in other loss groups, nothing compares to being with people who literally know how you're feeling, the decisions you had to make and life after them."

"I desperately didn't want my baby's life to end and equally I didn't want my baby to endure what lay ahead with her complex diagnosis. It was an unbearable situation and I will never be fully ok with it."
-Mum to twin girls

TFMR twin and triplet specific Support

We have a small WhatsApp group specifically for our mums and dads that have experienced a TFMR in your twin or triplet pregnancy, that you are very welcome to join. Please get in touch to find out more. It is a safe space where you can chat to other parents, ask questions and be in a supportive group of parents that understand how you might be feeling.

Additionally, we have befrienders who have personal experience of TFMR that we can match you with.

We offer TFMR-specific online group meetings. Please let us know if you would like more details.

We also have monthly online groups, one for those with surviving twins or triplets and one for those who have experienced the loss of all of their babies where both mums and dads are welcome to attend together or individually.

Acknowledgements to our parents who have kindly shared their stories.
We would like to thank: Hannah, Rebecca and George, Megan, Leah, Gavin, as well as our anonymous contributors, in memory of all of their babies .

"I came across Footprints baby loss, who offer support for bereaved families of twins and triplets. It's been so comforting to find others that have been in our situation-where we can share our experience without the fear of being judged."

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