

An Exploration of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women's Perceptions of Public Health Messages to Reduce Stillbirth in the UK: a Qualitative Study.

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1 **Title page**

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3 public health messages to reduce stillbirth in the UK: a qualitative study.

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22

23 **Abstract**

24 **Background:** Stillbirth is a global public health priority. Within the United Kingdom, perinatal
25 mortality disproportionately impacts Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women, these
26 communities have double the rates of stillbirth than white women. Although the
27 explanation for this remains unclear, it is thought to be multidimensional and includes
28 access to key public health information. Improving perinatal mortality is reliant upon raising
29 awareness of stillbirth and its associated risk factors. The aim of this study was to explore
30 BAME women’s awareness of stillbirth, perceptions of how it can be prevented through
31 maternal behaviour change and how key public health messages could be more accessible
32 to BAME women.

33 **Method:** Two semi-structured focus groups and 13 one to one interviews were completed
34 with a purposive sample of 30 participants from 18 countries and across 4 NHS Trusts.
35 Participants provided a detailed account of their recollection of stillbirth advice and risk
36 factors both before and during pregnancy. They also suggested approaches to more
37 effectively communicate key messages to BAME women.

38 **Results:** The results indicate limited awareness of stillbirth and potentially modifiable risk
39 factors. They highlight the importance of the way in which resources to communicate key
40 messages are developed and how they are communicated. The study supports the need for
41 a range of resources which should be developed and shared within communities and as well
42 as by trusted health professionals.

43 **Conclusion:** Our study found that the term “stillbirth” does not routinely exist in many
44 women’s narrative of perinatal health. This introduces additional complexity for health
45 professionals when discussing stillbirth prevention with women from culturally and
46 linguistically diverse backgrounds. Through co-development messages can be more
47 accessible, acceptable and communicated effectively. It was clear that there was no ‘one
48 size fits all’ and that a multi-pronged approach is required.

49

50 **Keywords**

51 Pregnancy; public health; stillbirth prevention messages; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
52 women

53 **Background**

54 Perinatal mortality is a global public health issue and there are wide variations in the rates of
55 stillbirth across the world, even between and within high income countries (1). For the last 5
56 years, reducing stillbirth has been a national priority within the United Kingdom (UK) and
57 there has been a 16% reduction from 4.2 stillbirths per 1000 total births in 2013 to 3.5 per
58 1000 in 2018 (2). However there remains a considerable disparity in outcome within the
59 population, with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women continuing to have higher
60 rates of stillbirth than white women (2). The reasons for these inequalities in stillbirth rates
61 are not clear, but are likely to be multifaceted and include underlying socio-economic
62 disadvantage and associated stress and coping mechanisms, access and acceptability of
63 health care and accessibility to key public health messages around reducing stillbirth risk (3,
64 4).

65 Raising awareness of public health issues and associated risk factors is an important element
66 in the reduction of poor health outcomes (5) . A number of potentially modifiable risk factors
67 for stillbirth have been identified in the last few years. These factors include, but are not
68 limited to: optimal body mass index prior to conception (6), smoking cessation in pregnancy
69 (7), screening for gestational diabetes (8), awareness of reduced fetal movements (9),
70 maternal side going-to-sleep position in pregnancy (10), and reducing caffeine intake in
71 pregnancy (11). In order for women to make positive behaviour choices they need to be aware
72 of what factors are of importance. However, it is unclear whether key health messages
73 relating to these factors are available, accessible and appropriate for diverse communities
74 within the UK, especially women who may experience language and cultural barriers when
75 accessing maternity care. This study aimed to explore BAME women's awareness of stillbirth,

76 their perceptions of how stillbirth can be prevented through maternal behaviour change and
77 how key messages could be more effectively communicated to BAME women.

78 **Methods**

79 Ethical approval was gained from the University ethics committee SREIC/2019/132 and a
80 qualitative study was undertaken between November 2019 and May 2020. After acquiring
81 informed consent, women were recruited to the study through “gatekeepers” at local
82 voluntary sector organisations. Women were eligible to participate if they were from a BAME
83 community, had migrated to the UK at some point in their lives, were aged over 18, had a
84 child under the age of five born in the UK and spoke either English or a language where a
85 voluntary sector interpreter could be arranged. Women who had previously experienced an
86 adverse outcome were excluded from the study. The gatekeepers were provided with study
87 information, interested women were then invited by the research team to attend a face to
88 face group or individual telephone briefing session to discuss the study further. Purposive
89 sampling was undertaken to ensure the sample included women from various countries of
90 origin, different cultural backgrounds and with different levels of English language literacy.
91 Before the COVID-19 pandemic, two focus groups of women were conducted. During the
92 COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were arranged on a one to one basis over the telephone. The
93 same semi-structured interview guide was used for the focus groups and interviews. The
94 questions related to knowledge of stillbirth prior to pregnancy, who communicated the key
95 messages around reducing stillbirth risk in pregnancy and what these messages were. Further
96 questions explored what participants believed would be the best way to communicate such
97 messages in the future. Probes were used to explore the issues in more detail. See
98 Supplementary **table 1** for the interview guide.

99 **Analysis**

100 Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and thematic analysis was conducted,
101 using Word and the highlighting functions, following the principles from Braun and Clarke
102 (12). Two members of the team (MC and TS) read all the transcripts, searching for patterns in
103 the data to develop codes which were then used to construct themes. Other members of the
104 team also read the transcripts and checked the analysis process. Discussion took place until
105 consensus was reached on the final themes.

106 **Results**

107 In total, 30 women took part in the study, seventeen took part in two face to face focus
108 groups and a further thirteen took part individual interviews via phone due to the COVID-19
109 pandemic, they had given birth in one of four North of England Trusts (see **table 1** for full
110 details).

Participant	Type of interview	Home country	Time in UK	Age	Parity
1. FG1	Focus group	Pakistan	8 years	34	P2
2. FG1	Focus group	Pakistan	2 years	30	P1
3. FG1	Focus group	Pakistan	5 years	23	P2
4. FG1	Focus group	Pakistan	3.5 years	24	P1
5. FG1	Focus group	Bangladesh	1 year	26	P1
6. FG1	Focus group	Pakistan	1 year	27	P1
7. FG1	Focus group	Hong Kong	2.5 years	24	P1
8. FG1	Focus group	Pakistan	1.5 years	27	P2
9. FG1	Focus group	Pakistan	2 years	25	P5

10. FG2	Focus group	Ethiopia	7 years	32	P4
11. FG2	Focus group	Not stated	3 years	39	P4
12. FG2	Focus group	Guinea	1 year	30	P2
13. FG2	Focus group	Somalia	5 years	40	P7
14. FG2	Focus group	Tunisia	10 years	32	P2
15. FG2	Focus group	Congo	3 years	26	P3
16. FG2	Focus group	Congo	2 years	30	P2
17. FG2	Focus group	Congo	2.5 years	30	P2
18.	Individual telephone (with interpreter)	Saudi Arabia	6 years	36	P1
19.	Individual telephone	Egypt	2.5 years	38	P4
20.	Individual telephone	Yemen	2 years	32	P1
21.	Individual telephone	Pakistan	4 years	32	P1
22.	Individual telephone	Russia	19 years	30	P3
23.	Individual telephone	Albania	1.5 years	24	P1
24.	Individual telephone	Sudan	3 years	29	P1
25.	Individual telephone	Ethiopia	11 years	31	P1
26.	Individual telephone	Iran	6 years	36	P2
27.	Individual telephone	Uganda	5 years	22	P1
28.	Individual telephone	Senegal	9 years	33	P1
29.	Individual telephone	Sudan	10 years	31	P3
30.	Individual telephone	Eritrea	3 years	28	P1

111 Table 1: Participant profile

112 Four main themes emerged from the data: limited awareness of stillbirth and associated risk
113 factors, mixed messages, the importance of the health professional, multiple information
114 sources.

115 **1. Stillbirth awareness**

116 Women were asked what they understood by the word stillbirth. Most women had never
117 heard the word in English and for some the word stillbirth did not exist, or they had not come
118 across it, in their first language:

119 *'Naturally die, no I never heard about it, no, I'm not sure if we have any word in my*
120 *language about it, no.'* P26 Iran

121 Some women discussed how stillbirth may be described in their first language:

122 *'when the baby born and he's dead, they just say the baby's dead, they don't have like*
123 *a word like the stillbirth'* P22 Russia

124 Some women discussed how a baby dying in pregnancy was a taboo subject in their culture
125 which led to a lack of discussion or sharing of information:

126 *'When the neighbours used to come around and I would hear that there's been a*
127 *death but we never found out what happened, how it happened just they used to say*
128 *Oh baby died in the stomach.'* P21 Pakistan

129 Other women talked about how stillbirth was so common back home that it was openly
130 discussed but there was a lack of understanding of the reasons why it happened

131 *'in Ethiopia so many, yeah, child die, people like children in pregnancy times they don't*
132 *know, that's why so many children die in pregnancy time'* P25, Ethiopia

133 Interestingly although women did not understand the term stillbirth and believe they never
134 discussed it in pregnancy when questioned about specific advice they may have received they
135 were knowledgeable about some preventative measures, but not why.

136 *'she used to ask things like is the baby moving full stop...No nobody told me why this*
137 *question was being asked'* P21 Pakistan

138 *'I don't think I remember anything about while I was pregnant to prevent child*
139 *stillbirth... the ninth month and I was told maybe sleep onto your side just because you*
140 *can breathe better ...but it wasn't about the child.'* P20, Yemen

141 Many women discussed how the topic of stillbirth can be frightening and how providing key
142 messages to reduce BAME women's risk of stillbirth could increase stress levels in women
143 who may already be living difficult lives. They believed it was important for health
144 professionals to frame information in a positive way to avoid this:

145 *'I think it's best that you do not mention stillbirth...to a woman who is pregnant*
146 *(antenatal) review. I have seen both sides ladies are pregnant and have problems at*
147 *home thinking all the time ...this might happen to me or it might not happen to me. I*
148 *think it's better if we give the lady advice about taking care of herself that is better*
149 *for her. we should ask women about the movement of the baby and give them*
150 *information about sleeping on your side and don't sleep on your back. Not use the*
151 *word stillbirth'* P 28, Senegal

152 In addition, some women discussed the idea of fate and that stillbirth will just happen with
153 no underlying reason therefore mentioning it would cause stress in women unnecessarily:

154 *'I mean if it happened it happened...you won't need to hear about it...just thinking all*
155 *your pregnancy...scared and stressed..... most of the ladies they say there is no reason*
156 *for that.'* P24, Sudan

157 **2. Mixed messages**

158 None of the women reported receiving specific advice from either health professionals or
159 family and friends to reduce their risks of stillbirth. However, many of the women discussed
160 how they received advice about keeping themselves and their unborn baby healthy. Advice
161 received from family or friends, including in their home country, was often in conflict with
162 advice received by health professionals in the UK. This included dietary advice:

163 *'during the first three months they said I don't have to eat some things like*
164 *banana...the food that is warm, especially they mention banana or date and then after*
165 *three months yes again because it's boy I have to be careful about my diet, I'm not*
166 *allowed to eat fish and just salmon, and seabass...'* P26, Iran

167 *'So I think the midwife would say "you're only allowed so much tuna a week" and then*
168 *people in Russia would be like "oh I don't know what you're talking about, you can eat*
169 *as much of this as you want...So it's just little things like that that would get confusing'*
170 P22, Russia

171 Women also received conflicting advice from different family and friends back home. In one
172 case, a woman from Eritrea was advised to stay active by her family

173 *'...they told me you have to work to work, work, work because it's good for you, don't*
174 *stay at home...'* P30 Eritrea

175 She was also advised not to stay active by members of her church:

176 *'when I go, they said sit here, don't stand up a lot, not too much, too long time, you*
177 *have to sit here, they told me like that, rest, like don't stand in our church...'* P30 Eritrea

178 Advice offered included other aspects of daily life:

179 *'don't even think about having a nice relaxing bath, whereas here the midwives are*
180 *always like "enjoy your nice bubble bath", I mean obviously not scolding hot but you*
181 *can have a normal bath with bubbles, you don't need to be worried about putting in*
182 *oils and stuff, whereas yeah, in Russia be like "just be careful, be very careful"...' P22*

183 Russia

184 As well as mixed messages about keeping healthy in pregnancy, women recalled advice
185 received from midwives and antenatal classes that was inaccurate. This particularly related
186 to the urgency of searching for support if there was a perception of decreased fetal
187 movements, or how to stimulate movements:

188 *'Yes, she asked me if I don't feel any movement for two days I think, if I remember, two*
189 *days I have to go to the hospital'* P26, Iran

190 *'And then sometimes I'm calling for midwife and then they told me eat like ice*
191 *cream, like ice, you need to cold the baby and then they move.'* P25, Ethiopia

192 **3. The importance of the health professionals**

193 All the women discussed how they received advice from their midwife in pregnancy around
194 staying healthy, although they could not always link the advice to reducing the risk of
195 stillbirth. Women believed that information targeting BAME women to reduce their risk of
196 stillbirth should be primarily communicated through health professionals, in particular
197 midwives. Midwives, nurses, doctors, GPs and health visitors were all named as key people

198 with this responsibility. It was believed that the information from health professionals was
199 the most trustworthy when compared to other sources:

200 *'...the midwives maybe should advise more the clients, the patients, because at least*
201 *in my culture, in my country, when a doctor says something or when a nurse says*
202 *something, when a midwife, it's more trustful. And the patient take it more seriously*
203 *than they will take in information on internet or in a leaflet...'* P23, Albania

204 In addition, women believed that the key messages around stillbirth prevention for BAME
205 women should be ongoing throughout pregnancy to avoid women turning to less reliable
206 sources of information:

207 *'The best way is update the information...at least once a month because sometimes*
208 *new mothers, they don't know anything, they take any advice from anyone, maybe*
209 *that advice is not suitable for them, you have to go to midwife, doctor is better than*
210 *internet.'* P29, Sudan

211 Women were asked about the practicalities of receiving the key messages in terms of
212 location and timing. Most believed they should be communicated in the woman's home,
213 hospital or GP surgery and it was important that women were aware about reducing the risk
214 of stillbirth pre-conceptually as well as throughout pregnancy:

215 *'Well, I think maybe it should be before. Sometimes some ladies, before they get*
216 *pregnant they have use with drugs and alcohol, and that's why it can make their*
217 *baby die. So maybe it's better to start before'* P23, Albania

218 Some women discussed how cultural barriers reduced the likelihood of BAME women
219 attending for routine appointments and this needed to be addressed as a key element of
220 stillbirth reduction strategies:

221 *'I think first of all we should advise them to go see a hospital...African communities,*
222 *most of them, they don't go to hospital because some of them, they give birth at home,*
223 *by themselves. Because there are some countries people have to beg for hospital. And*
224 *here, we have the chance that we can go to hospital, have a good midwife that can*
225 *explain. Maybe the advice you should give them is first to trust to go to hospital first,*
226 *to get checked.'* P28, Senegal

227 Trust was considered an important issue for most women, especially those who did not have
228 family and friends in the UK and women believed it was the responsibility of the midwife to
229 build up a relationship with BAME woman to ensure that she trusted the advice given:

230 *'I like to be explained that I know that you came from other countryI have a really*
231 *successful pregnancy with Daniel, with my son, because I just talk between, you*
232 *know, two sides (midwife)'* P26, Iran

233 Most women discussed difficulties BAME women may have with the spoken English language
234 and the need for health professionals to consider this when providing key messages about
235 reducing the risk of stillbirth:

236 *'Well if the midwife is meeting with a lady who's not speaking English very well she*
237 *should have an interpreter.'* P21, Pakistan

238

239 **4. Multiple information sources and formats**

240 Women discussed how they had accessed information about pregnancy related issues from
241 sources outside of maternity services and that this approach could be useful to supplement
242 the key messages around reducing the risk of stillbirth provided by health professionals. The

243 perspectives of these different sources varied between women. Some women discussed
244 how they relied on other sources to corroborate the message provided by the health
245 professional:

246 *'...my friends here from Iran, they always check internet, while the midwife told them,*
247 *or the family told them, but they always check the website, the same as me...'* FG2

248 In focus group two, the discussion revolved around the cultural background of the midwife
249 compared to the woman:

250 *'because my midwife was from Pakistan, and okay so from another culture, another*
251 *experience and so I check the internet...'* FG2

252 Some women discussed how written information would be useful to communicate key
253 messages about reducing stillbirth:

254 *'Yeah, a leaflet and give to, give it to pregnant women when they have got*
255 *appointment with midwives and it's simple and explained to make sure they*
256 *understand'* P24, Sudan

257 However, other women did not think written information was very helpful. Many did not, or
258 could not, read the information provided by health professionals and would not read the key
259 messages around reducing stillbirth:

260 *'Being told verbally is more effective than having the information because sometimes*
261 *people don't read...or can't read...or can read but can't understand'* FG1

262 In addition, one woman talked about how some BAME pregnant women may have a stressful
263 life which is not conducive with receiving written information:

264 *'...most people I know, I think because you're going through a lot of emotions and a lot*
265 *of like things going on in your body, so people are weak, people are tired every time. I*
266 *don't think leaflets would be a good idea to just sit down and read.'* P27, Uganda

267 Many of the women used the internet to source information related to pregnancy. This
268 related to times when there was no midwifery contact:

269 *'Well the first three months I didn't have much information, just because I didn't see*
270 *my midwife and I was just Googling most of the things'..* P19 Egypt

271 In particular the NHS site was a popular place to check. However, this was thought to be too
272 general for some of the information women required.

273 Most women believed that creating a video would be an effective way of communicating key
274 messages around stillbirth prevention:

275 *'everybody likes to watch a video, especially if it's short and snappy because if it*
276 *starts, it if becomes like a documentary a lot of people switch off....* 'P22, Russia

277 It was believed that whatever way technology was used, it should complement the advice
278 given by the health professional:

279 *'And the midwife just talk about it and explain it and then the people can go home and*
280 *the information is all the time with them, and they can check'.* P26, Iran

281 It was also thought that a video would help women understand the message:

282 *'films with graphics and things, that you can see not only hear, it might be a good way*
283 *to spread that information, just because if you don't understand what's been saying*
284 *you can have the photos or pictures and you can understand it'.* P21, Pakistan

285 Some women discussed how they had used mobile applications in pregnancy for general
286 advice. They suggested the idea of the key messages about stillbirth prevention being
287 provided on a mobile application downloaded onto a woman's smartphone:

288 *'Yeah, actually I got some information from an app.'* FG2

289 However, two women identified that they did not have regular access to the internet through
290 a smartphone during their pregnancies, and it was felt that some women would need
291 instruction on how to use an app:

292 *'Some people they don't know how to use, not everybody'* FG2

293 Some women thought text messages could be used as a reminder about the message.

294 However, other women thought that this may not be good for some women:

295 *'...some women maybe they will not care about the message you know, because it's a*
296 *message sometimes they delete it...'* P29, Sudan

297 Social media was suggested by some women as a place to gain information about stillbirth,
298 although other women discussed how accessing social media in relation to pregnancy could
299 be frightening:

300 *'...so I've been through many reviews, people they say, they speak about the experience*
301 *and they said, look, I'm about to give birth and the baby is dead, so it was very bad,*
302 *things to read, you know... so it's a bit scary...Fg2*

303 A number of women discussed how they found it helpful to receive information about
304 pregnancy in a group setting with peers and that this could be effective in communicating
305 key messages about stillbirth prevention:

306 *'there is a class I used to go to...where...pregnant women...came together and they*
307 *taught us ...when the baby comes how you carry them or what you have to do...like*
308 *even how you sleep, how you do all that. So those classes I think really helped*
309 *because...we were all involved...people from, or maybe from other countries who don't*
310 *understand English very well, so as long as someone is standing there and practising it*
311 *or showing them what to do, they kind of get the idea...'* P27, Uganda

312 However, it was acknowledged that not all women had the opportunity to attend such
313 groups.

314 Some women felt that information could be provided in an existing community group setting,
315 with different agendas designed for women. Ideas included women's groups in mosques but
316 also other opportunities:

317 *'Like we have ESOL classes and there's speakers coming in, so there can be a talk about*
318 *stillbirth.'* FG1

319 It was felt that existing relationships between women in community groups would be
320 beneficial when receiving advice about stillbirth prevention:

321 *'I like to know people, to meet people and have a good relationship with them.*
322 *Especially those, they will be, you know, like me, preparing for pregnancy.'* P20, Yemen

323 Women who were living in large accommodation centres for new arrivals felt that these
324 provided an opportunity to target a group of women to discuss stillbirth prevention:

325 *'refugees and asylum seekers you could find them in the homes where they firstly*
326 *come...and they keep them there for 3/4 weeks'* P20, Yemen

327 **Discussion**

328 This study found that, in general, there was limited awareness of stillbirth and the potentially
329 modifiable factors that might be associated with it amongst women from culturally and
330 linguistically diverse communities in the UK. Our findings have provided an insight into the
331 variety of ways in which women receive information about keeping their babies safe in
332 pregnancy and the mixed (and sometimes inaccurate) messages that they receive, even from
333 health professionals themselves. We found that women have individual preferences for how
334 stillbirth reduction messages would be best communicated including written information, use
335 of the internet, social media and learning in group contexts. However, women believed that
336 the health professional, in particular the midwife, is key in communicating these messages
337 which other media can support. Our study highlights the importance of both the way in which
338 resources to communicate key messages are developed and how and when they are
339 communicated. In particular, the provision of a range of resources developed and shared
340 within communities and supported by trusted health professionals.

341 Although there has been a considerable increase in focus on stillbirth prevention during the
342 past decade, both nationally and internationally, there remains a low level of public
343 awareness of stillbirth and the associated risk factors (13) and a continued stigmatisation of
344 the condition . (14) (15),. Our findings reflect this lack of awareness and stigma in the fact that
345 in some parts of the world there is no specific word for stillbirth. Our findings suggest that
346 despite some BAME women having heard simple descriptions describing the physical
347 outcome (“death of baby in stomach”) they did not consider this to be indicative of a health
348 issue or have a term to describe the specific mortality. A lack of acknowledgment that
349 pregnancy complications exist is a real barrier to accepting public health messages to improve

350 outcomes (16, 17). Bringing stillbirth out of the shadow of stigma and taboo is an important
351 first step towards effectively communicating key messages to prevent stillbirth.

352 In order for women to alter their behaviour in response to public health messages, these
353 messages need to be accessible and acceptable and they need be communicated effectively.
354 As our study shows, who and how information is developed and shared is significant. One of
355 the aims of our study was to understand how key messages could be more effectively
356 communicated to BAME women and we found that women preferred a range of resources
357 available in different formats. It was clear that there was no 'one size fits all' and that a multi-
358 pronged approach may be most effective.

359 Some women suggested that the involvement of community groups and existing support
360 networks would support effective dissemination of key messages. This supports previous
361 studies where utilising existing community groups to initiate discussion and share information
362 was an effective way of sharing key public health within culturally and linguistically diverse
363 communities, (18, 19). In addition to engaging community groups, the importance of receiving
364 consistent health messages from a trusted health professional was also identified in our
365 study. Continuity of care, which can support and facilitate a trusting and respectful
366 relationship, has been shown to have a positive impact on perinatal outcomes (20, 21).

367 A number of participants identified the need for visual as well as written materials and that
368 many women utilise social media and online technology to access information. Mackintosh
369 and others (2020), in their study of over 630 postnatal women in London, found that women
370 used a range of online resources and apps to access advice and 'self-diagnose' potential
371 complications in pregnancy (22). However other research has found that current tools are not
372 necessarily reliable, there are for instance a number of online apps for reduced movements

373 which do not provide evidence based advice (23). In previous work we have found that co-
374 produced digital animation is acceptable and accessible way of communicating evidence
375 based information in the perinatal period (24). Many women in this study thought the use of
376 short videos, viewed through their phone would be effective in backing up the key messages
377 around stillbirth prevention communicated by the midwife.

378 Our findings reveal the complexity of health professionals discussing stillbirth prevention with
379 women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds within the antenatal period and
380 the importance of approaching the subject in a sensitive manner. However, as Warland and
381 Glover (2015) argue, in order to successfully communicate these key messages, it is essential
382 that health professionals have the resources and training to feel comfortable to talk to
383 women from BAME backgrounds and their families about stillbirth and how to keep their
384 babies safe (25). Focussed workshops to support maternity care providers to have these
385 discussions have been shown to improve their knowledge and their intention to discuss
386 stillbirth with women in their care in the future (26). In this context, such workshops would
387 need an emphasis on developing cultural competence and addressing potential language
388 barriers to ensure that the key messages are acceptable and accessible for BAME women. It
389 is also worth noting that the women in this study originated from 18 different countries with
390 heterogenous backgrounds and therefore when communicating key messages with BAME
391 women, this heterogeneity must be recognised. What is considered acceptable and accessible
392 for one BAME woman, may not be for another.

393 **Strengths and Limitations**

394 A key strength of this study was the engagement of women from a wide range of cultural
395 backgrounds who had received maternity care from a range of Trusts. This helps to provide

396 some insights into the variety and range of awareness and perceptions of stillbirth and
397 associated public health messages. Despite this, our findings cannot be generalised to all
398 women from BAME communities. Data collection was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
399 and the planned focus groups were changed to individual interviews. We therefore lost the
400 opportunity to exploit the advantages of focus groups in exploring perceptions of culturally
401 and linguistically diverse groups (27) and utilising group dynamics to gain more depth to
402 discussions (28). However, the required change to individual interviews may have allowed
403 women who may have not spoken out in a focus group to explore their perceptions of
404 stillbirth.

405 **Conclusion**

406 Our study found that there is still a low awareness of stillbirth and associated modifiable risk
407 factors amongst women from BAME communities in the UK and that stillbirth as a term did
408 not routinely exist in BAME women's narrative of perinatal health. This introduces an
409 additional complexity for health professionals discussing stillbirth prevention with women
410 from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the antenatal period and highlights
411 the importance of approaching the subject in a sensitive manner. In order to address the
412 persistent inequalities in stillbirth rates, it will be important to engage local communities and
413 develop a range of co-produced, accessible resources to deliver effective public health
414 messages. Messages need to be accessible and acceptable and they need be communicated
415 effectively. As our study shows, who and how information is developed and shared is
416 significant. Health professionals, in particular midwives who have developed a trusting
417 relationship with the women will be key to ensuring the acceptability and accessibility of
418 these messages.

419 **Declarations**

420 Ethics approval and consent to participate

- 421 • Ethical approval was obtained by University of Huddersfield ethics committee
422 SREIC/2019/132. All participants gave (recorded) consent to take part. All methods were
423 performed in accordance with the relevant guidelines and regulations

424 Consent for publication

425 Not applicable

426 Availability of data and materials

427 The dataset generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available as
428 they may contain information that could be confidential, but are available from the corresponding
429 author on reasonable request.

430 Competing interests

431 The authors declare that they have no competing interests

432 Funding

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434 Authors' contributions

- 435 • TS had overall responsibility of the study and secured funding. TS, MC and CK conceived of
436 the idea, NA and MC collected the data. TS and MC undertook the analysis with input from
437 NA. All authors were responsible for the drafting of the manuscript. All authors reviewed
438 and gave approval for the final version of the manuscript.

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