

Perinatal mortality rates during the Corby steelworks “clean-up”

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This report is about two conflicting sets of ONS data for perinatal mortality rates in Corby, before, during and after the steelworks clean-up. The unknown reason(s) behind differences in the set released in December 2025 are of particular interest.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) data show a spike in Corby’s infant mortality rate during the steelworks clean-up, which I wrote about in my November 2017 submission to the EFRA Committee:

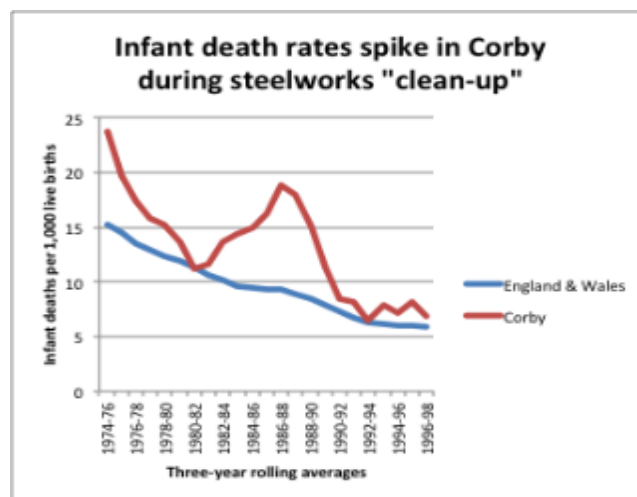
The collection of birth defect data from January 1964 (following the Thalidomide scandal) should have allowed swift identification of sources of environmental pollution that could be linked to babies born with defects. This hasn’t occurred as the long legal fight by Solicitor Des Collins showed following the clustering of birth defects during the Corby steelworks clean-up. The following article shows that causal factors of birth defects were hoped to be identified and also that birth defects were known to be “a problem which involves a high infant mortality rate and is responsible for much ill health, disability, and parental distress”:

“SCHEME TO NOTIFY MALFORMATIONS

General Practitioners have received from the chief medical officer of the Ministry of Health a letter informing them of a scheme, which came into force on January 1, for the notification of congenital abnormalities. The Scheme is voluntary but the chief medical officer expresses the hope that it will be supported by all doctors as a means of providing early information of causal factors of congenital malformation. He reminds practitioners that “following the thalidomide tragedy it was generally felt that there should be a national notification of congenital abnormalities so that any increase in these conditions might be noted as early as possible”. The scheme will be widely welcomed as a valuable means of helping to cope with a problem which involves a high infant mortality rate and is responsible for much ill health, disability, and parental distress.”

(The Times, 6 January 1964)

After Daniel Kawczynski kindly obtained the infant mortality rates in all councils in England & Wales from 1974, I was certain that there’d be a spike in Corby’s infant mortality rate that correlated with the steelworks clean-up and was able to produce the following graph, the data for which must have been known to those Public Health officials defending Des Collins’ action for justice:



<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/83436/html/>

The Corby infant mortality spike was reported in NN Journal (15 November 2025):

<https://www.njournal.co.uk/p/saturday-brief-baby-deaths-in-corby>

Also in Sunday Times (16 November 2025):

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/healthcare/article/is-corby-a-toxic-town-families-will-finally-find-out-the-truth-l92zpsjs>

In December 2025, ONS released the perinatal mortality rates for Corby for the years 1981 to 2010, following a FOI request:

Perinatal mortality rates, Corby, 1981 to 2010

Release date:

30 December 2025

Reference number:

3201

Summary of request

Perinatal mortality rates for babies resident in Corby. Deaths occurring in each year 1981 to 2010.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/adhocs/3201perinatalmortalityratescorby1981to2010>

The gap in the graph on page 2 is because the perinatal rate for Corby in 1991 was missing from both the set provided to Daniel Kawczynski MP and also from the set released to Kate Green MP following this question:

Infant Mortality

[Show full question](#)

Question for Cabinet Office

UIN 225973, tabled on 3 March 2015

Question

[Kate Green Labour Stretford and Urmston Commons](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) infant and (b) perinatal mortality rate was in each (i) region and (ii) local authority area in England in each year from 1985 to 2000.

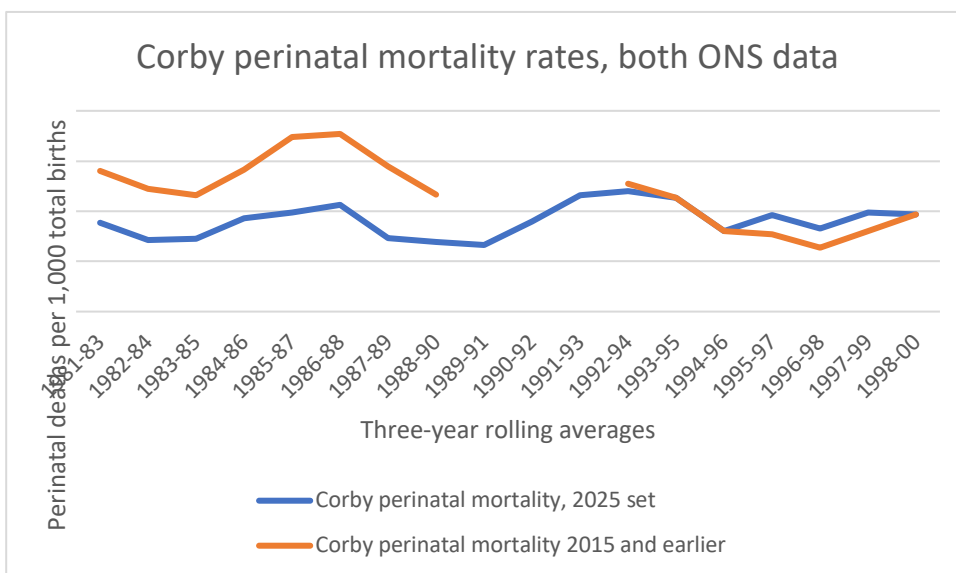
Answer

[Mr Rob Wilson Conservative Reading East Commons](#)

Answered on 9 March 2015

The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2015-03-03/225973/>



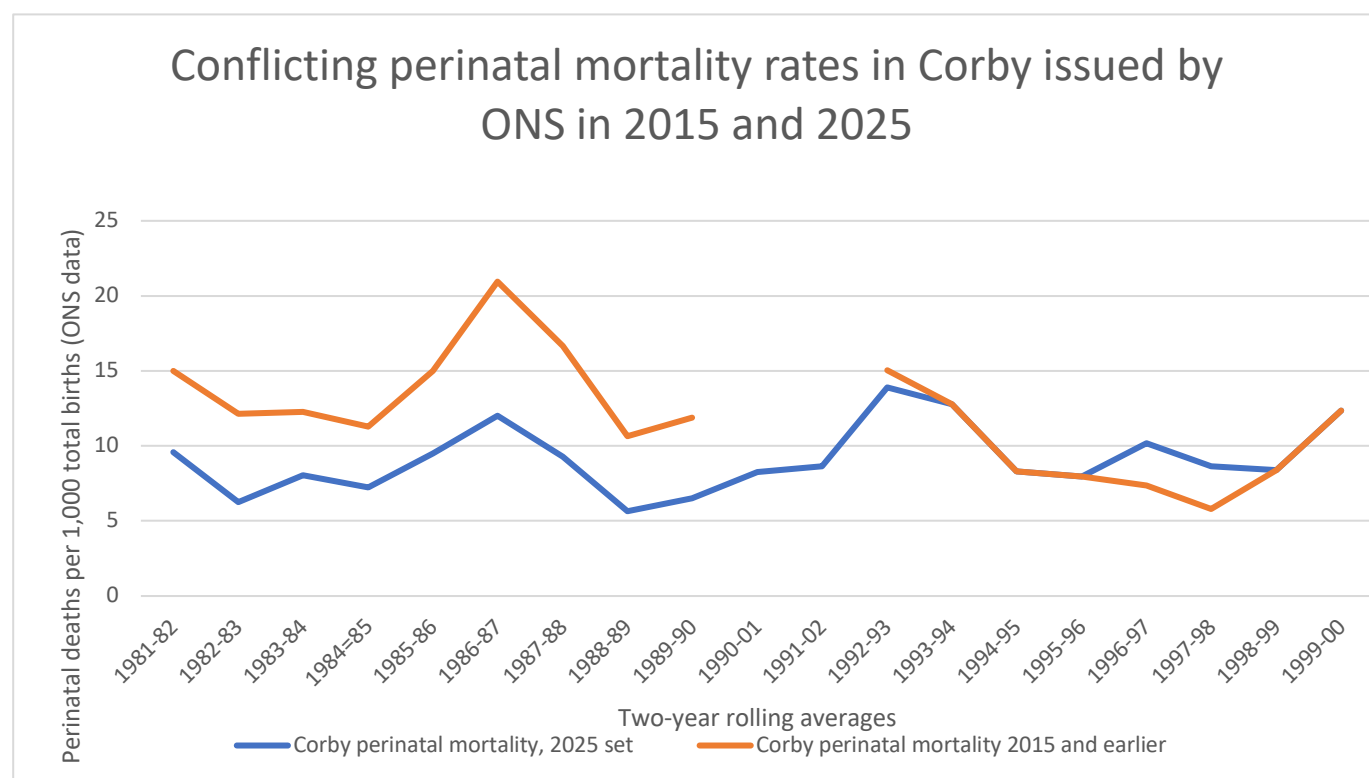
The shapes of the two graphs are very similar, with a short period of identical data.

If the “missing” 1991 perinatal mortality rate, that should have been included in the data released to Daniel Kawczynski MP and Kate Green MP, was a high figure, then the missing three years 1989-91, 1990-92 and 1991-93 must have shown an upward trend.

Here are the data for the individual years 1988-1993:

1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
11.2	10.1	13.7		12.7	17.4

The graph below has the same aggregated into two-year rolling averages and shows that there was an upward trend in the missing section.



In my opinion, it’s unlikely that the differences in the two sets of data were a series of random errors. The graph using the 2025 data shows lower rates before, during and after the first perinatal mortality spike as well as reduced values in the second spike and higher values at the end of the graph.

The differences between the two sets of data require further scrutiny and official explanation.

*****End of report*****