

Supporters' Newsletter

Welcome

From the Chair of Trustees

These have been extraordinary times when, tragically, we realise the demand for our services will be even greater. We have to be ready to respond to this need in whatever way we can and your continuing support during these difficult times is hugely appreciated.

Clearly, we have had no choice but to temporarily suspend our group sessions until we emerge from lockdown. However, the team have been very busy making plans for when life returns to some form of normality. This work is essential so that we are fully prepared to meet the increased demand we know will exist in the months to come.

Stand-by-me remains there to provide vital support for young people and their families who are dealing with the tragic loss of a loved one.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation on behalf of the Trustees for the magnificent dedication and commitment of our team who have continued working in circumstances none of us could have anticipated.

Ian Cotterill
Chair of Trustees

Looking forward with hope

By Sandra Blacker—Clinical lead Trustee



What will we remember of 2020? New words came into our vocabulary: lockdown, social distancing, new ways of living, staying home. All shops closed except for food and medical requirements, shortages of essential items, home schooling for the majority of our children and young people, home working for the majority of our workforce and valuing different occupations for the vital role they play in caring for our nation in many different ways. Clear skies, clearer air, less noise, and lots of sunshine after a month of torrential rain. A country united on Thursday nights to honour the NHS staff and carers. What will we at Stand-by-me remember so far?

We started the year on a high having been awarded a major grant from The National Lottery. This has enabled us to expand our service to employ a Family Bereavement Support Worker to offer support to the parents/carers of the children and young people with whom we work (see page 3). This important appointment will enable us to deliver a groupwork programme for these parents/carers and will involve working to support our Contact-me programme in schools. This grant also enabled us to increase our vital administration capability.

We welcomed five new volunteers to our team of experienced volunteers and we welcomed three new Young Ambassadors. We went back to basics, back to working at home, back to our kitchen tables, telephone conversations, Zoom meetings and an opportunity to reflect on what we do and how we can make improvements.

Groupwork and training for volunteers is on hold but we regularly contact families on the waiting list and we have expanded the capacity of our helpline to ensure we can respond to families who call us. We regularly refresh our website to provide up-to-date information and are active on Facebook.

Most importantly we are ready to resume normal working as soon as we can. We are looking forward to meeting as many of you as we can at our Remember-me day which we hope we will be holding on 29th August (Government restrictions permitting) or if not, it will be rescheduled for later in the year.

Sandra

To find out more about our groups, or for help and support, email: info@stand-by-me.org.uk or call to speak to a member of the team on 07469 255163

With thanks to all our supporters including:



SBM—Helping families weather the storm

By Karen Stanton—Clinical Service Manager

As Summer 2019 came to an end, we were rewarded with a beautiful sunny day to enjoy our annual Remember-me event. In September, our first therapeutic groupwork programme following the summer holidays was underway, as was a full diary of events planned for the forthcoming year, including a promotional video that our Young Ambassadors were filming as part of a project for Hitchin Youth Trust. The newest cohort of volunteers were well embedded as part of our team bringing a wealth of added skillsets and enthusiasm. Following another successful recruitment campaign, we now had another five volunteers waiting for their training to begin.

Sandra and I had met with our local MP, Bim Afolami, to inform him of all the wonderful work our young Ambassadors were carrying out, and to express their interest in visiting Parliament to discuss matters of interest around childhood bereavement.

In November, BBC Children in Need's Rickshaw challenge passed through Hitchin - giving us the chance to support them as a thank-you for very generously funding our group-

work programme.

As part of Hertfordshire Children's Bereavement Network, Stand-by-me was involved in the delivery of an educational day. Owen, one of our long-standing Young Ambassadors, gave an inspirational talk to over 100 professionals about his own grief experience, with many commending him on his public-speaking skills.

December saw us return to Garden House Hospice Care in Letchworth to help at their very beautiful Lights of Life Service. Sandra and I also met with many wonderful people whilst volunteering at the Holy Saviour Christmas Tree Festival, where our Young Ambassadors had entered a tree. It was a fantastic spectacle and the ideas and level of entries blew us away!

The new year started as any other, with our dedicated helpline and Contact-me project busy, and groups at full capacity. We had the added excitement of our oldest Young Ambassador, Jack (19), winning North Herts District Council's Young Stars Volunteer award (see page 5), and Stand-by-me being presented with a High Sheriff's Award in

recognition of our contribution to the community (see page 3). We had a lot to be happy about.

Then the news came. Covid-19 had reached our nation and we were in lockdown. A bereaved family faces many challenges. This would intensify their challenges and those families would have to find a new way of grieving now that we were facing social isolation.

Unfortunately, we have had to postpone our groups but continue to keep our helpline open and have expanded this area of support.

However, when speaking to those families waiting to join our groups I have been really heartened by the stories of unity during these difficult times.

Someone once said that adversity builds character, but others would say adversity reveals character. They accept that the wind has blown them off course but rather than getting lost at sea they are adjusting their sails and are re-navigating through uncharted waters.

Keep safe.

Karen



YAs in the news



Daisy, James, Mia & Jack speaking to a *Comet* reporter (Pic: Jacob Savill)

Four of our fantastic Young Ambassadors were featured in the *Comet* in February as part of Children's Mental Health Week. They spoke to the *Comet* reporter about their experiences of grief and how working with Stand-by-me as Young Ambassadors allows them to help other bereaved young people.

High Sheriff award



Stand-by-me was honoured to receive an award from The 2019 High Sherriff of Hertfordshire, Sarah Beazley, at the 25th annual High Sheriff Awards.

The award was collected by SBM Service Manager, Karen Stanton, Volunteer, Sue Sunderland and Fundraising Trustee, Shirley Avery, and was given in recognition of the outstanding support we give to families in our community.

We are so proud of our team, and this award is a lovely recognition of all the hard work put in by our volunteers, Trustees, staff and Young Ambassadors.

Lisa Lowe: A warm welcome to the SBM family

I'm delighted to be joining Stand-by-me in the role of Family Bereavement Support Worker.



Having volunteered with the charity for six years I have seen first hand the positive impact on the children and young people who attend the Stand-by-me group programme. I am constantly inspired by their courage and resilience in such difficult circumstances.

My role will be to extend support to parents and carers and to work with schools, helping them to support bereaved students.

We know through research and feedback from young people that this support is vital in improving the wellbeing and resilience of the family.

I am passionate about supporting families and equipping them with the knowledge and strategies needed to manage their grief and continue their lives.

Lisa

Ian Cotterill, Chair of Trustees said: "I am absolutely delighted to welcome Lisa to the team as our Family Bereavement Support Worker.

Lisa has been a volunteer with Stand-by-me and has also been the volunteer representative attending Trustee meetings. She brings a wealth of experience to this new role which will be critical in the months to come."



Fundraising update: Good News!

By Shirley Avery—Fundraising Trustee

Three may be The National Lottery Community Fund's magic number BUT ours is SIX



"Why six?" I hear you ask.

Well, six because — hooray, hooray — we can add a sixth service to what we do at Stand-by-me using the grant we recently received from The National Lottery.

We say a huge thank you to all of you who buy lottery tickets because it's your money which enables The National Lottery to support local organisations like Stand-by-me.

We are really excited about adding this sixth service as it helps us achieve what our bereaved children/young people have been asking us for and telling us "is desperately needed" For a while they have been saying "sort out my Mum and I'll be fine".



We listened and are delighted to welcome Lisa Lowe in the role of Family Bereavement Support Worker, as the newest member of our team. Lisa joined us on 1st May and she will set up a Parents' Support group for the parent/carer of the children/young people we work with. Subject to Covid-19, we hope to start the Parents' Support Group in September and will be sending out more details nearer the time.

Lisa will also become part of our Contact-me

team (our schools' programme) in supporting bereaved children/young people in school and helping their parent/carer where necessary.

If you would like to contact Lisa you can email her at: Lisa@stand-by-me.org.uk

The National Lottery grant is in place for three years and everyone here at SBM is hugely proud that our work has been recognised by them. We will use their money wisely.

Other fundraising news

Mindful that after this pandemic donations and grant funding will be harder to come by, we are in the process of setting up our "Friends/Supporters of SBM" project. We have lots of work to do to get it off the ground.

We are hoping that friends and supporters of the charity will sign up to give a regular donation so that we can continue our work - more details to follow.

All good wishes and stay safe.

Shirley

Shirley Avery, Fundraising Trustee

**For fundraising enquiries
contact:**

fundraising@stand-by-me.org.uk

Stand-by-me: A charity to be proud of

Beccy Savill reflects on her experience as a Stand-by-me volunteer

I have volunteered with Stand-by-me as a bereavement supporter since September 2017.

I am a qualified counsellor and psychotherapist with experience in mental health and wellbeing, including working with children and schools.

Stand-by-me offers its volunteers a high-quality interview and training process. The attention to detail stood out to me and translated as: Stand-by-me and its staff are incredibly passionate about the services and the support provided to bereaved children and their families.

I remember thinking, 'This is a charity I will feel proud to be a part of as a volunteer'.

From my personal experience of bereavement, it was painful, confusing and I felt a powerful sense of being 'lost.' There is the description of 'being overcome with grief', which I would describe as being intensely taken over in a state of confusion and unable to process what has taken place.

Here, I recognise there is no guidebook for how you may respond to the death of a loved-one and there is no set timescale to grief. 'Grief' is

our own 'individual' process.

I considered the thought, 'If this were my experience how might this feel for a young person?'

Stand-by-me facilitates valuable support to children and young people to help navigate their own individual experiences of bereavement. The groups provide a safe environment for children to explore their feelings and emotions, ask any questions they may have and to talk about their special person who has died. This support helps to develop new ways of coping with their 'grief.'

Stand-by-me's organisation of supporters and volunteers are essential to continue to help make a life-changing difference to the children, young people and families of our community.

I would personally like say 'thank you' to Stand-by-me for being such an inspiring charity to be involved with and the team of staff and volunteers who I share a positive experience working alongside.

Rebecca Savill, Dip.Couns MBACP





An absolute star!




We are delighted and very proud that our longest-serving Young Ambassador, Jack (top left), was awarded the Young Star Award at North Herts District Council's Volunteer Achievement Awards in March, in recognition of his voluntary work and dedication to Stand-by-me.


How to get in touch

 07469 255163 — helpline

 Info@stand-by-me.org.uk

 www.stand-by-me.org.uk

 @SBM_North_Herts

 @standbymeberavementsupport

Thank you!

We are so grateful to all the friends of Stand-by-me for their generous support. Because of you we are able to help even more bereaved children, young people and their families in North Herts and Stevenage look forward to a more positive future.

**Angel
Wings**

**Hillshott Infant
& Nursery
School**

**Stephen
Rabel—
AKO Give
Back**

**The Rotary
Clubs of
Hitchin &
Royston**

**HRJ
Foreman
Laws**

**We would particularly
like to thank:**

**Hitchin
Youth
Trust**

**Monica &
Harry Jordan**

**Simon
Gibson
Trust**

**N.Herts
Crematorium**

**The Rotary
Club of Hitchin
Tilehouse**

**Digital
Pennies**

Can we help?

If you or a family you know would like help or support from Stand-by-me you can:

- Visit our website at: www.stand-by-me.org.uk
- Email info@stand-by-me.org.uk

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer supporter please email info@stand-by-me.org.uk for further information.