



ANNUAL REVIEW AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2024-25

Background

We were established in 2020 to support bereaved families by maintaining the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden, arranging support events, creating other baby memorial areas, and raising awareness of baby loss. This includes babies who die through miscarriage, stillbirth, perinatal death or as infants. We are there for all families, no matter how or when was their loss.

Being a small, local community charity with no staff, nor regular income allows us total control over what we do and how we spend our money. We continue to work alongside other organisations, signposting people to their services and to their support where appropriate.

Volunteers

Our charity is run, and all our activities are delivered, by a very small team of volunteers, nearly all bereaved parents themselves, who between them give an enormous amount of time and energy. We were pleased to welcome Laura as a new Trustee, giving us eight trustees in total, each with their own specific skills and experience, and as a result were able to redistribute some of the key areas of responsibility within the volunteer team. A big thank you to them and to everyone who has supported us during the year, in any way.

Ashford Baby Memorial Garden

The Baby Memorial Garden continues to thrive and to serve as a lovely place for families to remember their babies, with over 450 baby names recorded forever, and more being added each quarter. Thanks to Aspire, Ashford Council's internal grounds team for maintaining the garden for us, on a repayment basis. At the Garden we also hold held our annual Teddy Bear's Picnic.

Faversham, Canterbury, Sittingbourne and other areas

Our remit covers the whole of East Kent from Sheerness to Thanet and down to Romney Marsh. We have always been conscious that Ashford is a fair distance from some parts of East Kent and have plans to create small 'satellite' areas in existing parks and gardens where we can install nameboards more locally. We had previously set up memorial areas in Faversham and Canterbury, and during 2024 we were able to create a third memorial area, in King George V Park in Sittingbourne. All together, we now have more than 500 baby names recorded in the various areas and we have just started discussions with organisations in Thanet about the possibility of creating a small area in a lovely park in Ramsgate.

Fundraising Events and Activities

A major part of our work continues to be around raising awareness of baby loss and encouraging people to talk - giving people the opportunity to talk about their losses can be so cathartic. This year we again attended a large number of awareness and network events often using our Smiley Face tombolas as a way of engaging with people. These and other network events and presentations are very important and have led to a significant number of events and activities. We also received very positive feedback on a training day we arranged for student midwives, and another training day we funded which was open to all East Kent Trust's staff midwifery and other staff. We have reached out to other baby loss organisations with mixed success.

Finances

We started the year with £12,571 in our accounts and ended the year with £8,604, an operating loss of approximately £4k. This can be explained mainly through two large items of expenditure, £1,831 for the replacement of the two benches in the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden which had started to rot after eleven years of service, and £2,228 to purchase in advance a number of nametile boards and posts for use in the future. We also spent £650 on a student midwives training day.

The other big item of expenditure was the £2,188 regular annual cost of storage, mainly the cost of two garages rented from the Ashford Council which used almost half our fundraised income (46%). This really is a major challenge for our small charity and our limited fundraising abilities, particularly as the garage rents will rise again from April 2025.

The bulk of our income once again was from our community fundraising, including tombolas and quiz nights and other events, along with some very welcome donations. A big thank you everyone who helped raised money for us in any way. Looking ahead, we are hoping to diversify our fundraising, so we become less dependent on particular activities, and specific volunteers.

Financial Reserves

Previously we had reserves to cover our main activities for twelve months and to cover the cost of returning the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden back to its original condition, should the Council decide to terminate the licence for that area. Given the pressure on our funds, not helped by the Council's own position on rent for the two garages, we have taken a pragmatic view that in reality it is extremely unlikely the Council would terminate the licence and require us to return the area to its original (very poor) state. On that basis, we have decided that as that aspect was a low risk, we need not retain an amount in our reserves for that specific purpose and this has allowed us to reduce our financial reserves to £5,000, a more manageable figure.

The Future

The coming year looks exciting, with, we hope, the creation of a fourth satellite area, probably in Thanet. Our volunteers will continue to look for opportunities to raise awareness of baby loss, and to give families opportunities to have somewhere special to remember their precious babies, and to talk about their losses. We are updating our Development Plan for the coming five years and are also consulting families on some of the events we have arranged, including the family picnic and the Wave of Light.

EAST KENT BABY MEMORIAL GARDENS GROUP FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2024-2025

Opening Bank Balance at 1 April 2024		£12,571.36	
Income		Expenditure	
Name Tiles (all areas)	£2,697.00	Nametiles (all areas)	£3,386.16
Fundraising (tombolas)	£3,194.10	Ashford Garden	£3,224.00
Fundraising (other)	£1,554.73	Faversham Area	£0.00
Event Donations	£649.45	Canterbury Area	£7.00
Other Donations	£1,179.80	Sittingbourne Area	£86.37
Grants	£0.00	Awareness	£371.90
Bank Interest	£306.49	Fundraising prizes/stalls	£1,463.15
Other	£545.14	BLAW	£66.45
		Family Events	£37.00
		Storage	£2,187.55
		Insurance	£298.96
		Printing etc	£88.81
		Travel	£1,311.22
		Other Core Costs	£833.97
		Other	£781.46
Total Income	£10,126.71	Total expenditure	£14,144.00
Closing bank balance at 31 March 2025	£8,554.07		
Cash held (fundraising float)	£50.00		

Total at 31 March 2025

£8,604.07