

Update Summer 2024

Welcome to our latest newsletter with updates on what we have been doing and some of our plans for the coming months. We have been an independent charity since August 2020 after separating from Sands as we wanted more freedom to support all bereaved families, no matter how or when their loss, and we are delighted at the way we have been able to develop our small charity. We are grateful to everyone who continues to support us, in any way. We hope you find this update of interest, but do, please, ask if you have any questions or suggestions.



Ashford Baby Memorial Garden

Volunteers created the garden in 2013 after raising £30,000 and opened the garden under the umbrella of the Sands charity. Those volunteers went on to create our new charity in 2020 and we are delighted that many of the original team are still involved, along with some welcome new faces!

The Ashford Baby Memorial Garden remains the only one of its kind in the UK, in a town centre, open to everyone and completely accessible. We now

have over 400 nametiles in the Ashford Garden for babies from the 1940's to the current year. The Garden continues to flourish and we are grateful to Aspire who maintain it for us (on a repayment basis), and to everyone who visits and helps remove litter etc. as well. Please see the next page for details of our other memorial areas.

NHS Support

In addition to our direct activities, we try to support the NHS where we can and recently funded a full day's bereavement training for the NHS Trust, described as *'an amazing day and some of the best training the team had ever received'*.

Our donation provided training for 30 people including midwives, nurses, support workers, and specialists and all of those who attended have signed up to be *'bereavement champions'* which, we are told, will mean that women and families will have access to a specialist bereavement champion 24/7. The Trust's early pregnancy unit team also attended the training meaning that women and families who have a miscarriage will have access to specialist care and will be supported to make memories.



We have also offered to support another day's training for student midwives, offering to meet the full costs of such a day – we arranged a similar event a while ago and that was very warmly received. And we are pleased to report that the late miscarriage cemetery at Canterbury Hospital remains well maintained following our charity's interventions a while ago.



Ashford Community Lottery

Just a reminder that you can support us, while also standing a chance of winning some great prizes, through the Ashford Community Lottery. The draw takes place at 8pm on Saturdays and for each £1 ticket, we receive 65p with the rest going towards prizes, VAT and running costs. If you would like to support us this way, just go to <https://www.ashfordcommunitylottery.co.uk/> Thanks.

Always Loved, Never Forgotten

Don't forget, on our website we have listed the names of each of our special babies and we are now able to add a limited amount of wording from families, in addition to the name and date we have already. Details on the website. <https://www.eastkentbabymemorialgardens.org.uk/our-special-babies>

NAMETILES – A WHOLE PAGE OF GREAT NEWS!

Having opened the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden in 2013, we have always wanted to make nametiles available in more areas, with the ambition of having small, local, sites right across the whole of East Kent. We are a very small charity with very limited resources, and inevitably, this plan will take time. We have set ourselves a sensible target of creating one area each year and after Canterbury came on board in 2023, we hope Sittingbourne will be our new area for 2024! Details below!



Canterbury

The new baby memorial area alongside the river in Canterbury's Westgate Park opened in mid-2023 and we now have around 30 baby names recorded there. The area has recently been planted up with geraniums and looks really lovely. Thanks to Canterbury City Council for its support and to our volunteers for keeping an eye on the area.

Faversham

We also have a nametile board in the garden at the West Faversham Community Centre in Bysing Wood Road (opposite Sainsbury's). We are grateful to the Community Centre for supporting this important initiative, giving local bereaved families somewhere local to remember their special babies.



Sittingbourne

We are hoping we may be able to create a small baby memorial area in Sittingbourne in the King George V Park, possibly in the area near the café (see photo). We have had some really great support from the Council, and local councillors, and are hoping to finalise the details over the coming weeks, with the aim of getting the area set up by the summer of 2024. Watch this space!

Ordering Nametiles

We offer nametiles in our Ashford, Faversham or Canterbury areas (and hopefully, soon in Sittingbourne!) at a one-off cost of £40, a price we have maintained since 2013! These tiles have one line for the baby's name and a second for a date. On each line we are limited to 21 characters (including spaces) and families can choose 'Baby Surname', or 'The Surname Babies', instead of a full name, or may choose to have just a month or a year instead of a full date.

We ask everyone to order nametiles via our website using the following link <https://www.eastkentbabymemorialgardens.org.uk/order> This system also allows payment to be made electronically and we are then alerted to any new orders and payments received. We have always said that if money really is an issue, we may be able to help out and that remains the case.

Orders are sent off soon after the 15th of February, May August and November and usually take up to a month after that to be put up on the boards by our volunteers. Families can, of course, choose to have nametiles in more than one area.



Calendar for 2024

We have already taken part in quite a few events this year and we have another busy few months ahead of us with our Teddy Bears Picnic and lots more Smiley Face Tombola fundraisers, including:

- 4 Jun Sittingbourne Volunteers Event
- 8 Jun Custard Pie Championships, Coxheath
- 23 Jun Gravesend Regatta
- 29 Jun Kennington Fair, Ashford
- 30 Jun Folkestone Armed Forces Day
- 6 July Eccles Family Fun Day
- 14 Jul Great Chart Big Lunch
- 27 July New Romney Country Fair?
- 10 Aug Folkestone Lions Fun Day
- 17 Aug Herne Bay Baytastic
- 24/25 Aug Festival in the Park, Ashford
- 14 Sep Challock Summer Fair
- 21 Sep Dover Urban Fair
- 28 Sep? Ashford County Square Tombola
- 28 Sep? Ashford Baby Loss Awareness Week stall
- 9-15 Oct Baby Loss Awareness Week
- 15 Oct Wave of Light, Ashford



Our Smiley Face Tombolas remain our main fundraising tool, raising around £5k each year. Do come and say hello at any of our events! If you would like to help or know of other events we could attend, please get in touch. More details at <https://www.eastkentbabymemorialgardens.org.uk/fundraising-and-awareness>

Volunteers



Our volunteers, at the recent Kent Charity Awards

A big thank you to all our volunteers who give up so much time and energy supporting our small charity. We are a very small charity with no staff and rely entirely on a team of volunteers. While the maintenance of the Ashford Garden is covered by our contract with Aspire, we really would love to have a few more people involved in helping us plan events, arrange fundraising and so on.

It would be particularly helpful to have a few people who have had more recent losses, so that we can make sure what we do is relevant to everyone. Maybe you would like to help us with some of our fundraising and awareness events, or simply by putting leaflets in local cafes and community buildings? We always offer travel expenses as well as meeting any other costs involved in volunteering with us. **If you would like to find out a little more, please contact Emma or Chris for an informal chat.**

Wave of Light

We are planning a Wave of Light on Tuesday 15 October during Baby Loss Awareness Week at Victoria Park, Ashford, in conjunction with Harper's Café and Willow and Green Funerals. This new location gives us access to electricity, shelter, some seating, car parking, toilets and everything else we need! Further details nearer the time (on Facebook and our website).



Our Independent Charity

Just a reminder that since 2020 we have been a separate charity and are no longer part of Sands. We are completely independent, although we support and publicise Sands as well as other baby loss charities such as the Miscarriage Association and many others. The Ashford Baby Memorial Gardens, and all our activities, are now run and organised entirely by local volunteers for all babies who have been taken from us, no matter what the circumstances, nor how recent or how long ago. This includes miscarriages, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and toddlers. It is important that if you want money to come to us, you specify the East Kent Baby Memorial Gardens Charity (or the Ashford Baby Memorial Gardens charity). Our charity registration number is 1180090. Thanks!



Gift Aid

We are now registered for GiftAid meaning we can claim from the Taxman an additional 25% of any donations made to us. A pretty good bonus! We can only do this where the donor has paid tax and there is a very simple form to complete, which we can send by email. So whether it is £20, or £100, do, please ask for a form. Thank you.

Storage

As a very busy charity we have a lot of equipment, including a large trailer, lots of tombola prizes, Wave of Light equipment and so on. We rent two garages from Ashford Council at a cost of £1,700 a year – a really big amount for our small charity which equates to around five full days’ fundraising! We have asked the Council to give us a reduced rate but that has fallen on deaf ears, despite a new policy suggesting that was an option. If anyone has any storage that might be suitable, please, let us know - we are not asking for a freebie, just something at a reasonable rate.



Exciting Plans for the Next Five Years

We have developed our plans for the coming five years, concentrating on the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden, other memorial areas, raising awareness, supporting families, supporting our volunteers and being financially secure. If anyone would like to see the document, it is available on our website. Our annual review for 2023-4 is also available on our website. This summarises what we have done, and our finances, for the last financial year.



Our Tombolas

We undertake an enormous number of Smiley Face Tombolas and get through many hundreds of prizes each year. In the past we were able to buy lots of prizes fairly cheaply from Wilko’s and other shops, but these bargains are getting harder to find! If you know anywhere selling off suitable items, or if you have new items that would be suitable for prizes, do, please think of us.

As part of our planning, we are keen to find other fundraising opportunities, so if you have any ideas please get in touch.

Our Web Site

We hope you have been able to visit our web site. We will continue to use this, as well as our Facebook page to keep everyone up to date. While we print this newsletter just occasionally, we do send out bi-monthly short updates to anyone with an interest. If you would like to receive these, please contact us via our website, or by email.

Thanks, to Tesco and Sainsbury’s!

Thank you to our friends at Tesco in Ashford’s Park Farm who presented us with a cheque for £800 recently, the proceeds from their second-hand book sales in the store. And thank you too to Sainsbury’s whose lovely staff alert us to ‘bargains’ when they come onto the shelf. Really appreciated and a great example of how two large supermarkets can actively engage with their communities!



Web Site



How you can contact us

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REMEMBERING OUR SPECIAL BABIES