



Update Summer 2025

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, and to focus on the memorial areas. We are delighted at the way we have been able to develop our small charity and 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

The Ashford Baby Memorial Garden is unique in the UK, being right in the town centre, bright and welcoming, open to everyone, open every day and completely accessible. We created the Garden in 2013 after local volunteers raised an amazing £30,000.

We now have nearly 450 nametiles in the Ashford Garden remembering 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.



Events and Activities

For the last ten years or more we have organised a free Teddy Bear's Picnic in July as well as a Wave of Light during Baby Loss Awareness week in October. The attendance for these events has dropped over the years so we asked everyone on our mailing list for feedback on whether these events were still wanted. Based on that, we have taken the decision not to run these events this year, and instead to concentrate our efforts on awareness and fundraising events, as well as expanding the number of satellite baby memorial areas. We hope still to have our stall in County Square during Baby Loss Awareness week, which always attracts interest.

Calendar for 2025

Already this year we have taken part in a number of community events including Headcorn School Fair, Ellington Park Fair in Ramsgate, and Ashford Town Centre raising over £1,200 for our charity. We have lots more events where we will take our Smiley Face Tombola and our bubble machine in the coming months including:

- 21 June Lydd Club Day.
- 28 Jun Kennington Fair.
- 29 Jun Ashford Armed Forces event.
- 5 Jul Freemason's event, Godmersham
- 12 Jul Dover Regatta
- 13 Jul Great Chart Big Lunch.
- 26 Jul New Romney Country Fair.
- 9 Aug Folkestone Lions Fun Day.
- 16/17 Aug Folkestone Music Festival.
- 6 Sep Custard Pie Championship, Maidstone.
- 13 Sep Challock Summer Fair.
- 20 Sep Dover Urban Fair.
- 15 November Highworth School Xmas Fair, 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.

NAMETILES – FOUR OPTIONS NOW

Since creating 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 (both financial and volunteer time!), and inevitably, this will take time, so we have set ourselves a sensible target of creating one area each year. We are pleased to report that we now have three such areas, with a total of 100 nametiles, with exciting plans for our fourth area this year.



Faversham

The Faversham nametile area was our first satellite area and is located within the garden of the West Faversham Community Centre in Bysing Road, opposite Sainsbury's. With nineteen tiles, we have plenty of space for more tiles and are grateful to the Community Centre for hosting the boards and for installing the tiles for us. Our photo shows some of the families at the opening of the area.

Canterbury

The second area is within the lovely Westgate Park in Canterbury city centre, on the wall alongside the river. This area has been open for two years and currently has tiles remembering 48 special babies. Thanks to Canterbury City Council for its support and to our volunteers for keeping an eye on the area. In this particular area, we are limited to a maximum of 70 nametiles, so at some point will need to talk again to the Council about other options.



Sittingbourne

Our newest nametile area is in Sittingbourne, in the King George V Park. We opened this area in 2024 and already have nametiles there for 33 special babies. We are grateful to Sarah and Paul who, wearing various hats, helped make the plan come true and who now keep an eye on the area, as well as putting up the tiles for us. They are also hoping to use some of their allocation as local councillors to install a bench, and possibly some extra planting, in the area.

Ordering Nametiles

We offer nametiles in our Ashford, Faversham, Canterbury and Sittingbourne areas 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 families to order through the 'Order a Nametile' tab on our website – this can be accessed by scanning the QR code to the right. This system 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, so please ask.



Orders are sent off soon after the 15th of February, May August and November and usually are put up on the boards by our volunteers within a couple of weeks. Families can, of course, choose to have nametiles in more than one area, although once the tiles are up, they cannot be moved to another area. Please click the QR code to the right or follow the link on our website to order.

Always Loved, Never Forgotten

Don't forget, on our website we have also 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. See the 'Our Special Babies' section on our website Details on the website.

NHS Support

We continue to support our colleagues in the NHS where we can and in recent times have funded a full day's bereavement training for the NHS Trust, and separate training for student midwives, something that was well attended and which received very positive feedback. The late miscarriage cemetery at Canterbury Hospital remains well maintained following our charity's interventions a while ago and we bought a simple pram for one of the hospitals for bereaved families to take their babies on that last, long walk within the Hospital. Just one small example of how a small charity such as ours really can make a difference.



Raising Awareness

We continue to raise awareness of our charity, and baby loss more generally, through our attendance at events, including a recent presentation to 100+ members of the Ashford and Wye U3A, attending Community Wellness and other public events in Margate, Ashford, Tenterden (soon), and Folkestone, and joining in a Women's Wellness event in Folkestone later in the year. And we'll be at the 'Self-Care Fayre' in Westgate Hall in Canterbury on Friday 22 August 2025. We are keen to get to as many events like this as possible, so if you know of anything suitable, please get in touch!

We are also very happy to come along to groups or organisations of any size to talk about our charity and/or baby loss more generally. It doesn't matter whether there are six or sixty people, nor the age range of the group, we can be very flexible with our presentation and can talk for anything from ten minutes to a couple of hours! We never charge for these sessions, nor do we ask for anything else, and we are available daytime, evening, weekday or weekend. Just give us a call!

Volunteers

We have no staff and depend entirely on our wonderful volunteers to run our charity and to deliver all of our events and activities. Earlier in the year we were delighted to welcome on board Laura who joins Emma, Becky, Jacalyn, Jo, Adrian, Chris and Chris as our trustees, and our key group of event volunteers, each of whom has personal experience of baby loss. They are joined by a lovely team of occasional volunteers who support our fundraising events and other activities as and when they can. Thank you to each of them. 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.



Setting the Scene for the Next Five Years

We are updating 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 will soon be available on our website. Our annual review for 2024-5 is also available on our website. This summarises what we have done, and our finances, for the last financial year.

Money, Money, Money!

We became an independent charity in 2020, run and organised entirely by local volunteers for all bereaved families, no matter what the circumstances, nor how recent or how long ago. This includes miscarriages, stillbirths, neonatal and toddler deaths. We support and publicise the activities of Sands, the Miscarriage Association as well as other baby loss charities, many of which are listed on our web site and we also try to work alongside other local charities, for example the Oliver Steeper Foundation.

With no staff, our costs are very modest and usually we have a turnover of around £12,000 a year, most of which is raised through our own fundraising activities, payments for nametiles and donations. We pay Aspire around £1,000 a year to maintain the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden and we pay Ashford Council £1,743 every year for the rental of our two garages. We have asked the Council to reduce the garage rentals but so far to no avail.



We do have financial reserves to make sure that if, for example, we suddenly had to reduce our fundraising, we could meet our key costs for a while, but these would not last forever, and we do need to try to build up our funds a bit more. We are not in a position to arrange big events and we certainly don't want to adopt the intensive fundraising campaigns of many charities, but we do welcome ad hoc donations or fundraisers to help us meet our costs. So if you have any ideas, or would like to make an ad hoc donation, please get in touch – we will always promote and publicise fundraising for our charity!

We still find people associate us with Sands, and 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!

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.



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REMEMBERING OUR SPECIAL BABIES