

## **ANNUAL REVIEW AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2022-2023**



### **Background**

Our charity was established in August 2020 following an amicable split from the Sands charity, with an updated remit 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. The basis of our work was widened from stillbirth and neonatal deaths to include all babies who die, whether through miscarriage, stillbirth, perinatal death or as infants. We are there for all families, no matter how or when was their loss. This new independence allows us to have total control over what we do and how we spend our money, so important for a small community charity. 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. During the year we lost Vicky as a trustee, but were delighted to welcome both Jacalyn and Adrian to the team. A big thank you to them and to everyone who has supported us during the year, in any way, and a special thank you to our trustees whose energy and enthusiasm makes things happen!

### **Charity of the Year**

In 2022 we were pleased to be selected as finalists in the Kent Charity of the Year awards, a welcome accolade and opportunity to raise awareness of what we do.

### **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 almost 400 baby names recorded forever, and more being added regularly. We have faced some minor vandalism, all of which has been reported to the Police, albeit without any evidence of action by them. At the Garden we held our annual Teddy Bear's Picnic which went well, with quite a few families attending. We also welcomed Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and himself a bereaved parent, who visited the Garden.

In the summer of 2022 we took a decision to replace the namestones in the area surrounding the mosaic in the paved section with stones that were brighter and easier to keep clean. This was a major and expensive project and we are grateful to Ashford Borough Council for a grant of £3,000 towards the costs.

### **Faversham, Canterbury, Sheerness and Dover**

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 already have a nameboard at Faversham and are awaiting agreement to something at Sheerness. We have recently had agreement to us installing boards within Westgate Park in Canterbury in a lovely setting alongside the river. We hope we can progress this during the coming months and will continue to look at other potential locations in other parts of East Kent.

### **Fundraising Events and Activities**

A major part of our work is around raising awareness of baby loss and encouraging people to talk about this still very taboo subject - just giving people the opportunity to talk about their losses can be so cathartic, for them and for us. We attend awareness and network events and use our Smiley Face tombolas as a way of engaging with people. During the year we undertook over twenty-five events, including sixteen whole day Smiley Face Tombolas which raised around £6,000 in total, although against this was the cost of attending events and the prizes themselves.

### **Finances**

We started the year with £4,015 in our current account and ended the year with £4,039, a satisfactory amount. Major expenditure included the replacement of some of the namestones in the Ashford Garden, for which we received a grant from Ashford Borough Council, as well as the purchase of a new large trailer for events, at a cost of £1,900 with a £1,500 grant from the Lawson Endowment Fund for Kent through the Kent Community Foundation. We received other smaller

grants from Persimmon Housing, Swale Council, and the Co-Op for which we are grateful. A big thank you too to families who raised money through wedding donations and other activities, and to the young people in Swale who raised £272 for us through the National Citizen Service project. We are grateful to every one of our supporters!

We pay Ashford Council to maintain the Baby Garden for us at a cost of around £1,999 a year, or £20 a week. We are happy to pay this as it keeps things on a business-like footing, although we do appreciate that they frequently go well beyond what they are paid for. What is less acceptable is that we have to pay Ashford Council £1,400 a year for the rent of two garages. We have asked the Council to waive these charges, so far to no avail, but we will continue on this quest.

### Financial Reserves

During the year we are able to increase our financial reserves from £7,500 to just over £9,000, with the aim of increasing this to £10,000 over time. That £10,000 represents the running costs of the charity for twelve months and is at a reasonable level. There are a number of important factors we have taken into account in setting reserves at that level. Firstly, the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden area is licenced to us for five years (to October 2025) after which the Council (at least in theory) give us just three months' notice to quit. While we cannot see that ever happening, it is a risk we have to bear in mind and we need to have some reserves to either fight any such request, to find and secure an alternative area, or to return the area to its former condition. While this seems extremely unlikely, we cannot be sure it would never happen and have to plan for that possibility. Secondly, we have core costs which includes paying Aspire for the maintenance of the Ashford Baby Memorial Garden, the costs of storage, and backroom costs such as insurance which have to be met come what may. Thirdly, as a small charity with a relatively low financial turnover, we are particularly susceptible to unexpected bills – a good example is some vandalism to the Garden in April 2022 which cost us over £300 to rectify - we have to plan for such eventualities. And finally, as a small community charity with no staff, we are entirely dependent on a small number of volunteers who undertake most of the fundraising and other income generation. Despite succession planning, the current levels of fundraising activity cannot continue forever and we have to be realistic in not necessarily being able to rely on current fundraising levels in the future. Charity law requires us to plan reserves at a realistic level and taking account of all these factors, we are satisfied the £10,000 figure is the right one.

### The Future

The coming year looks exciting, with, we hope, the creation of the Canterbury nametile boards and progress in other areas. 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.

### Financial Summary for 2022-23

Income		Expenditure		Actual
Name Tiles	£4,790	Garden Maintenance		£7,955
Fundraising	£8,189	Name Tiles		£522
Event Donations	£331	Fundraising and Awareness		£2,417
Other Donations	£4,311	Fundraising Prizes		£1,563
Grants	£3,978	Other Gardens		£855
Other	£126	Events		£455
		Storage		£1,435
		Insurance		£96
		Other Group Costs		£4,388
		Printing etc		£142
		Transfer to Reserves		£1,500
		Other		£374
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£21,725</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>£21,701</b>

Bank balance in current account at 31 March 2023 £4,039.06

Bank balance in Reserves Account at 31 March 2023 £9,031.85

Cash float held for fundraising events etc. at 31 March 2023 £50.00

**TOTAL MONEY HELD AT 31 MARCH 2023 £13,120.91**

Chris Twydell Volunteer Treasurer

May 2023