



Walsall Bereavement
Support Service

Annual 2017 - 2018 Review

Providing caring, bereavement support
for the people of Walsall since 1996



Chairs Report

“ The Trustees are confident that we will continue to have a bright future....”

This has been a challenging year for Walsall Bereavement Support Service (WBSS) due largely to the fact that funding cuts from Walsall Council and NHS Walsall as a consequence of their budget restraints, resulted in us having to close down our adult bereavement support service. However, it hasn't been all bad news as our Children, Young People and Family Bereavement Support Service *THE SWING*, is going from strength to strength thanks to WBSS receiving 3 substantial multi-year grants. These grants have provided us with a good level of financial stability that will help sustain this work until 2020. We are now in the process of developing a Community Fundraising Programme in order to strengthen our long-term financial sustainability and I am pleased to say that we are already reaping the rewards from doing so.

The Trustees are confident that WBSS will continue to have a bright future and we hope to re-open our adult bereavement service as soon as possible. Thank you to everyone who has offered their time, support and funds to ensure that we can continue to help the bereaved in Walsall.



Dr Bob Crundwell



“ Fantastic service, supportive, kind, and caring staff that are highly trained and professional. I was made to feel very welcome.”



Head of Service

" One of the most positive things that I will take from this year has to be the encouragement and support we have received from so many local people, past clients and other organisations ..."

The decision to close our adult bereavement support service was the hardest one that we have ever had to make but it was one that was necessary to ensure the survival of the organisation. Wherever possible, we have continued to help bereaved adults and have achieved this through our Family and Sibling Service and also through our support group for adults bereaved by suicide. Our aim now is to secure the funds needed to relaunch our adult bereavement support service, as we are acutely aware that its closure has left a significant gap in services in Walsall.

Despite having to restrict the number of referrals we accepted this year due to the funding cuts, we were still able to support 163 bereaved adults and 137 bereaved children and young people. This was a huge achievement and our volunteers who worked alongside our staff team, played an integral part in delivering this support. Indeed their support saved the charity over £39,000 through the in-kind value of their support.

One of the most positive things that I will take from this year has to be the encouragement and support that we have received from so many local people, past clients and other organisations who value our work and want to help. I look forward to working with them all during the next financial year and to providing the support necessary to enable bereaved people in Walsall to move forward with their lives.



Elaine Bullen



" Just a note to say how much I appreciate what you have done for me over the last few weeks. You have helped me to understand and subsequently deal with the last 25 years of grief. You have done something no one else has been able to do! "

What we achieved this year

- In total WBSS provided **1872** hours of support to **163** bereaved adults and **137** bereaved children
- **23** Volunteer Counsellors donated **852** hours of their time to support the bereaved
- **98%** of referrals to the WBSS adult service rated their support as **Excellent** or **Very Good**
- **90%** of children supported by *THE SWING* said that their counselling had helped them to manage their feelings and emotions
- **100%** of parents said that they would recommend our services to others
- **100%** of parents described *THE SWING* project as **Excellent**



" Since working with you my life has changed so much and now I can look forward to my future without feeling hurt, guilt, and anger about my mom. From the bottom of my heart I am truly grateful."

Our plans for the future

- Secure sufficient funding to re-establish an adult bereavement support service
- Help to develop outreach bereavement support groups across the borough of Walsall
- Work with local Funeral Directors, Walsall Manor Hospital, Solicitors and Mental Health Services to ensure quicker identification of bereaved people in need of support
- Secure funding to employ a further part-time counsellor to enable *THE SWING* to meet the growing demand on its services.
- Recruit more volunteers in order to increase the amount of support we can offer.
- Work closely with a wider variety of schools in Walsall to increase access to bereavement support for different cultural groups
- Provide training to teachers and other professionals on how to support bereaved children /young people/ adults and to identify those who need additional specialist help



"...Our family was in despair. We had lost our way and were unable to communicate in a rational manner. With the support we have been receiving we have been put back on the right track and are all working together to rebuild our family relationship."



WBSS adult support service

In addition to WBSS staff, trainee counsellors and qualified counsellors volunteered their time and their skills to provide the bereaved with:

- Telephone support
- Walk in support
- Face to face counselling sessions
- A support group for those bereaved through suicide

49% of the 163 people referred to our adult service during this period lived in areas of Walsall falling within the top 10% most deprived locations in the UK. Many of these clients were struggling with issues related to poverty, poor housing and isolation, all of which can increase anxiety and impact on the grieving process and increase anxiety and grief. Consistent with previous years, just over 50% of the clients that we helped were bereaved as a result of a sudden or traumatic death. This included those who had died as a result of murder, manslaughter, suicide, road traffic accident, or were drugs/alcohol related. Sudden and unexpected death can increase the trauma experienced by those left behind, making it much more difficult for them to manage their grief.



"...the sessions got me from drowning in deep water to the safety of dry land via calmer waters, a rocky path and then a safe road."

Case Study (Adult Client)

"My wife of 42 years and my daughter aged 35 died in a car crash just over three years ago whilst we were on holiday in Kent. I was also a passenger in the car and I too was injured. My son, aged 39, who was not on holiday with us, developed a lot of anger towards my daughter's fiancé, who was driving the car and caused the accident.

My son felt that I needed counselling and I knew that he did too, so we decided to attend the first session together for mutual support. My Christian faith did help me with my grief, although it did not reduce the effect of the loss of two thirds of my family. Initially we approached a bereavement support service outside of the borough but they had a very long waiting list of over 6 months and they could not offer us any sessions together. We then found out about WBSS and when we approached them, they were able to offer us counselling together within a few weeks, which is what we desperately needed. After our first session, we continued counselling separately and a lot of my son's anger dissipated which helped him to grieve properly.

I dread to think what would have happened if the WBSS had not offered my son the support he needed, because he may well have done something stupid and ended up in a lot of trouble or with a breakdown."



"I can now face up to life and look forward to a new life. It will not be the same but it is a life that I never thought I would have ..."



Supporting bereaved children, young people and their families

Since established, this project has supported more than 2357 children, young people and other family members. Our work is very much about prevention because without appropriate support, many children/young people would struggle to overcome their grief and the destructive impact that it can have on their daily lives and also their futures. In 2017/18 of the 137 referrals to *THE SWING*:

- **67%** lived in areas ranked within the top 10% most deprived wards in England and a further 18% lived in areas falling within the top 11-25% most deprived wards.
- **71%** were bereaved of a significant family member (parent, grandparent, sibling)
- **65%** lived in one adult households and 6% were living in care/with another family member

THE SWING provides:

- Telephone Support
- Home visits
- Special Support Service in schools
- Workshops
- One to One Counselling
- Family and Sibling Counselling
- Out of Hours Service



"The support has been incredibly helpful and enabled my daughter to understand the death of her father. It has also helped her with strategies and techniques at her level of understanding to deal with the pain of loss."



Case Study - *THE SWING*

"In April 2015, my children and I tragically and sadly lost their wonderful father and husband to me. He passed away suddenly, unexpectedly and without warning. He was a fit, strong, health conscious, active and healthy 47 year old. However, a massive heart attack killed him instantly. From that moment on our world and family life was devastatingly destroyed and wiped out forever. My children and I were totally lost and struggled with this huge and significant loss. Since July 2015, all three of us have received ongoing support from WBSS and *THE SWING*.

I can honestly say that without this very objective but empathetic support I really do not know where we would be. The service came into our lives at a time when we all thought there was no hope; we were empty, exhausted with grief, and did not see the point in going on. My daughter who was 10 at the time found my husband and she has Down's syndrome. *THE SWING* provided her with specialist and extra sensitive support to meet her additional needs.

Both children would definitely be in the formal medicalised mental health service by now if it were not for WBSS. As for me the support that I received has saved my life. However, for us as a family it meant the difference between us staying together, getting through the most unimaginable difficult times and still being here."

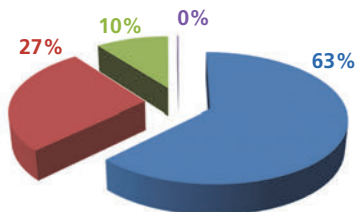


"As an adult you don't realise that as you are trying to process death, children are trying to do the same and when it's difficult for an adult, it's even worse for a child as they really can't find their voice."



Finance

How we raised our money



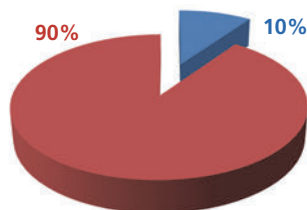
Donations and Legacies = £66,891

Charitable Activities = £28,983

Trading = £10,841

Other = £177

How we spent our money



Raising Funds = £12,478

Charitable Activities = £116,283

As a result of consistent and careful financial management over the years the Charity had managed to build up its reserves and so was able to absorb the £21,869 shortfall of income over expenditure, without jeopardising the sustainability of WBSS. This is only the second time in 10 years, that WBSS has experienced a deficit. The first time was for £3575 in 2013/14.

At the end of March 2018, WBSS reserves stood at £89,373 of which £42,222 was unrestricted and £45,151 restricted.



"I don't think anything needs to improve. I think the service should be better rewarded."



How we raised our income

The main source of income for WBSS is now from charitable trusts and foundations. During 2017/18, we received £76,318 in donations from 24 Trusts and foundations. The main funders were Children in Need, the Henry Smith Charity, the Eveson Charitable Trust, the Grantham Yorke Trust, and the Brian Murtagh Charitable Trust; however, we are grateful to each of the other 19 funders because without them, we would not have a service to offer the bereaved in Walsall.

We have developed a new Community Fundraising Programme and we are delighted that local companies, schools, churches, and individuals have chosen to support our Charity. Our grateful thanks go out to everyone who has/is supporting us!

WBSS was chosen as Charity of the Year for Marks and Spencer Walsall store and TSB Bank Walsall Branches.

Pictures right from top downwards:

TSB Walsall – Cake Bake Sale

Neil - Coast to Coast Cycle Ride

Callum and his Band - Rock Gig



" The service offered by Walsall Bereavement Service is invaluable and I now realise that without plucking up the courage to accept that I needed support, I would still be struggling now."



Walsall Bereavement Support Service

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WBSS has attained PQASSO Quality Standard Level 2 and we work to the professional and ethical guidelines of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

WBSS is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
Registration No: 1152724



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