

Minutes of the Stafford and District Bereavement and Loss Support Service Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 19th June 2024 at Katharine House Business Centre, Unit 1, Priestly Court, Stafford, ST18 0LQ.

Present: Shyamali Fenton (Chairman), Richard Soulsby, Lin Russell, Councillor Gillian Pardesi, Maureen Recine, Sheila Peckett, Ray Sutherland, Lesley Bailey, Wendy Herriott, Caroline Marshall and Jo Vogel.

Apologies: Nick Barnes (Hon.Treasurer), Angela Loughran (Deputy Chair) and John Loughran, Alison Soulsby, Donna Insull, Jennifer Eden, Nichola Sohie, Yvonne Hinksman, Julie Clifford

Introduction: Chairman, Shyamali Fenton, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Richard Soulsby for the use of the rooms.

Minutes of the AGM held on 28th June 2023:

The Minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting. Proposed by Ray Sutherland and seconded by Sheila Peckett.

Chairman's and Directors' Report:

The year April 2023 to March 2024 has been another successful year for Stafford & District Bereavement & Loss Support Service. Our team of volunteers and administrators continues to support adult clients in our community and in HMP Stafford.

At year end we had 21 active community Bereavement Support Workers with 3 resting and 2 BSWs supporting clients in HMP Stafford. Our volunteers comprise qualified counsellors, trained supporters and students and the befriending service has 3 trained listeners.

In the community we received 142 referrals and provided 505 sessions. 98 new clients were supported and a total of 134 clients completed their counselling journey with us. In HMP Stafford, 45 referrals were received and 192 sessions were completed. New clients seen numbered 41 and 52 completed working with our volunteers. The Befriending Service supported 5 clients.

The training team, led by Angela Blanchard, once again, provided training to students via Zoom and on successful completion of the course, four students were offered placements with B&L. Angela also prepared and presented two Continuous Personal Development mornings; one in person at The Wellbeing Centre, Katharine House Hospice in September and one via Zoom in March. In September the theme of our CPD was Autism/Neurodivergence and we welcomed our guest speaker Liz Stamatelatos, a CBT therapist. In March the topic was Pregnancy & Infant Loss and was led by two of our volunteers, Julia Gibbons and Debbie Kindon who had recently attended training funded by B&L. Thank you to them and to Angela for making each of these events both informative and enjoyable.

The supervisors, a team of five, have continued to meet monthly via Zoom to share experiences, discuss any problems and update procedures. Thanks to all the supervisors, in particular those supporting students on placement.

Throughout the year the trustees have met bi-monthly at Oakridge overseeing the running of the service, making decisions that support the work of our volunteers, reviewing policies, managing finances and implementing the strategic plan. Thanks to the Oakridge management for allowing us to hold our meetings in the conference room free of charge.

At the end of March, Sheila Peckett resigned as a trustee. We shall miss Sheila's knowledge and experience and we thank her for all the work she has undertaken in the role.

It was with great sadness that in December we learned of the death of Ian Glover, a B&L trustee for many years, former Treasurer and latterly our Hon. President. Ian was the kindest of men, always willing to offer support and never without a cheerful smile. We shall miss him very much and extend our sincere condolences to his wife, Jenny and her family.

SDBLSS is represented at a number of local networking forums including South West Staffordshire Healthy Communities, Staffordshire Families Bereavement Alliance and Staffordshire Independent Network Group. Membership of these groups ensures our ongoing connection with organisations in our area. Our collaboration with Katharine House Hospice continues and we are grateful to Richard Soulsby and the KHH trustees for allowing us the use of premises at the Hospice and the Business Centre for training, meetings and client work.

Fundraising remains our main source of income and under the guidance of Lesley Bailey many activities have taken place during the year. Our fee from HMP Stafford is our only source of regular income but in January we were fortunate to be the recipients of the Crematorium Recycling Scheme and we are extremely grateful to Daniel Evans, Bereavement Services Manager at Stafford Borough Council, for selecting B&L as the chosen charity. In his visit to the trustees' meeting in March Daniel spoke about the respect he and his colleagues have for B&L and his sentiment reflects our standing in the community and the commitment and compassion shown by everyone associated with our service.

I have said this many times and never tire of saying it; it is a pleasure to be part of this organisation where dedicated, enthusiastic and caring people come together in support of our local community. My personal thanks to all our Bereavement Support Workers and befrienders, the supervisors, the trustees, our fundraisers and our wonderful admin team.

Treasurer's Report:

Lesley Bailey presented the Accounts Summary and Report for the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 on behalf of Nick Barnes (Treasurer) who was unable to attend the meeting.

Treasurer's Report from Nick Barnes:

First, my apologies for not being with you tonight and my thanks to Lesley for reading this report in my absence.

You will hopefully have sight of the account summary for the last full financial year.

As you can see, our situation looks extremely healthy at the moment with a balance at the end of March of £32.5 thousand.

The fundamental reason for the account looking so healthy is the very generous donation by Stafford Crematorium of £ 14,000 in February, for which we are extremely grateful.

In making comparisons with the previous year's accounts, it's perhaps worth ignoring the £14,000 for a moment.

The year began with a balance brought forward of 19.4 thousand pounds, marginally higher than the previous year. We end the year with £18.431, excluding the £14,000, around £1000 less than last year.

Again, excluding the Crematorium's donation, our income otherwise was almost the same as the previous year at £11,900.

Our expenses have increased this year, on the face of it, by £1,300. However last year's accounts didn't include our insurance premium due to payment timing. The admin costs appear to have soared but the figure this year includes postage, stationery and telephone costs which we quoted as separate items last year. On the same basis, the increase this year is £103.

For anyone wondering, the item labelled 'contractor', relates to hiring 'Elvis' for the Elvis evening at Derrington village hall.

Fundraising activities have continued throughout the year organised by Lesley and have included the Yoga on the lawn, an Elvis event, a music concert and client donations. If anyone has any ideas for future fundraising activities please let Lesley know.

Finally, excluding the £14,000, we have made an operating loss over the year of £965.

If this all sounds rather pessimistic, it is to highlight that we need to keep the pressure on saving and maximising fundraising. We are currently in a very comfortable position but bear in mind that the large donation we received this year will not recur on a regular basis.

As our annual income has exceeded £25,000, we have had to have our accounts independently examined. This was done last week by my long term friend, John White, a retired pharmacist, at no cost.

Please leave any queries with Lesley and I will respond as soon as I can.

Finally I would like to thank Lesley for her year-long help balancing the accounts at each quarter end- it's much appreciated.

Shyamali Fenton thanked Nick and Lesley for their record keeping and asked for members to adopt these accounts as a true record. Proposed by Ray Sutherland and seconded by Sheila Peckett.

Election of chairman: at least 8 nominations were received for Shyamali Fenton who had confirmed that she was happy to continue in this role. Proposed by Richard Soulsby and seconded by Ray Sunderland. No other nominations. Elected unanimously.

Election of vice chairman: at least 7 nominations were received for Angela Loughran who had confirmed that she was happy to continue in this role. Proposed by Sheila Peckett and seconded by Richard Soulsby. No other nominations. Elected unanimously.

Election of treasurer: at least 7 nominations were received for Nick Barnes who had confirmed that he was happy to continue in this role. Proposed by Lin Russell and seconded by Richard Soulsby. No other nominations. Elected unanimously.

Election of new trustees: Shyamali explained that as Sheila Peckett had now retired as a Trustee (Sheila confirmed that she will remain as a Supervisor with SDBLSS) that there was a vacancy on the Board of Trustees but more would be welcomed. Shyamali asked if anyone might be interested or know someone would be interested. Anyone who would like to express an interest may be invited to the next Trustee meeting due to take place on Thursday 25th July at noon at Oakridge Business Centre.

Caroline expressed an interest and Maureen asked about the minimum time of commitment needed to be a Trustee. Shyamali confirmed that it would be 3 years. Jo Vogel asked what a Trustee role included – Shyamali explained that the Trustee team managed the policies, Constitution, reporting to Companies House, the Charity Commission, managing finances and overseeing the management of charity.

Ray explained his thoughts on the role of being a Trustee and Richard Soulsby explained that Trustees were like a Board of Directors and legally responsible for the charity. It is an unpaid role.

Presentations:

Maureen Recine, Volunteer who joined B&L in the early 2000's works with clients at HMP Stafford (along with Alison Soulsby). The prison's residents are now only sex offenders over the age of 18.

Maureen Recine shared an insight into the categories of prison care in operation at the prison and their role as bereavement support workers.

Ray Sutherland said he had visited the prison 3 times when he was Mayor of Stafford for choir and other music events and it was always a very relaxed experience.

Sheila asked about the support of the Chaplain which Maureen confirmed was very supportive of the work and benefits that the service provided.

Shyamali Fenton thanked Maureen and Alison for all their work at the prison.

Gillian Pardesi, Councillor with Stafford Borough Council shared that she was proud to be part of SDBLSS and felt she had a lot to learn and will support with funds where possible.

Lin Russell, Trustee and Befriender who shared that once clients had finished bereavement support sessions that clients can be offered the befriending service. This was a check in service via telephone for approx. 4 weeks to make the transition from support a little easier for the client. Lin is a Befriender as well 3 other people – always pleased to have more volunteers. Lin shared the experience with a current Befriendee and how it was helping.

Fundraising and Admin update by Lesley Bailey:

Admin:

We are operating as a full Admin team: Lesley Bailey (9 hours pw), Yvonne Hinksman (2.5 hours pw) and Julie Clifford (2 hours pw).

Rooms which are available for volunteers to use are the admin office, Rachel Barnett-Turner's room and the conference room at Oakridge Business Centre, occasional use of the Therapy & Wellbeing Unit at KHH, Co-op Funeral care in Stone and Love's Independent Funeral Directors in Stafford.

The Circle of Friends Group meets fortnightly in Stone on Wednesdays (2-4pm) and is running well with approx. 8-10 people at each session. Led by Lesley Bailey and Paul Evans from Co-op Funeral Care in Stone.

Client number as at 19.6.24:

Community active clients – 41 / waiting – 26 / pending – 2

20 Volunteers are active with 1 resting

Referrals since 1.4.24 = 24

HMP active clients – 12 / waiting - 9

2 volunteers active

Referrals since 1.4.24 = 5

We have been asked about offering support at a Care Home in Stone and we will be asking volunteers if they would like to be involved. There is a support group being arranged with a local social prescriber.

40 year anniversary to be arranged at Civic Offices including a memorial to Mr Ian Glover, Honorary President who sadly died at the end of Dec 23. His wife is currently a Befriendee with Lin Russell and will be invited and has stated that she would like to attend the event.

Fundraising:

We continue to receive £20pm from Lynda Randle & Elaine Reeves towards our phone bill.

The yoga on the lawn event hosted by Gill Clarke was very successful last year with another planned during the summer. Funds are shared between us and SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide).

Drumming workshops and other holistic events including the sale of books and crystals generated some income with more to be planned.

Steve Clifford once again arranged calendars for us to sell as well as a range of beautiful blank cards which are available via the office at £2 each. All proceeds to SDBLSS.

An invoice has been submitted to HMP for bereavement support and £3,400 due to be received soon.

The Concert with Nigel Shaw & Carolyn Hillyer (musicians) took place at the Hub in Lichfield in November and raised nearly £800.

We hosted an Elvis Night at Derrington Village Hall in August with the help of Ray Sutherland and Frances his wife and raised nearly £300.

We receive some client donations via collection tins in meeting rooms as well as after sending out feedback forms when a client has finished with their volunteer.

Collection pots at Co-op funeral Care and Fishtopia in Stone are being received.

Donations have been received from the Roger Hinton Trust and similar organisations and online shopping generates some funds - Easy Fundraising & PayPal Giving.

LB attends the Support Staffs group, S.I.N.G (Staffordshire Independent Networking Group) as their chosen charity who have supported SDBLSS with fundraising ideas and donations and allow Lesley to attend free of charge.

We received an incredible sum of £14k from Stafford Borough Council and the Stafford Crematorium's Recycling project. Presentation of a cheque will take place at the Open Day on Saturday 29th June.

Alex Robinson is running the Stone St Michael's 10K race for us again on 23rd June (raised £850 last time). T-shirts are being printed c/o Schui Graphics and further sponsorship from Malpass Pest Solutions (both are members of the S.I.N.G group).

If anyone can help with any of these events or if you are connected with any groups or fancy organising a fundraising event then please let Lesley know!

AOB:

There were no further questions or further business.

Closure:

Shyamali closed the meeting by sharing her thanks and gratitude to all involved. The meeting ended at around 8.20pm and drinks and refreshments were available.

Treasurer's Report SDBLSS 2024

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 12/6/24
TREASURER



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

STAFFORD + DISTRICT BEREAVEMENT + LOSS
SUPPORT SERVICE

On accounts for the year
ended

31ST MARCH 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1140987

Set out on pages

PAGE ATTACHED

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above
charity ("the Trust") for the year ended DD / MM / YYYY.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation
of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act
2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out
under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I
have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission
under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have
come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with
the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material
respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of
the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection
with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a
proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

Date:

06/08/2024

Name:

JOHN WHITE

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

BSc (PHARM)

Address:

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NOTTS NG22 0DA