



# ARCHIE Child Bereavement Service



## Christmas Newsletter 2021

Hello everyone,

I just wanted to say that we have really appreciated how difficult it has continued to be for many families over the past twelve months. Children and young people have been brilliant in the way they have managed to cope with all the changes. There have been a few changes for us, in changing our name and logo, but this has not affected our services. We were also amazed at the publicity we received for the Children In Need fundraising, and this type of profile always means raising awareness for bereaved children and young people everywhere. We have tried to assist families while dealing with the continuing COVID concerns and have reached out to many more families this year. I cannot thank our Volunteer Responders enough for their commitment and compassion of keeping going over the past twelve months. They have enabled us to undertake the direct support to families across the Grampian Region.

I know how hard it is as we approach another Christmas, when often all we hear on the TV is how happy it will be. This is not quite the way Christmas is often experienced by bereaved families, and the build up to the day is what many families find most daunting. Remembering past Christmases, and worrying about how they will manage this one, can be exhausting, especially if it is the first Christmas without their loved one. Just to reassure you, that it will pass as yet another day, and we have added a few tips to help think about how to do this.

Malcolm as ever has been exceptional, and I can only thank him for his support to me, and how he has dealt with the increase of referrals we have received this year. He is always ready to respond and go the extra mile. Our small team from ARCHIE have enabled us to continue to provide services, and even though our name may have changed, our personnel hasn't. Jane and Carolyn, our bereavement support workers, continue to provide support to Grampian Hospitals, and demands for their services increase.

I am supported in my role by my committee, some of whom are original co-founders, and I am always grateful for their commitment, support and advice they give to me.

Above all I would like to send all of you my love and best wishes as you navigate another Christmas without your loved one. I will be thinking of you all and hope that within the next the twelve months you will find some peace and healing.

Anne Bone  
Chair of Committee



# Tips for getting through Christmas

We know that as Christmas approaches it raises anxieties for many bereaved families about how to manage this. It is a time when missing your loved one is even more poignant, especially if it is the first Christmas. So we have put together a few ideas and tips to help manage this time.

-  Have a plan – talk with the children and see how they would like to spend the day. The anticipation and build-up of the day can be worse than actually getting through it.
-  Find a moment in the day when you will remember your loved one. It can be doing something like lighting a candle or having a special decoration, or visiting a significant place.
-  Changing a family tradition can help. While you will never forget previous Christmases, and some families choose to follow the traditions set, you don't have to if you want to do something different.
-  Make time during the day to do something together, that might be watching a movie or playing a board game.
-  Do whatever you need to do to get through the day. If you decide you want to have a pyjama day, or go out, or eat a takeaway, or have a traditional dinner, it is your decision. Remember to tell your extended family members and friends what you have chosen to do, so that they know what it is.
-  Reach out and speak to your friends if you need to. Remember that your friends want to support you and sometimes touching base with them can help you get through the day.

# ACTIVITY DAYS

Our Activity Day program this year has been impacted on due to the COVID virus and restrictions we have had to manage. We did manage a memory craft day at Monymusk hall, Tubing at Alford, and within the last few days our Christmas event at Hilton Community Centre. Unfortunately our New Deer venue was affected by the terrible storm so had to be cancelled.

The events we have managed have been well supported by families, many have attended for the first time, and while this has been quite daunting, I think the children have all enjoyed meeting others who are in a similar situation.

We are really hopeful that 2022 may allow us to hold more events, and return to some sort of normality. The Committee will be meeting in early January to plan the programme for the year. Let us hope we can go ahead with lots more fun things next year. Once we have the programme will share it with you on our Facebook page so you can add them to your calendar.

## TEENAGE GROUP



The Teenage Group met up recently at Go Ape at Crathes. They spent nearly 3 hours high among the tree tops which certainly tested their nerves and head for heights. All the group thoroughly enjoyed it, even one Dad who 'volunteered' to take up a spare place. Not sure our volunteers enjoyed it quite as much but wow they gave it a really good go. The group run by Rona, Kelly and Jane will meet again at the beginning of 2022 to plan activities for year.



# ABERDEEN PANTO

Harbour Energy kindly donated tickets to the charity for the Beauty and the Beast Pantomime at HMT. Five families from all over Grampian benefitted from this gift and thoroughly enjoyed a fun filled afternoon.

Oh no they didn't! Oh yes they did!



## BUCHAN YOUTH GROUP



Well October saw the North Group meeting again, in July we held our first get together since lock down with a leisurely treasure hunt around Strichen then a picnic at the lake. Although

enjoyable the group were wanting something a little more exciting for their next outing and wow did they get it!! Six intrepid young people took on the assault course at Crimond. The weather was cold but dry and by the end of the course the young people were cold and wet!! ( but happy 😊) dry clothes and a picnic lunch in the warm helped bring the roses back to their cheeks. The next adventure is a trip to the go cart centre in February.



Come  
join  
us!

malcolm.stewart@archie.org



# CONFERENCE 2021

During November we staged a free to attend conference at Thainstone House Hotel, aimed at supporting pupils following a traumatic bereavement.

Massive thanks to both Englefield Charitable Trust and Aberdeenshire Council for the funding we received towards the running costs. I would also like to thank the staff at Thainstone House Hotel for assisting in the organisation of the event and contributing to its smooth running on the day.

84 delegates attended and we have been delighted with the positive feedback.

The morning consisted of thought provoking and informative inputs from Barbara Jones, Head Teacher at Hazelhead Primary, Allison Connor, Head Teacher at Insch Primary School along with Dr Sally Paul from Strathclyde University and Pauline Lynch from Education Scotland. In the afternoon each delegate attended two workshops from 1) "Communicating with teenagers" ran by one of our volunteers, Lynn Miller, 2) "Supporting children with autism" ran by Gail McKeith, Autism Consultant, 3) "Classroom tips" ran by Natasha Robinson, Educational Psychologist and 4) "Communicating with children" ran by Jan Sanders and Val Oddie from our Committee.

We were very nervous about holding a face to face event, and this conference was postponed from last year. However it went very smoothly and everyone was delighted to be in the same room and be able to network with others doing similar jobs to theirs. Since the pandemic has struck we have continued to provide training mainly over Zoom, so it was such a blessing to feel as though we could resume some face to face training. Let us hope that next year enables us to reach more professionals so that they feel more confident to support a bereaved child.

## WHATSAPP GROUP

Our WhatsApp group was set up with the intention of having the parents and carers of children who have been bereaved of a parent, in a group where they can talk openly to and get advice from others with similar experiences. A lot of the users find it easier talking over a message than being face to face.

This is a safe space where people can interact as much or as little as they feel they need. Some of our group users don't converse but have mentioned that it's been helpful reading about how others are coping and supporting their children.

Volunteers are in the group to offer advice, support and possible resources. Currently we have 31 members in our group.

# WELCOME TO OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS

We were delighted to welcome Tatiana Doak, Barnabas Torok, Carol Barron, Emma Slesser, Margaret Johnstone and Suzanne den Engelsman to the ACBS family. All are fully trained and are already supporting families.

It goes without saying that without our marvellous volunteers we simply could not provide the service for bereaved children and their families that we do. As we continue to grow and get more and more referrals we are always in need of new volunteers. If you or anyone you know may be interested in training to be a responder, providing support, advice and guidance directly to a bereaved child, please get in touch with our coordinator Malcolm on [Malcolm.stewart@archie.org](mailto:Malcolm.stewart@archie.org) for a full information pack or just to discuss the requirements of the role.



## A MESSAGE FROM ONE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS

I became a volunteer responder for ARCHIE Child Bereavement Services in March 2020, undergoing my training via Zoom during lockdown. I was keen to become a volunteer responder for the charity after hearing first hand about the positive difference they had made helping children I knew personally deal with their grief

following the death of a close, much-loved family member. I was initially apprehensive about whether I would be able to offer the vital advice and support that a child or young person needs when navigating their way through the difficult and overwhelming grieving process. However, the excellent training I received from the charity equipped me with the knowledge, skills and confidence to be able to offer that support.

Sometimes it is as simple as listening to the young person talk about their emotions, worries or sadness and offering reassurance. At other times it can be participating in memory work, crafts or activities, which can help the child open up and speak about their loved one and how they are feeling.



**By Kim Walton**

The charity also offers a book gifting service, sending out age-appropriate books about bereavement and loss to families to help them understand and process their grief. Being a volunteer responder has enabled me to learn new skills, given me ongoing training, taught me a great deal, permitted me to give back to an organisation that has helped so many children and allowed me to meet many inspiring families whilst assisting at the charity's activity

days. Sadly, bereavement is a life experience we all have to go through but children can be helped to understand and manage their grief with the right help and information. Volunteer responders offer a bereaved child or young person hope for the future, by letting them know they are not alone, that their feelings are normal and that there is always someone who will listen to and support them.

I would absolutely encourage anyone to become a volunteer responder - it does not require a huge time commitment, it is extremely rewarding but most importantly, it can make a world of difference to a bereaved child.

## Message from our Coordinator

I hope our Christmas newsletter finds you all well and on behalf of everyone at ARCHIE Child Bereavement Service and The ARCHIE Foundation we wish you all a good festive season. The biggest news since our summer newsletter is in our name change. To reflect being fully embodied in The ARCHIE Foundation we changed from Grampian Child Bereavement Network to ARCHIE Child Bereavement Service. I can still be contacted at either gcbn@archie.org or Malcolm.stewart@archie.org or on 01224 554152.

Sadly this year has seen another big increase in referrals for our various services. Thanks to the dedication of our wonderful volunteers we have managed to rise to the challenge of increased demands and are continuing to provide the necessary support to bereaved children, young people and their families right across the Grampian Region. As an indication of just how important and unique the services we provide are, following the charity being part of the BBC's Country File programme (more about that later) I was fielding calls from across England and other parts of Scotland looking to access our services!

Thankfully we have been able to get back to running our activity days in person and it was lovely to see so many of our families again, whilst welcoming along some who came for the first time. Hopefully, if Covid allows we can run a full activity days programme next year and I will circulate our plans to you so you can save dates whenever they are finalised.



## THANK YOU DIXON FAMILY



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We were contacted by a BBC researcher in the summer this year to ask if we had a family who might be interested in being featured in a BBC Countryfile Programme. They were keen to have a rural living family so we got in touch with the Dixon family, who live in Cruden Bay, and they were willing to help.

After many virtual meetings with the family being supported by ACBS staff, The BBC filming took place over two days in early August and featured the teenagers talking on camera about losing their dad. It also featured their mum Corine who spoke about how the loss had been for them as a family. This was then followed up with a programme on the main Countryfile Ramble programme when they had also presented both Ailsa and Finn with special treats like meeting a renowned photographer and a famous Scottish harpist, recognising the hobbies of both of the young people.

Ailsa and Finn have accessed Archie's Child Bereavement Service for book resources, and they were supported by Carolyn, one our Bereavement Support Workers, who during COVID helped both young people through zoom calls.

We would like to say a massive thank you to Ailsa and Finn Dixon, and their mum Corine, for featuring on BBC Countryfile for us in September.

## Message from our Bereavement Support Workers

NHS Grampian continue supporting us to reach families within Grampian, who have had a loved one die in hospital.

With our first year being a success, Carolyn and Jane are looking forward to 2022 and seeing how their reach can expand to more families and children in Grampian.



Pictured is Carolyn, wearing one of the new polo shirts which ensure that our ACBS Bereavement Support Workers are easily recognised across Grampian Hospitals.

## Our First Year Impact

72  
Children Helped

28  
Family Referrals  
from NHSG Staff

Over 50  
Ward Visits



2 Happy Faces



# THANK YOU

Everyone at Archie Child Bereavement Service would like to thank all our fundraisers, volunteers, donors and supporters. Without your hard work and enthusiasm, we would not be able to help and support bereaved families within and around Grampian.



If you wish to volunteer, donate or fundraise for Archie Child Bereavement Services, please get in touch.