

Annual Report 2020



Introduction

Welcome to WAY's Annual Report for 2020.

WAY is the only national charity in the UK for people aged 50 or under when their partner died. It's a peer-to-peer support group operating with a network of volunteers who have been bereaved at a young age themselves, so they understand exactly what other members are going through. WAY was founded in 1997 and had nearly 3,700 members across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland at the end of 2020. The charity aims to provide peer-to-peer support to young widowed people – married or not, with or without children, inclusive of sexual orientation, gender, race and religion – as they adjust to life after the death of their partner.

To achieve this, WAY provides:

- A public website with guidance for members about getting through bereavement as well as information about how their friends and relatives can help.
- A public presence on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube) to provide up-to-date information on WAY and current issues facing people who have been widowed at a young age.
- Many opportunities for members to meet others in the same situation, either face to face through organised meetings or through online meet-ups.
- A new member information booklet upon joining, a regular printed newsletter and a monthly informational e-newsletter.
- A confidential telephone helpline that's available for members 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, offering bereavement support as well as legal, financial and health advice.
- Peer support from a network of volunteers who have all been bereaved themselves so understand what members are going through.

WAY also raises awareness of issues affecting those widowed young, campaigns on current issues such as changes to bereavement benefits and seeks out opportunities to publicise the existence of the charity wherever possible through the press and other avenues. We have networked with other organisations in the sector and beyond, working together to achieve our shared goals.

Within this report, we will outline the major issues and achievements of 2020, as well as presenting an analysis of the general financial position of the charity and fundraising activities for the year.

WAY's Objectives

- To advance the education of the public to raise the awareness of the needs of people who are widowed and young.
- To relieve persons in need, following bereavement by offering a peer-to-peer support network for anyone aged 50 or under, at time of bereavement, who is overcoming the loss of a partner, married or not, with or without children, inclusive of sexual orientation, gender, race and religion.



"WAY has supported me since the death of my husband in April by giving me access to others who have been widowed and to seek advice from people who have experienced this. It's provided an outlet to ask questions as well as giving me an opportunity to share my story with people who get it. It's been a real comfort to me."

Member of WAY subgroup for those bereaved during the pandemic

Letter from WAY's Chief Executive

Many of us were pleased to see 2020 come to a close. Covid-19 has impacted us all – from the measures and restrictions taken daily to prevent its spread to the effects on health. And of course, it has had a devastating impact on all those who have lost loved ones.

I am so sorry for what we have all faced during this difficult year and I wish to send my heartfelt thanks to every WAY member. Peer-to-peer support simply would not exist without you. The kindness and compassion shown between WAY members never ceases to amaze me, but especially in 2020; members have offered a listening ear, helped to lift each other's spirits and have gone above and beyond to support each other.

Like many organisations around the world, WAY had to adapt quickly to daily news updates announced from the government to keep our members safe. This unfortunately saw our face-to-face meet-ups being put on hold for much of 2020. However, WAY members, volunteers and our small team of staff responded quickly by implementing new online events, which soon grew in popularity and evolved to include online bingo, virtual picnics, pub quizzes and online festivals.

Despite all the changes, we have not sat still. Alongside 440 new online events, we have responded to 31% more enquiries, seen 1,500 new members join the charity, retained 69% of existing members, improved recruitment and support for over 130 volunteers, increased our social media following to a combined total of more than 20,000, rolled out new fundraising initiatives raising £41,600 for WAY, made successful funding applications generating £85,200 income, and finalised our five-year strategic plan, which you can read more about on page 5.

I am so proud of what we have all achieved and, as we emerge from the crisis, I am certain that the spirit of mutual kindness and consideration will continue within WAY as it always has. We all recognise that friendship, understanding and support will be needed more than ever as life will undoubtedly be very challenging for many of our members after the pandemic.

I personally wish to offer a sincere thank you to everyone who has contributed to WAY in the most difficult of years – our outstanding members, dedicated volunteers, supportive Trustee Board, committed staff and our generous fundraisers and donors throughout the UK.

Please stay safe and look after yourselves.

Rebecca Cooper
Chief Executive (2018 to May 2021)
WAY Widowed and Young



A Word from WAY's Chair

2020 was a year like no other. Being widowed, as all our members sadly know, brings a whole new unwanted reality into our lives. WAY was created in order to try to help make that reality just that bit more bearable. The understanding, friendship and mutual support amongst our members has proved of enormous benefit to thousands of members over the past 24 years.

However, the pandemic forced upon us a world in which, for months at a time, we weren't allowed to meet others, to give each other a hug or even to share a cup of tea and a chat. Such simple things that help to reduce the isolation and troubles of being widowed, particularly for those who are newly bereaved, were simply no longer possible.

And yet... 2020 saw our staff and our members do incredible things. As a Board, we feared that WAY's community fundraising would be hugely diminished. We feared that the local meet-ups and social events that are at the very heart of what we do would stop. We feared that trying to keep WAY running smoothly to help support our members and volunteers would be so much harder. And yet... none of that happened.

Our fundraisers found new and innovative ways to keep going, raising as much for the charity as any normal year. Our WAY world moved online through the incredible efforts of our volunteers, who used social media and Zoom to stay connected. And our staff, despite not meeting in person for over 12 months at the time of writing, kept things going. And they didn't just keep things going – they kept growing and improving so much of what we do.

So, my message to all of you as members is a simple one. Thank you. Thank you for every supportive message on social media, every text, every Zoom meet-up and every phone call that kept WAY doing what it does best – supporting each other.

Bill James
Chair of the Board of Trustees (2018 to June 2021)
WAY Widowed and Young



WAY in Numbers - our impact in 2020

3,692
members

WAY had 3,692 paid up members on 31 December 2020 (up 12.6% on 2019).

131
volunteers

At the end of 2020, WAY had 131 volunteers across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - up 45% on last year's numbers.

446
events
1,970
attendees

Between them, our members organised 446 online events in 2020.

90
Media
Interviews

90 WAY members took part in media interviews in 2020.

BIG picnic
80+ At Home
Events

More than 80 Big Picnic at Home events were organised in May 2020.

48 meetings

WAY staff and volunteers together attended 48 meetings to help spread the word about WAY - many of these online.

65
members
& children
at Activity
Weekends

65 members and children attended our WAY activity weekend in January 2020 before the pandemic.

55%
DIRECT
Debit

55% of our members had signed up to pay their membership by Direct Debit by the end of 2020 (up 8% on last year).

56 articles
published

WAY and our members were featured in 56 online and printed articles in 2020.

10
TV
Shows

WAY members appeared on 10 TV shows.

16
radio show
interviews

WAY members were interviewed on 16 radio shows.

2,793
signed up

More than 2,700 people signed up to receive our Friends of WAY newsletter by December 2020.

12,026
printed
publications
87,256
electronic
newsletters

Over the past year, we sent our members more than 12,000 printed newsletters and more than 87,000 e-newsletters.

18,590 Leaflets
Cards &
Posters

In 2020, WAY distributed 18,590 leaflets, cards and posters to volunteers and organisations through Project SWAN - up 220% on 2019.

105
Members Supported
by our Memorial Fund

In 2020, 105 of our members were supported by our Memorial Fund, which helps people who are struggling financially to attend WAY events or to pay their membership fees. This was triple the number of applications in 2019.

74,323
visitors

We had 74,323 visitors to our website in 2020 and more than 171,771 visits to our web pages.

42
Gift
Membership

42 Gift Memberships were bought for members to pay for a year's membership.

5,608
TWITTER
FOLLOWERS

We had 5,608 followers on Twitter - up 20% from 2019. Engagement was up 33%.

282
LinkedIn

We had 282 followers on LinkedIn - up 87% on 2019. Engagement was up 133%.

10,381
Facebook
Followers

We had 10,381 followers on our public Facebook page at the end of 2020 - up 23% from 2019. Engagement was up 44%.

3,774
Instagram
followers

We had 3,774 followers on Instagram - up 84% on 2019. Engagement was up by 155%.

£195,323
raised

WAY raised more than £195,323 through donations and various fundraising initiatives in 2020, including Gift Aid.

WAY's Governance

WAY's Board of Trustees met seven times in 2020 to provide governance oversight to WAY. In response to the pandemic, the Board moved their meetings online and held emergency talks. New procedures were implemented to protect the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and members - including working from home and cancelling face-to-face events.

The Board reviewed budgets and forecasts to take account of the expected financial impact of the pandemic. This initially forecast a significant deficit for the year due to a predicted loss of fundraising income. However, this impact was mitigated in full by new grants secured and a successful fundraising campaign (see page 13).

Despite the challenges faced this year, we continued to evaluate Board practices to make sure that our trustees were as effective as possible - both individually and collectively - so they can make a positive impact on the charity and help the organisation to fulfil its charitable objectives.

Initiatives have included:

- Recruiting a new trustee specifically to assist the board with marketing - a gap that was previously identified.
- Developing online meetings to ensure that the charity can operate effectively, and Trustees can fully participate in ongoing governance, despite Covid-19 restrictions.
- Chairing working groups as part of ongoing activities within the charity.
- Reviewing policies, procedures and introducing a staff handbook.
- Ensuring all Trustees have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and complete safeguarding training.
- Finalising the WAY Strategic Plan.

This year, sadly, in light of government guidance at the time, we had to cancel our planned AGM in Glasgow. We had hoped to be able to hold a scaled-down 2020 AGM later in the year. However, as government guidance on large social gatherings remained subject to change, we decided that we would not be able to hold an AGM in 2020. Members were kept informed of these developments and the charity kept a record of decisions made in line with guidance from the Charity Commission. Members were also given the opportunity to attend an online Q&A session with the Board in September 2020.

Strategic Plan

As we move towards our 25th birthday, WAY has more than 3,700 members - more members than we have ever had before. The WAY Board of Trustees wanted to make sure that the charity's strategic direction - encapsulated in our new Strategic Plan - would reflect the views of all our members and volunteers to make sure the charity met their needs, to draw out our long-term ambitions, to help outline our organisational priorities and reflect our new structure.

In order to do this successfully, we decided to seek the support of external expertise to bolster our capacity in this area and to undertake an analysis of the feedback data we had gathered. We submitted an application to the Cranfield Trust, which matches charities with skilled professionals to undertake projects on a pro bono basis.

Our application was successful and the project was assigned to Adam Smith, a Senior Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University. Adam volunteered his time and expertise freely to support WAY, working with our Board of Trustees and Chief Executive through 2019 and 2020.

WAY's new Strategic Plan has been developed in line with recommendations drawn from the report and takes on board feedback from our members, staff and volunteers. Our plan has been developed for the WAY team, our members, volunteers and all our supporters who have an interest in seeing WAY grow, develop and succeed and we set out three Key Priorities for the next five years: WAY's Members, WAY's Reach and WAY's Charity.

WAY's Strategic Plan, unveiled in spring 2021, will provide a roadmap for the next five years to help our Board of Trustees and Chief Executive plan ahead effectively. It will set out clearly how we can best support our members and meet their needs, as well as ensuring we have achievable goals in place so we can be confident our activities work towards increasing our reach and effectively achieving WAY's vision.

WAY's Vision

"To ensure ALL those eligible to be members are aware of WAY and have access to the peer- to-peer network and support that WAY offers."



Meet WAY's Board of Trustees



Bill James, Chair, WAY Member, appointed November 2017

I was widowed in 2006. My wife, Helen, died of cancer when our daughter was only days old. I have since been a WAY member in Scotland, London, The Netherlands and finally in Gloucestershire where we are now settled. I joined the Board in 2017 following my return from working abroad as an accountant in the oil industry.



Graham Briscoe, Independent Trustee, appointed March 2018

I have worked in many management services roles throughout my 30-year corporate career with Royal Sun Alliance across IT, quality and customer service management and transformational change. Since retirement I have built up a portfolio of trustee roles across further education, universities, the NHS and housing associations. I was appointed as an Independent Trustee for WAY in March 2018 – bringing knowledge and experience of charity governance to support WAY's Board.



Jacqueline Dewdney, Trustee, WAY Member, appointed September 2019

I have been widowed for over seven years, and a member of WAY for over six years. As the admin of WAY's closed Facebook group for four years, I know how WAY works and have seen how the many members are helped through the charity. I am the mother of a 25 year old so I fully understand the challenges facing members with children who have left home.



Louise Dodds, Trustee, WAY Member, appointed September 2019

I was widowed at 29 when my partner, Andy, was killed in a freak cycling accident in Grenoble, France in 2015. I joined WAY in February 2016. The charity has helped me to take ownership of my grief and my life and has supported me through my worst days and smiled with me on my best days. In 2018 I became Area Contact for WAY in the North East and then joined the Board in September 2019. I feel it's a fantastic opportunity to give back to the charity.



Mike Etherington, Trustee, WAY Member, co-opted December 2020

I was widowed quite suddenly in 2005 after 11 years of marriage and found myself unexpectedly raising our two children, then aged 4 and 6, on my own. I discovered WAY and immediately started to benefit from the type of support that only fellow WAY members can provide. Now the kids have left home, I've re-joined WAY and would love to use some of my work and personal experiences to help WAY to reach out and support all eligible members across the UK.



Chris Lima, Independent Trustee, appointed March 2018

I have more than 10 years' experience as a company director and I am a bereavement support volunteer with Cruse. Being a Trustee of WAY has allowed me to use some of the skills gained in these areas at the same time as being part of a wonderful organisation, meeting so many inspiring individuals who are providing valuable peer support in many different ways.



Stuart Scarbrough, Trustee, WAY Member, re-appointed in March 2019

I was widowed at 31 with two small children. I was fortunate enough to find WAY six months later. A big part of WAY, for me, is the nationwide holidays. This is where peer-to-peer support is at its best, escaping everyday life, whilst creating new memories with others who get it. As a Trustee I am privileged to play an important part in organising these holidays.



Jo Sedley-Burke, Trustee, WAY Member, appointed December 2018

I am a shareholder and Non-Executive Director of the IT solutions and services business, Sovereign Business Integration Group Plc. I have more than 20 years' experience in the public and third sector. I am passionate about equality and campaigned with Stonewall for the right to have a civil partnership and then marriage for same-sex couples. I joined WAY as a member in 2018, following the death of my wife Paula, and joined the Board the same year.



Kate Siegler, Trustee, Chair of WAY Website Working Group, WAY Member, appointed March 2019

I was widowed in February 2017, 10 weeks after I married my beloved husband Jonathan. I became a member of WAY in 2017 and joined WAY's Board in 2019. I'm an experienced independent consultant, and have worked with many household names in retail – leading digital and business transformation projects with expertise in strategy, e-commerce and business change. I'm passionate about representing the views of fellow members, whilst using my business acumen to support the aim and ambitions of the charity.

Our members

WAY has **3,692** members and a **69%** retention rate

By the end of 2020, we had nearly 3,700 members, which was up 12.6% from 2019. We have seen the retention rates increase over recent years and now have a retention rate of 69%, compared to 59% in 2017 prior to the direct debit system being launched.

The 1,500 new members who joined WAY during 2020 were a combination of those who had been newly bereaved and those who had reached out for support during the pandemic. Throughout the year, we continued to reach out to young widowed people through social and other media, as well as working alongside other charities and organisations to raise the profile of WAY at this time.

40% of members find WAY through word of mouth and recommendation

The strongest referral for new WAY members continues to be through word of mouth, with a record 40% of our new members finding the charity through personal recommendation. As the charity continues to grow, so does our quantity of members who choose to renew their membership through the **direct debit** system and we now have 55% of members choosing to renew this way, which speeds up the process and ensures the continuity of support.

During 2020 we started to look into the diversity of our new members and introduced an equality policy to help ensure that we are supporting all communities. We are proud to say that our **LGBTQ+ community** stands at 3.7%, which is above the national average of the proportion of the UK population identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual of 2.2%.¹ Although we are reaching out to **Black, Asian** and **Minority Ethnic** communities, we recognise that our new members from these communities at 6.3% is lower than the national average of 13.8%.² With the introduction of WAY Ambassadors during 2020, we have been working to reach out to diverse communities and to share the work that WAY does to support our membership.

Memorial Fund and Gift Membership

The pandemic has affected many people financially and, at a time where bereavement and loneliness has been at the forefront of so many people's lives, WAY has been able to continue supporting new and existing members through our **Memorial Fund**. This was set up in 2017 to support members to attend WAY events and assist with membership fees. In 2020, we saw the number of new applications to the Memorial Fund triple – from 35 applications in 2019 to 105 in 2020. Of these applications, 71% were for new memberships and 23% were for members who wanted to renew their membership.

At the end of 2019, we introduced the **Gift Membership Scheme** so that people could buy both new membership and membership renewals through our online shop for the cost of £25. Throughout 2020, 42 gift memberships were bought. More than 80% of these were gifted to new members to make sure they had the support of WAY during this difficult year.

Throughout most of 2020, WAY's staff have had to adapt to new working environments as well as supporting members and volunteers. Our Operations Team has consisted of **Membership Services Manager Colette Scarbrough-Jelfs** and **National Volunteer Manager Veronica Currie** who, alongside **Chief Executive Rebecca Cooper**, have worked remotely to ensure that the needs of our membership continue to be met during this challenging year.

1. 2018 figure [Office of National Statistics, 2018].
2. ONS 2018 report [Office of National Statistics, 2018 and Diversity UK.]

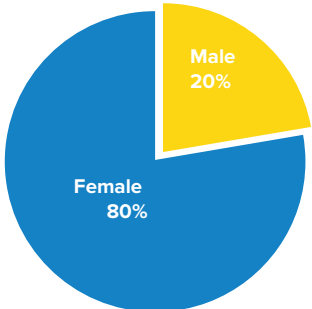


"Without WAY and the kindness, empathy and compassion I found here, I honestly don't know where I'd be right now."
Steven, WAY member

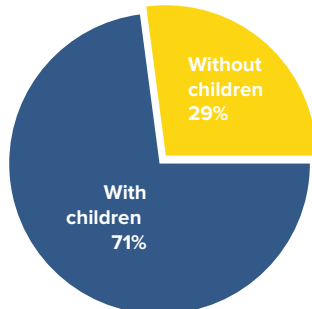
Member Demographics

Gender split:

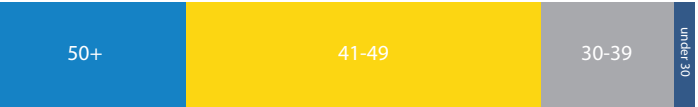
This reflects government statistics on the numbers of men widowed below the age of 50, compared to the number of women.



With/without children:



Age of WAY members:



Please note that anyone in the UK is eligible to join WAY if they have been widowed before their 51st birthday and they can remain a member for as long as they wish. A number of years ago WAY member Gaynor Williams set up a group for those who missed out on WAY membership due to age restrictions – an organisation called **WAY Up** that supports widows and widowers aged 50 and over. For more information, visit <https://way-up.co.uk>

Our membership services

In 2020, we have focussed on increasing the reach of our services to all members and we have been able to successfully react to the changing national circumstances whilst ensuring that our members maintain a good level of peer-to-peer support. We have proactively responded to members' needs throughout the pandemic and have adapted our offer to reflect the evolving situation. Due to the pandemic, we have had to move the majority of our meet-ups online.

In spite of the challenges, WAY has continued to provide a wide range of services to help all of our members through their bereavement journey, for both new members and those members who have been with WAY for a number of years.

WAY membership includes:

- Access to our members only website, where you can view all events listings, communicate privately with other members and join group discussions and forums
- Access to our member only closed Facebook group and a large range of subgroups
- Online events running alongside local and national events
- Local group holidays and national events, when possible
- A regular members magazine and monthly enewsletter
- Free telephone helpline, offering counselling support as well as legal and financial advice
- Unique volunteering opportunities

We continued our commitment to make sure our services were as good as they could possibly be for members throughout 2020.

Going forward, WAY's new strategy will help us to prioritise how income from fundraising activities is best used for our members and to further our aim of raising awareness and reaching out to more people who need support. As we approach our 25th anniversary, we want to make sure that WAY is inclusive, values individual differences and that all members feel welcome, accepted, included and listened to.

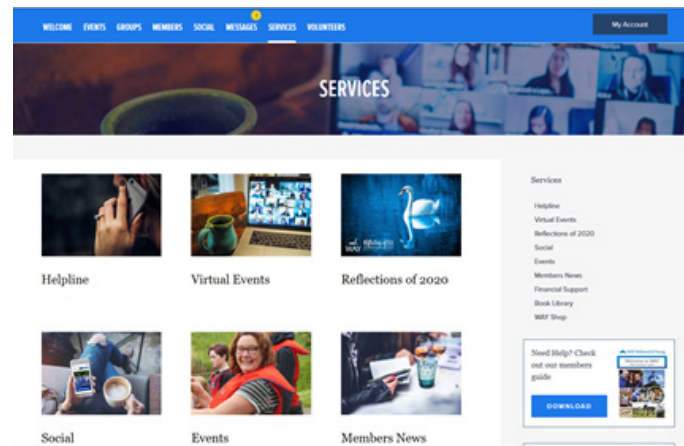


"My safety net for my sanity in lockdown was a few good friends and my online family in WAY. Here was a ready-made community for lockdown. We could do this and we had each other's backs."

Sarah, WAY member

Members only website

Throughout 2020, we made a number of changes to the Membership Services pages of our website to help members get the most from their membership.



The members only section signposts members to:

- **Virtual events** – a direct list of all online events detailing dates, times and links
- **Events** – a list of every event on our system, including all members' events, online events and trips
- **Social** – where members can access our forums, chatrooms and social media platforms
- **Members news** – a link to all the latest WAY news, as well as enewsletters and WAY Forward magazines
- **Financial support** – information about WAY's Memorial Fund (see page 7)
- **Book library** – a list of our books available to loan out to members (49 books were loaned free of charge in 2020)

The need for online support has never been more apparent than in 2020. With the website platform that already existed, we have been well placed to continue working to offer support to our members, even when we couldn't meet in person. We have also identified other online developments that have ensured our work has continued to grow and that members have been able to access support.

Through video conferencing, live meetings and social media broadcasts, we have identified other ways in which online support has worked and will look to incorporate these into our ways of working in future.

As the end of the year approached, we held a competition called Reflections of 2020, inviting WAY members to submit works of art, photographs, poetry and prose that summed up the year for them. We received dozens of inspirational entries that we then displayed in an online gallery for all our members to enjoy.



Telephone helpline

We would like to encourage more WAY members to make use of the free 24-hour telephone helpline that was introduced in 2016 as a benefit of WAY membership. The helpline offers:

- 24-hour telephone counselling and support: members can speak in confidence to a member of the team and may be referred for further telephone counselling sessions with a qualified counsellor
- Personal legal advice and confidential information: members can be referred to a fully qualified professional to receive support on personal finance or legal matters
- Health advice across a range of medical and wellbeing issues
- Access to an online portal for further advice and support

There is no limit to the number of calls a member can make to this helpline. The service is open 24/7, 365 days a year and anonymity is assured at all times.

WAY events

Whilst many of our face-to-face meet-ups were unable to go ahead during 2020 due to the pandemic, we were able to hold some meet-ups during January and February before the lockdown came into force across the UK.

In January 2020, 65 WAY members and children headed for a weekend of adventure at **PGL's Caythorpe Court** in Grantham. Equipped with thermal clothing and flasks of hot chocolate, all attendees joined in activities from archery to high ropes and finished off the evenings with discos and an impromptu Burn's Night celebration.

Sadly, WAY's flagship **AGM** event in March had to be postponed, along with many other events throughout 2020. However, WAY members and volunteers continued to reach out across the country to organise online events and share their skills and hobbies with each other.

During 2020, a record 446 online events were created on our website by our members – up from four in 2019. Many members enjoyed the opportunity to join online events from their own home – with 1,970 members attending events.

As the lockdown continued, WAY decided to change our annual Big Picnic event into a virtual event and our members organised more than 80 **Big Picnic At Home** events – with competitions, games and chats throughout the weekend.

WAY's CEO **Rebecca Cooper** said: "Despite not coming together in the usual way, it was heart-warming to see so many people across the UK rolling out their picnic blankets, decorating their homes in handmade bunting, enjoying home cooked foods and simply getting involved! The location may have been different, but the friendship, understanding and support that WAY is renowned for shone throughout the whole weekend."

Following the success of the virtual Big Picnic, our Operations Team decided to set up further online events throughout the year, including two virtual festivals (one in the summer and one in the winter) to help members through the lockdowns. More than 210 members and their households joined each other via Zoom, to take part in dozens of different activities from art to cookery to a live music set.

In September, we also held a virtual Q&A session with our Trustees, and we also ran a public Open Evening with the Operations Team, as part of National Grief Awareness Week in December.

Landmark Opportunity

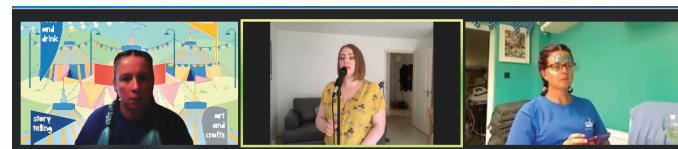
We were delighted when the Landmark Trust offered WAY members and their children the opportunity to stay at one of their beautiful Medieval properties just before lockdown began as part of their #50forfree scheme.

Kirsty told us "It was lovely having the opportunity to spend time together without the pressures of normal daily life. We made some lovely memories..."



Kirsty, who stayed at a Landmark Trust property in Suffolk with her two children.

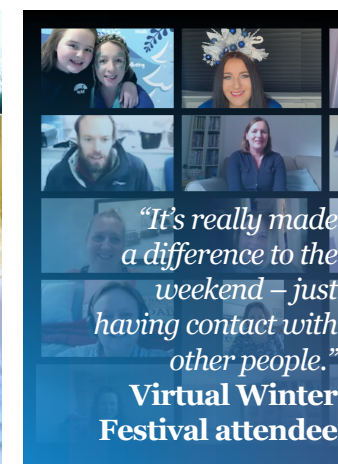
446 online events were organised by WAY members in 2020.



"I just wanted to say thank you for a lovely event today. [The Virtual Festival] is my first event and it was perfect for me as I find it difficult to attend large events in person due to my anxiety disorder. Even though I was very scared for the first session, I had a lovely time..."

Virtual Summer Festival attendee

80 Big Picnic at Home events were held in May to replace our Big Picnic events.



"It's really made a difference to the weekend – just having contact with other people."

Virtual Winter Festival attendee

65 WAY members and children went along to WAY's activity weekend at PGL Caythorpe Court in Grantham in January 2020 before the first lockdown.



"It was lovely to be with and talk to people who knew exactly what you've been through, what you're going through and share similar fears and hopes for the future as you do."

Kate, WAY member who attended the PGL activity weekend with her 11-year-old daughter



Communications

WAY provides its members with advice and support through various different communication channels:

- **Our regular WAY Forward magazine**, which gives members an opportunity to share their stories and experiences with others three times a year.
- **Our monthly newsletter**, which provides a round up of what's going on with WAY, including all the latest events. We sent out more than 87,256 newsletters to members last year.
- **Facebook:** WAY has a closed Facebook group for members only, which runs alongside the WAY website as an informal platform for members to communicate with each other. Members have also set up local Facebook groups (run independently of WAY) for many of our areas to help local members keep in touch with each other as well as subgroups for members with specific interests and experiences – from camping to cookery, as well as an LGBTQ+ group.

It is also part of WAY's remit to reach out to members of the public and to raise awareness of the needs of people who are widowed at a young age, which includes reaching out to potential new members. We do this through various platforms, including social media, our Friends of WAY newsletter, press coverage and the news section of our public website.

WAY has a freelance Communications Manager, **Vicky Anning**, who works alongside the Chief Executive and Membership Services Team on a part-time basis to help with WAY's communications outreach.

WAY in the media

90 WAY members and volunteers had the opportunity to take part in media interviews in 2020. As a result, we had 56 articles appearing in newspapers, magazines and online in 2020 – from the *Huffington Post* to the *Telegraph*. In addition, WAY and our members were also featured on 16 different radio programmes and 10 TV shows, which is really helping us to get the word out about WAY. 5% of our new members told us they found WAY through traditional media coverage in 2020.

56 Articles Published
WAY and our members were featured in 56 articles in newspapers, magazines and online on 2020.

10 TV Shows
WAY members appeared on 10 TV shows.

16 Radio Interviews
WAY members were interviewed on 32 radio shows.



Social media

Facebook

We had more than 10,000 Followers on Facebook – up 23% on 2019.

Twitter

We had more than 5,600 followers on Twitter – up 20% on 2019.

Instagram

We had more than 3,700 followers on Instagram – up an astonishing 84% on 2019.

LinkedIn

We had nearly 300 followers on LinkedIn, also up 87% on 2019.

We now have a combined reach of 20,000 people across our social media platforms, which is helping us to reach out to new and younger audiences. In 2020, we created 43% more posts than we did in 2019 and our engagement was up by 54% across all our platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn). We also marked milestones of 5,000 followers on Twitter, 3,000 on Instagram and 10,000 followers on Facebook!

Our social media volunteer **Aimée Claire** has continued to work alongside our Communications Manager to run strategic social media campaigns around key dates including Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day and National Grief Awareness Week and Christmas. We were also offered the fantastic opportunity to take over footballer Neville Southall's Twitter feed in June to mark Men's Health Week.

In June, volunteer Trustee **Kate Siegler** set up a series of Instagram Live chats (Talk Away with Kate, known as #TAWK) hosting interviews with fellow WAY members about their personal experiences and how WAY has helped them. This has been very popular – regularly reaching 1,000 views.

In June, we also held a series of Instagram Live events to mark **International Widows' Day** and to turn the spotlight on the injustices facing widows around the world.

15% of our members told us they found us through social media so this continues to be a strong area of focus for our outreach activities.

WAY's website

We refreshed our website in the first quarter of 2020, with a new look and updated content. After Covid-19 hit, we also launched a new subsection of the website dedicated to bereavement during the pandemic.

Throughout 2020, we have been working with our Website Working Group to tap into expertise among our membership to continue to make improvements to both our public facing website and our members' only website.

More than 27% of new members told us they found us through Internet searches, so making sure that we have a strong digital presence continues to be a key priority.

We had more than 74,000 visitors to our website in 2020 and more than 170,000 visits to our web pages, which is slightly down on 2019 due to an ongoing issue with cookies that we are looking to resolve.

Raising awareness

In 2020, we continued to work alongside other bereavement charities and networks to achieve our shared goals. Our staff and volunteers attended 48 virtual events throughout the year to help raise awareness of our charity.

WAY is also working alongside other bereavement charities including Cruse Bereavement Care, Winston's Wish, Grief Encounter, Child Bereavement UK and the Childhood Bereavement Network as part of the National Bereavement Alliance. We are also a member of the all-party parliamentary group for bereavement support.

We were also involved in the second **National Grief Awareness Week** in December, established by WAY member **Linda Magistris** who is founder of the Good Grief Trust.

Campaigning



On 7 February, the High Court ruled that denying Bereavement Support Payment to unmarried parents when their partner dies is incompatible with human rights law.

The case was brought by Child Poverty Action Group on behalf of two fathers, following on the heels of the 2018 Supreme Court case, which ruled in favour of Northern Ireland widowed mum **Siobhan McLaughlin**. (Siobhan was granted lifelong WAY membership when she came to speak to us at our AGM in March 2019.)

Since the Supreme Court ruling, the government has not taken any action on this issue. However, when questioned by Liberal Democrat co-leader **Ed Davey** in the House of Commons on 15 January, Prime Minister **Boris Johnson** said that he would work to remedy what he acknowledged was an 'injustice' – a huge step forward for campaigners.

WAY has been campaigning on this issue alongside the Childhood Bereavement Network, Child Poverty Action Group, Cruse and other charities for many years. Our campaign spokeswoman **Georgia Elms** has met with Ed Davey and is calling for a meeting with the Prime Minister as soon as possible. She spoke to BBC Look North in March (see picture).

We are really pleased to report that the government announced in the summer that they would be seeking a Remedial Order to address the lack of bereavement support for unmarried parents. At the time of writing we were still awaiting further details from the government.

Raising awareness of the needs of people who are widowed young is a key part of our mission and we will continue to campaign on these important issues in 2021.

Helen Bailey Blog Award

Every year, WAY runs a competition to find our members' favourite blogger. The award was set up in memory of late WAY member Helen Bailey, who helped so many young widows through her blog Planet Grief. The winner chosen by fellow WAY members in 2020 was **Sakima Branch**, who blogs at www.shoesandglitter.com – a blog set up by his partner Kinga before she died.

"There are no words that will describe just how much it means to me – for Kinga's legacy, and to be recognised on a personal level by the charity of my peers that I consider family."

Sakima, Helen Bailey Blog Award winner



Mandy Burrows Award

In order to recognise the tireless work of WAY members and volunteers who go above and beyond the call of duty, we set up the Mandy Burrows Award in 2014 in honour of one of our late members.

This year, a special award was presented to **Rhona Bain**, one of the Mandy Burrows Award nominees. Rhona was awarded special recognition for her exceptional commitment to WAY as a volunteer for over 10 years during which time she has helped to shape the Area Contact role and helped to organise the annual Scottish Break.

The 2020 winner of the Mandy Burrows Award was **Lizzie Riley**. Lizzie is a Facebook page admin for WAY WOCs (WAY Members without Children) and was nominated for the many wonderful things that she has organised – from quizzes and a random gift exchange to the annual WAY WOC Manchester weekend.



Huge congratulations to Lizzie, Rhona and to all the nominees and thank you to them all for all they contribute to WAY and its members.



Our volunteers

WAY has
131 volunteers doing a range of jobs from hosting social media interviews to arranging online quizzes

We have
45% more volunteers than we did last year

79% of new members reported being welcomed by an Area Contact when they joined WAY

84% of WAY's 63 regions are covered by Area Contacts

With the onset of a global pandemic, WAY members recognised that more of their peers might need support, and many stepped forward to offer their services as volunteers around the country.

Volunteers are absolutely central to WAY's peer support network and WAY demonstrated its commitment to volunteers with the appointment of a **National Volunteer Manager** in October 2019. This has meant that volunteers have had access to support, guidance and training throughout an incredibly challenging year.

As a result of this, and a willingness by members to act in support of others, WAY's volunteer network saw an increase of 45% from 90 at the end of 2019 to 131 by the end of 2020.

Volunteers showed enormous resilience as they adapted their normal means of extending support to others – through coffee meet-ups, meals out and pub meets, to name but a few. Instead, they embraced the online world in a bid to continue to offer support to WAY members, too many of whom found themselves bereaved at such a desperate time. Buddying was introduced in some areas and Zoom meetings, quizzes and bingo became regular features in WAY members' diaries (see page 9).

Volunteers have increased online activities through various online means – from Zoom to Facebook and the members only website chatroom – in a bid to keep members connected. Where possible, and when safe to do so, outdoor meet-ups have also taken place.

WAY Ambassadors were introduced to the volunteer team in the second half of 2020 and seven Ambassadors were successfully appointed with the purpose of representing WAY's diverse membership and helping to promote the charity both locally and nationally. Phase 2 of the Ambassador applications was opened in November 2020, with appointments being considered at the end of January 2021.

New roles and developments have taken place throughout 2020. **Area Contact Teams** were identified as a positive way to increase support in the large WAY regions and now more than 50% of areas have more than one volunteer. Not only does this help to support members but it also benefits volunteers, who can support their community as part of a network rather than taking on the role on their own.

A new online **Area Contact role** was introduced to welcome new members who join a WAY region with no local volunteers. In recognition of the number of WAY members joining who do not use Facebook, a Website Forum Volunteer was also appointed to help keep members using the members only forum connected and communicating. This role has also seen the hosting of a regular weekly chat room for all members to use.

We have also been strengthening our support for our volunteers. Over the course of 2020, training funded by the **National Lottery Coronavirus Emergency Community Fund** was developed for WAY volunteers, which included working with third party agencies such as GriefChat. This training included media training for Trustees and Ambassadors, as well as guidance on Grieving Through Covid-19 and Beyond and Self Care for WAY Volunteers.



"WAY has helped me so much in my grief journey that I wanted to give something back. I have gained so much from volunteering, confidence, sharing new experiences, learning new skills. It's a way of turning my traumatic past into a positive. My life wasn't supposed to take this path but I want to make the most of what I've been given. I can't take the pain away for members but I can try and help them get through and start rebuilding. I've learnt many new skills already through volunteering. I really enjoyed media training, which was completely new."

Karen James, WAY Ambassador

Project SWAN

Funded by the **National Lottery Community Fund**, Project SWAN saw the creation of new leaflets to help raise the charity's profile in the community. By the end of 2020, more than 3,500 leaflets had been distributed by members, supporters and volunteers. During lockdown, when many organisations were shut or not accepting promotional materials, leaflets were shared online with a potential reach of over 250,000 people.



"I enjoy getting members together to support each other and have fun. I know how much I got out of these meet-ups and I want to give others the same opportunities."

Rhona, WAY volunteer

Raising Funds



"WAY has helped me so much and I want to raise money to give something back."

Suzanne, WAY fundraiser

Despite a challenging year that saw many of our usual fundraising events postponed or cancelled, WAY's members and supporters rallied around us to raise an incredible amount of funds to help us continue our vital work to support and reach out to more young widowed people across the UK. Combined with Gift Aid and other donations, the 2020 fundraising total was £195,323.

Members and supporters found creative ways to raise funds during the pandemic – from virtual mountain climbs to socially distanced challenges, virtual marathons, head-shaves, 2.6 challenges, sky dives and Facebook Birthday Fundraisers (which alone raised almost £3,000 during the year). Our Give WAY to Summer fundraising campaign raised a massive £34,576 (including Gift Aid) over the course of three months.

WAY doesn't normally receive any government or statutory funding. Until now, we have relied on membership fees of £25 per year, fundraising and donations to pay for the vital services provided for our members. This year, however, due to the exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 global pandemic, WAY received £40,752 from the government's **Coronavirus Community Support Fund** distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund, which was used for continuing WAY's services for members and for recruiting and training volunteers so that WAY could increase its support for its membership (see page 12).



HM Government

In partnership with
THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

We were delighted that corporate supporters such as **Irwin Mitchell, Waitrose Northwich** and **Coventry University** continued to reach out too, despite all of the challenges in 2020, helping WAY to raise an additional £2,806.

WAY also received an incredibly generous £40,000 in donations from the **Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's** national metals recycling scheme. Money was donated in 2020 from Lewisham Crematorium, Peterborough Crematorium, Hither Green Crematorium and Hereford Crematorium.

Thanks to members' support in voting for WAY, the charity also received £1,000 from **The Movement for Good**.



WAY would like to thank everybody who has contributed to a phenomenal fundraising year, despite the considerable hurdles that 2020 brought, which has helped us to continue providing our services to young widowed people across the UK during a year when this support was needed more than ever before.



WAY finances

Despite all that has happened in 2020, WAY's financial position has remained safe and secure over the year. With three full-time permanent members of staff, our costs are substantially higher than they were just a few years ago. However, both central fundraising efforts and the fundraising carried out by our members and supporters, coupled with the continuing growth of our membership, leaves us in a great place financially to continue to grow and develop further in coming years.

On the income side, we have seen growth in key areas. The continuing growth of our membership has been such that we have almost 3,700 members for the first time. Income from new memberships and renewals has therefore grown to £97,800 (2019: £85,600). Secondly, our normal ongoing fundraising activities raised more than in 2019 despite the inevitable restrictions on, and indeed cancellation of, many events. Community fundraising – money raised from members both through donations and local fundraising efforts – was inevitably slightly down at £41,600 (2019: £48,700). However, in parallel to that, efforts to secure funding from external sources has been notably successful in 2020 with a total of £85,200 raised (2019: £66,200). In addition to that, we were able to secure additional National Lottery funding to support us through the pandemic of a further £41,000.

We had budgeted to spend more than we had coming in during 2020, with pre-pandemic expected increases in costs arising from staffing changes, project work around volunteers and the website. However, some activity did not take place because of the pandemic and we managed to get through the year without replacing our part-time administrator. Such has been the success of fundraising efforts that we still continue to see revenues covering costs year on year.

RESERVES

Our policy is to retain six-months' worth of running costs. With £265,000 in the bank at the end of the year, our reserves remain well above this level. The position of National Volunteer Manager has now been made a permanent one and the current level of reserves enables us to look at and implement further such changes. It remains a key challenge for the charity in the coming years to identify how and where it can best utilise these funds in order to support our members and to further our aim of reaching more potential members. To that end the Board, working with members, is working to enhance WAY's digital platform – with particular focus at the moment on our website and other social media.

WAY Widowed and Young		
CHARITY NUMBER 1164988		
Accounts to the end of December 2020		
BALANCE SHEET		
	2020	
CURRENT ASSETS	£	£
Debtors		
Gift Aid	9,169	
		9,169
Current Account	275,584	
Less Memorial Fund	(1,852)	
Less Uncleared (Cheques)/Credits	1,043	
		274,775
Set Aside Funds		
Memorial Fund	1,852	
Gift Membership	(475)	
Less Uncleared (Cheques)/Credits		225
		1,602
CURRENT LIABILITIES AND DEFERRED INCOME		
AGM 2020	(10,364)	
National Lottery - Project Swan	(3,775)	
Project Solidarity	(52)	
Events/Audit Fees	(1,713)	
		(15,904)
TOTAL Assets		269,642
FINANCED BY:		
Accumulated Surplus Brought Forward	180,794	
Net (Deficit)/Surplus for the Year	88,848	
		269,642

The Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet on pages 14 and 15 are a summarised extract from the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020.

Financial statements have been subject to independent examination, as required by the Charities Act 2011. No matters of concern have been raised by the independent examiner.

Full financial statements for WAY Widowed and Young can be found on the Charity Commission website.
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission

WAY Widowed and Young		
CHARITY NUMBER 1164988		
Accounts to the end of December 2020		
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT		
	2020	2019
	£	£
Income		
Members subscriptions	37,500	34,000
Members renewals	60,325	51,650
Donations	19,556	66,187
Donations - Central	106,479	0
Fundraising	41,841	48,741
Memorial Fund	1,744	950
Income - Other	1,165	312
Merchandise	1,437	1,737
COVID 19 Support	5,000	0
Gift Aid	27,447	45,675
TOTAL Income	302,494	249,251
Expenditure	£	£
Memorial Fund	(1,680)	(2,460)
Member Helpline	(8,098)	(6,096)
Administration	(16,769)	(17,892)
WAY Forward	(15,293)	(15,079)
WAY E-Newsletters	(2,375)	(2,150)
Annual Report	(584)	(1,372)
Media & PR	(13,469)	(16,786)
Staff Costs	(111,834)	(90,066)
Committee expenses	(86)	(846)
IT Expenditure	(561)	(4,524)
Merchandise	(1,801)	(4,102)
Big Picnic	(151)	(2,395)
Website	(24,782)	(16,710)
Bank Charges	(60)	(60)
Insurance	(997)	(912)
Audit Fees	(1,000)	(690)
Paypal/Just Giving/etc Fees	(4,291)	(4,456)
Other - Project Swan	(9,950)	0
Total Expenditure	(213,780)	(186,594)
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year excluding Events	88,714	62,657
Prior Year AGMs		(394)
Holidays and Events	134	(63)
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year	88,848	62,201





WAY Widowed & Young

Support. Understanding. Friendship.

WAY's Mission

"To offer unique support for those aged 50 or under when their partner died, through an inclusive peer-led network based upon mutual self-help. WAY also campaigns to raise awareness and understanding of the issues affecting those widowed young, and to influence relevant policy."

WAY's Vision

"To ensure ALL those eligible to be members are aware of WAY and have access to the peer-to-peer network and support that WAY offers."



WAY Widowed and Young
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Find us online: www.widowedandyoung.org.uk



Email us: enquiries@widowedandyoung.org.uk



Find us on Facebook at WAY Widowed and Young



Follow us on Twitter: @WidowedandYoung



Follow us on Instagram: @Widowedandyoung



Find us on LinkedIn: WAY Widowed and Young

Founder: Caroline Sarll, 1997
Chair: Bill James (2018 to June 2021)
Chief Executive: Rebecca Cooper (2018 to May 2021)

Design by Sue Bailey
Words by Vicky Anning
Proofreading by Lucy Llewelyn

Registered Charity No: 1164988