

W&Y Widowed
and Young

Annual Report 2021



www.widowedandyoung.org.uk
Support. Understanding. Friendship

Registered Charity No: 1164988

Introduction



A word from WAY's Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees

As we continued to navigate the pandemic, 2021 was hugely challenging for WAY and our members. The impact of Covid-19 continued to affect us all, especially those who lost loved ones – many of whom sadly became eligible to join our charity. The kindness and friendship shared between members was needed more than ever before. Despite the overwhelming obstacles presented by the ever-changing restrictions, our members came together to provide a listening ear, to lift each other's spirits and to offer vital peer-to-peer support.

The restrictions on face-to-face events acted as a catalyst for the huge expansion of digital engagement between our members. Online events and platforms removed all geographical boundaries, allowing our members to connect with each other across the UK.

In 2021, we saw a 15.2% increase in the number of members joining WAY, and our army of member volunteers has grown to 150 – ensuring that our members are supported through digital platforms and through our 62 local homegroups across the UK.

In May, we waved goodbye to **Rebecca Cooper**, who did a wonderful job as Chief Executive for WAY for three years. **Bill James** also stepped down as WAY Chair in July after serving since 2017 – our thanks and gratitude is extended to them both for the wonderful work they did in leading the charity through this challenging time and building strong foundations for future growth.



In spite of the many challenges, our WAY members raised more than £137,000 through a range of activities and donations – up 17.5% on the previous year. Without the efforts of our wonderful fundraisers, WAY simply could not operate. Their support not only ensures that our current members' activities can continue, but also enables us to reach out to future members.

Sadly, more than 23,000 people aged 18-51 die every year.* This means that the need for WAY has never been greater. While it is sad to reflect that we welcomed more than 1,700 new members in 2021, we are pleased that so many young widowed people found our support.

However, we know that there is still much work to be done to make sure that everyone who needs WAY knows about our charity. In 2021, WAY launched a new five-year strategy plan that includes ambitions to reach out to more young widows, strive towards better engagement with underrepresented groups and continue to invest in our member services as we approach our 25th anniversary.

A sincere and heartfelt thank you goes 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.

Stephanie Patrick
Chief Executive since August 2021

Joanna Sedley-Burke
Chair of Trustees since June 2021

Our Story

WAY Widowed and Young is the only national charity in the UK for people aged 50 or under when their partner died.

Founded in 1997, it's a club that nobody wants to be eligible to join, but we are so glad that our members find us. We provide a safe space for people who have been widowed at a young age – offering friendship, support and understanding.

WAY offers a unique peer-to-peer support network, led by volunteers who have all been bereaved at a young age themselves so they understand exactly what other members are going through.

As well as offering a secure members only website and opportunities to meet and chat online and in person, our members also have access to a 24-hour confidential telephone helpline offering bereavement support, legal, financial and health advice.

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 media and other avenues, to show that there is support out there to help people navigate life after loss.

"I joined WAY over eight years ago and it has made a huge difference to my life – a safe place to talk, people to go on holiday with and a social life. Some of my best friends are still people I met through WAY, and it really has helped me rebuild a life in ways I couldn't have imagined."

WAY Member



W&Y

Widowed and Young

WAY impacted the lives of

4,254

young widows in 2021



helping them to navigate their bereavement by offering support and advice, both online and in person.



62

local
homegroups
across the UK

What WAY does



WAY members organised **987** in person and virtual events that were attended by 3,392 people.



150 amazing volunteers helped to support our work across the year.

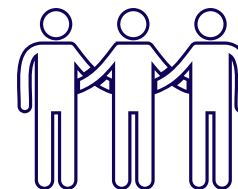


Generous supporters raised **£137,000** helping us to reach more people in need of support.



173 young widows were gifted annual membership of £25, both from our Memorial Fund and through gift memberships.

How WAY helped



79% of members found that meeting others in the same situation has helped.*



Our small team grew to **3 employed** members of staff, helping to better support our members.



79% of members felt that they were better able to cope with their grief.*



70% of members felt less isolated.*



24,332 people helped us to spread the word about WAY by following us across our various social media channels.



Members were kept updated with **117,663** communications across the year.

82 press articles were generated with 90 WAY members taking part.



12,000 people visited our website which was an incredible **44% up** on the previous year.

* Based on survey responses from 446 members in May 2022

Our Members

1,732 new members joined in 2021. Some were newly bereaved, whilst others reached out for further support during the pandemic.



WAY's membership grew by **15.2%**



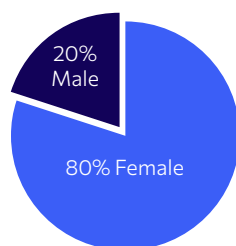
121 people used WAY's 24/7 helpline, enabling them to access counselling services, legal and financial advice.



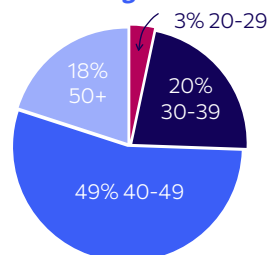
70% of members renewed their membership and retention rates continue to increase year on year.

Demographics

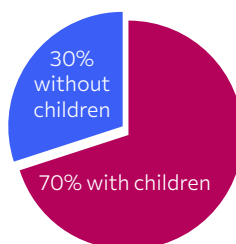
Gender



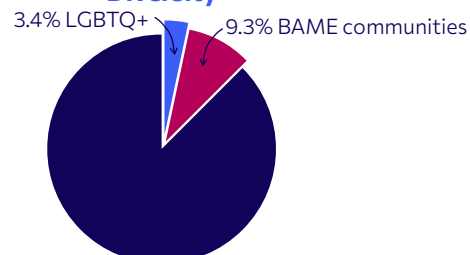
Age



With/without Children



Diversity



Our Member Services

In spite of the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic in 2021, WAY continued to provide a range of vital services and help for all of our members as they navigated their bereavement journey, including:



A members' only website, which listed **987** events, provided access to forums, chat rooms and allowed members to connect and communicate privately with each other.



A closed Facebook group and a large range of subgroups, which were accessed by **87%** of members.



117,663 regular members' magazines and monthly e-newsletters provided information, resources and members' stories.



35 books about bereavement were loaned to members in 2021.



27 members were nominated for member awards, including our Lockdown Legends award for members who had gone the extra mile to support each other during the pandemic.



72% of members felt that they had an improved network of support.*



80% of members said that they have better knowledge about grief and bereavement.*

* Based on survey responses from 446 members in May 2022

Kirsty's Story



"During the pandemic, I quickly became very conscious of the fact that widowed people were already cut off from much of 'normal life'. To be stuck in our houses, in our own heads, was not a good prospect during lockdown. I decided to set up a Saturday Zoom session for members which very quickly expanded.

I also set up a buddy system, which provided members with a buddy who they could contact during lockdown, someone they could check in on and someone who could check in on them. I have made amazing friendships from WAY and wanted other members to experience that too.

WAY has become my support network for so much of my life. It has integrated into my 'normal' life and, during lockdown, it was one of very few constants."

Events



Many of our face-to-face meet ups were still on hold during 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, particularly in the first half of the year. However, we adapted quickly, and a huge number of meetings went online with some smaller gatherings going ahead towards the end of the year.



3,392 people attended 987 events listed across the year - up 14% on the previous year.



75% of members said that face to face meetings and events are one of the most important services that WAY offers.*



* Based on survey responses from 446 members in May 2022

"When Rob died, I didn't know anyone in my situation and suddenly my social life changed too. WAY gave me both social contact and contact with people who I could talk to about Rob and who genuinely understood what I was going through."

WAY Member

Here are just a few events from across the year.

Virtual Spring Festival

The day included yoga, quizzes, games, and tips on healthy eating. With **21** different sessions throughout the day, the festival was attended by more than **100** people.



Big Picnic

With restrictions beginning to lift in May 2021, we were able to hold our annual Big Picnic event both in person and online – with **30 picnics** taking place up and down the country.



Bingo

Lots of members across the year joined in various online events including bingo and quizzes.



Creating Change

Every year, around 3,000 young, widowed men and women with children are unable to access bereavement support payments to help support their families because they were not married to their partner when they died.

WAY has been campaigning on this issue for many years alongside other charities. In July 2021, we were thrilled when the Government finally responded by introducing draft legislation to extend bereavement support payments to cohabiting couples with children.

We are very disappointed, however, that the legislation has still not been finalised at the time of writing. We continue to campaign on this issue to make sure that our members both with and without children get the support they are entitled to – as well as highlighting other injustices that affect those who've been widowed young.

Our Volunteers



Volunteers are absolutely central to WAY's peer-to-peer support network, with 150 volunteers covering roles up and down the country and online.

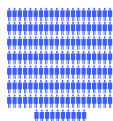
We are pleased that we have been able to increase our support to volunteers in 2021. Our National Volunteer Manager **Veronica Currie** is now in a permanent position with WAY and works tirelessly to ensure volunteers are kept informed and offers ongoing support, training and practical guidance for our growing network of volunteers.

In June, we hosted our first **Volunteers' Festival** – an online event open to volunteers with a variety of activities throughout the day. This included a presentation from author Caroline Lloyd as well as a cookalong along with Masterchef contestant Theo Michaels.

We also appointed four new **Ambassadors** to our team of WAY members who help to promote WAY and raise awareness of the diverse and inclusive nature of the group.



16% more people helped to volunteer in 2021 compared to 2020.



150 volunteers covered 175 volunteering roles.



These volunteers helped to support WAY across the UK in 62 regions.



82% of WAY regions are covered by a local volunteer member with 68% of them having more than one volunteer.



57% of members said that they have found it helpful being able to support peers.*

*Based on survey responses from 438 members in May 2022

Raising Funds for WAY

Although many of our usual fundraising events continued to be on hold during 2021, WAY's members and supporters did an incredible job of raising funds for our charity. Together they helped to raise more than **£137,000** by taking on amazing challenges and through generous donations including gift aid.

London to Brighton



A team of 18 WAY members raised an incredible £33k!

Virtual Marathons



Walking



Wingwalking



We'd like to thank the following companies and foundations that have supported WAY in 2021:

Austin, Davis & Sons Funeral Directors
Bakerwell Ltd
Decanter
Irwin Mitchell
Masterserve Foundation
Sandwell Council via the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) scheme
S.E.A. Building Compliance Limited



78 amazing fundraising challenges took place across the year.

How your support helps

£5

pays for access to the members area of our website

£10

pays for a member to access our helpline for a year

£25

pays for a year's funded membership to WAY

£40

pays to train a WAY volunteer

£100

pays for a member to access a funded place on a WAY weekend break

Interested in fundraising?

Please get in touch with us at fundraising@widowedandyoung.org.uk

Financial Review

Accounts to the end of December 2021

Income & Expenditure Account

	2021	2020
Income	£	£
Members' subscriptions	44,025	37,500
Members' renewals	69,425	60,325
Donations	58,718	126,035
Fundraising	47,007	41,841
Income - Other	1,670	1,165
Merchandise	1,503	1,437
Covid-19 Support	0	5,000
Gift Aid	31,679	27,447
TOTAL Income	254,026	300,750
Expenditure	£	£
Memorial Fund	(3,575)	64
Member Helpline	(9,595)	(8,098)
Administration	(17,406)	(16,855)
WAY Publications	(18,179)	(18,252)
Media & PR	(20,353)	(13,469)
Staff Costs	(110,906)	(111,834)
IT Expenditure	(3,650)	(561)
Merchandise	(699)	(1,801)
Big Picnic	0	(151)
Website	(32,922)	(24,782)
Insurance, Audit & Legal Fees	(3,276)	(997)
Paypal/Just Giving/etc Fees	(4,758)	(4,351)
Other - Project Swan	(845)	(9,950)
Total Expenditure	(226,164)	(211,036)
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year excluding Events	27,863	89,714
AGM 2021	(1,443)	0
Holidays and Events	0	12
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year	26,420	89,726

Balance Sheet

	2021	
CURRENT ASSETS	£	£
Debtors		
Gift Aid	6,000	
		6,000
Cash At Bank	299,869	
Less Uncleared (Cheques)/Credits	(3,273)	
		296,596
Set Aside Funds		
Gift Membership	(450)	
		(450)
CURRENT LIABILITIES AND DEFERRED INCOME		
Events	(1,045)	
Brand Refresh	(5,040)	
		(6,085)
TOTAL Assets		296,062
FINANCED BY:		
Accumulated Surplus Brought Forward		269,642
Net (Deficit)/Surplus for the Year		26,420
		296,062

WAY's Board



Meet some of the people who make decisions about our strategic direction.

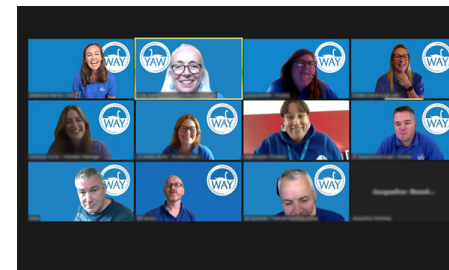
In 2021, our Board took on an ambitious brand refresh, holding **5** Board meetings and **10** working group meetings across the year looking at our website and branding.

We would like to thank Bill, who stepped down as Chair and Chris who stepped down as a Trustee at the end of the year, and all of our trustees, all of whom are volunteers and do a fantastic job.

Trustee	Appointed
Stuart Scarbrough	2016
Bill James	2017
Chris Lima	2018
Graham Briscoe	2018
Jo Sedley-Burke	2018
Jacqueline Dewdney	2019
Kate Siegler	2019
Louise Dodds	2019
Mike Etherington	2020

AGM

We were delighted that our online AGM was attended by more than **150 WAY members**, who had the chance to hear updates about the charity from the comfort of home.



“WAY has helped me a lot, particularly when I was newly widowed, and I see the help it provides to many other people today. I'd like to help the team in their quest to reach as many eligible widows as possible across the UK, so we can help to provide support to even more folks at a time when they most need it.”

Mike Etherington, Trustee

Strategy and Charity Objectives

Our members help to shape our future and after going through an organisational transformation in 2018, WAY carried out a range of consultations with our members to help inform the direction our charity should take in future. We carried out an extensive survey of our members and volunteers to work out the best way forward as our charity continues to grow.

From this, our 2021-2026 five year Strategic Plan was born and reflects the views of all our members and volunteers to make sure the charity meets their needs, to draw out our long-term ambitions, to help outline our organisational priorities and to reflect our new structure.

WAY's new Strategic Plan has been developed in line with recommendations drawn from reports and takes on feedback from our members, staff and volunteers.

We would like to thank everyone who offered their valuable input – from completing WAY surveys to attending meetings, from talking to our team to taking part in working groups.

Our new strategic plan is split into three key areas:

Members' Services



Our work in this area will include membership services, inclusion and engagement and support for volunteers.

Reach



We want to ensure that ALL those eligible to be members are aware of WAY and have access to the peer-to-peer network and support that WAY offers. This includes growing our brand awareness, communications and relationships.

Governance



Our aim is to manage WAY in a more effective, sustainable and transparent way with excellent governance, in order to support the needs of our members. This includes a key focus on governance, funding and operations.

Sachel's Story



Sachel (pictured above left) joined WAY in August 2021 after her 52-year-old husband died of Covid-19. Here's her story...

"I caught Covid in December 2020 and then a couple of days later my husband and nine-year-old son got ill too. My husband got worse and then was admitted to hospital on 6 January and died the following week. It was a lot to take on board – from having a fantastic Christmas together one minute to him not being there.

I don't know whether I coped or not in those first few days and weeks – I just existed. I just did what I had to do to get through the day. I found WAY through a Google search. I found I was in a pretty good head space, considering – but I didn't want to suddenly explode because I hadn't dealt with my grief or talked to anyone else who understood. I needed to be whole for my son.

Going along to my first WAY event was nerve-wracking but it's been hugely beneficial. I've gone along to dinners, cafes, walks and me and my son are going on a day trip to Hunstanton with fellow WAY members in future.

Our local group is very active but there's no pressure to attend things if you don't want to. The best thing is knowing you're not on your own and that people have been through what you've been through. It's a place where you can be without judgement or expectation. You can talk if you want to and if you don't, that is also fine.

What I found I struggled with was making the right decisions about my son. When you're on your own, it's relentless. Through WAY, I joined a subgroup on Facebook for other WAY parents who had children with special educational needs. Suddenly I had people to bounce those decisions off, which has been really valuable.

I would definitely encourage people to join WAY – it's been so helpful to be with people who get you without any judgement."

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's Values

Caring

Respectful

Innovative

Valued

Transparent

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