

Annual Report 2017



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“WAY has been a lifeline for me. I have had support from the only people who truly know what I have felt and endured. I have been inspired and lifted by others at a time when I felt there was nothing to go on for. I have made friends – both virtual and through meet ups in the real world – who I wish I’d never had to meet but are now some of the best people I know.”

Vickie

Introduction

Welcome to WAY’s Annual Report for 2017.

WAY is the only national charity in the UK for men and women aged 50 or under when their partner died. It’s a peer-to-peer support group run by 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, at the end of 2017, had nearly 2,800 members across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The charity aims to provide peer-to-peer support to young widowed men and women – married or not, with or without children, whatever their sexual orientation – 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 the first stages of bereavement as well as information about how their friends and relatives can help.
- A public presence on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) 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 online in our members only forum.
- A new member information booklet upon joining, a triannual 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.

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 (see Campaigning for Change, page 20).

Within this report, we will outline the major issues and achievements of 2017, as well as presenting an analysis of the general financial position of the charity and fundraising activities for the year (see WAY in Figures, page 28).

WAY’s Objectives

- i. To advance the education of the public to raise the awareness of the needs of people who are widowed and young.
- ii. 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, whatever their sexual orientation.



“I found WAY a few weeks into my bereavement at a time when I was vulnerable, lonely and struggling to connect with people who truly understood the magnitude of my loss. The mutual understanding and support from fellow members is invaluable... Without doubt, WAY is the anchor in my shifting new reality.”

Julia

A Word from WAY's Chairman

WAY is now 21 years old and as of 31 December 2017 we had nearly 2,800 members, which is bigger than we've ever been before. It is really sobering to think of just how many young widows and widowers have been with us on this terrible journey over the past 21 years. WAY is a charity that is sadly so necessary – and we have supported literally thousands of people through some of the darkest days of their lives since 1997.

WAY has changed so much over the last 21 years. When I became a member in 2006, we had just 700 members. I joined by filling in my details on a leaflet and sending this off to a PO Box number along with a cheque. We had an online forum called Topica and a newsletter that was just a few sides of A4 paper. Each area operated separately, not really mixing with other areas. The only holiday was the CenterParcs weekend!

In 2007, WAY employed a membership administrator, Gemma Greenbank, who worked from home for just 20 hours a week. Now we have an office in Derby with two full-time Membership Services Managers. We have a website with many pages offering advice on dealing with widowhood, as well as online joining, a forum, chat room and an events system for all our members. We also have our closed Facebook group, which has totally changed how WAY members interact with each other – allowing friendships to develop and flourish right across the country.

When WAY first started, it was run by volunteers and these volunteers are still as important as ever to the success of WAY. Our Area Contacts are a friendly face for new members as well as the main event organisers in many areas. Our Trustees are also volunteers and they put in many hours of their time as well. There is a lot involved with the running of WAY and we should all be eternally grateful for the work of our volunteers. WAY would just not function without them!

We must also appreciate that all our volunteers fit the work they do for WAY around their normal everyday lives – and all while dealing with their own grief too. All too frequently our volunteers may say, "I am really sorry I can't do this right now as it is my anniversary next week". We all understand and we try to be flexible and pick up the pieces. Unfortunately, this means we can't always provide the service our members expect.

Putting strong mechanisms in place

When I became Chairman of WAY eight years ago, I had a vision of 'sorting WAY out'. However, with just one part-time member of staff I realised that there were limitations to what could be achieved with such a reliance on volunteers to run our peer-to-peer support network and the day-to-day operation of the charity. I recognised that we needed to put strong mechanisms in place to enable the charity to

operate efficiently as our membership grows.

This has taken a lot longer than I envisaged all those years ago! The Trustees and I have had to put in many long hours – and frustratingly we have not been able to achieve everything we would have liked.

Now that WAY has annual income over £100,000, we are considered to be a medium-sized charity and we are in the top 17% of UK charities by income. With this growth comes the need to have robust processes and management structures in place to match that status. At times this has resulted in difficult decisions and challenges within the Board that have not been easy to resolve as we try to fit WAY around the normal stresses of daily life. I am pleased to say, however, that we are now in the position to recruit a full-time Chief Executive Officer to manage the day-to-day operation of the charity going forward.

Trustees of WAY have always been drawn from the membership until now. However, as the charity continues to grow and there is a lot more involved with managing the finances of an increasing large membership charity, we need to be really strong on governance and are in need of experienced trustees to help us do that. That's why we have introduced a facility to enable WAY to recruit external trustees. In November 2017, we started a recruitment campaign for experienced trustees and we will be announcing our new appointees at the March 2018 AGM. This does not mean we would never appoint WAY members as trustees, as we would not wish to lose the valuable first-hand knowledge of what it is like to be widowed at a young age. Similarly, we have discussed the possibility of always having Board representation for the sub-group WAYWocs (WAY Widows Without Children) to ensure their particular views and voices are considered in strategy development.

When WAY converted its status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2016, the Board of trustees adopted an 'off the shelf' form of constitution from the Charities Commission. However, this has proved not to be sufficiently robust for WAY's needs as a membership charity. An improved and re-written constitution is needed to ensure it is fit for purpose for our future development. This will be an early priority for the new board next year. This important new constitution will of course be developed in consultation with members and will need to be approved at the AGM in 2019.



Finding the way for WAY

The changes being implemented will enable the Board to focus on reaching new members and providing support to our existing members. I have been a member of WAY for more than ten years and I know there will always be times when I need support from other WAY members. I also want to offer support to others who are just at the beginning of this difficult and upsetting journey. And we want to make sure WAY is getting the level of support right to help our membership retention. Which is why we are now sending out regular surveys to our newest members after three months and nine months.

This year we have also finally been in a position to implement direct debits for membership payments. This will help members who are too busy to renew their membership via Paypal and will help WAY retain more members. This facility has taken over 12 months to implement, partly due to complications between our bank and CAF's direct debit process but mainly due to limitations with the service from BinaryFold4, the company that developed and hosts our website services. A decision on how we should move forward with our digital strategy will be needed by the new board and CEO.

I am very conscious that WAY has not grown and developed as much as the board had hoped over the past few years. This is partly the symptom of an expanding organisation with a high dependency on volunteers. However, as you will see within the pages of this Annual Report, we have many achievements to celebrate over the last 12 months.

WAY continues to campaign at the highest level alongside some of the UK's most high-profile bereavement charities such as Cruse and Child Bereavement UK to raise the awareness of the needs of young widows and widowers – one of our charity's key objectives. In 2017, we campaigned incredibly hard against cuts to the Widowed Parent's Allowance and managed to galvanise huge support for our cause – attracting media coverage in outlets from the *Observer* and *Sunday Times* to the Victoria Derbyshire show on BBC2 and *Woman's Hour*. We are continuing to speak out against these unfair cuts as part of the Life Matters Task Force – and we are also continuing to campaign on behalf of unmarried couples who are not entitled to any bereavement benefits under the current system when their partner dies.

Our campaign work has raised WAY's profile among professionals in the bereavement sector as well as among members of the public. Our media coverage has almost tripled in 2017 as a result – with nearly 100 articles in print and online media, as well as national TV coverage including a slot on News at Ten in April. Our social media outreach continues to grow from strength to strength. Our members

have organised more events than ever through our website (913 events were arranged in 2017!). And we have had a fantastic year for fundraising with huge support from our members doing incredible things like running in marathons and cycling across the country. This culminated in being chosen as AFC Wimbledon's Match Charity in 2017.

I am confident that WAY will continue along this upward trajectory to become a more robust charity and one that is really well equipped to support everyone who has the misfortune to be widowed at a young age. WAY has been such a lifeline for me and I hope it will continue to be a lifeline for many thousands more young widows and widowers in the future.

Georgia Elms
Chairman



"WAY is a place where everyone understands in a society that has little understanding."

Becky



WAY in Numbers - our impact in 2017



WAY had 2,781 fully paid up members at the end of December 2017 (up 21% on 2016 figures)



We had 86,715 visitors to our website in 2017 and more than 283,000 visits to our web pages



There were nearly 6,000 new posts in our members' only forum last year on topics ranging from inquests to advice on DIY – and 21,730 messages sent via our internal messaging system



WAY's public Facebook page had more than 6,000 followers by the end of 2017 (up by more than 1,000 in one year)



More than 1,000 people attended WAY's Big Picnic events at 37 locations across the country in May 2017



More than 80 WAY members and children gathered at Comrie Croft in Scotland in August



WAY and our members were featured in 96 articles in national newspapers, magazines, local newspapers or websites in 2017 (from the *Sunday Times* and *Observer* to *Good Housekeeping* and *Huffington Post*)



74 WAY members and children went along to WAY's activity weekend for families and children at Kingswood Activity Centre in February 2017



At the end of 2017, WAY had 60 volunteers working as Area Contacts across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as many other volunteers helping to arrange meet ups or holidays and helping the charity to run smoothly. Between them, these volunteers organised more than 913 events, from coffee meet ups to barbecues



WAY members were interviewed on 25 radio shows in 2017, from BBC Radio 5 Live to Woman's Hour and LBC.



WAY members appeared on 15 national TV shows, including BBC News at Ten, BBC Breakfast News and Good Morning Britain



Around 130 WAY members attended our 20th anniversary party and AGM in Stratford-Upon-Avon in March 2017



WAY members raised £41,552 through various fundraising initiatives in 2017



WAY had more than 2,700 Twitter followers by the end of 2017 (up from 1,900 in 2016)



WAY now has more than 570 followers on Instagram (up from 200 in 2016)



More than 1,800 people had signed up to receive our Friends of WAY enewsletter by December 2017 (up from 1,300 in 2016)



55 WAY members and kids got together at the National Forest Youth Hostel in Derbyshire in June 2017

Providing effective and sustainable governance

WAY has a Board of Trustees who, until now, have been drawn from WAY's membership. Trustees are all volunteers and usually serve a term of two to three years. The Board meets roughly four times a year, and at the annual general meeting, which is held at a different location around the country every year. The Board chooses a Chairman from its ranks to preside over meetings.

WAY's new constitution as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) also allows us to appoint up to two external trustees to the board for a fixed term, usually because they have the skills or experience of a particular aspect of charity management that we need. At the end of 2017, we held a recruitment round for external trustees to help us strengthen the governance of our charity going forward. We will be announcing several new appointments at our March 2018 AGM in Newcastle.

Charity Commission guidelines state that trustees are responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of a charity, determining the direction and development of the charity through good governance and clear strategic planning. In addition to this, we also need robust systems in place to help run our membership services on a daily basis.

To help oversee the running of WAY, our Trustees set the wheels in motion during 2017 to recruit a new Chief Executive Officer. We are delighted to announce that an appointment was made in early 2018.

We were also pleased to announce the appointment of two Membership Services Managers in 2017 to help with the smooth day-to-day running of the charity. Working from our offices in Derby, **Colette Jelfs** and **Georgina Wild** are helping to make sure that members' needs are met as quickly and efficiently as possible.

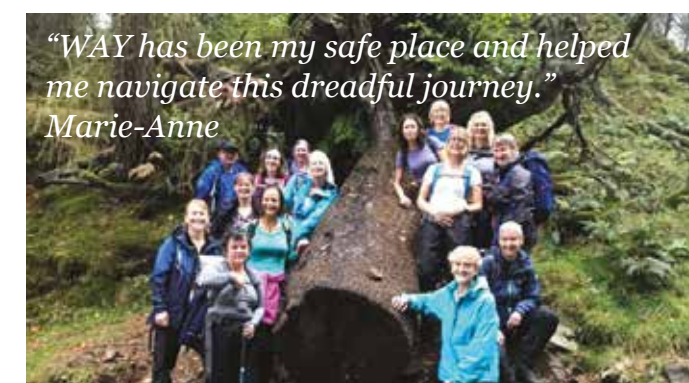
2017 to help shape the charity's priorities for the next 2-3 years. As WAY continues to grow, the Board of Trustees are keen to ensure that it retains its original values and is moving forward to meet the needs of its members. They spent time evaluating the current objectives and whether they were still relevant to the charity today – unanimously it was felt that they were. They then discussed and prioritised the key areas that they would like to develop to support members and help the charity grow. Each of these areas needed to support the existing objectives.

In summary the priorities are:

- 1. First Contact:** Understanding and improving first contact for new members.
- 2. Area Contacts (AC) and Local WAY:** Improving local offers, understanding what is happening in each area, investing in and better understanding of the needs of ACs, celebrating differences of each area and AC.
- 3. Online support:** Improving the existing online experience.
- 4. Fundraising strategy:** Creating and implementing a clear fundraising strategy with measurement.
- 5. Communication channels:** Update joiners' details to explicitly say that members will benefit by being part of Facebook groups and informing them how to contact their AC. Be clear on how Facebook and members only website will be used.

The Board has selected challenging priorities that, while hard to deliver, will have the most impact for members and the charity.

The next steps are to plan out with the CEO and new trustees how each of these priorities can be achieved, within what timeline and how they will be measured.



Meet WAY's Board of Trustees

WAY's Trustees met four times in 2017 to discuss governance issues and the strategic direction of WAY.



Chairman: Georgia Elms
(re-appointed March 2016)

"I joined WAY in October 2006, four months after I was widowed aged 36 when my husband Jon (38) died suddenly from Meningitis – leaving me with 1-year-old Daisy. I found out the next day that I was pregnant.

The main reason I have been able to survive as a young widow has been through the support and reassurance I have received from other WAY members who I have met at local, national and even international events, as well as online. I joined the WAY committee in March 2009 and took on the role of Chairman in March 2010.

I wanted to give something back to the wonderful charity that had helped me so much. I hoped that I could use my skills from previous roles in large companies to ensure that everyone who was eligible to join knew about us and that WAY was able to be what it said it was. I also wanted to campaign on behalf of WAY to ensure that those who are widowed young are recognised and taken seriously."



Treasurer: Debbie Knivett
(re-appointed in March 2016)

"My husband was diagnosed with stomach cancer in 2000 when I was pregnant with Ben, our first (and only!) child. Ben was born in December 2000 and Andy died in May 2002. I heard about WAY on the radio and joined the North East group although I was still in the South at the time but knew I was going to relocate. WAY provided me with the support of others who had been bereaved but also a social network when I had no friends in the area. I have been WAY's treasurer for seven years now and really enjoy the challenges it brings."



Trustee: Stuart Scarbrough
(appointed in March 2016)

"After finding myself widowed at 31 with two small children to bring up, I was fortunate enough to find WAY six months later. As devastating as my situation was, knowing that there was support at the end of a phone – or on the other side of a social media forum – gave me strength to face each day. Three years later, I am still finding new challenges each day, but knowing that those people I have met through our unique support network will be there for me at every hurdle is a huge help.

As a WAY trustee, I want to ensure that I play my part in continuing to promote and publicise the charity, so that every person who is eligible knows about us and is able to reach out and join us. WAY is more than just a charity. It is a community full of people who both need support and are wanting to support each other. I hope that those who need a voice can count on me to represent them.

A big part of WAY, for me, is the events – whether local coffee meets or nationwide trips to CenterParcs. This is where lifelong friendships are formed, and I find these a fundamental part of the organisation. I hope to promote these events and ensure that meet ups are accessible to all members so we can all enrich our turbulent lives."



Trustee: Ed Spooner
(appointed in March 2016)

"Grief hit me hard when I lost my wife Heather in October 2011. It took me two years to find WAY – I wish I'd discovered it earlier! Finding people who just 'got it' and knew the right thing to say rather than 'Oh, you're young, you'll find somebody new' was like a breath of fresh air.

I hope by becoming a trustee I can give back something to WAY, a charity that literally saved me during my grief. I am a web developer by trade and build e-commerce websites during the day (and night, and weekends..). I hope this will come in handy in developing the WAY web presence further and help us to reach out to and support more widows. As Heather and I never had the chance to have children I am also an active member and admin of WAYwocs, (WAYers without Children)."



Trustee: Jane Bayliss
(resigned in 2017)

"I was widowed in May 2012 after my husband died very unexpectedly of a heart attack aged 40. I was 34 and left with three small children aged 1, 5 and 7. I joined WAY a few months later after a friend of the family told me about it. Looking back on those first few months in particular, the support and strength of fellow widows was one of the only things that kept me going.

I have been a housewife since October 2004 when I went on maternity leave from the Business Travel Industry to have my first child. I have always been a homemaker and had no wish to return to work. I am currently still a stay at home mum and live on a small farm with my husband Martin (a fellow WAY member) and our four children.

I'm a true believer that life is for living and that we must make the most of every day. As we are all too aware, our lives can be changed so quickly. WAY continues to be a constant support to me and I have made some wonderful lifelong friends."



Trustee: Martin Eggleston
(appointed March 2017)

"I joined WAY in May 2014, about three months after Jane died. I found out about it after looking up groups for like-minded widowers on the internet, as I was beginning to realise that, no matter how sympathetic my friends were, not only had they also lost someone very dear to them, but they often didn't know what to do or say to help me.

The group I joined welcomed me so warmly that I immediately felt a connection with WAY. I have a daughter, who was 7 when her mum died, and through WAY I met Kirsty, who also had a boy who was 7 when his dad died, and another boy who barely knew his dad as he was just 7 months old.

We brought our two families together and had wonderful times at WAY picnics and at Centerparcs. After moving to Oxfordshire I decided I'd like to give something back, so when Andrew Smith asked for another Area Coordinator to join him in August 2015 I was delighted to take on the role."



Trustee: Bill James
(appointed in November 2017)

"I was widowed through cancer in 2006 and left with a very premature baby in Inverness and a job in the Middle East. Being widowed and having to cope with the new reality has undoubtedly been the greatest challenge of my life. It took me almost a year to find WAY but when I did it made a huge difference to me providing something that even the most supportive friends and family could not. Just to be able to meet and talk to others locally or online who were going through the same thing made me feel better, more at ease and less alone.

I have been a WAY member in the Highlands of Scotland; in Surrey; as part of the international group when living and working in The Netherlands; and now in Gloucestershire following our return to the UK in 2017. It was my work as an accountant and finance director for a multinational company that led to my travels and now as a trustee I hope to use my professional skills and personal experience to further the work of WAY and to help and support all our members as best I can – just as WAY helped me and my daughter through some very dark times."



Delivering a range of excellent services to meet members' needs



WAY provides a range of services for our members to help them through different stages of their bereavement journey, whether they have been newly bereaved or whether they have been widowed for a while.

WAY membership includes:

- Our Members Only website (with the chance to talk to other members via a private forum and chatroom)
- Access to our members' only closed Facebook groups
- Local group activities and national events
- Weekends away and holidays with other members
- A regular members' magazine and monthly enews
- Free telephone helpline, offering counselling support as well as legal and financial advice
- Volunteering opportunities

In our most recent Member Survey (end of 2016), 80% of our members said that they were satisfied with WAY overall and the services provided by the charity. As you will read in more detail over the next few pages, we are striving to make our services as good as they possibly can be for our growing membership.

Our priorities going forward are to understand and improve our first contact for new members and improving our local offer, as well as improving members' existing online experience.

Telephone helpline

In 2016, we were very pleased to be able to introduce a new service for all our members – a free 24-hour confidential telephone helpline that offers:

- 24-hour telephone counselling & support: members can arrange to speak in confidence for six 30 minute sessions to a trained bereavement counsellor.
- Personal legal advice and confidential information: members can get support from a fully-qualified professional with any personal finance or legal matters
- Health or medical advice across a range of medical and well-being issues
- Access to an online portal that offers 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. Our online forum and Facebook Page are filled with questions from members about legal and financial issues, and many discussions about the lack of counselling available through the NHS – we hope this helpline will provide a useful stopgap when members are struggling most.

Increasing membership and improving retention

At the end of 2017, WAY had 2,781 members, which is a 21% increase on last year's figure of 2,302.

We have seen a steady increase in new joiners over the past two years, with more than 1,400 new members joining the charity in 2017 (compared to 1,300 new joiners in 2016, 1,100 in 2015 and 849 in 2014).

A significant increase in media coverage for WAY through our campaigning (see page 20) has led to a higher profile for our charity and, since we set up our online joining facility, it is so much easier for potential members to find and join WAY through our website.

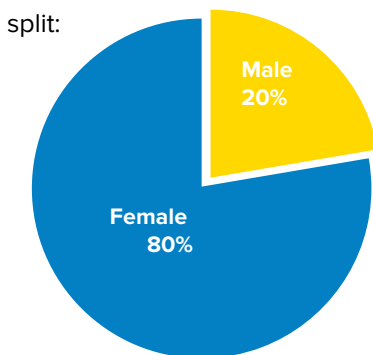
However, we had a total of 1,015 members lapsing during 2017, which mean that we fall far short of our overall retention target and this continues to be an area of concern. In order to address member retention, we have introduced a survey of new members both three months and nine months into their membership. This will help us to address any issues raised by new members and to help their membership run as smoothly as possible.

In 2017, we also introduced our new **Memorial Fund**, which offers support for new and existing members who are struggling to pay WAY's £25 per year membership fee, as well as providing funds for members who cannot afford to attend WAY events (see overleaf).

We hope that the strengthening of our Membership Services Team and the introduction of a Direct Debit system in 2017 to facilitate the membership renewal process will help to improve member retention going forward (see page 17).

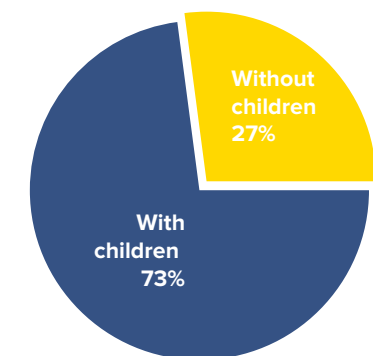
The breakdown of WAY's membership is as follows:

Gender split:

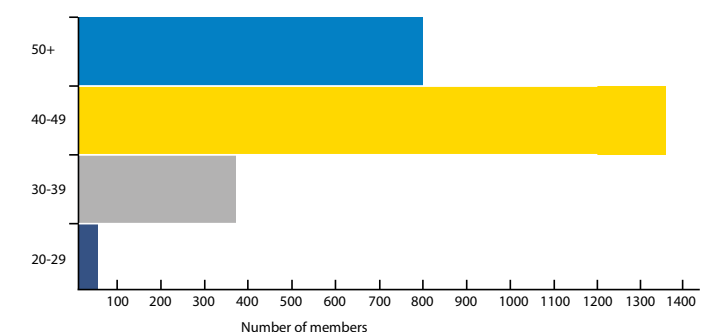


This reflects government statistics on the numbers of men widowed below the age of 50 compared to the number of women.

With/without children:



Age of WAY members:



Arranging regular and inclusive events

One of the main benefits of being a WAY member is the opportunity to get together with other young widows and widowers who understand exactly what you're going through. And there have been lots of opportunities to do just that during 2017. There are regular meet ups organised by and for WAY members across the UK – ranging from coffee meet ups to activity weekends. Over the course of 2017, our members organised 913 events via the Events section of our members only website.

We have a network of 60 area coordinators who arrange meet ups for members on a local level. Typical events include pub evenings for adults, picnics and park days out with children, meals in restaurants and barbecues, where people can get to know each other in relaxed surroundings.

WAY also holds national events for members from across the country, all of which are organised by our volunteers. Some of the highlights of the 2017 events calendar included: a weekend at Kingswood Activity Centre in South Yorkshire in February; a gathering at Comrie Croft in Scotland; weekend activities in Derbyshire and Dorset over Father's Day weekend in June; a walking weekend in the Lake District in October; a Break-A-WAY city break in Sheffield; and a skiing trip to France over New Year (see overleaf for more details).

We also hold an annual meeting and dinner dance every March at different locations around the country. This is not just a legal requirement but is also an opportunity for members to meet other young widows and widowers from Aberdeen to the Isle of Wight. In 2017, more than 130 people gathered for WAY's 20th anniversary AGM in Stratford upon Avon. In 2018, WAY's AGM is heading up north to Newcastle.



WAY also organises an annual Big Picnic Weekend in May, which is a chance to throw picnics at beauty spots across the country during the course of one weekend – and to introduce what we do to members of the public and potential new members (see overleaf for details of our 2017 Big Picnic Weekend).

Not content with homegrown adventures, WAY members have organised some very successful holidays and

weekends away during 2017 too, including a visit to Villa Pia in Italy in April for some early spring sunshine and a wonderful weekend in Copenhagen in May.

Last but not least, we were absolutely delighted that WAY submitted a successful application to the Landmark Trust's 50 for Free scheme, which meant that two recently bereaved WAY members

and their families got the fantastic opportunity to stay in a stunning historic property in Kent in March 2017 (see page 25).

One of WAY's priorities is to make sure that WAY events are inclusive for all our members. With this in mind, this year our trustees set the wheels in motion for a **Memorial Fund**, which will make it possible for our members who are struggling financially to attend events that may be beyond their budget. The fund has been created in memory of those WAY members who have passed away and has helped 12 members since it was introduced.



"WAY has been a lifeline for me over the years. I'm so glad I plucked up the courage to go to my first meet up.... I have never looked back and have some amazing new friends who just 'get it'."
Lynn

What WAY members got up to in 2017

There were many get togethers up and down the country – and some even further afield – in 2017. Here are just a few of the highlights:

February: 74 WAY members and children enjoyed a weekend of outdoor pursuits at Kingswood Activity Centre in South Yorkshire (see page 14)

March: More than 130 WAYers attended WAY's 20th anniversary Annual General Meeting and dinner dance in Stratford Upon Avon

April: A group of 55 WAYers and children travelled to Villa Pia in Italy

May: Around 1,000 people attended WAY's 20th Anniversary Big Picnic events at 37 different locations across the country – from Scotland to Cornwall

May: 50 WAYers Without Children (WAYwocs) travelled to Copenhagen in May – enjoying boat trips, fun fair rides, ice creams and lots of laughter!

May: 24 WAYers and 38 kids had some half-term fun at Wall Eden Farm in Somerset

June: 55 members and their children got together in Derbyshire to mark Father's Day together (see page 15) while another 60 members and children got together in Dorset

July: A group of 21 WAY Outward Bounders, 12 children and friends went camping in Ashbourne, Derbyshire

August: 80 WAY members and children took the high road to Comrie Croft in Scotland

September: A group of WAYers got together for a Break-A-WAY weekend in Sheffield

October: A group of 58 WAYers and friends went walking in the Lake District while others gathered at CenterParcs in Sherwood Forest – organised by Linda Heywood and Sharon Whitehead

December: 21 WAYers and their 34 kids decided to pack their bags and head off to Lapland this Christmas to reset the Christmas spirit button.

December: Last but not least, a group of 30 WAYers and their children celebrated the New Year on the ski slopes of France.

WAY's Big Picnic Weekend

WAY's 20th anniversary Big Picnic weekend was the biggest ever – with 37 picnics up and down the country, from Scotland to Cornwall. More than 1,000 friends, family and supporters came along to help celebrate WAY's 20th anniversary at some of the country's most picturesque picnic spots.

We held a Big Picnic event for the first time in Northern Ireland, bringing together young widowed men and women and their families in Belfast. WAY's founder **Caroline Sarll** visited the Welsh picnic at Barry Island in South Wales two decades after she started the charity.

One widow who came along to our Big Picnic event in Devon to find out more about WAY told us: *"My son, who's 11, in his words had a 'thoroughly enjoyable afternoon'. Feedback is that the kids were all exceptionally kind, inclusive and shared an unspoken bond of support. This speaks volumes! I too found it to be a relaxed atmosphere, forward focused with respect for the past – and, my biggest relief, non-intrusive. I'm signing up this evening and looking forward to meeting other members of the club one doesn't wish to be eligible for but whose members are forging forward with best intentions and bold spirit."*



Taking the plunge with WAY

In February, a group of more than 70 WAY members and children got adventurous at Kingswood Activity Weekend in South Yorkshire for the fourth year running. This year's outdoor adventures included abseiling from the top of a tall tower, archery, fencing and the zip wire, to name but a few. [Here's Yvette's story...](#)

When Yvette first joined WAY in October 2016, she was keen to get together with other WAYers and their families as soon as possible with her two daughters, aged 3 and 6. Before she knew it, she found herself heading up the A1 to Kingswood Activity Centre. Over the course of one February weekend, Yvette and her girls got to try things they'd never done before – including archery and abseiling.

"I abseiled 40ft down a tower," she said proudly. "I cried all the way, but I did it! As I walked upstairs my breathing started getting really shallow. But I was so determined to do it! And everybody was saying come on, you can do it. And I did!"

"My oldest daughter, Lauren, went up first – she was first in the queue. A few minutes later, she was coming down with another WAY member, Sally. And then she did it twice more on her own!"

"There were a few people who were nervous on the zip wire," she said. "One lady was kneeling on the floor. But there was a lot of team spirit and support for people you'd literally just met. And we were all watching out for each other's children."

The girls made lots of new friends. And Yvette got some much-needed chill out time.

"It's very hard when you're at home," she said. "You've got all these boundaries. We were just able to relax. The girls were both crawling through mud and I just stood there letting them. It allowed them the freedom to be children.

It allowed me to relax about things I'd normally get uptight about. I just thought: 'We'll wash it all when we get back home'. It was just about having fun and being social with no chores. And best of all: No cooking and cleaning!" When it came to the Sunday afternoon, Yvette and the girls didn't want to leave.

"I was warned I could feel a bit deflated when I got home. And I did," she said. "But various people said let's keep in touch. It was exactly what I needed it to be in terms of the support. I suddenly realised that we'd found what we needed, that we'd found people who understood."

"Going on weekends like that, you meet people who are at different stages of their journey – two, three four up to 11 years into their grief journey," she said. "You see how things have moved on in their lives and they've gone forward in their lives."

"A lot of my friends, their lives have moved on whereas I live and breathe it every day," she said. "Generally it's on my brain every millisecond. With WAY members, you can talk freely about how you feel about things. For me it was so good to be with people where you feel normal... because that was what it was like at Kingswood. We just felt normal. We felt like we belonged."



"We just felt normal. We felt like we belonged."

Father's Day with WAY

This June, a group of 55 WAYers got together to support each other through Father's Day weekend, which can be a difficult time for so many of our members. Sheffield WAY member Jenny writes about sending messages to lost loved ones at the YHA National Forest in Derbyshire...

Twelve months ago, I would never have imagined that this Father's Day me and my children would be sending balloons into the sky with messages for Daddy. And last summer, as we struggled through the early days of our grief, I certainly couldn't imagine that we'd be able to do this surrounded by others to share our tears, laughter and love. But this is what WAY has given us: the chance to be with others who know what we are going through; and what a difference it makes!

On Friday, 16 June we found ourselves at the YHA National Forest, near Derby, with 55 other WAYers (20 adults and 35 children) for a weekend full of activities – as well as time to chat and reflect.

When we arrived, we didn't really know anyone so we were understandably a bit apprehensive but you won't be surprised to know that by the time we left on Sunday, we had exchanged details with others, found out who was going on the next WAY event we were booked on and had happily agreed that we'd be back next year!

We had exclusive use of the hostel and this helped us to relax as we knew that everyone else there was with WAY. The sunny weather made a real difference to the weekend as we could sit, eat and play outside the whole time. Saturday was then a very busy day at the Conkers Activity Centre, just a short walk from the hostel. Some of us had booked onto activities such as kata kayaking, karting, ropes and the zip wire whilst others made the most of the free activities such as the barefoot walk and the play areas in the centre. We all made use of the train to get around the site in the heat of the day and one member experienced a few mobility scooters to help her to get around with a broken foot!

The kata kayaking was our favourite activity, helped by the team spirit that shone through (and because we won the races!). Some found the ropes a bit scary but we cheered each other on and personally the sensation of whizzing down the zip wire with 'no hands' was one to savour!

Back at the hostel on Saturday afternoon there was a chance for the children to decorate biscuits (which was actually an excuse to pile on as many sweets as possible and to eat a few on the way!) but there were some brilliant designs produced in a tight competition. This was also the time when we wrote the labels for our Father's Day balloons. This brought some tears for us, but what better place to be than with others who were doing the same?

Saturday night was then bingo and quiz night. What a competitive lot we are! In good spirits, the children helped the adults with the quiz and they had their own prizes in the bingo.

Sunday morning saw a more relaxed start with the main event being the balloon release. Co-organiser Stuart Scarbrough made this as easy as it could be and we cheered as our messages went up into the beautiful blue sky. "They look like stars" said my two as the balloons caught the sun's rays.

Spending time with others in the same situation always helps us to keep stepping a little bit further along on our journey, so thanks to all the other WAYers who were there too.

A note about balloon releases: Some members have expressed concern about balloon/lantern releases because of their potentially harmful effect on the environment and animals. Please note that we did use special biodegradable balloons. What was important for us this weekend was the process of writing notes for Daddy and 'sending' them. Going forward, we need to think about what we use to do this that doesn't cause unnecessary harm.



Supporting peer-to-peer relationships

Network of Volunteers

WAY is run by a network of volunteers – from our area contacts to our board of trustees to our social media volunteers. In 2017, we had two paid members of staff in the Membership Services Team and a freelance Communications Manager.

WAY's 60 area contacts are integral to the way our charity runs – they give up their valuable time to reach out to new members in their area and to organise local events. One of our strategic priorities going forward is to understand what is happening in each area, understanding the needs of Area Contacts and celebrating the differences of each area.

Data protection changes have meant that Area Contacts can no longer be given new members' telephone numbers, and this has meant that our volunteers can only contact new members via our members only website. The board spent much time brainstorming ideas for how best to support our volunteers in this regard. We are aware that changes to data protection laws coming in 2018 will mean it is incumbent on WAY to be even more precise about the way we store and share members' data, and we are working to incorporate these changes into our way of working.

We are continuing to look at ways of strengthening the level of support for our network of volunteers over the coming year, to make sure that we have a robust infrastructure in place to support the peer-to-peer relationships that are so hugely beneficial to WAY's members.

We are also continuing to ensure that our Membership Services Team in Derby is provided with the resources needed to offer the right level of support to the charity and our growing membership.

The Mandy Burrows Memorial Award

In order to recognise the tireless work of our volunteers, in 2014 we launched the Mandy Burrows Award for Outstanding Contribution to WAY. This is an annual award held in honour of one of our members, Mandy Burrows, who sadly passed away. We were pleased to announce the 2017 winner was **Linda Magistris**, Area Contact for WAY in London (pictured right with WAY's Chair Georgia Elms).

"I was absolutely delighted to receive the Mandy Burrows Award at the AGM," said Linda. "I actually couldn't believe it, especially as there were so many other really worthy candidates who have all worked tirelessly to promote WAY and to support and help members throughout the year."

Helen Bailey Award for Best Blog

We were also pleased to announce the winner of our new Helen Bailey Award for the best blog written by a WAY member, as voted by our members. We set up the award in memory of late WAY member Helen Bailey, who helped so many young widows and widowers through her own blog Planet Grief and through her book *When Bad Things Happen in Good Bikinis*.

The very deserving winner of the first award was **Gary Marson**, who has helped so many WAYers through his inspirational blog *Just Carry on Breathing*, which describes the months after his wife took her own life.

"I felt genuinely humbled to win the first Helen Bailey Award," said Gary (pictured below, in centre). "I'm incredibly honoured to have my name linked with somebody who brought such comfort to so many widowed young. I initially wrote about my grief purely as a coping mechanism but quickly realised that sharing my story was a way in which I could ensure that Louise was able to continue, indirectly, to reach out and help others, just as she would wish. If just one other person has found my words helpful then I can take consolation in the thought that at least some good has come out of Louise's death."

Find Gary's blog at
<http://justcarryonbreathing.blogspot.co.uk/>



WAY's Website



WAY's website continues to be a useful resource for members and non-members alike. More than 37% of new members find us through Internet searches so a strong web presence is a good way of promoting our unique services for people who've been widowed at a young age. We also have a section on our website aimed at friends and family who are supporting someone who's been widowed young. Our online joining process also continues to run smoothly, helping newly bereaved people to find the support they need at a time when they need it.

In 2017, we saw a slight increase in the number of users of our website – with 86,715 visitors compared to 86,503 in 2016. During the same period we had more than 283,000 visits to our website.

The members' only part of WAY's website is being well used, with 6,000 new posts in our members' only Forum during 2017 on more than 1,000 different topics ranging from cooking-for-one tips to how to deal with difficult in laws. Our forum is a great resource for members to offer one another advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We also have a chatroom where members can talk to each other in real time.

The Events section of our website is also very well used, with members posting 913 events over the course of 2017. It couldn't be easier for members to set up an online event and invite other members in their local group to attend.

Members can now book onto and pay for some national events through our website, making the administration of events much easier for our Membership Services Team.

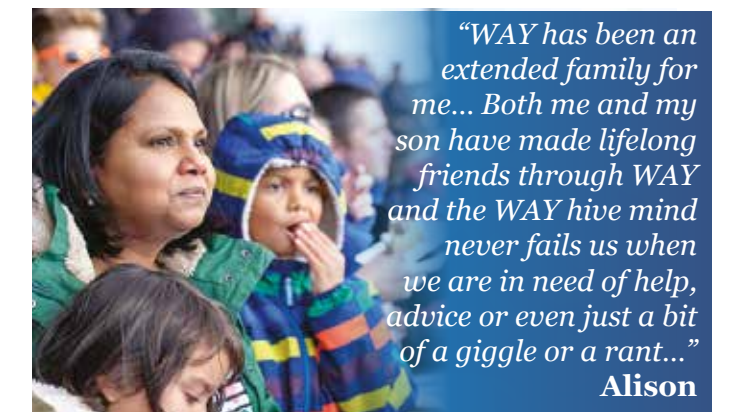
WAY members can also see who lives close to them geographically and can message each other directly, via

the Members' Only Area, as well as chatting live with other members in the chatrooms. More than 21,730 messages have been sent using WAY's internal messaging system in 2017.

All of WAY's policies and procedures, as well as past Annual Reports and newsletters, are available in the How WAY Works section of the Members' Only Area, which includes a wealth of information for members about how the charity is run.

We were also really pleased to be able to introduce a new system through our website this year that will allow members to renew their membership of WAY via **Direct Debit**. We hope this will make members' lives easier when their membership comes up for renewal, as well as helping our membership systems to run as smoothly as possible going forward. WAY will not store any of our members' details. All transactions will be managed by GOCardless, which handles millions of transactions every year for 30,000 top companies in the UK and Europe.

WAY is hoping to make further improvements and updates to our website in 2018.



Harnessing the experiences of members to raise awareness and help other young bereaved men and women

Getting the word out about WAY

As well as encouraging members to build their own support networks interactively through WAY's website and meet ups, WAY provides our members with advice and support through:

- Our tri-annual *WAY Forward* magazine, which gives members an opportunity to share their stories and experiences with others
- Our monthly e-newsletter, which provides a round up of what's going on with WAY, including all the latest events
- WAY also has a closed Facebook group for members only, which is run by volunteers. Currently this is running alongside the WAY website as an informal platform for members to communicate with each other and we hope that the two offer a complementary service for our members.
- Our volunteers have also set up local Facebook groups for each of our areas to help our members keep in touch with each other. And in addition, a number of spin off groups have also been set up by members with specific interests and experiences – from a page for members who enjoy outdoor adventures to a group for members who've been bereaved by suicide.

It is also part of WAY's remit to reach out to members of the public and to raise the 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 channels, including social media, press coverage and our public website. WAY has a freelance Communications Manager who works with the trustees and Membership Services Team on a part-time basis to help with WAY's communications outreach.

Media Coverage

2017 was something of a sea change year for WAY in terms of media coverage. We had 96 articles in newspapers, magazine and online – a nearly three-fold increase in coverage since 2016. We also more than doubled our coverage on radio and TV, with 40 appearances on national and local radio and TV stations.

The main focus of our media coverage in the first half of the year was our campaign against cuts to the Widowed Parent's Allowance, which led to national media coverage that we could only dream of in the past. Articles featuring WAY and our members appeared in the *Independent*, the *Observer*, the *Sunday Times* and *Grazia* and our members and Georgia Elms were also interviewed alongside key politicians on the influential Victoria Derbyshire show on BBC2 as well as being interviewed in BBC Radio 5, LBC, Woman's Hour and Channel 5 news.

As a result of all the coverage, bolstered by footballer Rio Ferdinand's support for our cause, we have noticed a huge increase in WAY's profile among journalists and decision makers – and among members of the public too.

This led to extremely high-profile coverage throughout the rest of 2017, with a prime slot on BBC News at Ten in April, excellent coverage on BBC Radio 5 Live in August and an interview with WAY members by recently widowed actress (and WAY member) **Holly Matthews** on the primetime Lorraine show just before Christmas (Holly pictured bottom right with Membership Services Manager Colette Jelfs).

In 2017, we have made a conscious effort to diversify our coverage to reach out to more men and also to other parts of the community that are underrepresented among our members, such as the Asian community, through features on bereavement in Eastern Eye and the Voice of Islam radio. We also made the decision to advertise in the *Funeral Director Monthly*, which is read by more than 3,500 funeral directors across the UK – one of our key audiences in terms of reaching out to newly bereaved widows and widowers who could benefit from our support.

WAY invested significant time and energy into reaching out to local media in the run up to our 20th anniversary Big Picnic Weekend, which really paid dividends. We had good coverage in local papers and radio stations – including a lovely article in the *Western Mail* about how Caroline Sarll founded WAY 20 years ago and articles in local papers ranging from the *Bromsgrove Advertiser* to the *Reading Chronicle*, the *Eastern Daily Press* and the *Belfast Telegraph*. We also had radio interviews in Nottingham, Leeds and Cornwall.

Here are some of the other highlights of our coverage in 2017:

- WAY member “**Adam Golightly**” recommended WAY in his final Widower of the Parish column in *The Guardian*
- Musician **Ben Westwood** and WAY supporter wrote about his experiences of widowed fatherhood in *The Telegraph*
- One of WAY's younger members **Greig Pender** talked to Radio 1's *Newsbeat*
- Two WAY members who met through WAY were interviewed in May's issue of *Woman & Home*
- **Ali Afzar** talked about Asian men and grief in *Eastern Eye*
- WAY trustee **Martin Eggleston** talked to BBC Wales about the controversial McDonalds ad featuring a bereaved mum and her son
- WAY got a mention in *Hello* magazine when WAYer **Amie Capron** won the magazine's Star Mum competition in May
- Asda's *Good Living* magazine featured WAY member **Andy Szebeni** in the run up to Father's Day – reaching more than 2 million Asda customers
- Three of our members were interviewed by BBC Radio 4 for a feature on dating for *Woman's Hour* on 29 August.
- WAY trustee **Martin Eggleston** was interviewed on BBC Radio Oxford about dealing with your late partner's digital legacy – and on the Voice of Islam radio station

- WAY London Marathon runner **Graydon Widdicombe** was interviewed in *Runner's World*
- WAY member **Lauren Roche** appeared in an article in *New* magazine
- We also had two articles featuring WAY members in *Good Housekeeping* magazine this winter – a moving interview with **Ashlyn Reed** in November about coping with being widowed twice; and an inspirational interview with **Pherenice Worsey-Buck** in the Christmas issue of the magazine talking about finding love again
- London WAY member **Kirsty Jenkinson** was featured in the Guardian's *Weekend* magazine in November, while **Amy Donnelly** was interviewed in *Best* magazine and **Andrew Ware** and **Jess Haslem** spoke to *Positive News*.
- **Louise Munde** and Scottish WAY member **Ali Payne** both spoke to *Woman's Own* about coping with Christmas
- Several of our members were interviewed for an article about young widowhood in the *Daily Mail*
- Two pieces in the *Huffington Post* featured WAY members, one offering tips about getting through the festive season and another about cancelling Christmas altogether
- WAY had two shout outs in the *Daily Mirror* in December – one in an interview featuring **Steven Park**, who was widowed with triplets in 2016 and another featuring WAY Area Contact **Lindsey Briggs** and her fight for her husband's right to die after a road accident left him severely brain damaged.

You can keep up to date with all our latest media coverage on our website here: <https://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk/media>

Social Media

WAY's social media presence continues to thrive, providing a cost-effective way for us to reach out to potential members and to friends and supporters of the charity, as well as to key influencers.

We have a public Facebook group that had 6,000 followers at the end of 2017 (up by more than 1,000 in one year). We have a mixture of members and non-members using this platform and have found it to be a very effective way of engaging people in WAY campaigns, including our calls to action around changes to bereavement support benefits.

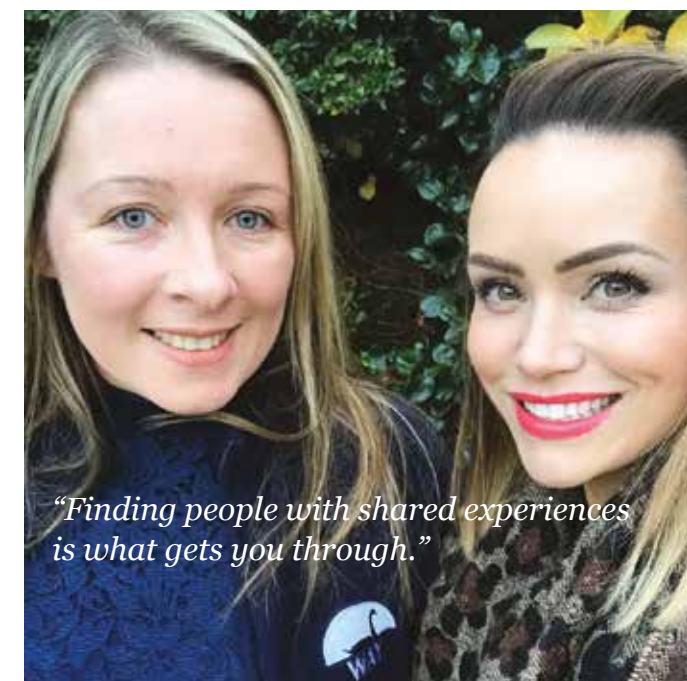
We also have an increasingly active Twitter presence, with more than 2,700 followers by the end of 2017 (up from 1,900 in 2016). We have focused our efforts on reaching out to other bereavement agencies as well as journalists, politicians and other key influencers to make sure that our message is getting out to as many people as possible. Our Instagram account now has more than 570 followers (up from 200 in 2016) and is helping us to reach out to a new and younger demographic.

BBC Radio 5 Live recorded a video interview of WAY members Diane and Jayne to coincide with their radio interview in August, which was shared on the BBC Facebook page and was seen by more than 100,000 people. And a moving letter that was written by one of our Welsh members to her MP about the unfairness of the cuts to Widowed Parent's Allowance was seen by more than 70,000 people, which really helped to bring the message home to many more people.

We also had lots of social media interest on key days on the calendar such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day – as well as a good social media following around fundraising events such as the London Marathon in April and the AFC Wimbledon fundraising match in November.

We also now have more than 1,800 people signed up to receive our regular Friends of WAY e-newsletter (up by 500 people since last year).

We are hoping to continue to engage potential new members and supporters via our social media platforms, including YouTube and LinkedIn.



Campaigning for change

In the first half of the year, WAY dedicated significant efforts and resources to our campaign against planned cuts to Widowed Parent's Allowance, working with the Child Bereavement Network alongside leading bereavement charities such as Cruse, Child Bereavement UK, Winston's Wish and Grief Encounter.

As well as the high-profile media coverage mentioned above, a delegation of WAY members travelled to Westminster in March and another group of WAYers held a protest outside parliament in April. More than 3,500 people wrote nearly 4,000 letters to their MPs as a result of the campaign, reaching 601 MPs (92%). And a cross-party group of peers in the House of Lords, including former work and pensions minister Baroness Altmann (Conservative), said they believed the government were making a mistake.

However, in spite of all our valiant combined efforts, the cuts were voted in by MPs by a narrow majority (292 to 236) and the new Bereavement Support Payment system came into effect on 6 April 2017. This means that parents who were widowed after that date will only receive financial support for 18 months. As part of the Life Matters Task Force, chaired by widowed writer and PR Executive Ben Brooks-Dutton, WAY is continuing to campaign against these unfair cuts by showing the impact that this is likely to have on widowed parents when the payments stop.

To coincide with Children's Grief Awareness Week, the Task Force launched a high-profile new report in the House of Commons in November featuring six policy recommendations designed to help provide better financial and emotional support for bereaved families in the UK. The Task Force created a moving film entitled 'Dear MP', which acted as a letter to MPs calling for their support on the policy recommendations. We are also continuing to press for co-habiting parents who weren't married to be eligible for bereavement support when their partner dies.

The recommendations include:

- Adapting the information registered at death to include any details on dependent children of both married and unmarried couples;
- Training all teachers and carers of children on how to manage and support bereaved children;
- A call for the government to confirm that Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education (PHSE) will become statutory, so that all children can learn about bereavement and grief within a safe, supported and age-appropriate curriculum
- Introducing a cross-government bereavement strategy, and identifying a government lead for this
- A call for every organisation to have a bereavement policy
- A call for the government to open a new consultation into how it can better support bereaved families



Some of our media coverage in 2017



Runner's World



walesonline.co.uk



Best



Grazia



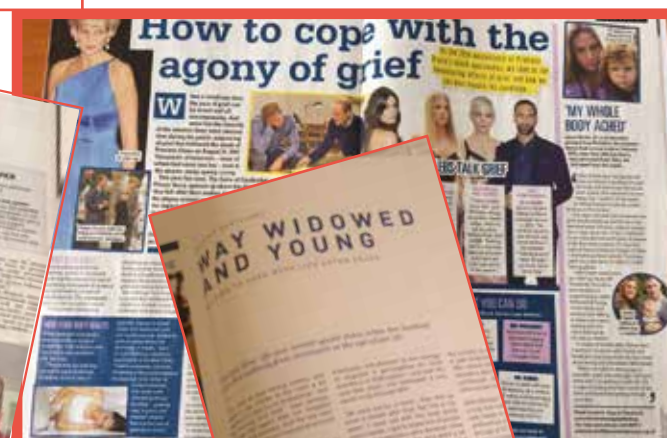
Good Housekeeping



Hello



The Times



New magazine



The Guardian



positive.news



The Observer

Raising funds for WAY

WAY doesn't receive any government funding, so we rely on fundraising, donations and membership to pay for vital services for our members, including our 24-hour telephone helpline.

This year, our members and supporters have generously raised more than £41,500 to help WAY build our unique peer to peer support network for young widows and widowers across the UK.

Our key fundraising events included the **London Marathon** in April, which raised £3,000 and the **Thames Dragon Boat Race** in July, which raised more than £7,000. And one of our amazing members, **Andrew Ware**, cycled £1,000 miles for WAY – raising £2,000 along the way (see page 26). We were also delighted to be chosen this year as one of **AFC Wimbledon's** Match Charities, which raised more than £1,000 for the charity in November. And we are pleased to be working with Manchester law firm **JMW Solicitors LLP** as one of their Charities of the Year in 2017/18.

You can read about some of our fundraising highlights for 2017 over the following pages:

- **Kath and Paul Bennett** in Bristol raised £2,300 for WAY over Christmas.
- **Sarah Wilkinson** helped to raise £750 for WAY through a raffle at the SpiritQuest weekend.
- **Hannah Tole** raised more than £400 running the Liverpool 10K in memory of her husband.
- **Bethan Scurrah** raised more than £150 running for WAY in the Leicester 10K.
- **Belinda Thompson** and **Alex Harrison** raised more than £300 for WAY in lieu of gifts at their wedding.
- **Veronica Currie** raised £1,500 for WAY through a Memorial Race Night in her husband's memory.
- Former WAY members **Suzanne Harvey** and **Mike Pinks** raised £350 in lieu of wedding gifts.
- **Desiree Goodall** – WAY's former press officer – ran in the Bristol Half Marathon this autumn raising more than £1,400 for WAY.
- **Michael Knight** and **Clair Surridge** also ran in the Bristol Half Marathon in memory of WAY member Karen Salem's late husband, raising more than £800.
- **Russell Day** – who ran the Oxford Half Marathon in October and plans to run in Reading in 2018 to raise money for WAY in honour of his sister, WAY member Nicola Froud-Williams. So far, he's raised more than £420.
- **Shona Barlow** and friends raised more than £400 for WAY by taking part in the Great Cumbrian Run in October.
- In addition, the following funds were raised for WAY:
 - **George Duke** of Kent Lodge raised £250; **Good Grief Trust** raised £150 through joint fundraisers, **PCC St Peter General Fund** raised £500 and **Loughborough Ladies Circle** £1,525.87.
 - The **Metropolitan Police Retired Police Service Association** also made a generous donation of £1,542 to WAY earlier this year
 - **Prima Solutions** raised £500 and **Chesterfield Christadelphians** raised £130.

We were also successful in several applications to trusts and foundations in 2017:

- £2,000 from the JK Foundation
- £1,500 from Rank Foundation
- £1,000 from Edith Murphy.

Marathon efforts

WAY's London marathon runner **Graydon Widdicombe** from Devon raised more than £3,000 for WAY (including Gift Aid), which is a truly awesome achievement!

It was so inspiring to see a group of WAYers cheering him on from the streets of London in April, complete with banners and WAY T-shirts. Graydon and his supporters even got a shout-out on the scrolling BBC news coverage and the event was live streamed on our social media platforms.

Graydon said: "Thanks to everyone who has sponsored me. It's really appreciated. I did have a massive wobble at about 25-miles, near Big Ben. The road narrowed, so I was close to spectators on both sides, thoughts turned to Claire, and the tears came. But I had a great day out, and I am proud to have been able to run for WAY. And I know Claire would be proud of me too."

We were delighted to receive a charity place in the 2018 London Marathon and look forward to bringing you news in due course from our 2018 runner, WAY member **Katie Compton** from Lincoln.



Charity of the Year



We are delighted to announce that staff from **JMW Solicitors LLP** in Manchester have chosen WAY as their Charity of the Year, alongside Maggie's Centre (which supports cancer patients and their families in the Manchester area). We would like to take this opportunity to thank WAY member **Macaila Hannaford**, who works for JMW as a Senior Associate and Proclaim Developer, for nominating WAY for this fantastic opportunity. We are looking forward to working with staff at JMW over the next year to raise funds for WAY through local events in the Manchester area – and to help raise awareness of WAY too.

WAY heads to AFC Wimbledon

We're delighted to announce that WAY was chosen as one of AFC Wimbledon's match charities in 2017 and raised more than £1,000 as a result.

A group of 18 enthusiastic volunteers donned WAY's blue hoodies against a chill wind to collect funds as Wimbledon fans arrived for the match against Peterborough United in November – while another group of 20 WAY members and kids enjoyed a VIP tour of the stadium.

Footie fans got to read a double-page article about WAY in their match programme – and there was lots of coverage on AFC Wimbledon's website and social media feeds too. We even got our banner shown on Sky TV, which was covering the match!

All in all, it was a great day for WAY. (Although Wimbledon only managed a draw against Peterborough United, unfortunately.) Big thanks to all the volunteers who helped to make the day such a success – especially to Dons season ticket holders Sara Challinor and Mark Worledge.

Our fab WAY photographer Gary Marson captured some of the moments on camera, as you can see below.



Super heroes for WAY

This summer, a group of 15 WAY Members Without Children (WAY Wocs) donned super hero costumes and raised more than £7,000 for WAY taking part in a Dragon Boat Race in Kingston Upon Thames! Twenty-one-year-old Glasgow WAY Wocer Ilona Morgan tells the tale...

It was an early start, which is never a nice thought after a meet up of WAY Wocs! The sun was out, it was quiet and I wasn't really sure what to expect of the day, but the excitement and anticipation of what was to come was felt by all of us.

I was a rower in the WAY Wocs Dragon Boat team and I hadn't taken this role seriously. I don't think any of us really took it too seriously! I hadn't heard of an event like this before but watching the other teams proved that we were slightly out of our depths. Some of the teams seemed to be run on military discipline and were confident that they would defeat the competition. Watching them, we were fairly confident that they would too! However, that didn't stop us giving it our very best shot.

Our team name was called, and – dressed up in our superhero capes – we skipped away to our positions. Getting fitted in life jackets and organising ourselves in our rowing positions, it was all really exciting. We were paying attention to our instructor, but honestly we were far too caught up in the thrill of the competition that he may as well have been speaking Chinese. We were preoccupied with laughter and photographs.

It was definitely an experience that I will never forget. I sat at the back of the boat so I could see everything we were doing. I got wet. It was quite cold and the rowing was a much smaller part of the day than I expected. Each race itself took a little over a minute to complete. However, that little burst of teamwork was so much fun. And having sat at the back, I saw us at our best rowing and the bits that were honestly a shambles. It was so much fun taking part that I wish we had gotten more than three turns.

After each race we came up with new tactics, none of which were successful in helping us win or even beat our previous scores! But that didn't matter to us. In amongst the races we got to mingle with each other and the supporters who had joined us for the day. It was such a relaxed atmosphere despite the noise and busyness that surrounded us. It felt like a mini festival, which is not something we do a lot of in WAY Wocs. For us it is very rare not to see bottles of Prosecco scattered amongst us!

All in all it was a great day. We raised a huge amount for WAY, we bonded as a group and we laughed a lot, which is the main thing.

WAY Wocs is such a fantastic group that I am so pleased to be a part of. They have become a family to me. They support me, look out for me and they are there for me whenever I need them. It has allowed me to regain my confidence and independence, which had been such a huge part of my life that was taken away when I lost my partner. The people I have met have become such a wonderful network of friends that I can rely on whenever I am struggling. It was one of the best decisions I made to continue with WAY Wocs and I am so thankful for the opportunities it has offered me and I am excited to see what future opportunities there will be.



WAY Wocs is a sub-group of WAY that is open to WAY members who do not have children of their own – which includes almost one in four of our members. WAY Wocs has more than 600 members and has an active list of weekends away and holidays coming up. WAY hopes to fill two Dragon Boat teams in July 2018. Drop us a line at fundraising@widowedandyoung.org.uk to find out more.

A Landmark Opportunity

Two WAY members and their families had the opportunity to spend a weekend at a historic **Landmark Trust** property for free in 2017. WAY was chosen from among dozens of other charities to take part in the Landmark Trust's 50 For Free programme, which gives families across the UK the opportunity to spend some time away at some of the country's most breathtaking historic properties.

WAY invited all our members to tell us why they deserved the opportunity of enjoying a weekend at The Grange in Kent – and we chose two members and their families: Lynette F and Sara M.

The weekend gave Sara and Lynette the chance to spend some healing time with their families and with each other in the stunning family home of one of Britain's most influential 19th century architects, Auguste Pugin, in the seaside town of Ramsgate.

For Sara, it was a particularly poignant weekend as it would have been her husband Phil's birthday and their first wedding anniversary since he died last October.

Sara said the time out she spent at The Grange with her four children was just what she needed.

"I was so relaxed for the first time in months," she said. "Spending time with my children with no internet or TV was great. I really enjoyed meeting Lynette too and hearing her experiences with grief and how her children had handled things we were dealing with."

For Lynette too, it was an emotional weekend because her late husband Dean was a big fan of Time Team and together they had watched The Grange being renovated on the popular BBC TV show.

"Dean absolutely loved Time Team and never missed an episode," she said. "He was really into history, architecture and restoring old buildings. I was quite emotional as this is the kind of place my husband would have loved to have stayed in. He would have been over the moon."

"All in all we had a wonderful time at The Grange and would love to thank The Landmark Trust for giving us this opportunity," she added.



The power of WAY

This summer, Cambridgeshire WAY Area Contact Andrew Ware cycled more than 1,000 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats – and raised nearly £2,000 for WAY. Here he explains how fellow WAY members have played a crucial role in his journey...

I joined WAY in 2014, the year after my wife Jane died from Sepsis. During that first year, I hadn't felt ready to talk to the outside world about her death. My grief was deep and personal, and I couldn't comprehend it myself, let alone communicate it to others.

When I found WAY, I soon discovered its biggest resource: its members and their stories. The support of other people going through the same, tragic circumstances was a lifeline. So when the idea of cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats started to become a definite plan, I wondered if it would be possible to use WAY's network of friends to get from one end of the country to the other. I had done the ride before, but that had been with Jane helping me out and sending me daily messages of support. When she died, I had thought it would be too emotional to try it without her. And then, gradually, it started to feel like a fitting memorial.

In a spur of the moment Facebook post in 2016, I suggested the idea of staying with WAY members on the ride, and I had a great response. From then on I knew it was feasible. When I had some more definite plans earlier this year, I asked for offers of accommodation, and there was certainly no shortage of help. I could have planned a route that would take two months to cycle, let alone two weeks! And there were towns I could have stayed in for three nights in a row with different people.

Now the hard work started of coordinating the many offers, and trying to join them into a route that would work in 15 days. I had my own plans in mind, but many of them went out the window when I realised the ride would be dictated by when and where WAYers could host me.

I knew it would be a struggle to find members in more remote parts of the country, but the thought that kept me going was "it doesn't matter how: I'll get to John O'Groats one way or another."

When I set off from Cornwall on 29th July, there were still some gaps in the itinerary. After much deliberation, I had added my one-man tent to the kit list at the last minute. At least that way I had an emergency roof over my head.



"This trip is the perfect analogy of bereavement. It's been a long, lonely journey, that sometimes seems impossibly hard. Then one day, unexpectedly, you look behind you at how far you've come, and you can't believe you've made it."

Twists and turns

Anyone who's completed what's known as the "End to End" will tell you that Cornwall and Devon are the hardest sections: steep climbs that go on relentlessly for mile after mile, day after day. If you stay on the minor roads, the twists and turns often mean you can't even get up much speed on the downhill parts

either. But it was worth it for the views over Dartmoor.

After climbing through Cheddar Gorge and into Bristol on Day 3, the next few days were a bit flatter. There were still some big gradients, but easier stages in between. The longest day was 105 miles, from near Telford to Preston – I couldn't avoid doing that if I was going to make it to my next host north of the Lake District.



And then, when you reach the Scottish border at Gretna, you see that you're only just over halfway, and there are mountains ahead of you. I continued across to Falkirk, Pitlochry, Aviemore, and eventually a trip on the Cromarty ferry before the final two days, finishing along the stunning north coast. Many of the highland roads were remote, with very few places to buy food – but by then you're nearly there and nothing is going to stop you doing the last 200 miles!

As I rolled into John O'Groats on 12 August, I'd covered 1,024 miles, and spent 89hrs 23mins pedalling. The next day would have been our 23rd wedding anniversary, and it felt like a fitting way to mark the occasion.

The one factor I couldn't control was the weather. During 15 days of riding, only two days were dry, and it turned progressively colder as I headed northwards. Crossing the highlands, my (thankfully unused) tent seemed like an increasingly valuable possession: if the bike broke down in the mountains, I'd need some shelter until I could get help. And standing with a roadside snack in the rain and the wind, I often had to remind myself that this was my summer holiday – and I'd volunteered for it.

A long & winding road

All sorts of people cycle the End to End, and I expect every one of them feels a huge sense of achievement at the finish line. Yes, it's tough (I estimate I pushed the pedals round nearly half a million times) and at some point it feels like the easiest option is to quit. But it's also the sort of endeavour that anyone reasonably fit can achieve, with a bit of preparation and lots of determination. Personally, I've had the added incentive that no amount of physical effort could match the pain of Jane's sudden death at the age of 43. And so it's proved to me that I'm strong enough to cope, even when at first it seemed impossible.

This trip is the perfect analogy of bereavement. It's been a long, lonely journey, that sometimes seems impossibly hard. You can make some plans, but there will often be an unexpected event that makes everything change. When you set out, the road ahead is too much to visualise, and instead you live by just getting to the next destination, day to day. Then one day, unexpectedly, you look behind you at how far you've come, and you can't believe you've made it.

Read more at 1000moremiles.wordpress.com



Andrew also raised funds for WAY by cycling across the US in 2015



WAY in figures

Income

It has been another good year for WAY financially. We had anticipated spending more than we had coming in during 2017, with increases in costs arising from staffing changes and website costs and lower income from Gift Aid and fundraising. But our fundraisers and donors did us proud, raising £6,000 more than in 2016, an increase of 16%.

The number of new members was up on the previous year, by 106 or 8%, and renewals were much higher, at 287 more, or 27%.

The increase in expenditure in 2017 is as a result of:

a) the decision made in 2016 to increase administrative support for the charity. This has led to increases in staff costs and other administrative expenses, such as office costs and purchases of office equipment;

b) the ongoing support and development of the website. In 2017 we moved to a monthly retainer payment with BinaryFold4, our website providers, which ensures they host our website and provide support, together with a degree of development;

c) the costs of launching direct debits;

d) media and campaign costs - our significant campaign work in the first part of 2017 against cuts to the Widowed Parent's Allowance resulted in an increase in media coverage and resulting increase in time and resources. Our media work is detailed on page 18.

Reserves

Our policy is to retain between three and six months of running costs. With over £100,000 in the bank at the end of the year, our reserves level is far higher than this.

Accounting basis

At the last AGM we proposed moving to an accrual basis for the accounts, rather than income and expenditure. These accounts are still on an income and expenditure basis, and will continue to be so until we have two years of comparative data to publish in the annual report. If we adopted an income and expenditure basis in 2017 then the result for the year would be a deficit of £3,324, rather than the surplus of £1,262 shown here.

WAY Widowed and Young		
Accounts to the end of December 2017		
BALANCE SHEET		
	2017	
CURRENT ASSETS	£	£
Lloyds Bank Current Account	748	
Less Uncleared (Cheques)/Credits		748
CAF Bank Current Account	121,523	
Less Uncleared (Cheques)/Credits	(10,155)	
		111,368
TOTAL Assets		112,116
FINANCED BY:		
Accumulated Surplus Brought Forward		110,854
Net (Deficit)/Surplus for the Year		1,262
		112,116

WAY Widowed and Young		
Accounts to the end of December 2017		
INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT		
	2017	2016
	£	£
Income		
Members' subscriptions	35,825	33,158
Members' renewals	35,180	28,010
Donations	17,764	13,944
Fundraising	23,788	21,716
Income - Other	2,848	3,406
Gift Aid	16,767	20,037
AGM 2018	4,305	0
Prior Year AGMs	19,045	24,334
Holidays and Events	23,948	15,646
TOTAL Income	179,470	160,249
Expenditure	£	£
NCVO	(688)	(2,523)
Member Helpline	(5,053)	(4,005)
Administration	(12,304)	(7,164)
WAY Forward/Enews/Annual Report/Booklets	(16,211)	(13,484)
Leaflet Drop	0	(9,944)
Media and campaign work	(18,231)	(7,894)
Staff Costs	(39,753)	(21,633)
Committee expenses	(1,808)	(1,430)
IT Expenditure	(1,587)	(899)
Big Picnic	(2,501)	(3,068)
Holidays and Events	(22,927)	(21,462)
AGM 2018	(760)	0
Prior Year AGMs	(28,069)	(23,567)
Website	(17,451)	(940)
Website Development	(2,604)	(11,378)
Paypal/Just Giving/etc Fees	(3,849)	(3,375)
Other	(4,411)	(2,953)
Total Expenditure	(178,208)	(135,718)
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year	1,262	24,531

The Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet on pages 28-29 have been subject to independent examination as required by the Charities Act 2011 and no matters of concern have been raised by the independent examiner.





"Knowing that my daughter has made some great friends through WAY who know exactly what we are going through means the world to me. People who are there to listen, support and celebrate our achievements is so precious to both of us..."
Bridget





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Founder: Caroline Sarll, 1997
Chair: Georgia Elms

Design by Sue Bailey



Words by Vicky Anning



With thanks to all the photographers who have contributed to this Annual Report,
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