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NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Dear All,

On behalf of the Chair and Trustees I want to thank all our wonderful Volunteers who despite, in most cases, coping with their own personal loss give their time and finances so generously to support fellow Survivors. Without you, we as an organisation could not exist.

We celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide at our Volunteer Day on the 16th April. A true achievement, but as a charity that is growing year on year we face a challenging period. We must ensure that we have the foundations in place to sustain this growth and the Board of Trustees wishes to acknowledge the many generous donations made by our SOBS Groups to central funds. These have enabled us to provide vital training and support to our new groups and Volunteers.

I especially wish to thank the Ilkeston Group who have paid 12 months' rent for the Lincoln Group and also given £300 to help set up the new Aylesbury Group.

I am confident that together we will be able to sustain this much needed growth and establish new groups in areas of the country that sadly have insufficient or no existing support.

Trustee, group leader and fellow survivor,

Joy Heal

Volunteer Day 16th April 2016

On the 16th April 2016, over 50 of us gathered at the Hallmark Mickleover Hotel near Derby for our annual Volunteer Conference. This year was a very special conference as we celebrated our 25th Anniversary of Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide. To commemorate our 25 years, everyone attending the day was gifted a special engraved pen.

Ann Culley (Chair) welcomed everyone and gave a talk on the past, present and future of our charity. She spoke about our founder, Alice Middleton. Alice lost her brother to suicide and was unable to find any support. She placed an advertisement in her local newspaper asking for people who had lost loved ones to suicide to contact her.

The response was so great that she started the first support group which now 25 years later has grown to over 60 groups nationwide.

Ann spoke of the growth of the Telephone Helpline and email support which are facilitated by survivors and gave some statistics of the many people who had been helped through the charity.

It was with pride and pleasure that Angela Samata's documentary with the BBC was acknowledged. It raised a lot of awareness for SOBS, and had been nominated for a BAFTA award.

Ann also paid tribute to others who have made valuable and much appreciated contributions to our organisation over the past year. These included Trish Thomas for her vital work with the police, Joyce Mathers for her work with the Scottish Support Groups and Helpline Volunteers. Suzzi Clifford for her new support group for people affected by suicide due to their professions. Steve Carter for his development of a new initiative, "Engaging Men". Karen Edgar for taking over and organising the John Peters Memorial Birmingham Support Day. Ann gave a special thank you to the team who are working on our new Operating Manual and congratulated Jackie Carter on receiving her MBE for her work with the NHS.

Ann introduced Michael Payne, who unfortunately was unable to attend but is preparing us for a fundraising exercise later this year that is hoped will raise enough funds to employ a Group Development Training Manager. In preparation for the launch of the fundraising campaign he has started a SOBS Charity Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Minna Nelson has also joined the team to work on our charity Website and to develop a safe Internet Forum. Ann also expressed our thanks to the staff in the office, especially Eric, for all the hard work they do on our behalf.

Ann recognised and paid tribute to all the hard work undertaken on behalf of SOBS by our many Volunteers, stating that the work undertaken at local level is just as important and vital as any national initiatives and that this local level work is what enables our charity to reach and support those affected by suicide.

Ann spoke of her extensive research into Membership and informed everyone that the Board of Trustees had decided, after careful consideration of all the facts, that Membership is not appropriate for SOBS at this present time. The Board had instead decided to offer Volunteers the opportunity to become Associates. She explained an Annual Business Meeting will be held at which major topics affecting our charity will be discussed and Associates will have an opportunity to express their opinions which will be then taken forward for consideration by the Trustees. Ann stated that this was an exciting new development for our charity.

Eric Thwaites then presented Michael Payne's report on his work, including the updating of SOBS on Social Media and his preparation for our fundraising campaign to be launched in the Autumn. The report explained how the Social Media activities are essential and have been put in place to support the fundraising campaign. Michael will continue to monitor Facebook and other social media sites which are free to access and will play a huge role in raising awareness of our charity and fundraising campaign.



Then just before lunch we cut our anniversary cake which we enjoyed during our afternoon break. We then made our way outside to gather for our balloon release. We attached personal messages to our lost loved ones and watched until the balloons disappeared. This was a very special and emotional part of our Celebration.

After lunch Doug McQueen presented the Treasurer's report which was well received.

Steve Carter then gave an excellent presentation on his "Engaging Men" programme. He has organised several activities that have been attended by male survivors and had received very positive feedback from those who had participated. Steve explained that he hopes to extend the programme to other SOBS groups and that he will be available to any group interested in starting a local "Engaging Men" programme. He can offer advice on gaining funding and practical advice on how to start up running the programme.

Finally, Vivien Culpan gave a presentation on the new Group Operating Manual. Various questions were asked which were answered by Vivien and one or two Trustees. The groups represented were asked to take the Draft Copy back to their groups for discussion and comment. They were given several weeks to respond via the office, after which it would be assumed that the groups were happy with the new manual.



There was a short time for discussion and questions before we had to close the day. The feedback on the day was very positive and many who

attended stated that they had thoroughly enjoyed the day and that it was one of the best Volunteer Days they had attended.

SOBS Support Day In Memory of John Peters - Birmingham 12th June 2016

Those of you who knew John Peters and his dedication to Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide, would know how important the support days he organised annually for SOBS were both to him and all who attended. It was always going to be a challenge to come close to those standards and provide the kind of support John gave unfailingly to hundreds of survivors over the years before his death from cancer in 2014.

The day began with a touching talk from Michelle L Rusk (formerly Lind Gust) about her journey through bereavement following the loss of her sister to suicide and the people she has met along the way. Michelle's themes of hope, a sense of spirituality and the bitter-sweet fortuitousness of meeting great people (like John and his family), even though a painful loss, was an inspiration to us all.

Phillip Hoppner of Papyrus presented on suicide prevention for young people – providing worrying figures on the rise of suicide in young people and sparking a debate about the possible influences of that rise: social isolation (in spite of an apparently vibrant social media community), social pressures, other life pressures (school/getting in to work). He also dispelled a number of myths, encouraging openness in talking about suicide with young people.

The moving testimonials of two survivors of bereavement by suicide brought home the continued pain and loss many feel for many years following their losses. There was a strong sense however, that while you will never be the same again, you can learn to live differently. Even to smile and laugh. The friends we make at these times, often in SOBS support groups, are a great support and solace for many years to come.

The afternoon session began with Professor Rory O'Connor's fascinating presentation on understanding suicidal behaviour. His research around this area revealed a nuanced approach to recognising the signs of someone who is at risk of completing suicide. More than simply identifying

the myriad risk factors like depression, child sex abuse, adverse life events, bullying (and there are many more), Professor O'Connor presented other characteristics that are often present: entrapment, defeat, hopelessness. Social perfectionism certainly chimed with those present in relation to their losses: not being able to meet your own standards. He concluded with his work on identifying the difference between someone who is suicidal and someone who actually completes - the aim being to enable intervention and prevent completion of suicide in those most vulnerable. Interestingly his study showed that amongst those who are suicidal, those with a high tolerance to physical pain and also lowered levels of the hormone cortisol (usually released in response to stress) are significantly more likely to complete suicide.

We ended the day meeting with others who had experienced a similar loss. Always a good opportunity to hear others' stories, share our own and meet people who may go on to be part of that invaluable support network we rely on as we continue our journey through our painful losses.

We think John would have got a lot out of the day and hope it was a fitting way to remember him. We hope those who attended did too. If you came along - we'd love to get your feedback in order to shape any future support days. Please fill in the survey <http://tinyurl.com/SoBSDay2016> Look out for future events on the SOBS Website www.uk-sobs.org.uk

Are you interested in taking part in research? Were you informed by a professional of the suicide of a loved one?

My research study will involve me meeting with people who have experienced being informed by a professional of the death of a loved one by suicide and talking to them about this experience, what aspects of it were important to them and what they may have liked to have been different. The study has been approved by the University Ethics Board and the Board of Trustees for SOBS have agreed to be involved.

For more information about how to get involved please follow the link: **[About my research Protocol for ethics](#)** which can be found on the SOBS Website.

Meeting at Kensington Palace

A group of 11 of us from various Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide groups met with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at Kensington Palace on 10th March.

The catalyst for the initial contact from Kensington Palace was the BBC film - Life After Suicide (shown in March 2015 and again in February 2016), but the fuller reason for the meeting was to give the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge an opportunity to hear what makes bereavement by suicide different, what it is like in the early days and why it is called complex grief.

Early e-mail contact was made by Kensington Palace to Angela Samata, followed by a few long phone calls with several people, and numerous follow-up communications. Angela was informed that the Duke, Duchess and Prince Harry are focusing their charitable work at present on encouraging people to talk more openly and regularly about their mental health and shining a spotlight on services that support those in need; and one area that the Duke, in particular, is very concerned about is the high incidence of suicide - especially in young males - and the many factors that lead to it.

Communications with Angela evolved and centred around Angela's suggestions for who might make up the group to meet with the Duke and Duchess, specifically highlighting the areas of conversation that they wanted to focus on. The decision was also made to keep the meeting with the group private as opposed to the public visit to the Maytree in the morning by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and the subsequent meeting with Jonny Benjamin - a mental health campaigner, who, in January 2014 launched a social media campaign called Find 'Mike' to search for the stranger who talked him out of taking his own life in 2008.



The Duke and Duchess were very empathic and listened intently to experiences of loss and suicide bereavement. We ensured that the last portion of the meeting offered an exploration of what those bereaved had found helpful and hence there was an extended discussion about Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide. The Duke and Duchess came away with a very strong sense of the importance of the work of Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide.

Ann Rowlands, Director of Bereavement Services, Child Bereavement UK and Brian Dow, Director of Rethink Mental Illness were also in the meeting.

Following the meeting, Angela received a personal letter of thanks which highlighted that the Duke and Duchess were incredibly moved by the discussion and inspired to do what they can to help.

SOBS Engaging Men Programme – Swindon starts the national roll-out

The SOBS-Engaging Men Programme, started and trialed in the Gloucester group since 2015 by Steve Carter, was launched into its National Roll-out mode on Friday 8th July at the offices of Justin Tomlinson, MP, in Swindon. The launch was widely reported in The Swindon Advertiser and



The Link local newspapers, as well as BBC TV Bristol, who will run an article on Jacky Parry's, (leader of SOBS-

Swindon) work in the community, including SOBS, in September this year. Subsequently, both Jacky and Steve have been interviewed by Graham Seaman of BBC Radio Wiltshire. If you want to listen to the interview, you can find it on play-back on the BBC Radio Wiltshire website, the Graham Seaman Programme, Monday 25th July 2016 at 1.30 pm.

The project is intended to create an activity-based programme in order to bring together men who have been bereaved by the suicide of a relative, friend, or colleague, but who may not find traditional meetings help them to unburden themselves. It is available to any SOBS group nationally and contact can be made with Steve Carter, leader of the national programme roll-out, either through the SOBS website, or by e-mailing him at sobsengagingmen@outlook.com.

Some men find it hard to make themselves vulnerable by talking face-to-face about their journey of grief following a suicide, but will be more likely to do so in an active environment in which they are shoulder-to-shoulder with other men. That is the concept of the programme and it has been shown to work in the trial period since 2015. The Gloucester Engaging Men group has taken part in flat-green bowling, spectated at the Rugby World Cup and a premiership Manchester United football game, as well as doing walks with a pub lunch. The evaluations from participants have been positive, which all gives a good lift off to the wider roll-out.

Swindon's Engaging Men Programme will come under the overall supervision of Jacky Parry, leader of the SOBS-Swindon group, but will be operated in the first instance by Steve Carter. The first activity of the programme will take place at the sports ground of The Nationwide Building Society in Swindon on Sunday 14th August 2016 and will involve an afternoon of ball-games from midday, concluding with a barbecue around 5pm. All this is being funded by The Nationwide and we are grateful to Darren Johnson for his organisation of the afternoon, which is part of their community programme. Darren has also been responsible for approaching some seventy local businesses for raffle prizes for the event.

Steve says, "I am delighted that the SOBS-Swindon Engaging Men Programme has got off to such a good start. It will be a question now of keeping the programme in the news and keeping the momentum going. What I offer to other interested SOBS groups is advice, information and guidance in setting up a local programme. So far, further interest has been expressed by SOBS groups in Bradford, Manchester, Bournemouth, Uttoxeter and London. This is encouraging and I am optimistic that SOBS groups will find that there is a need for such programmes locally and that men-folk will be drawn to participating and will benefit hugely from doing so."

If you are interested in setting up the SOBS Engaging Men Programme in your area, please contact Steve at the dedicated e-mail address above, or the national website.

Steve Carter (Leader – SOBS National Engaging Men Programme)

Time to Remember Day organised by Uttoxeter SOBS Group

On Saturday 16th July the Uttoxeter SOBS group held a free "Time to Remember" Activities event at the Manor Golf Club, Kingstone for families who have lost loved ones to suicide. 160 adults and children gathered together to participate in the event and remember loved ones lost to suicide. 6 teams entered the Gruesome Golf Competition where a golfer and non-golfer play 9 holes of golf.

The winning team were Dan Lakin and Jan Lakin. They were presented with trophies donated by Richard and Sue Thompson in memory of their son Mike.

Other activities included face painting, memory jar making, cookie decorating, art and crafts, circus workshop and entertainment by the very talented magician JD Magic. Mandy and Paul Stubbs made 200 delicious cupcakes in memory of their

daughter Hannah. Everyone also enjoyed a hog roast, sweets and ice-cream.

The afternoon concluded with poems read out by survivors, Glen and Sharon Markey read a poem in memory of their daughter Helena, Joy Breckles in memory of her son Rob, Joanne Clewes and Kim Nash in memory of Jonathan Heal, Sue Thompson in memory of her son Mike and Elexie Bradley in memory of her Uncle Dan. An emotional roll call of loved ones lost to suicide was read by Rev Sally Smith and then everyone went outside to release balloons with messages to those lost.



Joy and Phil Heal of Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide, Uttoxeter Group would like to thank the Manor Golf Club for hosting our event.

We would also like to say a big thank you to the following for running our activities: Yvonne Milward - Memory Jar activity, Kim, Sammie, Georgie and Dallas Nash - craft activities, Cherry Booth - cookie decorating, Jane Collier - Circus workshop, Sue Budge and Mark Glover Jones - photography, Carmel and Becky - face-painting. Glen and Sharon for helping to set everything up on the day.

A huge thank you to Jackie Hateley and her daughters Catherine and Jessica who held a fabulous Elvis fundraising night in memory of husband and dad John Hateley the proceeds of which funded this event. A special thank you goes to Kelly Bradley who helped to organise the day in memory of her brother Dan.

Joy from Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

SOBS Respite Caravan

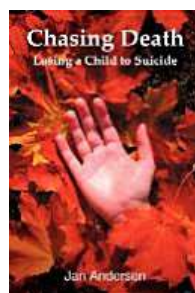
Judi Johnson and Marc Shrimpton from the Scunthorpe SOBS group have raised an amazing £40,000 to purchase a static mobile home in Cleethorpes to be used for those bereaved by suicide to provide respite breaks. (Keep checking the website for updates).

New Support Group in West Cumbria

The first group meeting will take place on the 13th September 2016 and will meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month thereafter, for more information contact John on 07572 975721 or Karan on 07896 703757.

Book review

“CHASING DEATH Losing a Child to Suicide” by Jan Anderson



“Chasing Death” by Jan Anderson is the story of the grief suffered by a mother (Jan) at the suicide of her 20-year-old son. He took an overdose of Heroin and, although a heroin addict, he left a note saying his overdose was not an accident but was deliberate. He hated himself and his life and this was the easiest way to end it.

Jan had a very emotional ride through her grief and her book is a very open account of the pain and suffering she felt and endured. She found that when the numbness and shock passed there was nothing to cushion and protect her from the pain of her loss. Jan writes about the various causes of suicide with openness and honesty including depression, bullying, relationships and others. Jan discusses how we all wear masks, saying we are fine when we are not. Kristian also wore a mask that said, “Life is fine. There’s nothing I can’t handle” when in reality he was desperately unhappy. She suggests it would be better if we could be honest and cry and laugh with our family and friends and by that means maybe help our loved ones and us to come to terms with what has happened.

In another section Jan mentions the pain she felt when asked to identify ‘the body’, her son who for 20 years had been a living breathing child was ‘the body’. Jan was hurt and offended at this. She talks about the unreality and pain of choosing a coffin, deciding on burial or cremation, arranging the funeral service and then the funeral and burial and all the turmoil this brought. However, the waiting period before the headstone could be placed was good and helped her choose the right words for his epitaph.

One chapter Jan devotes to the grief of other family members, especially siblings, whom she calls the ‘forgotten grievers’ and suggests that parents should take care of siblings of the one lost to suicide. Parents should be free and open in front of them so that they too are free and able to grieve and grow.

The book discusses and explores the various feelings and reactions that Jan went through. She is very open and honest about them. She attempts to explore the stigma, helplessness and problems of unanswered questions that assail those bereaved by suicide. All through the book Jan

includes letters and stories of others who have suffered the loss of suicide bereavement.

It is a book full of feelings and situations that we all experience through suicide loss. She gives coping strategies for the bereaved. She herself has turned her grief into positives. Jan owns and runs websites and has taken part in various radio and TV programmes as a result of her work and websites.

I do feel that I should point out that Jan is a spiritualist and while she does not labour this in her book it does colour a fair amount of what she writes. However, bearing that in mind, this is a good book and will be very helpful to many people. It will help them to face their grief and pain and it will reassure them that they are not alone and that there is still life for them after such a traumatic experience. I shall certainly recommend this book to others.

Survivor's Poem

Suicide Assassin

Suicide it haunts my every day
Since it killed and took my son away
It's the enemy that I most fear
An assassin that may still be near

A predator that could strike again
God please let my vigil not be in vain
I will watch for little signs that show
Suicide's attacking those I know

This time I'll be ready for the fight
And pray to God I will get it right
I'll save them from this deadly attack
This time I'm fighting Suicide back.

SOBS Rose

SOBS Rose available to buy as another way of commemorating those who we have lost.



This is a bush rose, suitable in a pot on a patio, or on a grave, or to be planted wherever. The cost, potted is £12.95 each, Inc. VAT, mainland UK delivery is an additional £5.95. (Please note that this reduced

introduction price offer is for this year only) SOBS will receive a donation of £2 for every rose sold. There would be a simple black on white tag saying "SOBS Rose".

To order, please contact Annette Wright of World of Roses on 08452 606888;
annette@worldofroses.com

Please do not contact the SOBS Office to arrange but go direct to Annette. If you have any problems, please contact me.

Best wishes

Geoff Price, Trustee and Treasurer

Elvis Fundraiser

On the 9th January 2016 at Acton Trussell Village Hall a wonderful night's entertainment was enjoyed by a packed hall of supporters.



The event was organised by Jackie Hateley and her two daughters Catherine and Jessica in memory of beloved husband and father John Hateley who took his own life in 2014. Jackie said, "We just want to repay something to SOBS for all the support we have received."



The entertainment was provided by the very talented Elvis impersonator Jason Dale who had along with Mum Suzanne, also attended SOBS meetings following the loss of a much loved son and brother, Nicholas Dale, in 2014. A fabulous night was enjoyed by all and an amazing £2,310.00 was raised for their local SOBS group.

Become a Trustee and make a difference

Trustees Wanted

Survivors of Bereavement by suicide are looking for new Board members to join them and help influence the future shape and direction of their organisation.

We are particularly keen to recruit individuals who have relevant work experience in areas such as marketing, fundraising, finance, human resources, business development, law and safeguarding, although this is by no means essential.

You should have a keen interest in mental health, enthusiasm and commitment along with skills and experience gained through family life, volunteering or professional roles.

You must be eligible to become a company director.

This role is voluntary with paid expenses and involves attending up to six Board meetings per year as well as involvement in chosen work streams and other events.

The following guidelines from the Charity Commission are available on the web.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509664/cc3_lowink.pdf

If you are interested, please contact our National Office.

Telephone: 0115 944 1117

email: sobs.admin@care4free.net

You can also complete the following application form from our website and attach it to an email for the attention of the Chief Officer sobs.admin@care4free.net

TRUSTEES APPOINTMENT APPLICATION
Articles of Association Amendment 10.03.13

Dates for your Dairy

Bolton Retreat 09/09/16 – 11/09/16. Franciscan Friary Pantasaph. For more information, contact Janet or Noel on 01942 201744.

Gloucester SOBS Annual Retreat 21/10/16 to 23/10/16. For more information, please contact Margaret Carter on 01242 609346, 07810 386216 or onemargaretcarter@talktalk.net

SOBS launches online Forum

Survivors are 300% more at risk of taking their own life. It is vital that Survivors have access to support and SOBS is a unique charity where those

bereaved by suicide support others who have lost loved ones to suicide.

There remain vast areas of the UK where there are no SOBS Support groups. Even where a support group exists Survivors may be unable to attend meetings: lone parents, shift workers. There may also be survivors who need support between meetings.

This forum is set up to meet the needs of those who cannot attend groups or need support between monthly meetings. It is a safe environment where survivors can contact other survivors to share support, views and helpful information.

SOBs Forum can only accept membership from those aged 18+.

Accessing our Forum:

You must apply to become a member of this forum. The application form can be found on the SOBs Website:

<http://uk-sobs.org.uk/we-can-help/apply/>

The password is: try me out (including spaces and lower case).

Once you have completed the application please keep checking the junk mail as your code to activate may be returned to your junk box.

Thank you

We would like to thank all our Volunteers for their dedication and hard work. Thank you so much for your commitment of time to our organisation.

Also to all those people who have raised funds with determination and generosity, thank you.

Submission of articles, news, events, reflections, etc., for consideration for the January 2017 newsletter must reach the editor no later than 1st December 2016. We reserve the right to publish those submissions that seem most relevant and suitable for the newsletter. Submission does not guarantee inclusion. Submissions can be sent via Email to Joy Heal sobs.news@googlemail.com or sobs.admin@care4free.net

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SURVIVORS OF
BEREAVEMENT
BY SUICIDE

SOBS Needs Your Help!

We are currently trying to raise money to help **set up more support groups** across the UK!

We are looking to raise money to set these up in the large areas where we are not yet able to offer our support. Our long-term aim is to have 3 support groups in every county, meaning a **total of 144 groups!** We also want to develop and train our existing support group network to make sure we are offering the best possible support to every person that needs our help.

We are looking to raise £50,000+ to accomplish this goal. We need these funds to start up new support groups, apply training and development, and also, to keep looking for more opportunities for the Charity to reach more people. To enable this to happen, we will need to employ additional staff to ensure we have professional support for new and existing groups.

If you would like to donate, you can do either of the following:

- Visit <https://campaign.justgiving.com/charity/sbbs/supportgroupcampaign/>
- **Text SOBS02 £5 to 70070 to donate £5** (donations can be £1, £2, £3, £4, £5 or £10 by replacing the amount in the text message).
- Send a cheque to our National Office at: SOBS, Flamsteed Centre, Albert Street, Ilkeston, DE7 5GU.

We also would love it if you could help share the campaign around and tell your family and friends! Every single person made aware of our charity and the campaign is a victory!

You can find us at:

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/SOBSCharity
- Twitter: [@SOBSCharity](https://twitter.com/SOBSCharity)
- Instagram: [@SOBSCharity](https://www.instagram.com/SOBSCharity)

Alternatively, you can give our office a call on 0115 944 1117 if you have any questions.

Every donation, no matter how small means we get one step closer to achieving our goal.

Thank you for your support.