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## New Leaflet & Handbook

### Remembering our Child

As members of The Compassionate Friends, we know first-hand the agony of child bereavement, as we are bereaved parents or close family members of a child who has died. We are each unique in our own ways, with our own families, backgrounds, circumstances, religions and cultures, but one thing we have in common is the desire to honour our child or sibling's memory.

We are pleased and proud to announce the publication of our latest leaflet and accompanying handbook which offers you some practical suggestions for remembering and honouring the memories of our children. Whether we choose to remember our child through photos, by planting a tree, or some other method, memorialising gives us the opportunity to ensure that our child has an everlasting presence in our lives, the lives of other people who knew and loved them, and even those who never met them.

The Handbook is designed as a resource that you can dip into when looking for new ways of honouring your child's memory. Everything here has been suggested by bereaved parents or close family members as something that has worked for them.

#### Bereaved mother, R commented...



*As I read through [The Handbook], I found myself becoming quite emotional, not so much with sadness but more because it offers so many diverse and positive activities and avenues to remember and reconnect with our children. I think many of us can become a little static with our grief after a few years, not changing or even looking so much at the photos we have around the house, not going into our child's bedroom very much or connecting so much with their possessions, instead doing more just day to day living and managing our 'new normal' – your handbook opens up new ways and ideas to re-engage positively with our child, who they were and the life they had – thank you so much”.*



The Handbook is free to bereaved parents and families. Order from our National Office [info@tcf.org.uk](mailto:info@tcf.org.uk) | 0345 120 3785. Or download a digital copy [www.tcf.org.uk/rememberinghandbook](http://www.tcf.org.uk/rememberinghandbook)

# Introducing our new Trustees

**On 3rd November last year 2 new trustees were elected to our Board. Overall, like company directors or governors, our Trustees are responsible for making sure our charity is doing what it was set up to do. They use their skills and experience to support and guide TCF, managing the strategic direction, governance and financial health of our charity and ultimately helping us to achieve our aims.**

## Melian Mansfield

"My daughter Anna died on May 1st 2015. She was married with two young children. Her sudden and totally unexpected death has devastated all the family including her three brothers, sister and many friends. She was so loved by everyone; it has been impossible for us to understand why she took her life.

I have had a long career in education - teaching, and then training governors. I have experience as a trustee of a number of charities and organisations, am governor of three primary schools and chair of a Nursery School Governing Body. I chair the Campaign for State Education, the National Early Childhood Forum and London Play which campaigns for play opportunities for London's children.

Being involved with TCF has been a life saver and enabled me to find solace with others. I am honoured to have been elected as a trustee of such an amazing organisation which daily provides support to so many people and families".



## Warren Weiss

"I became aware of TCF after the death of my daughter, Emily, in 2011. My family has benefited from the charity very much, and I am glad of the opportunity to put something back in.

I have been an accountant for 26 years in a small, high-street practice, where I advise individuals from small and medium-sized businesses on accounting and tax compliance. I also play in a semi-professional 6-piece party band which performs in pubs and at parties. It is less lucrative than accountancy, but marginally more enjoyable. At various times, I have been the treasurer for three nursery schools and the Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau, I have served on the Board of Muswell Hill Synagogue, and I currently volunteer as a magistrate. I hope that my experience will equip me to be a useful board member of TCF."



## Andrew Miller, new Chair of Trustees

**After her 3 year term as Chair, Maria Ahern has now stepped down from this role. All of us at TCF warmly thank Maria for her tireless hard work and commitment to our charity. In February the Board elected a new Chair of Trustees, Andrew Miller QC and here he explains how he got involved with TCF.**

"I lost my son Fabian in a drug-related accident in January 2015. Fabian was only 19 years old. His death was totally unexpected and was one of those tragic accidents of youth that too many parents have to deal with.

It took a few months before I discovered The Compassionate Friends and I started attending TCF meetings about five months after Fabian's death. I very quickly realised and appreciated the incredible help and comfort that I was able to get from other bereaved parents. Being involved with TCF brought a new form of familiarity and normality in what had quickly become a very unfamiliar and abnormal world.

Shortly thereafter I became involved in fundraising for the TCF concert in London in October 2015. At the end of 2015, following my attendance at the National Gathering, I was co-opted as a Trustee onto the TCF Board. I became an elected Trustee in 2016, re-elected in 2019.

I am honoured to be a trustee and now Chair, of such an amazing charity that has provided me and so many others with so much help and care and which shines a light of hope that we can all carry on our own individual journey. I am committed to spreading the knowledge and work of TCF to both the bereaved and non-bereaved.

I have been a commercial barrister in full time practice in London for 27 years. Through TCF, I also offer support to parents facing an inquest and co-facilitate a support group for bereaved parents and siblings in North West London".



**For a full list of our Trustees please visit [www.tcf.org.uk/trustees](http://www.tcf.org.uk/trustees)**

# A Day in the Life - Abi May



**Abi leads TCF's leaflet volunteer team, helping to write and edit our over 40 leaflets and fact sheets. Here she tells us a little about her life and her motivations for helping TCF in this way. A warm thank you to Abi for all she has done to continue to improve and develop our supportive online and printed leaflets.**

## ***Can you tell us a little about your background before getting involved with TCF?***

I am the mother of two children. My son Pax died age 3 in 1982 from a genetic condition, when I was living and working in India with my first husband. Beautiful Catherine died in April 2011, aged 30, from suicide.

Before Catherine died, I was teaching English in a Further Education College. I was also working from home editing a Christian magazine and had published some books. I live now with my partner John in Stoke-on-Trent.

## ***How did you get involved with The Compassionate Friends?***

When my son Pax died in 1982, I had no support. When Catherine died, I was out of my mind with grief. All of my suppressed grief about Pax came to the fore and I was overwhelmed. During the traumatic weeks after Catherine's death, I was sitting at my computer, wandering through the internet, seeking some clues as to how I was going to survive. And that's when I came across TCF.

I joined the TCF forum. Here I discovered that I was not as alone as I thought I was. There were other parents who had also experienced the throes of agony at the loss of a child or children. I could go on the forum at any time of the day and night and find solidarity. The companionship I found was later replicated in person as I met TCF members. It wasn't that my interaction with other bereaved parents could help me make sense of my children's deaths, but it did help me make sense of my grief. I saw that the turmoil of thoughts and feelings was not abnormal, and accepting this helped as I leaned into my grief and was carried by its waves.

I got involved with the TCF Leaflet Committee because it was a way to use my experience and skillset to help other parents.

## ***Can you tell us a little about your role with TCF?***

Most of my work for TCF is on my computer, writing and editing leaflets and factsheets, and coordinating by email the work of the volunteer "leafleteers". About once a year we have an informal meet-up. I read and attend some training events to increase my knowledge. I'm also involved with my own Living with Loss bereavement support project and run events.

I am fairly continuously meeting and interacting with bereaved parents. It helps me stay "real" and open to different perspectives and experiences- invaluable as I sit at my desk, editing and writing.

## ***What's the best thing (s) about your role?***

That I'm honouring the memories of my children by doing something useful that helps other people, and in doing so, I have found some meaning in my life. I wake up in the morning and I have something to focus on – which was not the case in the first couple of years after Catherine died.

I also appreciate my email interactions with the other volunteers and being able to work together to make the leaflets the best they can be. There is so much to learn from other people's comments.

## ***What do you find most challenging about your role?***

Wanting the leaflets to be as inclusive as possible. Everyone is in some ways unique and has their own life circumstances and perspectives. If you were in a personal face-to-face situation, you could adjust your conversation to that person, but when writing a leaflet you have to generalise to an extent and hope that as many people as possible will be able to relate and be helped. There is a very real and understandable sensitivity around language, and sometimes it can be a challenge to find the appropriate words.

## ***Are there areas you would like to develop?***

I would like our leaflets to not only offer compassion and understanding, but also do more to support parents in coping with their loss and carrying on with life to the point that they are thriving once again.

To explain: Grieving for a child is really hard. I know this by experience. There can be an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness. In our leaflets we really try to empathise with parents because compassion is key. But there's another side to this – finding hope; to allow ourselves to live and to actually enjoy the life that we have now. This can be a sensitive issue when parents are in the most agonising throes of their grief.

## ***What do you like to do to relax and recharge?***

For relaxing I do craft activities – felting, knitting, etc., and I read and watch nonsense like sci-fi – as far from reality as I can get. Recharging comes from music and also spiritual Christian books that provoke deep thought. The biggest relaxer and recharger combined is walking, and in March I set out on a 280 km pilgrimage walk in Portugal/Spain – hoping not only to relax, but also to raise support for TCF. Follow my walking blog here: [www.1stepcamino.home.blog](http://www.1stepcamino.home.blog)

You can sponsor Abi on her walk via her JustGiving Page [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/onestepcamino](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/onestepcamino)

# TCF News & Events

Thank you to TCF member, Alison, for writing to The Guardian newspaper. Her letter was published in the print and online editions in February. Fantastic publicity for our charity - we reprint her words below.

## Support following the loss of a child

**Alison Bender draws readers' attention to The Compassionate Friends charity in the hope of helping anyone who is grieving.**

Following your article (You never stop grieving, G2, 3 February), concerning the death of a child, may I please draw readers' attention to The Compassionate Friends, a registered charity that is a network of bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings offering support to other similarly bereaved family members who have suffered the death of a child or children of any age and from any cause. The solace to be gained from the company of other parents who "just know" is hard to describe to those who have not experienced the anguish of this particular sort of bereavement. TCF is not very widely known – perhaps because most parents, myself included, shrink from contemplating losing a child. It was not until two years after the death of my 20-year-old daughter that I came across TCF, but it has helped save my sanity, and I wish I had found it sooner.

Alison Bender, Bigbury-on-Sea, Devon

[www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/07/support-following-the-loss-of-a-child](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/07/support-following-the-loss-of-a-child)

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## National Lottery supports Grief Companion Scheme



**We are delighted to announce that the National Lottery is to fund our new Grief Companion scheme.**

The scheme initially began as a pilot project; but several matches have now been made with parents benefiting from this one-to-one contact and peer support. Volunteer Grief Companions use their own experience and ways of coping to be alongside another bereaved parent supporting with regular telephone and/or email contact.

If you have been thinking about volunteering for TCF and in, particular, about how you could reach out to support other bereaved parents, we would encourage you to consider the Grief Companion role which would make a positive difference to a more newly bereaved parent.

You can find out more and apply here: [www.tcf.org.uk/volunteergriefcompanion](http://www.tcf.org.uk/volunteergriefcompanion)

If you would like a grief companion, visit [www.tcf.org.uk/griefcompanions](http://www.tcf.org.uk/griefcompanions) to find out more.

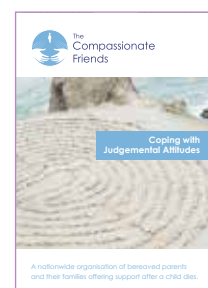
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## New leaflets... just published

### Coping with Judgemental Attitudes

Written especially for those bereaved parents who may be trying to manage when there is some stigma attached to a son or daughter's life and/or death or where they may have to deal with the reaction of others who are critical of our child for a variety of reasons. This includes those of us whose child died as a result of drug, alcohol or solvent use; illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia; involvement in crime, gangs or prostitution; suicide and other aspects of our child's life.

**Thank you to Lisa Rose for her sponsorship of this leaflet in memory of precious Emily Weiss.**



## Death of our Stepchild or our Partner's Child

The death of a child, no matter their age, causes heartbreak for their parents. Our new leaflet looks at some of the particular issues that may arise if the child who died was our partner's biological child but not our own.

Thank you to Robert and Deborah Treadgold for their sponsorship in memory of their beloved son and stepson, Matthew.



## Sponsor a leaflet in memory of your loved one

We are always looking for sponsors for our supportive leaflets. The cost of sponsorship is usually £350 and we will include your dedication message in the leaflet. This is a lovely way to honour the memory of our loved one - by supporting the printing and distribution of our publications for other bereaved parents and their close family.

Perhaps your support group, a member of your wider family, a family friend or your work colleagues would like to support your loss and remember your child or children by sponsoring one of the leaflets.

To find out more or to offer sponsorship email us at [info@tcf.org.uk](mailto:info@tcf.org.uk) or call 0345 120 3785.

## Make 2020 the year you join us at a Supportive Gathering or Retreat Weekend

Come and spend a few days away with others who understand what it means to be a bereaved parent. You will be warmly welcomed in a safe, supportive and compassionate environment and can immerse yourself in the comfort and warmth of a dedicated team of bereaved parent supporters.

### 1st - 3rd May, Scottish Gathering, Stirling

For bereaved parents, siblings or grandparents. To book go to [www.tcf.org.uk/scottishgathering2020](http://www.tcf.org.uk/scottishgathering2020)

### 22nd - 24th May, North East England Supportive Gathering, Bishop Auckland Co Durham

To book go to [www.tcf.org.uk/northeastweekend2020](http://www.tcf.org.uk/northeastweekend2020)

### 19th - 21st June, Supportive Retreat Weekend, Birmingham

For parents bereaved by suicide or through drug or alcohol use.

To book go to [www.tcf.org.uk/woodbrooke2020](http://www.tcf.org.uk/woodbrooke2020)



# TCF Fundraising

*A warm thank you to all our fundraisers and donors - large and small*

## A Musical Evening

Last December, Tali Jackson held an evening of music in North London to support TCF. Five aspiring singers and actors, including Tali, entertained over eighty guests with an evening of performances from musical theatre, including Chicago, Beetlejuice and Les Miserables, as well as popular songs.

### Tali writes...

"In this fast moving, high tech world, my passion for the theatre offers me escape and an emotional outlet far better than anything else ever could. I am currently in my final year of A levels studying Drama and Film, determined to make my mark in the world of theatre, film, television, and music.

The morning after my musical evening I was left with the most overwhelming feelings of love and joy from everyone that joined me in supporting The Compassionate Friends. Thanks to everybody's continuous support throughout the process we raised nearly £1000! I am incredibly grateful for being given the opportunity to do what I love for an amazing cause, as well as for the people around me who helped to make it happen. It truly was a night that I'll never forget".



## Co-op Local Community Fund backs TCF

The Compassionate Friends has been chosen to benefit from the Co-op Local Community Fund. During the funding phase until 24 October 2020, Co-op Members are able to choose TCF as their local cause. Every time a member buys selected own-brand products and services, 1% of the money they spend goes to the chosen causes in their community.

We have already been voted as the local cause at the Co-op in Cricklewood, London and hopefully there will be more! If you are a Co-op Member then please vote for us!

If you would like to join online you can at [www.membership.coop.co.uk/new-registration](http://www.membership.coop.co.uk/new-registration).

## Calendar raises £1000

Last year, Karen Delderfield and Yvonne Cooney produced a beautiful 2020 calendar 'A Sketchbook Year of Great Tey'. All proceeds from sales were given to TCF – which amounted to an amazing total of £1000. All the calendars completely sold out! Thank you so much to both Karen and Yvonne for this wonderful fundraising idea and for choosing TCF to benefit – we are so grateful.

## Thank you to John Lewis shoppers

A huge thank you to John Lewis in High Wycombe for a wonderful donation of £900. We are hugely grateful to all the shoppers who nominated The Compassionate Friends through the Community Matters scheme in the store. Our Trustee, Sue Hughes, was presented with the cheque last December.



# Can you help us in 2020?

- **Fancy running for TCF?** Email Stephen to grab one of our places in the Royal Parks Half Marathon on Sunday 11th October 2020.
- **Fancy cycling for TCF?** Email Stephen to grab one of our places in the Prudential RideLondon - Surrey event on Sunday 16th August 2020.
- **Don't fancy running or cycling?** How about sponsoring our 2020 London Marathon runner Izzy Alexander. Her Just Giving page can be found at [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/isabel-alexander1](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/isabel-alexander1)
- **Do you shop at Waitrose?** Waitrose supports charities through their Community Matters initiative. To put TCF forward for selection, please ask for a Community Matters application form at Customer Services next time you're there. Complete and return to the store. We can help you with the wording for the application if you wish.
- **Does your company choose a Charity of the Year?** If so, please do nominate The Compassionate Friends as a candidate for consideration? Please let us know what we need to do to apply and we can do the rest. Thank you.
- **Are you thinking about making your will?** Please do think about leaving a gift to The Compassionate Friends.



## Other simple ways to help us

### Amazon Smile

If you shop online at Amazon, go to AmazonSmile instead and for every penny you spend TCF receives 0.5%. Over £2.3 million pounds have been raised for charities in this way and we would love a slice of that! Go to <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1082335-0> to sign up to support The Compassionate Friends every time you shop.

### Easy Fundraising

If you shop online, you can raise FREE donations for The Compassionate Friends. Over 4,000 shops and sites will donate to us when you use easyfundraising to shop with them! Please sign up and support us at [www.easyfundraising.com](http://www.easyfundraising.com). Over £2,500 has been raised for TCF in this way. Please help us to raise even more – it's at no cost to you.

### Recycling

Did you know you can recycle printer cartridges and old mobile phones and support TCF? Just contact our national office for recycling envelopes. Perhaps your place of work could donate their empty printer cartridges, too?

For more information on any of the above contact Stephen at [stephen@tcf.org.uk](mailto:stephen@tcf.org.uk)

## Could you join our Helpline Team?

Our National Helpline provides support and information to bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents, as well as professionals working with families, every day of the year. If you would like to volunteer with us by donating a few hours per month, answering calls from your own home, we would love to have you as part of our wonderful Helpline Team – helping us to continue providing a professional, helpful, warm and caring response to callers.

### If you are

- at least two years past your own bereavement
- emotionally resilient so you can support others
- an empathic, compassionate listener, committed to helping others
- non-judgmental, respectful of others' attitudes and beliefs
- trustworthy and reliable
- reasonably computer literate and with good writing skills

**then we would love to hear from you. We offer training and support to anyone selected.**

For an informal chat about volunteering on our Helpline or for more information and an application form please contact: Ruth Mercier, Helpline Manager, e: [helpline@tcf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@tcf.org.uk) | t: **01737 817892**



# The Compassionate Friends

Supporting bereaved parents and their families

## Get in touch

UK Helpline:

**0345 123 2304**

E: [helpline@tcf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@tcf.org.uk)

Northern Ireland Helpline:

0288 77 88 016

**General Enquiries**

0345 120 3785

E: [info@tcf.org.uk](mailto:info@tcf.org.uk)

**TCF Library**

0345 120 3785

E: [library@tcf.org.uk](mailto:library@tcf.org.uk)

To find out more about  
TCF visit

**[www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)**

**[@tcf.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/tcf.org.uk)**

**[@TCFcharityUK](https://twitter.com/TCFcharityUK)**

## Support TCF by donating



We cannot support bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents without your help. We appreciate any donations large or small.



### Online

Donate online at  
**[www.tcf.org.uk/donate](http://www.tcf.org.uk/donate)**



### By phone

Donate by debit or credit card  
**call 0345 120 3785**



### Does your company choose a Charity of the Year?

Why not consider nominating TCF as a candidate. Please let us know what we need to do to apply and we can do the rest. Thank you.