



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Compassionate Friends (TCF)

Saturday 26 November 2022

Venue: Sarah Fell Theatre, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London

Chair: Andrew Miller KC

1. Chair's welcome

The Chair of TCF, Andrew Miller KC, welcomed those attending the 2022 Annual General Meeting at the venue and also via zoom. This was the first in person AGM since 2019. Andrew advised that he was nearing the end of his 3-year period as Chair and also advised that Carolyn Brice our CEO, who had done amazing work on the AGM, was unfortunately appearing via zoom as she was unwell.

A photographer was in attendance and Andrew announced that anyone not wanting to be in the pictures should let TCF know.

Andrew welcomed our guest speaker Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter and thanked all the staff and fellow trustees. He also welcomed and thanked Reverend Simon Stephens for attending, and for founding TCF in 1969.

2. Minutes of the 2021 AGM and matters arising

The draft Minutes were approved and adopted unanimously following the proposal of Melian Mansfield, which was seconded by Ken Barclay. There were no amendments nor matters arising from those minutes.

3. Presentation of Trustees Annual Review - Given by Carolyn Brice, Chief Executive Officer, TCF via zoom

Carolyn advised she had recently achieved 10 years' service as an employee of TCF, although she started volunteering for TCF in 2008.

Carolyn presented an overview of the Trustees Annual Report (April 21 to March 22) which has been published.

The operating environment was still affected during this period due to the continued uncertainty of Covid, with stop and start periods of restrictions and easing throughout the year. This resulted in TCF developing a flexible hybrid approach with our bereaved parents and volunteers being supported online and by phone, and in person gradually when restrictions eased alongside online and telephone support.

Due to uncertainties with Covid not all of TCF's planned initiatives in their 3-year plan could take place.

Carolyn advised that the Annual Report shows the full range of TCF's achievements, and as it was impossible to cover this in the time given at the meeting there were four strands of TCF that would be covered today:

1. Focus on Volunteers

At the heart of our charity are our 250+ volunteers with various roles such as the Helpline, one to one support, Grief Companions, Retreat volunteers, Library, Walk leaders and many more. Their work for TCF can also impact on their own well-being and grief, as bereaved parents are turning to us very early in their grief and the pandemic has added to their trauma. Carolyn advised that with the support of Ruth Mercier, Sharon Rose and Shirley Gower our volunteers are our key focus and TCF has held regular online sharing sessions, workshops and webinars and dedicated training. In May 2021 we set up our Hear For You listening support service for our peer supporters, with qualified counsellors who are also bereaved parents.

2. Building TCF Infrastructure

TCF appointed Karolina Zwierzyk as Office Manager in October. Karolina has been working alongside trustee adviser Guy Paton researching Customer Relationship Management systems to replace TCF's existing aging database to support membership, fundraising and events management (our CRM went live in July 2022)

As with the previous year, funding was hit by the pandemic. TCF focused on strengthening our fundraising infrastructure and welcomed Jenny King to work alongside Stephen Armstrong supporting fundraising events and individuals who wish to raise money for TCF.

3. Hybrid Approach

TCF has continued to offer our online support groups for specific circumstances, since setting them up during Covid, offering support to bereaved parents from all over the UK.

TCF were able to hold in person support days in Glasgow, Derbyshire, Hampshire and Belfast. There was a newly bereaved parents' weekend retreat in Bath in February and a Scottish gathering in March.

4. Grief Companion Scheme

This scheme has been expertly managed and developed by Shirley Gower offering one to one peer befriending support usually, but not exclusively, to those bereaved parents in early grief who have no access to other TCF support. The scheme has been funded by the National Lottery. We can quickly put a match in place and support is offered usually up to 12 months. We have recently made 200 grief companion matches. In January 2022 Suzanne Cannon joined TCF as the part time grief companion administrator.

Carolyn advised on the future of TCF:

- Review and continue implementation of our 3-year plan
- Return to in person weekend retreats and support days
- Encourage and support informal events and walks
- Continue our hybrid model of support
- Renew funding for the Grief Companion Scheme

- Continue to develop infrastructure for supporting (we recruited Johanna Kitterick in August 2022 to support the work of Ruth Mercier and we will look to recruit in 2023 for administrative support for events)
- Undertake a Gap and Inclusion Analysis eg walks locations, Northern England – limited reach. We will look at under-represented groups eg LGBTQ, ethnic minorities, bereaved fathers. We will publish our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Continue development of profile and awareness of TCF – we will look to recruit a communication specialist to reach out to key stakeholders eg Police, Coroners, GPs

Carolyn thanked all those attending the AGM and all those who support TCF with their donations, time and energy, especially our very much valued volunteers.

Carolyn thanked all the staff team, and Karen Ivey for helping out in the office, for their energy and compassion and expressed her intense pride at their achievements.

Andrew praised the report and thanked all the TCF staff members.

4. Finance Report - Given by Sheila Phillips

Andrew advised that Sheila stepped in as Treasurer after Nigel Taylor fell in.

Sheila advised that the report is based on our income (membership donations, other donations from individuals, gift aid, trusts and foundations, general fundraising and events) our expenditure (eg the helpline, gatherings and other supportive days and weekends, online support and local groups) and our reserves (the total funds available to TCF to enable TCF's work to continue)

The report can be summarised as follows:

- Reserves of £431,542 at 1 April 2021
- Income of £459,980 received during the year (£256,237 unrestricted, £203,743 restricted for a specific project/purpose)
- Expenditure £378,221 (£211,781 from unrestricted, £166,440 from restricted)
- Reserves at the end of the year of £513,301

Sheila summarised TCF's income, expenditure and reserves over the last few years:

- Since 2015 there has been a gradual increase in spending until 2021 when it decreased due to Covid; this year spending increased closer to the pre pandemic level of 2019/20
- Over the last 5 years income, expenditure and reserves have gradually increased between 2017/18 and 2019/20 but in 2020/21 there was a decrease in income and expenditure due to Covid restrictions when planned activities were put on hold
- In this year both income and expenditure recovered compared with the previous year, although in the first half of the year expenditure was still less than forecast and some designated funds eg for volunteer training could not be spent when plans had to be cancelled. Reserves at 31/3/22 reflects this and our current plan is to spend funds held over from 2020/21 in this current year
- The split between unrestricted and restricted funds at 31/3/22 is detailed in Note 17 of the accounts in the Annual Report

5. Fundraising - Given by Stephen Armstrong via zoom

Stephen highlighted some of this year's donors:

- Hobson Charity, for bereavement support days
- Box Power, who donated £10,000
- TCF member Peter Baxter helped secure a donation from 'Trust for London'
- Law firm DWF, whose foundation has supported bereaved siblings' support
- David Bransby, who raised funds from the sale of 'Forget me Not Poems' book he compiled
- Anna & Chris Read raised funds from a variety of activities over the last year in memory of their son, Michael
- Rachel & Mark Terry raised funds from an ice hockey tournament in memory of their son, Danny
- Richard Deeks chose TCF to benefit from his charity day at his Golf Club in Hertfordshire raising over £6000
- Jack Payne, who cycled in the annual Team Dare cycle ride to raise £10,000 for TCF

There were so many other fundraisers with an amazing range of activities.

Stephen thanked Jenny for her role in supporting fundraising for TCF.

Stephen advised the following:

- TCF have signed up to 'Run For Charity'
- There are spaces for Ride for London next year
- The next 2.5 challenge (in support of our 250 volunteers) will be the weekend of 20th May 2023. Thank you to Graham Seed for promoting this year's 2.5 challenge
- This year we received the second highest amount in legacies
- Stephen and Jenny can work with, and offer help to, anyone with any local fundraising idea
- Anyone can easily fundraise for TCF by signing up to Amazon smile or creating a birthday fundraiser on Facebook
- Stephen thanked all the staff, trustees and volunteers at TCF

6. Vote on adoption of Annual Report

The draft Annual Report and Review was approved and adopted unanimously following the proposal of Maria Ahern, which was seconded by Jen Hughes.

7. Any Other Business/Q & A's

There was a question from the audience regarding investment income. Sheila advised a decision was made 2 years ago not to invest any funds long term as our funds are usually smallish but this would be reviewed.

8. Guest Speaker

Andrew welcomed Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter, a long-term member and supporter of TCF to speak at the meeting.

Afterwards there was a Q & A session from members in the room and via zoom. Andrew expressed a vote of thanks to David on behalf of the attendees and TCF.

9. Announcement of new Trustees

Following the recent election, the Trustees from January 2023 will be as follows:

Melian Mansfield
Warren Weiss
Claire Coveney
Sheila Phillips
George Burn
Gill Hardy
Jen Hughes
Ken Barclay
Nisha Shah
Adelle Brenner
Alison Cramp
Sefton Kwasnik

The following individuals will no longer be on the Board (their last meeting will be in January 2023)

Gina Claye
Maria Ahern
Andrew Miller

Sue Hughes has completed her maximum 9 years' service as a Trustee. Andrew thanked Sue and all the Trustees for their hard work.

Andrew presented Carolyn on behalf of the staff and Trustees with flowers and a gift as a thank you for her 10 years' service with TCF.

George Burns expressed on behalf of TCF, our thanks and love to Nigel Taylor and our thoughts are with him.

10. Close

The meeting was formally declared closed by Andrew Miller at 4pm.