



Suicide Bereavement Support

For Cumbria &
surrounding areas

Annual Report

August 2022 to July 2023

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Suicide Bereavement Support for Cumbria & surrounding areas

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Registered Charity number: 1184889

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Patron's Foreword by Marie-Elsa Bragg

Suicide Bereavement Support for Cumbria and the surrounding areas (SBS Cumbria for short) has had a good year, supporting many who may otherwise be tragically isolated. They support our local communities by developing peer support which makes such a difference. One person said: *'To sit in a room with others who have had the same experience helped me begin to get up in the mornings.'*

Safe companionship makes all the difference.

However, SBS not only works in this way, volunteers now work with a network of organisations that support the bereaved and also those working with suicide prevention.

SBS are an essential part of Cumbria and those who contribute to their work in any way, including all the volunteers, deserve genuine gratitude. Thank you.

Marie-Elsa Bragg, Patron

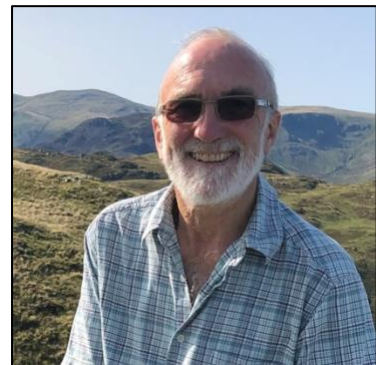


Chair's Report

John Brown resigned as Chair of SBS Cumbria in November 2022, with Emily Griffiths taking on the role in addition to her involvement as a local facilitator for Barrow and South Lakes. They have both contributed to this year's Report.

First, John:

After 12 years at the helm of SOBS Cumbria, then the independent charity, Suicide Bereavement Support, I stood down as Chair in November. I knew it was time for me to step back from the day-to-day involvement with bereavement by suicide, emotionally draining as it is, and to metaphorically let my father (who took his life in 1992) rest in peace. I am indebted to Emily for offering to step into the breach.



Currently, I am continuing as a Trustee and facilitating the monthly Zoom meeting in partnership with John Purdie.

We have kept the Zoom meetings going on a monthly basis, as there is still a need for this. It is a huge challenge for anyone to join a meeting of 'strangers' following such tragic loss, but, having said that, the people who do find the courage to join seem to benefit from meeting other people in the same situation without having to leave home.

I would just like to say that I am indebted to the small team of people who have provided this platform which has now enabled literally hundreds of people to find mutual support through the horrific tragedy which bereavement by suicide surely is. Thank you.

Emily continues the report:

Firstly, I would like to thank John Brown for his fantastic work holding the reins of first SOBS and then SBS during our development. And also for his years of offering support to the suicide bereaved. I myself benefitted from John's support 13 years ago, following the loss of my partner, and I can honestly say it was life changing.

Whilst it's always a tragedy that there is a need, it is also heartening to see such an increase in awareness and support for those of us who are suicide bereaved. That awareness has increased since John Brown and John Asher held the first meeting in Keswick in 2009 and our work is now in a context nationally of SBUK, Child Bereavement UK and others as well as Every Life Matters, Bags for Strife, Cumbrian churches and local initiatives including Let's Talk Bereavement.



We are very keen to promote this variety of available support to those who contact us, as well as the aspects we ourselves can offer, as everyone's needs are different.

At the core of our commitment as a small charity has always been support to those who are bereaved by suicide. However, we also understand the needs for suicide prevention and awareness, improvements in mental health provision and a broader willingness to talk about grief and bereavement. I am confident that our work and our connections will continue, maybe in different forms and forums, as this awareness and change continues.

At present, our resources as a small volunteer-run organisation are stretched thin. Trustees have been working on contingency plans in case our work across Cumbria becomes unsustainable with the volunteers available. This is hard and we hope that we'll be able to continue but, if not, it is reassuring to know that others, particularly Every Life Matters, have the resources to continue a similar approach if SBS for Cumbria and surrounding areas has to adapt for a different future. We will, of course, keep in touch about any developments.



Emily raises the profile of SBS by attending events, including the 2023 North Lonsdale Agricultural Show

Reflections

“The loveliest club no one wants to join”

“You say no one wants to be in your group, but it was the place we needed to be”

“It helps just knowing you are there”

Barrow

Whilst the number attending the Barrow group has remained quite low, this has allowed us the opportunity to have some in-depth conversations, and the meetings have felt very worthwhile. Our small library of relevant books has proved very useful, with books frequently being lent out.

We are grateful to People First and Health Watch for allowing us to use the building, and to our friends in other organisations, particularly Mind in Furness, for helping us spread the message that if you are suicide bereaved, you deserve additional support.

After contacting our local Mental Health Trust as part of promoting the Barrow group, I was very pleased to be able to work with the Lesley Whittaker in the Experience and Engagement Team of Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust, to develop a [short video about my family's experience of suicide bereavement](#). I found it challenging to be honest and succinct, whilst bearing in mind the video would end up on YouTube, and to an extent I wanted to protect myself and my family's privacy. The support from Lesley and her team was outstanding, and the end result was shared at their Board meeting in September 2022, where the feedback was they were 'very moved'. The video has also been used in training, at talks I have given, and it was shared with Cruse Bereavement volunteers across the Northwest.

Emily



Carlisle



Carlisle meetings have continued with the number of attendees averaging between three and five. I have continued to have the able support of three regular attendees, whose wise counsel and kindness with new attendees continues to be hugely supportive. One of the recurring things we hear as facilitators from those attending the peer support meetings is the need to speak to and listen to others that have shared experience of bereavement by suicide as they then feel less isolated and alone. The friends that support me in Carlisle have attended for several years and between us, we are able to absorb the range of emotions we see and hear from new attendees to the group and hopefully provide a lifeline, whether temporary or otherwise.

In that vein, we have seen some new attendees choosing to attend the group once or twice before taking a break. Whilst this can be worrying as the facilitator, in that there is a worry and concern as to how the person is coping, it reassures me that there is now an ever increasing range of support networks in Cumbria and the surrounding areas that bereaved families can access. These haven't existed previously and their development can only be a positive thing. SBS has been a vital cog in an ever growing wheel and I am gratified to have been part of its development over these past years.

In February, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of a photography exhibition created by David Moyes at The Stove in Dumfries, south west Scotland. David very kindly donated all sales proceeds to SBS and I had the pleasure of making a speech opening the exhibition, explaining the history and origin of SBS and how we operate today. Several people approached me at the event with questions and comments, with some sharing their own experiences of bereavement by suicide. I was pleased to be involved in such an important event, which was able to use its platform to raise awareness of the help available in our area.

We have also seen a leafleting campaign target the Carlisle area with SBS leaflets distributed to GP surgeries, community centres and supermarkets with the continued theme of raising awareness in the community of the help that is available to families at their time of need.

Sharon

Kendal



Kendal meetings have been well attended, with some 'regular' members who have been extremely generous in their support of other newer members. The group feels very much 'a family', and whilst it goes without saying there have certainly been sadness and tears, the amount of laughter at times might surprise people. Cake eating has become a definite tradition in the meeting, with one member bringing in a delicious home-made 'jaffa cake' cake, and Amber sourcing the best sponge cakes in Kendal!

We have been proud to support our members in campaigns and activities mentioned elsewhere in this Report.

Whilst it's hard to find the right words, as the reason for us being together is always so awful, the Kendal meetings have felt incredibly positive and supportive.

Facilitated by Amber, Emily and Kitty

Online Zoom meeting

Numbers attending the online Zoom meetings have dropped significantly as normal life post-Covid has returned and numbers attending our face-to-face meetings have increased. A decision was taken late in 2022 to reduce to just one online Zoom meeting per month and then to review later in the year.

We recognise how incredibly hard it is for someone who has been bereaved to join a meeting of people they have never met and to share their utterly tragic situation.

Having said that, over the years since we started the online meetings, people who have joined have invariably found it a helpful and worthwhile experience not least because it can be done from their own home (or other setting of their choosing). Tough as it is, our suggestion would always be to give it a go – a warm welcome is assured to anyone who does join us.

Those who continue to attend certainly find it useful and appreciate the continuing opportunity to meet others bereaved by suicide in an informal setting without meeting face-to-face. Numbers have steadied, giving 84 for the year, which is still a significant number (and greater than any single face-to-face venue) so seems worthwhile.

John and John

Whitehaven/West Cumbria



The Whitehaven group has continued to meet monthly, with between four and 10 people attending. This includes a core of regulars as well as new members who drop in and are always made most welcome. I have continued to offer 1:1 support to those on the west coast between meetings, by phone or over a coffee.

A recent highlight (and continuing to September) is a Tesco fundraiser at the Whitehaven store. This is not only raising awareness across the local community, but also has the potential to raise funds for a social event for suicide bereaved in the area. The group and I will be considering an event at Christmas, dependent on the size of donation (could be £500, £1,000 or £1,500, depending on the number of in-store token votes).

I also hold one of the helpline phones, which is a lifeline to many. Support for these people varies, depending on their need: it could be a one-off (often lengthy) conversation, and then enough for them to know we are there if needed, or it could be multiple conversations. Some people also contact by text (and I respond by text) as they aren't able to find the strength to talk. The aim is to "meet" people where they are and to support as much or as little as they want. It's often hard but being able to support is a huge privilege too.

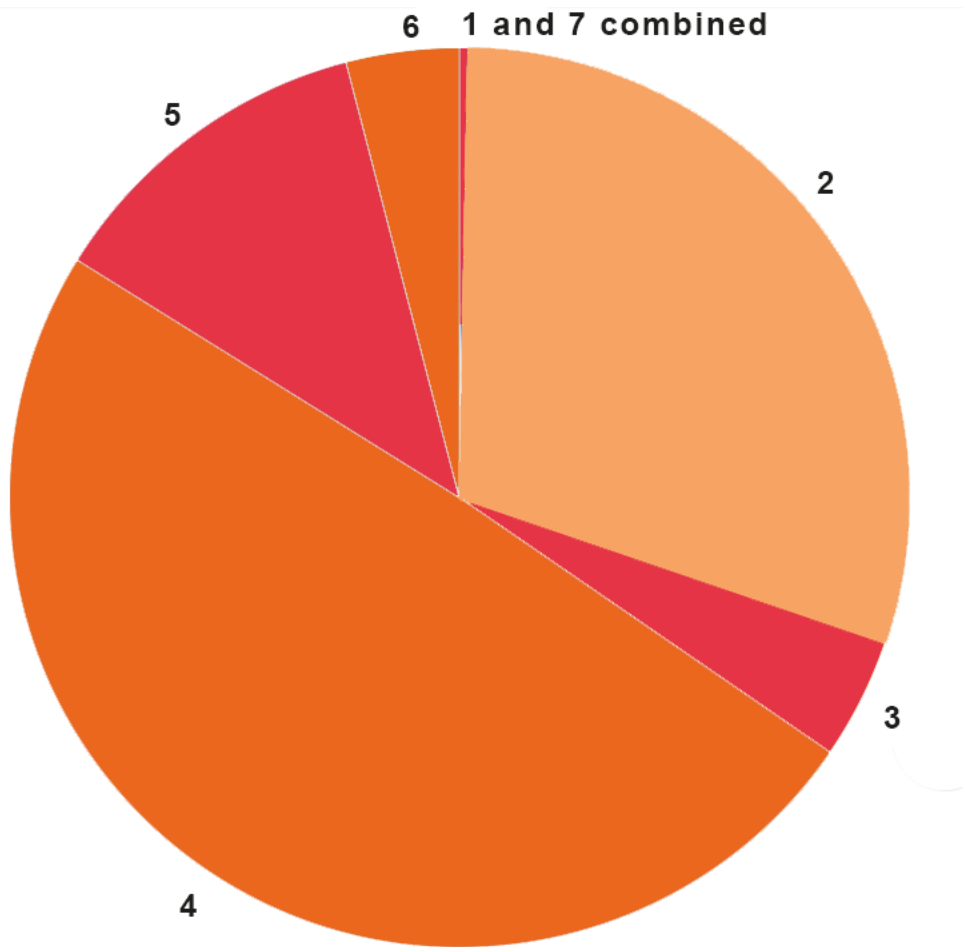
Karan

Financial Update

Opening balance on 1 August 2022	£17,708.69
Total annual income	£18,875.32
Total annual expenditure	£23,248.38
Closing balance on 31 July 2023	£13,335.63

Income

	Income	2021/22	2022/23	Notes for 2022/23
1	Amazon	£12.17	£42.89	
2	Donations <i>(including funeral donations and fundraisers)</i>	£2,146.52	£5,646.87	<i>£1,000 of donations ring-fenced for Forum event (£500 in previous year was also ring-fenced for Forum)</i> <i>£700 of donations ring-fenced for UpFront, from Penrith Lions and Rotary) groups (2x250) and £200 from Frank</i>
3	Facebook	£1,192.96	£821.26	
4	Grants <i>including</i> <i>Marsh Trust £500</i> <i>Eric Wright £993</i> <i>Hadfield £2,500</i> <i>The Frieda Scott Charitable Trust £5,308</i>	£3,050.21	£9,301.00	<i>Hadfield grant ring-fenced for Forum event</i> <i>The Frieda Scott Charitable Trust monies ring-fenced for South Lakeland and Eden</i>
5	JustGiving	£1,199.09	£2,282.21	
6	PayPal	£261.94	£765.12	
7	TheGivingMachine		£15.97	
	TOTAL	£7,862.89	£18,875.32	



2022/23 income

- 1 and 7 combined** Amazon and TheGivingMachine combined
- 2** Donations
- 3** Facebook
- 4** Grants
- 5** JustGiving
- 6** PayPal

After a significant drop in 2021/22, Income for 2022/23 bounced back to a similar level to that achieved in 2020/21.

This reflected a huge amount of work on grant applications that resulted in amazingly generous grants, particularly from The Frieda Scott Charitable Trust (to be used in South Lakeland and Eden) and from The Hadfield Trust (focused on the October 2022 Barrow event).

Also, on a smaller scale but appreciated just as much, we saw the return post-pandemic of supporter fundraising and also gifts from various community organisations following SBS speaker meetings.

Huge thanks go to everyone who contributed to our Income in the past year.

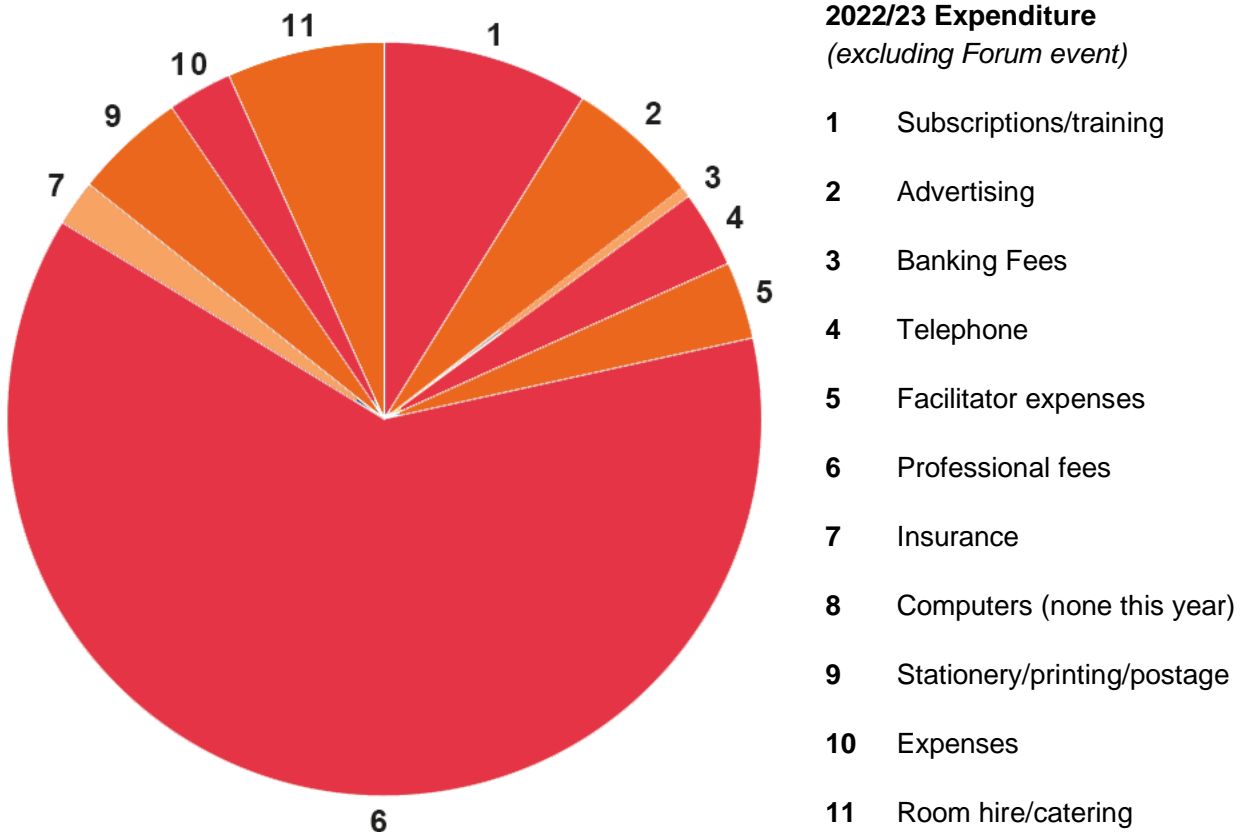
Investment

We hope that our expenditure over the past year also reflects an investment in our work and in the fulfilment of our purpose.

	Expenditure	2021/22	2022/23	Forum event and directory creation	2022/23 excluding Forum event
1	Subscriptions/training <i>conference attendance last year and tickets for this year</i>	£76.00	£1,436.37	–	£1,436.37
2	Advertising <i>includes collection tubs, face book boosts, T shirts, Cando FM</i>	£3,220.92	£994.25	£70.00	£924.25
3	Banking Fees	£55.80	£72.00	–	£72.00
4	Telephone	£572.13	£538.17	–	£538.17
5	Facilitator expense <i>personal costs incurred by facilitators, including travel, SBS sim cards</i>	£46.50	£539.30	–	£539.30
6	Professional fees <i>book keeping, admin, publicity</i>	£6,790.18	£15,270.97	£3,284.00	£11,986.97
7	Computers	£105.64	–	–	–
8	Insurance	£324.34	£321.78	–	£321.78
9	Stationery/printing/postage <i>including promotional fliers, annual report and Forum booklet</i>	£99.78	£1,336.10	£557.68	£778.42
10	Expenses <i>speakers/performers, framing of pictures for Upfront</i>	£2,953.51	£1,001.30	£551.30	£450.00
11	Room hire/catering <i>some arrears from previous financial year paid for Whitehaven</i>	£510.00	£1,738.14	£638.00	£1,100.14
	TOTAL	£14,754.80	£23,248.38	£5,100.98	£18,147.40

These Expenditure figures hide a wide range of activities and support not necessarily directly linked to the locality groups. As well as those groups, reported under Reflections on pages 5–8, there are also various other activities and highlights, described in more detail from page 13 onwards.

We see all of these as Investments into support for those bereaved by suicide.



Expenditure was higher than the previous year by £8,493.58. Over £5,000 of this related to the Barrow event where SBS took the lead on creating an important gathering, generating a lot of media discussion and delivering resources that are still proving their value across Cumbria.

“The Forum event helped us raise the issue of being suicide bereaved county-wide and beyond. We couldn’t have organised it as effectively nor as professionally without the additional support from Sally and Hazel and the really positive feedback on the day (including form our MP) showed that this was a valuable investment. We also created the Directory as part of the event and this has proved to be a useful resource for organisations across Cumbria ever since.”
Emily Griffiths, SBS Chair

An area of cost that has increased is professional fees, but it should be noted that 2021/22 only included seven months of external publicity and administration support (not the full year as in the most recent figures). The grant applications and associated work to bring in new income also had an impact on the professional fee costs during the year as Hazel provided significant administrative support on these.

Room hire and travel amounts returned to higher, but more “normal” levels, post-pandemic during 2022/23.

All in all, the Income and Investment financial figures hide a vast additional investment of time and emotional energy from Trustees and others, especially the Chair. We recognise that this is not sustainable for our volunteers for the longer term, and this is one of the factors in the current review of the charity’s future as mentioned in Emily’s Chair’s report (page 4).

Activities

e-Newsletter and welcome letter with links

Everyone who contacts us, whether by email, telephone or via social media, is asked if they'd like to keep in touch. A welcome letter acknowledges their contact and provides a summary of how SBS Cumbria may be able to support, as well as offering various links to other organisations and resources.

For some people who contact us, this is sufficient.

However, we also offer the opportunity to keep in touch by receiving our monthly e-newsletter. This includes dates of monthly meetings, news from the charity and all sorts of other updates and links that may be of interest or useful or both.

Since the end of July 2022, when the distribution list covered 194 email addresses, this aspect of our work has grown such that the July 2023 e-newsletter went out to 248 individuals. Feedback from recipients has been very positive and encouraging and we know that it is well read and appreciated.

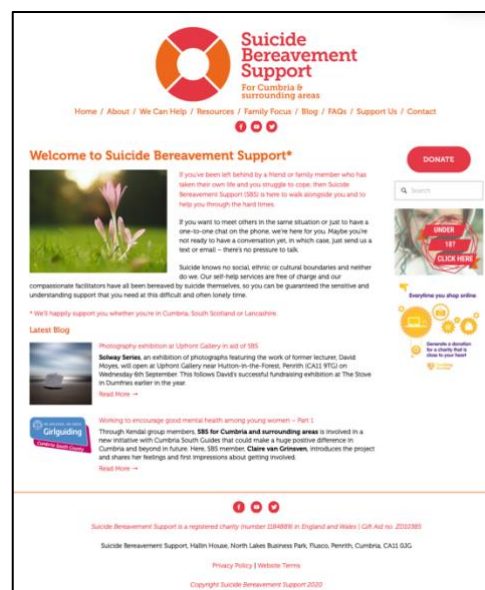
The most recent 12 editions of the SBS e-newsletter have, on average, been read by 122 people, over half our membership.



Website and social media

With support from Sally Seed of Stoneleigh Communications, we've continued to maintain information and post fresh content on our website and we have also been active on both Facebook (the open Page) and Twitter, sharing posts from other organisations as well as promoting our meetings and other work.

Two guest blogs were created during the year, one with Alex Phillimore of the national Farming Community Network and one with Karen Dutton who leads the Let's Talk Bereavement project in North Cumbria. Both organisations appreciated the opportunity to explain their work and we were able to extend their communications to our own contacts and promote them (with links to the blogs) on social media.



Closed Facebook Group

Another online source of support and connection is our closed Facebook group. This has just over 150 members, with new people joining and others leaving all the time.

“The rainbow postcards created during 2022 were made using the helpful suggestions for coping that have been put into the group over the last few years.”

Being a part of the SBS meetings, the closed Facebook group and being able to share pictures and thoughts with others who understand, without any reservations
 A thought diary: writing some of the not so nice things down when they come into your head (if the same thought reoccurs, say 'already wrote that down')
 Organisations such as Compassionate Friends, Winston's Wish (including camps for children) and Suicide Bereavement UK • Cuddling pets
 Company of family and friends • Focusing on positive things you did to help your loved one, not the things you wish you'd done
 Grief counselling from the local hospice, Cruse, First Steps, Samaritans (6-week course) and EMDR
 Memorial acts eg at family events, Cruse dedication page, Every Life Matters candlelit vigils
 Self care: try not to get too stressed/over tired • Apps eg Insight (help with sleep)

“We use the group as a safe space to remember our loved ones, especially at difficult times such as anniversaries, and we offer support to each other, sharing poems and pictures and other material.”

Listening to music, songs, podcasts and reading poetry or books with special meaning • Contributing to training groups eg police, counsellors
 No pressure on yourself to have 'perfect' family events • Meeting relevant organisations and working for change that could help others
 Take one day at a time, don't be too hard on yourself, accept there will be tearful times • Screaming (inside or out loud!)
 Writing prose or poetry • Making music • Making a special blanket or cushion from loved ones' clothing
 Trying to avoid difficult thoughts and triggers • Physical activity (often linked to fundraising) (g)
 Be a mental health champion • Welcoming new family babies and other special events
 Distracting yourself • Fundraising for suicide prevention charities or SBS

The face-to-face group facilitators act as moderators for the Facebook group, but to date we have not had to restrict any content.

Partnership working, connections and campaign support

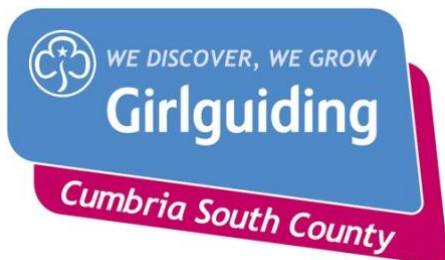
As a small volunteer-led organisation, SBS Cumbria builds connections to others who share our purpose or who are active in associated areas such as mental health, suicide prevention and grief and bereavement support.

Emily Griffiths, as our Chair, took over from John Brown in attending the county-wide Suicide Prevention Group (now being reconfigured as part of local government reorganisation) that is chaired by Public Health. She is also involved in the county-wide bereavement support group, chaired by the NHS. Both of these groups have been really important in keeping SBS Cumbria linked to other statutory and non-statutory organisations.

SBS Cumbria members and volunteers are also actively involved in:

- developing a new Mental Health Guiding badge (see page 22 for details)
- campaigning for higher education establishments to have a legal duty of care for students' mental health (#ForTheHundred campaign)
- supporting the Baton of Hope suicide prevention initiative
- working with Cumbria Police on the training of new recruits in how best to break bad news to families (see pages 19 and 20 for further details)
- promoting BAGS for Strife and other bereavement support resources

and much more.



Impact

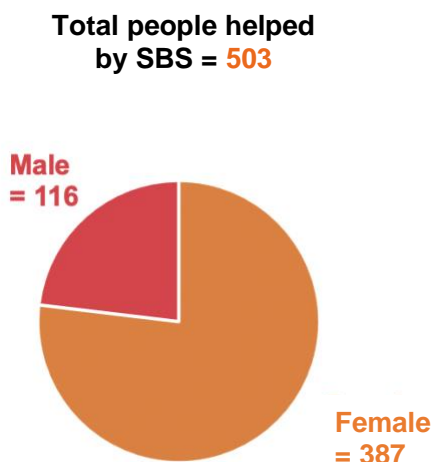
This section of the Annual Report is all about quantifying how we are making a difference, focused particularly on the people we have helped through our core activities. Each and every point of contact is important for the individuals concerned and we try to support in a number of ways, hoping that at least one approach will be right for each person.

Overall contacts 2022/23

Relation of person who took their life	Number of people bereaved
Husband/Partner	10
Son	10
Brother	6
Father	3
Friend	9
Mother	6
Wife	1
Sister	3
Brother-in-Law	2
Niece	2
Uncle	1
Patient	2
Cousin	3
Not known	18
TOTAL	76

NB: Some people have lost more than one person and some prefer not to identify the person they have lost.

The bigger picture, of course, is the number of people helped by SBS Cumbria and its predecessor in the past 12 years – and that figure is over 500 people so far, revealing the desperate need for support and services like ours across the county.



Relation to the person lost to suicide			
Husband/Partner	104	Uncle	1
Son	89	Granny	1
Sibling	74	Sister-in-law	1
Father	45	Brother-in-law	3
Daughter	31	Grandfather	1
Mother	35	Cousin	5
Wife	8	Work colleague	2
Friend	42	Godson	1
Niece/Nephew	7	Employer	3
Grandchild	4	Other (incl patient)	18
Girl friend	1	Not known	27
TOTAL			503

Group meetings (face to face and online)

SBS started running an online support group on Zoom during COVID-19 and has continued to run this alongside the normal face-to-face meetings at Barrow, Carlisle, Kendal and Whitehaven throughout the year, as some people prefer this form of engagement, There is further information in the Reflections section on pages 5 to 8.

Total meeting attendances in recent years

Venue	2021/22	2022/23	Total meeting attendances in recent years
Barrow	26	37	91
Carlisle	27	42	184
Kendal	37	78	123
Whitehaven	27	72	155
TOTAL face-to-face	117	229	553
Online	226	84	879
TOTAL	343	313	1,423

“The numbers of meeting attendances reflect the fact that some may attend once, whilst others attend multiple meetings and appear several times in these figures. The numbers are a clear indication of the value of our face-to-face support to those bereaved by suicide. As written elsewhere in this Report, meeting attendance numbers reflect only one aspect of the support we offer. Overall, the number of people who have contacted us since a group was first started in Cumbria is around 500, including meeting attendance, one-to-one conversations and through our website, Facebook, e-newsletter, helpline or email. Obviously, that’s no cause for celebration — it’s not a club anyone wants to join — but I know that all of us, who’ve been involved as volunteers, feel incredibly humbled and proud to be there to make a difference.”
Emily Griffiths, SBS Chair

These figures show a complicated picture but reinforce the interest in an online group (still more attendees than any individual face-to-face venue) and the different attendance trends in different parts of Cumbria. With other organisations, particularly Every Life Matters, also offering support meetings, it may be that the drop in numbers in Carlisle is more about a diversity of opportunities to meet.

However, in case this is not what is happening, volunteers in and around Carlisle were very active in Spring 2023, leafleting doctor’s surgeries and other possible points of contact about SBS, to ensure that those who might want our support were aware of our meetings.

Highlights

Supporting each other through loss event (The Forum, Barrow, Saturday 15 October 2022)

This was a major project in Barrow, a key location for SBS Cumbria. An exhibition and event was built around Bev Bishop's Finding Magic performance, about the actor's loss to suicide of her son, Jess, and Andy Airey, who lost his daughter, Sophie, to suicide, talking about being one of the #3DadsWalking. The aims of the event overall were to raise awareness of the urgent need for support in and around Barrow and to promote the various organisations involved in providing support for suicide bereaved.



L to R: Bev Bishop, Emily Griffiths (SBS Chair) and Andy Airey (3 Dads Walking)

“We wanted to make a noise so that people noticed the issues,” says Emily, who led the whole project, “and we needed to make sure it was an environment those of us bereaved could attend and where we’d feel comfortable and supported. It wasn’t particularly about increasing the numbers at SBS Cumbria meetings but very much about building connections and using an event as the focus for as much publicity as possible.”

Pre-event: three local radio interviews, a running ad on community radio, articles in the local newspaper, numerous social media Shares and posts in groups, and letters and posters to over 100 organisations including local MPs and councillors, GPs and other healthcare professionals, public transport hubs, shops, community centres, major employers and emergency services.

“Our Barrow MP, Simon Fell, promoted the event in his newsletter and came along on the day and the Directory of Support, with entries for all those exhibiting, grew from the A4 sheet with a few names that I’d expected to a 16-page booklet with information on 29 relevant organisations working in South Lakes and Furness. We’ve since distributed even more copies of this and it is downloadable from our website too (www.sbs.org.uk/papers-and-reports) providing an invaluable resource for anyone working with those bereaved by suicide.”

On the day: 76 people participated with a total of 28 hearts added to our remembrance tree and 17 staying on for Bev’s afternoon workshop, which was specifically for those bereaved by suicide. 17 people completed evaluation forms — 11 stall holders and seven attendees — and the opportunity to network was commented on most frequently, then quality of the speakers, and need to speak about suicide. 13 out of 18 evaluation forms indicated there was nothing they would have changed, comments including ‘useful’, ‘needed’, ‘inspiring’, ‘emotional’ and ‘a good balance’. St Mary’s Hospice put on their website: “What an honour to be invited to this amazing event.”

“Supporting Each Other Through Loss was stressful and exhausting but, as it turned out, incredibly worthwhile. We aimed to make a noise and get people talking about suicide and I really wanted everyone involved in different organisations to get to know each other so that they can work better together. In the months since the event, that investment has created even more opportunities than I’d hoped and should, if things continue, mean that there’s better support available to anyone bereaved by suicide in Barrow and beyond.”

Emily Griffiths, SBS Chair



John Purdie introduces Andy Airey, one of the 3 DadsWalking



Simon Fell MP meets Micheal Cassell of Mind in Furness

Post event: Many of the organisations involved have been using the Directory with their staff and we now have resources available at Furness General Bereavement Office and St Mary's Hospice. The Mental Health Trust also using the directory as a resource.

Cumbria Suicide Prevention Group have circulated the Directory to all members; The Mail published a follow-up article and Simon Fell MP also reported on his visit. The relationships with major employers have been maintained and The Farming Community Network worked with us on a guest blog.

Police recruit training

In March, Cath Tate and John Purdie (pictured) met up at Carleton Hall, Cumbria Police's HQ near Penrith, to assist the police on their traffic role play day for new recruits. Cath reported on the most recent sessions:

"A while ago in the Carlisle SBS meeting, it became apparent that interaction with the Police, especially when being informed of a death, has a big impact on people and their families. Sometimes this interaction is not helpful and at times has made the experience even more difficult. John Brown approached the Police to see if we could work with them to make the experience better and Sharon Tweedie took on the role of making it happen.



It was decided that we would attend on their traffic role play day and assist on a particular scenario. The recruits are notified on the radio that they have to deliver the news of a death to a particular address. The husband has died in a car crash on the road and the recruits are tasked with telling his wife. They are all very nervous at the responsibility of what they have been asked to do and the role of SBS is to watch and listen to their delivery of the news, the way they conduct themselves and the words they use. Then, alongside their police trainer, we give gentle, supportive feedback about what they have done well, but also ways they could improve their delivery the next time.



The recruits have told us that they expect people to be shocked or sad but had not thought about the full range of reactions that they could be faced with when they attend to break the news. There are other issues that we discuss, such as checking if there are children in the house or to be picked up from school, ensuring that they leave the person with someone to sit with them when they have to leave and also about what happens next and leaving details for the person to be able to contact them later. We are able to give feedback about how they work with their partner, supporting each other through a tough task.

As volunteers, our involvement in something like this seems to be a good investment of time and effort early in the careers of these Police officers. The recruits really appreciate the opportunity to make their mistakes in a role play situation rather

than at a real incident. Trainers have told us that they have learnt from our feedback and that this has improved their knowledge and ability to support and train recruits too.

Finally, there has been feedback from Every Life Matters that this initiative is making a difference to the families in our county as the qualified recruits are now better equipped to undertake the difficult job of delivering a death message in a clear but compassionate way. Personally, I feel very proud to be involved in an initiative that makes a difference where it really matters, in our area and with families who are unfortunate enough to receive such life changing news.”

University of Cumbria mental health nursing inputs

This project also came about through Rob Ewin of the Police Training Department at Carleton Hall and it involved Cath Tate and Sharon Tweedie. Rob and the mental health nursing tutors realised that SBS representatives could make a valuable contribution to the understanding of the students on the University of Cumbria’s degree courses.

“We were asked to answer a volume of ‘curious questions’ compiled by the mental health nursing students,” explains Sharon, “and they asked a whole range of questions around our experience of suicide, the build up to our relative’s death, our own experience, others attitudes and the aftermath. It proved to be a major undertaking to answer as many of these as we felt able to complete. There were certainly some that Cath and I didn’t want to answer as they were too close and personal.”

“We were able to leave the tutors and students on the mental health nursing, paramedic and other healthcare courses with a resource of Q&As that should be a learning aid for them years to come, enabling them to deal with patients and families affected by suicide in future. “



Manchester Suicide Bereavement UK conference (September 2022)

In one packed day, researchers, motivators, health workers and those bereaved by suicide gathered in Manchester to learn from each other, take stock and plan for future work.

Suicide Bereavement Support (SBS) Cumbria and the surrounding areas financed three delegates, Amber Cropley and Kitty Birtwistle from South Lakes and Frank Ritchie from Dumfries and Galloway. They attended a range of conference sessions and browsed the exhibition hall to find out more about other organisations working in this area.



Kitty Birtwistle (*pictured on the left*)

The conference this year was very much focused on moving forward and providing relevant training to make that happen. One of my highlights came at the beginning of the day when Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Manchester, opened the event and talked about how he's been learning so much in the past five years about the importance of mental health initiatives and specifically things that get people talking about suicide. It was good to hear from someone in his position who is working to understand the issues and then make a difference.

Amber Cropley (*pictured on the right*)

Kitty and I took turns in making notes for the speakers and there were also workshops and other presentations throughout the day. I found two of them particularly useful and thought-provoking:

- Dr Kathryn Gardner, University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) - she had conducted research into suicide and self-harm in the Northwest and has been very involved in developing what's known as the PABBS training. By 2023/24, she wants all NHS Trusts to have trained staff and to have suicide bereavement support services that are providing timely and appropriate support. She's very aware that having effective and accessible training is going to be fundamental to making this happen.
- Dr Sharon McDonnell's session was entitled Workplace responses when an employee dies by suicide. I think we talk a lot about friends and family members being affected but I know that colleagues also need to be supported as they are suicide bereaved too.

Each speaker covered so much that it's quite hard to summarise but it was a really interesting, if exhausting, day and all the information will be very useful in future.

Frank Ritchie (*pictured in the middle*)

I attended a conference a number of years ago, benefitting greatly from the experience in terms of Attitude, Skill and Knowledge (ASK) - as I navigate my life after the death of my son, Alan. The 2022 conference re-charged my bereavement batteries.

One of my key contacts came when I introduced myself to Steve Phillips of Jordan's Legacy and offered my support to his Baton of Hope Project and another highlight of the day was Angela Samata in conversation with 3 Dads Walking: Mike Palmer, Tim Owen and Andy Airey. Amazing what they have achieved, and the funds they have raised. All three gave honest and insightful responses with admissions of feelings of guilt and blame to a greater or lesser extent.

Hidden Dumfries, a photography exhibition (February 2023)



Hidden Dumfries, an exhibition of photographs hosted at The Stove Café in the centre of Dumfries, featured the work of former lecturer, David Moyes. David and his wife are also members of the SBS Cumbria support group that meets in Carlisle.

The exhibition ran for a couple of weeks in late February and early March and the 40 or so pictures in the exhibition showed a different perspective on local architecture, and the movement of the water around the beaches of Dumfries and Galloway.

“I think the photographs reveal aspects of our buildings and our beaches which are perhaps less often noticed,” said David. All David’s photographs were available for a donation of £50 each, with the money raised supporting SBS Cumbria, and the event raised almost £2,000.

Sharon Tweedie, our facilitator for North Cumbria, spoke briefly at the opening: “We’re all volunteers who’ve personal experience of bereavement by suicide. We simply aim to support those who’ve lost someone in this way and we also want to raise awareness of the issues around this particularly tough-to-handle bereavement and grief. I hope David’s exhibition has helped in letting those in and around Dumfries who might appreciate our support know that we’re available.”

South Cumbria Guiding mental health initiative



Through Kendal group members, SBS Cumbria got involved in a new initiative with South Cumbria Guiding that could make a huge positive difference in Cumbria and beyond in future.

A group of South Cumbria Guiding Leaders are planning a new badge to honour a former young leader, Heather, who sadly took her life. One of our South Lakes members, Claire van Grinsven, joined Heather’s mother, Sarah and sister, Emily at the initial meeting for those making it happen.

“It was clear to see not only the passion these people have to genuinely help young people have a great start in life, but also a commitment to grasping something positive out of such a heart-breaking situation,” said Claire. “The plan is for a new Guiding badge to be named in memory of Heather and to be encouraged and promoted locally in the county before, hopefully, being rolled out across the country.”

The group is planning a Mental Health Awareness evening in October, which will bring together Rangers, Young Leaders and Young Adults Leaders to learn more and to think about their own mental health. They’ll have opportunities to meet with professionals from Mental Health teams and organisations so that they can then write the syllabus for the new badge.

“Being part of the kick off meeting, I saw how many good organisations full of these extraordinary people are out there,” said Claire. “There are so many support networks that I had no real knowledge of previously but appreciate much more now. SBS will have a stall at the event and will also be supporting Sarah and Emily as they participate in the project.”

Burton Singers Christmas Concert (December 2023)

Thanks to everyone involved in the Christmas Concert performed by Burton Singers (of Burton-in-Kendal) back in December. The festive evening raised £1,034 for Suicide Bereavement Support.



Coniston to Barrow walkers (May 2023)



Another amazing initiative by Heather’s family: Thank you to the 18 H’s Angels (including Heather’s Mum, Sarah, and sister, Emily) who walked from Coniston to Barrow in May as part of the K2B sponsored walk.

H’s Angels raised over £6,000 with £4,000 of that being donated to Suicide Bereavement Support. It was a glorious day and the walkers scattered forget-me-not seeds as they walked, all in memory of Heather.

Governance and Structure

According to our Constitution, the object of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), Suicide Bereavement Support Cumbria, is to preserve and protect physical and mental health for the public benefit of people suffering bereavement as a result of a suicide in Cumbria and the surrounding area by:

- self-help support groups, helpline and online support including a closed Facebook group and one-to-one support;
- signposting to helpful resources;
- working closely with any organisation or initiative aimed at suicide prevention;
- media advocacy; and
- research for suicide prevention and bereavement.

Our registered office is:

c/o Woodrow Services (Cumbria) Limited, Woodrow Hall, Woodrow, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 0AT

Our Registered Charity number is 1184889.

Trustees

- John Brown (Chair to 21 November 2022)
- Emily Griffiths (Chair from 21 November 2022)
- John Purdie
- Karan Smith
- Sharon Tweedie

All Trustees are members of our **Steering Group**, which also includes:

- Lucy Binfield
- Kitty Birtwistle
- Amber Cropley
- Cath Tate

Also thanks to Frank Ritchie who has been an active fundraiser and contributor to SBS throughout the year.

Full policies, processes and procedures for the operation of the charity are available to all volunteers and are reviewed and updated annually. All facilitators and Trustees hold current enhanced DBS certification and safeguarding training for work with vulnerable adults is part of the support package that we put together for anyone considering an active involvement in our face-to-face or Zoom support groups.

Thank You

There are so many people to thank after another busy year for SBS Cumbria and we're aware that it would be too easy to miss some people from this list. Please be assured that, if your name is not here, we'd still like to thank you for everything that you have done for us this year.

- Thank you to the various grant-making bodies and organisations that have supported our work financially in the past year:




ERIC WRIGHT
CHARITABLE TRUST



*The Bela Lodge
Freemasons
presenting SBS Chair,
Emily, with a cheque*



Thank You

- To those that have fundraised for SBS over the last year, including some anonymous contributors too. Donations have been received via platforms, such as JustGiving and MuchLoved, an online tribute charity offering a place to remember someone special and fundraise in their memory.
- 
- Our Patron, Marie-Elsa Bragg, for her continued support.
 - Our valiant fundraisers and all those that have supported us.
 - Inspector Dr Rob Ewin and everyone else involved in the Police recruit training programme and the University of Cumbria nursing project.
 - Our speakers and performers, Simon Fell MP, Bev Bishop, Andy Airey and Frank Ritchie, who played a major part in the Barrow event and everyone else who made the event work well by all that they did in the background.
 - Hazel Duhy (administration), Catherine Ellis (accounts) and Sally Seed (publicity) for all their work in the background to enable SBS to function effectively.
 - Everyone involved in the Hidden Dumfries exhibition including David Moyes, the team at The Stove Café, Dumfries Camera Club; Dumfries Devorgilla Rotary Club; and The People's Project.
 - Our suppliers: Stitch & Print and Gelt Gifts, for enabling us to have logo T-shirts and lapel badges, at short notice, for our supporters and volunteers; and Banana Print for producing our Directory and various promo material.
 - Customers and staff at Tesco's Whitehaven store for including SBS Cumbria as one of three charities to benefit from in-store donations over the summer of 2023.
 - Local newspapers and community radio stations, especially Dumfries Community Radio DCR Online and CanDo community radio in Barrow for their support.
 - The caretakers and owners of all our face-to-face meeting venues across Cumbria and The Forum at Barrow for their help and patience.
 - Suicide Bereavement UK for their ongoing work and their conference that makes connections for us elsewhere in the UK. <https://suicidebereavementuk.com/>
 - All the other organisations, voluntary and otherwise, working across Cumbria to support those bereaved by suicide and on both postvention and prevention of suicide.

... and every single one of our members and volunteers – take care!

What's Next?

Upfront Gallery photography exhibition

In September 2023, David Moyes' photographs will once more be at the heart of an exhibition, raising awareness and fundraising for SBS Cumbria.

Solway Series will be exhibited at Upfront Gallery and Arts Venue, just north of Penrith, from Wednesday 6 September through to Sunday 24 September.

Thanks to the Rotary Club of Penrith and Penrith Lions for their financial support for this event, enabling all proceeds of photograph sales to come to SBS Cumbria.

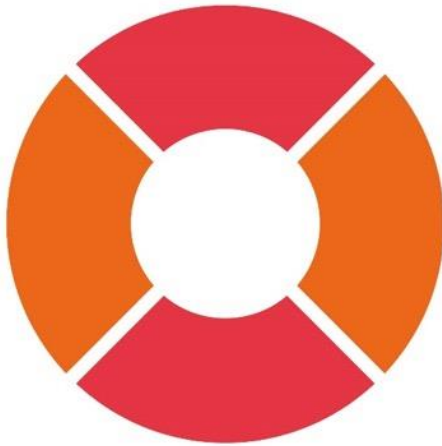
Changes ahead for the charity

As mentioned in Emily's Chair's Report (page 4) SBS Cumbria is finding it difficult, as a small volunteer-run organisation, to find those who are willing and able to take on the huge responsibilities involved in leading locality groups, supporting others who are bereaved by suicide. This is almost always a difficult and emotionally challenging thing to do and a couple of our current locality facilitators need to stand down from this commitment later in the year for their own personal reasons.

Trustees have been working on contingency plans in case our work across Cumbria becomes unsustainable with the volunteers available. We are continuing to raise funds and to focus on our core work but the uncertainty makes things hard.

We hope that we'll be able to continue but, if not, it is reassuring to know that others, particularly Every Life Matters, have the resources to continue a similar approach if SBS Cumbria has to adapt for a different future. It is at times like this that all those connections and networks built in recent years come into their own.

We will, of course, keep in touch about any developments.



Suicide Bereavement Support

For Cumbria &
surrounding areas

Published August 202

Helpline:

07896 703757 (Karan) or 07572 975721 (John)

E: hello@sbs.org.uk

W: www.sbs.org.uk

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Suicide Bereavement Support for Cumbria & surrounding areas

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Registered Charity number: 1184889