



Aching Arms

Towards 2025 – reaching bereaved parents in new ways

Background

Aching Arms was registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales in 2013.

Aching Arms provides comfort and support for bereaved families after the loss of their baby during pregnancy, at birth or soon after.

We work directly with midwives and nurses at over 170 hospitals nationwide, who, on our behalf, offer an Aching Arms Bear to bereaved parents in their care.

The bear provides a sensitive conduit for health professionals to support and discuss the emotional and well-being needs of parents, particularly in the

turbulent days following their baby's death. We also donate bears to other organisations who support families after baby loss at any stage of pregnancy and send them to families who contact us themselves via our website.



The charity has three principal aims. They are to:

1.

promote and protect the health (including, but not limited to, the mental health and well-being) of parents, their families and friends when a baby dies in utero, at birth or soon after birth (“baby loss”);

2.

advance education about the experience of baby loss particularly, but not exclusively, amongst healthcare professionals;

3.

support and promote research into baby loss and the methods of alleviating suffering arising from baby loss and to disseminate the results of such research.

Introduction

Vision: To bring comfort and support to bereaved families across the UK, for as long as they need us.

Mission: To raise awareness of the impact of baby loss, both in health settings and the wider community, by working with health professionals and employers to ensure all bereaved families receive high quality care, and through the gift of an Aching Arms Bear and the support available via Supporting Arms find comfort and support for their emotional and mental wellbeing.

This document gives an overview of the key objectives that Aching Arms is setting to build on over the next three years.



1 Promoting and protecting the health of parents whose baby has died

Offering Aching Arms bears either through hospitals or directly by post to all parents whose baby has died is at the core of everything that Aching Arms does. We will continue to increase the number of comfort bears and grow our support services for bereaved families by:

- Continuing to strengthen existing links with NHS Trusts and Health Boards in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to ensure Aching Arms bears are offered to all parents in all areas of maternity care, including Early Pregnancy Care, Delivery Wards and Neonatal Units.
- Continuing to attempt to secure links with NHS Trusts and Health Boards in areas of England, Scotland and Wales where Aching Arms bears are not yet offered.
- Extending the reach of the Supporting Arms for Dads service through circulation of the “Bereaved Dad’s Survival Guide” to all Trusts and Health Boards.
- Developing the Be Together programme throughout the UK, focusing effort in 2022-23.
- Creating and implementing a plan that provides opportunities to support siblings through loss.
- Developing opportunities to acknowledge, engage and support families whose loss was longer ago.
- Growing and extending the reach of the Supporting Arms service launched in 2020.
- Continuing to adapt how we offer support to ensure services are inclusive and accessible to families from diverse communities, including those with disabilities and families, who due to bias, prejudice or racism face unequal access to care.

2. Advance education about the experience of baby loss

The Aching Arms Awareness Training ensures Health Professionals have the confidence and sensitivity to offer an Aching Arms bear to bereaved parents. The newly launched Workplace Bereavement Training for employers' programme is now complete and is ready for marketing more widely.

Over the course of the next three years Aching Arms will:

Continue to lead high quality Awareness Training to Health Professionals working in Maternity Care.

Deepen relationships with existing corporate partners, develop new corporate partnerships and use these opportunities to raise awareness of the impact of pregnancy and baby loss.

Create clear volunteer pathways, from initial involvement of more recently bereaved parents through to deeper engagement by those longer ago bereaved covering roles such as Trustees, Bear preparation, Training and Ambassadors.

3. Support and disseminate research into methods of alleviating suffering arising from baby loss

Aching Arms will, wherever possible, continue to support appropriate research.

We will focus on setting up a specialist group with research background and experience which will:



Find opportunities to conduct our own research on support needs such as bereaved fathers, siblings, those longer ago bereaved and families who face inequalities in access to bereavement support.



Seek opportunities to be active participants within research projects developed by other organisations whose aims are similar to our own.



Keep informed of developments in research relevant to baby loss and carefully consider how these should be disseminated to the Aching Arms community in a way that is mindful of the potential impact upon emotional wellbeing.



Where appropriate, provides summaries of relevant research on the Aching Arms website, along with signposting as to where further information and support can be accessed.



Disseminate research updates/reviews via the health professional (or other appropriate) newsletters.

4. Governance

During 2021 the CEO has worked closely with Trustees to develop the role, skills mix and governance of the Board however there are skills gaps due to recent changes. The board will begin recruitment of diverse new Trustees in late 2022. Then, over the course of the next two years, the CEO and Board of Aching Arms will focus on developing the infrastructure of Aching Arms with a particular emphasis on the following key areas Governance, People and Policies.

5. Our People

We are determined to improve the support, training and resources of the staff team and our growing network of volunteers. To that end we will:

- I. Restructure the existing core team of CEO, Volunteer & Operations Coordinator, Community & Events Fundraising Coordinator and Bereavement Care Manager and establish an organisational structure that can meet the demands of the charity as it continues to grow.

To support our strategy the structure that we will work towards over the next three years includes new roles such as:

- a) **Bereavement Care Team**
- b) **Volunteer & Operations Team**
- c) **Fundraising Team**
(Community & Events and Corporate Fundraiser)
- d) **Digital Marketing Lead**

6. Business Planning

The Board will continue to support the CEO and staff team in formal business planning process with the production of an annual Business Plan which identifies the key objectives, time-scales, and budget required to implement the Strategy on an annual basis, and incorporates an effective mechanism to enable the Board to regularly monitor progress of the key objectives.

7. Policies

Put in place the policies and procedures required to ensure effective governance of the charity and fulfil its duties as an employer and evolve as our charity continues to grow.

8. Conclusion

Over the last five years Aching Arms has grown substantially with a higher profile and increasing responsibilities and expectations.

The Board of Trustees is responding by continuing to evolve Governance which is designed to facilitate a growing unity of purpose throughout the organisation, with increased resources, greater accountability, more risk awareness and higher standards.





When you begin the exciting journey of pregnancy you have no reason to believe that it won't have a happy ending. After losing our daughter, that we envisaged so many happy times with, we felt lost and broken.

Leaving the hospital empty handed is a living nightmare, the Aching Arms bear doesn't just give you something to hold, it gives you the comfort that you so desperately need knowing that you are not alone and another family understands the agony and the aching.

Our bear became our constant companion through the pain and the sadness and will always have a place in our hearts and in our home.



Tracy – bereaved mum

If you would like more information please contact us:

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Find us on social media

