



Chair's report 2019

## **INTRODUCTION**

2018-19 has been a landmark year for Aching Arms. This year, we took the next step in our evolution by making some important changes to our structure and appointment of key roles. We are delighted to have appointed Leanne Turner as our inaugural CEO. As the founder of Aching Arms and the lead operator of the charity since its inception, Leanne is uniquely placed to take Aching Arms to the next level of growth. We've also made other important appointments including fundraiser manager, administrative coordinator and client care manager. These key roles will drive further growth and impact of our charity in the years to come. In the short period since the appointment of these roles, we have already seen the impact that each of these team-members are making.

We are incredibly proud that in this year we broke all previous records in our community fundraising. We also continued the strong momentum in growing hospital numbers. We put together new structures to significantly improve our communication with our fundraisers.

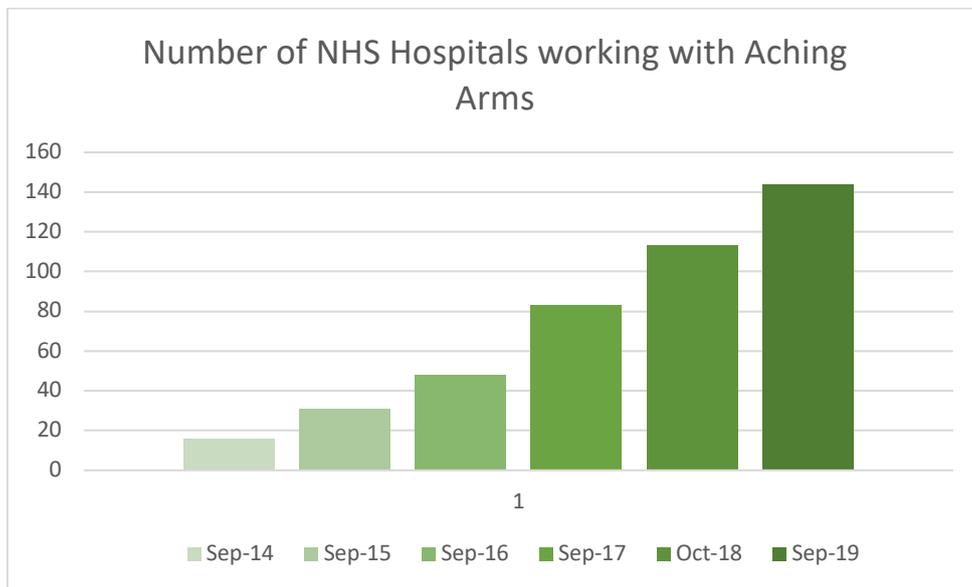
We have also been working hard to develop Aching Arms' profile within the baby loss sector. We are now members of the Baby Loss Awareness Week Alliance and participate in the BLAW Policy and Campaign working group.

I, along with all my fellow trustees, am immensely proud of these achievements and our growth. This year we were able to provide comfort and support to more parents than in any other year in the past. This is the core mission of Aching Arms and we are incredibly grateful to our entire community - members of the staff, our dedicated volunteers, fundraisers and trustees - for contributing to this mission.

## **PARTICIPATING HOSPITALS**

As of 1 September 2019, we have 144 hospitals working with Aching Arms to offer comfort bears to bereaved parents.

This is compared to 113 hospitals on board at this time last year – an increase of 31 hospitals. This graph shows the rapid increase that we have seen over the last five years.



Links with leading hospitals in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are growing due to our presence at national conferences and through collaborations with new and well-established baby loss charities. We will continue this work and hope that through our efforts to reach out, all leading hospitals engage with us to understand how Aching Arms bears can support parents in their care, not just on Delivery wards, but across all of maternity services, A&E and Neonatal Units.

Working with hospitals is integral to our Charity’s mission. Therefore the reach and engagement of the work we do with the hospitals is a strong endorsement of our work. We will continue to set strong targets for the number of hospitals we would like to work with in 2020. We will also continue to raise the bar on the level of engagement with the hospitals we already partner with.

**BEARS**

Our bears are always gratefully received and continue to be an important part of the comfort and support that parents receive following the loss of their baby. This is the cornerstone of our charity’s work and we are extremely lucky to have a dedicated team of hospital and postal volunteers who ensure that our comfort bears are prepared, dedicated and delivered to bereaved families.

We are very proud to report that our bear numbers have dramatically increased this year. We posted 996 directly to parents and 4256 were donated to hospitals. This is a significant increase compared to last year when we posted 517 and donated 3331 to hospitals. In total, this year we have seen an increase of 1404 bears compared to last year which is a fantastic achievement.

**FUNDRAISING**

we have seen a steady increase in the funds raised this year. This comes from the increase in the number of hospitals we are working with and a continued increase in the awareness of our charity. This year we had an income of £161,176. A steady source of income has enabled us to continue to provide our comfort bears free of charge to hospitals and to post them to bereaved families.

The funds have predominantly come from direct donations from our supporters and many who have raised funds by taking part in our fundraising campaigns Miles in Memory and Forget Me Not Tea Party which have both been great successes. Our supporters have also undertaken their own events to raise money in aid of Aching Arms.

As of 31st July 2019, 45 tea parties had been held and a total of £27,754 was raised. This was our highest amount raised since launching this annual fundraiser in 2017. In October 2018 we raised £12,000 through our annual Miles in Memory Challenge events.

Direct donations were the largest proportion of our income in 2018-19. With around £100,000 coming to us via three online donation platforms. Also, Facebook's launch of their fundraising platform has had a significantly positive impact on the number of donations we have received by very generous community.

During this financial year we set out to develop our grant application process. With the help of Touchdown Services we have a better understanding of how to apply for grants and to Trust Funds. We submitted a small number of applications to fund a pilot in the North West of England and were awarded £1000 from LCVS Community Impact Fund to bringing comfort to bereaved parents across Merseyside. We are better prepared to make further applications in the 2019-2020.

Our merchandise is a growing area of focus and the new lines that have been introduced are becoming increasingly popular. We are tracking and monitoring product line sales so we can offer merchandise that is meaningful to our community. So far, our pin badges and dandelion scarf are amongst the most popular items.

We have established new systems to review and establish improved systems for communicating with fundraisers, collating donations, dedications, recording upcoming events and increasing revenue. This will enable our record keeping is more streamlined and user friendly; which then allows us to communicate better with supporters of Aching Arms and keep them up to date with fundraising opportunities through a personal and caring approach.

## **AWARENESS TRAINING**

The awareness training we provide is very important in terms of our objectives of promoting awareness, improving the care of bereaved parents and developing and improving our relationships with hospital teams.

Nineteen awareness training sessions took place from September 2018-September 2019. All sessions received positive evaluations and have strengthened our ties with health professionals in each setting. As shown by this feedback,

"The training that we had was so well presented and received – the staff were inspired." Julie Stewart, Barnet Hospital

volunteer trainers also represented Aching Arms at eight conferences in 2018/19 leading to an increase in the number of hospitals we work with and strengthening of relationships with other charities.

"I met Sarah and Jenny who represented Aching Arms at the Liverpool Women's, truly inspiring women and they presented the Aching Arms charity with such integrity, warmth and compassion, even having suffered their own losses, it was great to meet them." Louise, Cradle

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Staff**

This has been a milestone year for Aching Arms in setting up a more structured, robust management structure. This structure has been set up so we can raise the bar on the impact we can make on our goals and have strong foundations for growth. The changes we made this year mean that rather than solely relying on our volunteer team, we now have a core paid team for some critical roles. Our core paid team now includes: full time CEO, a part time Administrator overseeing operations, a part time Fundraising Coordinator, and an external contractor for Social Media Management. Details of these role are as below:

#### Chief Executive Officer (Full-time)

We're delighted that Leanne Turner (Founder of Aching Arms) was appointed as our inaugural Chief Executive Officer (CEO) effective 1 January 2019. Leanne is the founder of Aching Arms and has been deeply involved in all aspects of running the charity including training, partner & volunteer management, strengthening relationships with the baby loss community and fundraising.

In the time since her appointment, Leanne has already provided strong leadership and management of the charity's strategic and operational aims. My fellow trustees and I are incredibly excited for Leanne to take Aching Arms to new levels of strength and growth in her role as the CEO.

#### Volunteer Support Administrator (part-time)

In June 2018 the charity recruited a permanent part time Volunteer Support Administrator. The post holder works alongside our management and volunteer team. The responsibilities include maintaining the records of adult volunteers, providing support to them, and providing general administrative assistance to the Chair, trustees and Acting CEO. This role demands a proactive and effective administrator with sound experience of office administration and systems.

#### Fundraising Coordinator (part-time)

In September 2018, it was agreed the charity needed to change this from a volunteer role to a paid role. A contract for services for a part time fundraising coordinator was agreed for 16 hours a week with a self-employed contractor from October 2018 until December 2018 during which the recruitment process to appoint a permanent part time Fundraising Coordinator was undertaken. In February 2019 a permanent appointment was made. The purpose of this role is to co-ordinate the fundraising activities of Aching Arms supporters. To grow the charity's challenge events portfolio and to co-ordinate and develop our community fundraising opportunities.

### Client Care Manager (part time)

In May 2019, it was agreed the charity needed to urgently change this role from a volunteer role to a paid role. Due to a rapid increase in contact from bereaved families and hospitals seeking support, the expectation on volunteers was becoming unreasonable. The trustees made the decision to recruit a self employed contractor on a part time basis whilst the recruitment of a permanent post holder was undertaken. This role requires a high level of understanding and empathy of the needs of bereaved parents, their family and friends after a pregnancy or baby loss.

The most important part of this role is to communicate sensitively and in a timely manner, to emails and messages requesting an Aching Arms Bear. Requests may be from a bereaved parent, a family member, friend or a Health/Social Care Professional.

This role is often the first point of contact a bereaved person has with the charity. Many share their personal experience of loss in this initial contact, therefore it is essential replies are prompt, caring and supportive. Each reply must be non-judgemental, personal, and clearly answer any questions. The Client Care Manager needs to be able to identify the needs of each person and know how to sensitively signpost parents to professional support.

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### Social Media Manager (part- time contracted)

In July 2018 we contracted a Social Media Manager (SSM) to manage our rapidly growing Social Media presence. The SSM manager is responsible for regularly presenting content to reach the audience most likely to visit the Aching Arms Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter accounts. These will typically be bereaved parents, their family and friends, midwives and other medical professionals working with bereaved parents.

This role is responsible for posting relevant content to reach the audience most likely to visit page.

This includes writing editorial content, overseeing design in social media platforms; monitoring and responding to users empathetically; and promoting charity's campaigns eg. fundraising, awareness training and new hospitals. This role has enabled us develop and expand our community through digital reach. The social media manager continuously generate content for the charity's SM platforms, works with others within the charity to create new ideas and campaigns, and measure how effective those ideas are.

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## **HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

The overall results of the 2019 Health Professionals survey shows a very positive picture of how well respected Aching Arms is by those working with us. Twenty nine hospitals responded, this is a 41% response rate which is very encouraging. The overall response from hospitals is extremely positive. Summed up by this comment,

"A highly valued and beneficial resource for supporting parents."

## **VOLUNTEERS**

We have a very committed team of 130 volunteers, who are vital to the charity. The commitment of our volunteers ensures Aching Arms provides a reliable and well respected service to bereaved parents and the health professionals caring for them. We are grateful to

our volunteer community and continue to identify thoughtful ways to demonstrate to our volunteers the value of their role.

The feedback from volunteers via the annual survey is a very positive picture again this year. 38 volunteers responded to our 2018-19 survey. This is a respectable 47% response rate.

- 97% feel **extremely appreciated or very appreciated** for their work – this mirrors last year’s survey results
- 92% **extremely satisfied or very satisfied** with their experience as a volunteer, again this mirrors last year’s results
- 97.37% are extremely likely and very likely to continue to volunteer
- 97% would recommend us as a volunteer organisation
- In terms of how much impact they feel they are having it is a more mixed picture:

How much of an impact do you feel your volunteer work had?	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
great deal of	37%	26%
a lot of	22%	39%
a moderate	33%	21%
a little	6.23%	10%

## TRUSTEES

We have a strong board of seven trustees who have a wide ranging skill-set including psychology, healthcare, business, finance and education. The board of trustees have been effectively overseeing the running of the charity and making key decisions. Board meetings are held at a regular cadence with a robust agenda & minutes, full review of the charity’s performance and discussion on the future strategic focus areas. Strong governance and adherence to policies and procedures is critical to us and we will continue to focus on these areas in the coming year as the charity grows.

## COMMUNICATION

We are conducting a full review of our communications plan in line with changes to data protection (GDPR) and new ways we manage and staff our social media platforms.

We are developing an action plan with aim of producing a communications plan in support of the fundraising strategy, which identifies parents prepared to be interviewed, key media contacts and capitalizes on the charity’s strong social media presence.

## RESEARCH

We’ve started taking positive steps regarding our own research into the effectiveness of a comforter after pregnancy and baby loss. One of our trustees Dr Anna Clancy has been working with leading academic institutions to identify potential partnership to carry out a qualitative research project exploring the experiences of bereaved parents who have received an Aching

Arms bears. Further work is also planned to agree a research policy so the charity can decide how Aching Arms will support, undertake and disseminate research.

## TOWARDS 2020

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With 2019 being such an important year at Aching Arms, we have so many achievements to be proud of. In 2020, we will continue to build on these achievements to make a bigger impact and grow our influence in the communities that we serve. The investments we have made in our staff and processes hold us in good stead for our future ambitions. We will continue to strive towards maintaining a steady source of funding and plan judiciously to use the generous donations that families give to Aching Arms each year so we can help bring comfort to other parents. We will also strengthen our diligence about our governance, data protection and training.

In closing, I would like to share a quote from famous Indian scholar Rabindranath Tagore 'I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy'. The spirit of service is central to everything we do at Aching Arms and we look forward to continuing to serve our communities in the years ahead.

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Sundeep Kaur



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ date:

1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 \_\_\_\_\_

Sundeep Kaur

Chairperson

Aching Arms

Registered Charity: 111531296



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## Document signing sheet

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1 document (7 pages) and this coversheet.

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Date Signed

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