

The Thalidomide Trust

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE August 2017

People News

I am very happy to report that Lucy Cumming's baby, Iris, arrived safely on 10 May. Mother and baby are doing very well – and they both popped in to the office to visit us just a few weeks ago.



May was obviously a month of new beginnings, as Lesley Hutchinson, our new Finance Co-ordinator started in early May which allowed a short handover with Keith before he left. She and Jeff are working really well together as our brand new Finance Team.

We are now in the process of recruiting a new member of the Health & Wellbeing team to work alongside Michelle in supporting the team and providing wellbeing advice to beneficiaries. Many of you will have had contact with Michelle and will know what a valuable support she provides but - as the number of beneficiary enquiries increases and we roll out our programme of HNAs across the UK - she simply no longer has the capacity to meet the demand.

Unfortunately Tara Rhodes (who was working on a flexible basis to assist the admin team with arranging meetings, beneficiary visits and events) was only with us for a short period as she was offered a permanent, fixed-day position which better suited her personal situation. We recently advertised the role on a part-time basis but unfortunately didn't attract any candidates who met the requirements of the role so did not make an appointment.

Two of our beneficiaries received important recognition for their achievements in July. Wendy Tomes was awarded the prestigious League of Mercy medal in recognition of the many years of volunteer support she has provided to other beneficiaries of the Trust. This was presented at an awards ceremony at The Mansion House in the City of London. And Rosie Moriarty-Simmonds was awarded an Honorary Fellowship from Cardiff University, for her contribution to equality and rights for disabled people - 32 years after graduating from the University with a degree in Psychology. This award is only given to individuals who have achieved international distinction in their field and Rosie received hers to a standing ovation in front of a large audience at Cardiff's St. David's Hall.

I am pleased to advise you that we accepted six new beneficiaries to the Trust in July. I have now been to visit all of them – taking me from North Wales down to Cornwall!

Beneficiary Events

Since my last Update in April we have had two beneficiary events.

In May we had our first ever 'Beneficiary Open Day' at the Trust's office in St Neots. It was a very relaxed day and gave beneficiaries an opportunity to meet staff, NAC representatives (Carolyn and Simone attended) and each other in an informal setting. We were delighted that 30 beneficiaries came along – with some travelling from as far away as Spain, Scotland and Ireland! – and the feedback from those who attended was really encouraging.

We also held a local event ('Up your Way') in Glasgow in July. 17 beneficiaries came along (including Mikey and Carolyn from the NAC) and it was wonderful to have the opportunity to meet people who don't normally attend Trust events. There was a mixture of formal sessions, one-to-one discussions with staff and time to mix informally. Again, the feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive with most people highlighting the opportunity to meet with old friends and make new contacts as the best thing about the day. Everyone who completed the feedback form said that the Trust should have more local events in the future so watch this space!

Plans are now coming together for our second 'Fit for the Future' event, which will be held in Liverpool on 6/7 October 2017. The team of beneficiaries who delivered last year's successful event in Loughborough are in charge again and, although we have already had a number of 'early bird' bookings, there are still places available – so if you are interested in getting fitter and more flexible, please get in touch with Michelle to reserve your place.

Health & Wellbeing issues

Two new briefings have been completed and are now on the website – one on [Balance & Falls](#) and the other on [Bladder and Bowel problems](#). Thanks to all of you who took part in the research which informed these.

We are continuing with our programme of Holistic Needs Assessments (HNAs) and have now completed over 100 of these. We really enjoy getting out and about and meeting you and your feedback indicates that you are finding them beneficial and they are encouraging you to think more about your health and wellbeing. A number of beneficiaries have already made positive changes to their lives as a direct result of their HNA - which is really good to hear – and others are planning to make changes. And 100% of beneficiaries who have had an HNA and returned a feedback form say that they would recommend one to another beneficiary.

Communication Matters

We are continuing to add information to our new website and, in response to your feedback, are in the process of implementing some structural changes to make it easier for you to find your way around the site. We are also currently working on a number of beneficiary 'case studies' which will go live soon – so if you have an experience that you would like to share with other beneficiaries, please let us know. We will also soon be introducing some new more interactive features to the site, so please do take some time to check it out - and if you have suggestions as to how it could be improved, please let us know. We always welcome your feedback!

We also continue to produce factsheets on topics that lots of beneficiaries are asking about – and since my last Update have added factsheets on [Wills](#), [Lasting Power of Attorney](#) and [Wheelchairs](#) to the list.

And finally....

We are in the process of finalising our five year strategic plan – which has been produced jointly by the Trustees, NAC and staff – and will make that available on our website soon so that you are aware how we are all working together on your behalf.