

**NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
TO  
The **Thalidomide** Trust

**NAC Newsletter**

**Spring 2021**

Welcome to the Spring NAC newsletter. Writing this on a lovely spring day in March, it almost makes me forget about the strange circumstances we are all in at present. I do hope you are managing with the very beginnings of the easing of lockdown, for me it actually feels that the past few weeks have been the toughest – missing family and friends like crazy...

I have to say, the continued support I get from meeting folks though the Zoom coffee breaks (and I really enjoy the book club) has helped. Sukeshi Thakkar describes her popular Indian Cookery session in this newsletter and gives us a tasty recipe. My husband Rob and I had our first Zoom dinner party celebrating a friend's 60th with a 1920s murder mystery dinner – I have to say our hopeless management of IT, difficulties reading our scripts and lack of concentration – especially after a glass or two, made finding out 'whodunnit' all the more hilarious. I am pictured here as Lessie More – a jazz singer! For lots of Zoom Meetup events from the monthly quiz, to a chat over coffee or specific topics, please sign up to the [Positively Connected](#) group on the Meetup platform, or contact [Annabelle Blackham](#) at the Trust.



For this edition, we have maintained our 'magazine' style of publication, we meet our new research Trustee Rosemary Varley and our NAC Communication Officer Sarah Hagger-Holt, and with Mark Spofforth taking over the mantle of Chair of Trustees from Sir Robert Nelson, he describes his perfect weekend. We have articles on gardening, life insurance, food-boxes and the regular features of the 'Chair's Update', a 'Campaign Update' as well as 'Our Chair Answers' with the question submitted following discussion with a group of volunteers. Please [contact me](#) with questions, recipes, gardening tips or ideas for future editions. Once again, thank you to all who have contributed to this edition! You make the difference...

**Carolyn Desforges, NAC newsletter editor – [carolyn@ttnac.org](mailto:carolyn@ttnac.org)**

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**You are warmly invited to the first ever joint event held by the Thalidomide Society and Thalidomide Trust's NAC – online on Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 May.**

**What's going on?** Catching up with old friends and making new ones, with time for socialising and fun activities throughout the weekend; listening to fascinating speakers, including Sukeshi Thakkar and BBC journalist Fred Dove; finding out about the oral history project and Science Museum collections and enjoying live comedy from comedian Laurence Clark. Join the event for the whole weekend, or just one day.

**Register for your free place and see full programme:**

[www.thalidomidetellingyourstory.co.uk](http://www.thalidomidetellingyourstory.co.uk)

**More info:** If you need help with using Zoom to join the event online, contact [annabelle.blackham@thalidomidetrust.org](mailto:annabelle.blackham@thalidomidetrust.org). BSL signers are available for the whole event.

# Chair's Update – Seasonal Thoughts...

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## Rowland Bareham, NAC Chair

Seasons – I wonder which season you like best out of autumn, spring, summer and winter. For me, the season I like best is the spring – a time to say goodbye to the cold winter and to say hello to a hot (but not too hot!) summer. This summer is one I'm looking forward to with some optimism of a return to normal, well maybe not quite the normal we've known but a new normal of some kind. Maybe foreign travel will be tricky, and we still need to be alert with Covid-19 sensible measures. Nevertheless, I look forward to meeting old friends such as my NAC member colleagues face-to-face rather than talking on the phone or at NAC meetings on Zoom; and of course, some of you too. We've all had a different (and I acknowledge for some it has been quite difficult) year in one way or another and we will all have our Covid-19 stories to tell, but Spring has started (even if it did mean losing an hour sleep with moving the clocks forward). So, as I look optimistically to the coming summer, I wish you a good summer.



**Covid-19** – As the Executive Director said in her recent update, the Trust takes the topic of Covid-19 and its implications very seriously. The NAC has discussed the impact of Covid-19 extensively at its meetings with the Trustees and the staff. Please do not hesitate to [contact the Health and Wellbeing team](#) at the Trust about any concerns for coping with the current Covid-19 situation. In the meantime, stay safe.

**Campaign News** – Mikey Argy describes the excellent Health Grant news in the campaign update below. Some news too for European thalidomiders (such as in Spain and Italy), I understand that the governments in the EU now can apply for assistance through the EU – because of the Campaigns Team's hard work in the EU Parliament. It is good news for European thalidomiders who never had the opportunity to fight for the compensation that we achieved, to now have the potential to access the help they need. Once travel to Europe is possible, the Campaigns Team will assess how best to re-engage with the EU Parliament.

**Following the recent NAC elections**, I am really pleased to welcome Sue Gooding to the council for the first time. I also congratulate Mikey Argy on her return, and Graham Kelly and Guy Tweedy for continuing terms of office. It is great for the NAC to be able to have access both to skills of new members, and those who have previous experience of the NAC.

Last but not least, don't forget to join us for our conference held jointly with the Thalidomide Society. This will be online on Zoom over the weekend of 15–16 May 2021. There will be opportunities for chatting, quizzes, and comedy, as well as some fascinating stories and feedback from the Society's Oral History and Science Museum projects.

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# Welcoming our new Research Trustee

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## Carolyn Desforges asks questions to Professor Rosemary Varley

**Can you tell us something about yourself?** I have worked for 30 years in the field of neurodisability, in both NHS and University settings. Previous posts have included the University of Hong Kong and University of Sheffield. I am now a professor at University College London. Most of my work is in adult disability, particularly in the fields of stroke and dementia, but I am also patron of a school for children with cerebral palsy. I divide my time between London and Sheffield.



## **What attracted you to being a Trustee of the Thalidomide Trust?**

I am in the same age-band as the beneficiaries of the Trust and have known of the thalidomide scandal since the Sunday Times investigation in the late 1960s. I have worked in partnership with people with neurodisability throughout my career and that has given me insight into the realities and challenges of living well with a disability. Some of my research addresses the impact of ageing on brain and behaviour, and I believe that this experience may be of value to the Trust and to beneficiaries as they enter their 60s. I have joined the Research Committee of the Trust and will be chairing the committee from March 2021. I aim to identify research questions that are important in understanding the long-term effects of thalidomide and then commissioning high-quality research addressing these issues. As a final step in the research process, I hope we can disseminate important findings to audiences both in the UK and internationally to ensure that beneficiaries receive well-informed support for their current and future needs.

**What have you enjoyed so far about the role?** I was immensely proud to be part of the Trust when lifelong extension of the Health Grant was announced by the Chancellor in the recent budget.

**Have there been any challenges so far in being a Trustee?** My time as a Trustee has entirely overlapped with the Covid-19 pandemic and so initial experience has been atypical and, as for all of us with life in lockdown, there have been many challenges. My induction to the Trust and my role as a Trustee has taken place online. As yet, there have been few opportunities for informal conversations with beneficiaries, Trust staff or fellow Trustees. Hopefully that will change as we emerge from the crisis.

## **Has anything been a surprise to you about the Trust and/or the beneficiary community?**

Sadly, few opportunities to meet with the beneficiary community to date and so I can look forward to lots of surprising interactions. I have been involved with a number of charities across my career and from my initial impressions of the Trust, I am impressed with the professionalism, expertise, attention to detail and insight of staff. I look forward to learning more and contributing more.

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## Campaign Update

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**Mikey Argy, NAC and Campaigns Team member**



You will all have heard the fabulous news that the government has agreed to extend our Health Grant for our lifetime for all beneficiaries in England – and we expect the rest of the UK to follow suit. Well done everyone. Your letters to your MPs, your contributions to the HNA and Health Grant review processes, those of you who supported the Campaigns Team with phoning MPs, and the staff and trustees contributions, all made this lifetime commitment possible.

We are being given four-yearly commitments of funding, reviewed every four years with the understanding that our needs will most likely increase. This is the best result we could have hoped for. It was not appropriate at this stage to ask for a large increase due to the financial situation the whole country is in, so getting that lifetime commitment was a real home goal and one which I am sure most of you are greatly relieved about.

Without the HNAs we would not have had the documented evidence we needed to convince the government to continue supporting our health needs. There was still the need to remind the government of its role in the thalidomide distribution in the 50s and 60s; and together with the pressure of the MPs, and the work of the Trust in putting together an outstanding Impact Report based on our HNAs, we made an indisputable case.



**Well done to all of us!**

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## My Perfect Weekend

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**Mark Spofforth, Chair of Trustees**

Mark became Chair of Trustees in January 2021, following Sir Robert Nelson's retirement from the position. His picture (below) shows him on a visit to Sydney Cricket Ground, Australia with a statue of a namesake, Fred Spofforth, the 'demon bowler', whose exploits started the Ashes series! Chartered accountant, lecturer and broadcaster during the week, Mark tells us about how he likes to spend his time at weekends....

**Eat in or eat out (if only we could!)?** Eat out... preferably a picnic lunch on a sunny warm spring day fishing for trout, followed by a meal cooked by Monica Galletti with wine chosen by her husband, David. Having said that, my wife is a professional chef and seems to conjure fantastic meals from fridge contents so meagre that I would send for a takeaway!

**Seaside or Countryside?** Countryside generally. We're currently renting a house by the seaside in Worthing in Sussex between selling and buying houses in the South Downs. The salt spray gets everywhere, but a bracing walk on the sand is always fun.

**Cat or dog?** Dog. We've always had dogs, although we're currently without. My wife has her eye on two Great Danes for when we move.

**Wine or water?** Wine of course. Much against doctor's orders, as I have Crohn's disease and suffer from gout so I need to avoid port and red wine. Beer for the rugby matches, though.

**Thriller or Comedy?** Thriller. I am an avid reader of Lee Child and Peter James novels, and I must have watched every Poirot and Miss Marple TV programme many times over.

**Who or what is your screensaver?** A scuba diver. One of my favourite pastimes when I was younger, and I often wish I had been a marine biologist rather than a Chartered Accountant (besides which it sounds so much more exciting when having a dinner party conversation).

**What is your signature dish?** Pasta with prawns and salmon in a cream sauce. Quick, easy, delicious and fairly healthy compared to the alternative Full English breakfast.

**I couldn't get through the weekend without...** A WhatsApp call with my daughter in Florida. She gave birth to twins last June, my first bloodline grandchildren (although I have four others through my second wife) and I haven't yet been able to fly out and meet them. They're nearly walking! Gemma went to Florida University on a swimming scholarship a year before we lost her mum to cancer and loved it so much she stayed there after competing in two Olympics for TeamGB and holding a World Record for nine years. As soon as the restrictions are dropped, I shall be on a plane.



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## Introducing our NAC Communications Officer

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### **Sarah Hagger-Holt, NAC Communications Officer**

Sarah started working part-time with the NAC in February. For the first few months she will also be supporting the NAC with admin as Gillian Sherwood has now left the admin support role. We look forward to working closely with Sarah over the coming months.

#### **Can you tell us a bit about yourself?**

I live in Hertfordshire with my partner, two children, two rabbits and three backyard chickens. For the last 20 years, I've worked in communications roles in charities and with volunteers. Last year, I decided to go freelance. I also enjoy reading, baking and swimming.



### **What is the role of a communications officer?**

That's a big question! It depends on the organisation, but for me in this role, I think it means doing what I can to help the NAC, beneficiaries, Trust staff and trustees all to talk to and listen to each other in the most engaging, cost-effective and timely way possible. I bring some technical skills and knowledge into the mix, as well as a fresh pair of eyes, but I'm really here to facilitate what you want to say, not to impose my agenda.

### **What attracted you to working with the NAC?**

I knew very little about the Trust or about NAC before I started, but I had obviously heard about thalidomide and its impact. I was impressed by the visibility of survivors and the ability to get public attention to their cause. I believe that people most affected by an issue should be the ones leading the action, so I am pleased to be working with a user-led group.

### **How will you know the most appropriate way of communicating with our beneficiary community?**

By listening to as many people as I can during these first few months, finding out what kind of communication beneficiaries and NAC members want to see and developing ideas which can meet those needs. Also by trying things out: some things won't work, but we shouldn't be afraid of giving them a try.

### **What do you hope to achieve in your first year of working with the NAC?**

I hope that by this time next year, people will feel that communication between the NAC and the beneficiary community is more regular, engaging and easy-to-access. That would be success in my book!

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## **Positive Connection – Cooking the Indian Way**

### **Sukeshi Thakkar, Meetup cookery class host**



I started Indian cookery classes on the Meetup platform as one of the Trust's [Positively Connected groups](#). These are run via Zoom. I thought it would be fun to teach our community typical simple home-made Indian dishes. The response has been excellent. I started the first class by explaining the different spices and methods of cooking between East, West, North and South India as it varies a great deal. Anyone who feels like it cooks along, with a list of ingredients and the method being sent to those attending beforehand. The curries were simple at first but we are starting to move on to more involved dishes. We have also made different accompaniments (e.g. chapatis, puris etc).

I really enjoy the evenings when we do this and hope more people join in. For more information on this group or others, contact [Annabelle Blackham](#), Volunteer Coordinator, who will guide you through joining the Meetup platform. Here is a tasty sample recipe – enjoy!

## **Corn on the Cob Curry**

### **Ingredients**

- 875g or around four cobs, fresh or frozen and halved
- 100g peanuts, unsalted (optional, substitute with tomatoes to thicken gravy)
- 50g gram flour (also known as chickpea or besan flour)
- 4 tablespoons oil
- 250ml Greek yoghurt
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- 1½ teaspoons red chilli powder
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 3 tablespoons fresh coriander, finely chopped



### **Method**

Bring a pan of salted water to the boil and slip the corn in. If frozen, boil for around six to eight minutes (if fresh, five mins) then turn off the heat and leave as is. In the meantime, you can grind the peanuts to a fine consistency, in a coffee/spice grinder or food processor for best results or in a pestle and mortar.

In a large, lidded pan, heat the oil over a low to medium heat and when hot add the gram flour, stirring continuously to smooth any lumps and roast it slowly. After around four or five minutes, it should start to turn a pinkish brown – now add the ground peanuts (or tomatoes) and again stir for around five minutes, then switch off the heat.

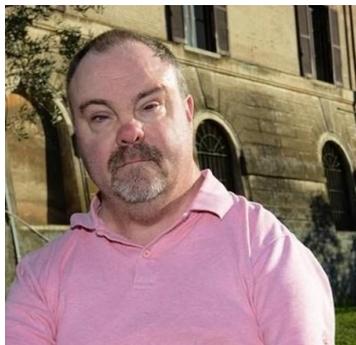
Add to the mix the yoghurt, salt, turmeric, chilli powder and sugar. Stir and add the sweetcorn (cut each cob into 1½ inch slices or halve them). Then put the pan over a medium heat and slowly add up to around 600ml water, stirring to mix.

Once mixed, pop the lid on and leave to heat through for around five minutes until the sauce is the consistency of double cream, then take off the heat and sprinkle over with fresh coriander. Serve in bowls either with rice, chapattis or just by itself.

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# Can't Cook, Won't Cook? Using Delivered Meal Boxes

Craig Millward, NAC Deputy Chair



I love my food... but I can't cook. Or, at least, that's what I thought. The truth is, I have always lived with someone who could do it better than me and I got too easily frustrated by everything taking longer than it should, and me constantly messing up the timing.

But a few years ago, my circumstances changed and it was 'cook or starve'. Thank Tesco for ready meals! But after just a few months they became boring, and I had put on weight. My son suggested trying 'Hello Fresh' meal boxes and my world changed. Six months on, I would say for the first time in my

life that I am confident I can cook a variety of very tasty, well balanced meals. And I have not had a single failure.

## So, what are meal boxes?

Every box contains all the ingredients you will need for nearly a week's worth of meals. You can select the meals you like the look of a week in advance, for anything up to four people. There are plenty of vegetarian and vegan options. I order a box every week with three different meals for two people. So, I cook three times a week, and put the second portion in the fridge or freezer to be eaten three days later. I don't have a grill or an oven, but have found that this is not a problem. All the companies I have used send a text on delivery day with a delivery slot which has always been accurate, even over the Christmas period. All three brands I have tried ensure you are able to recycle all the packaging and the cost of delivery is included for 'Hello Fresh' and 'Gousto'.



## What do I need?

There are plenty of options that can be cooked using just a large saucepan and a small pan for any rice or noodles. My microwave does have an oven function which I tried using for the first time this week, and everything went fine. So, my potential repertoire has now increased. For 'Hello Fresh' you just need to have a stock of cooking oil, if required, and salt for seasoning; whilst I understand you occasionally need flour, eggs or milk for 'Gousto'.

The instruction card provided for each meal lists all the preparation that needs to be done, so I can get all that finished before I turn on the heat and begin cooking. You will need to be able to chop and prepare salad or veg, snip the ends from sachets of ingredients and squeeze the contents into the pan. I have found a small food processor I can use easily, a

brilliant chopping and grating board that also looks very smart on my kitchen top, and that a cheap Lidl coffee bean grinder is perfect for chopping garlic and fresh chillies.

### **What are the options?**

So far, I have tried three. There are plenty more out there, but not all deliver outside London. My first was 'Hello Fresh' which I have used most often, and was the perfect place to begin. There is a great choice of meals and the quality of the ingredients is excellent. The instruction cards are easy to follow and I soon established a confident rhythm.

I branched out a month ago and tried 'Gousto', which I am still getting used to. Exactly the same format as 'Hello Fresh' and, so far, my verdict is that each meal takes a little more work, but it is normally worth the effort. I find it a little more difficult to find three meals I can cook on my hob, which is why I bit the bullet and ordered two meals that needed me to trial using my microwave as a conventional oven. I also find the menu cards a little harder to follow, but am getting used to them.

The third option I recommend is 'Pasta Evangelists'. They specialise in hand-made pasta with great sauces, but you can also find slabs of lasagna. Much easier to cook – all you need is a pan of boiling water and a microwave for the sauce. You can buy single boxes without a subscription, in which you must choose at least two meals, but they also do single-person portions. I order two meals every two weeks, and pop one in the freezer so I'm covered for the seventh day of each week. 'Pasta Evangelists' have a concession in Harrods – and I can see why.

### **What do they cost?**

'Hello Fresh' and 'Gousto' work out between £3.50 and £5 per meal. 'Pasta Evangelists' is a little more expensive at around £7. If you opt for a subscription, 'Pasta Evangelists' cut the cost per meal and give you free delivery. So far, I have not had a single meal that I would not have been very happy to pay £15– £20 for at a restaurant, so I think that is good value. You can pause or stop subscriptions at any time, and skip weeks if needed.

You can normally find very good trial offers somewhere on the web, but if you are tempted to try one and would like me to send you a link just drop me an email. I will be sent a referral reward, but I promise I will donate an equivalent amount to my local food bank.

Can't cook, won't cook? Not anymore!

P.S. My chopping board holds the grater and bowl which makes it so much easier to use. It is raised from the kitchen top a little which is very useful. And visually attractive as well!



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## Our Chair Answers

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### Rowland Bareham, NAC Chair

This edition's question arose through discussion at a volunteer meeting. In answering, please remember that I can't pre-empt what the Trustees might do in the future. However, I can give some of my thoughts.

#### **What will happen to the Trust when there are only a few of us left?**

There are different possible scenarios for what might happen, and it would be speculative for me to offer any particular one. The timing and the exact mechanism for ending the Trust will be decided by the Trustees when the time comes.

#### **Will it carry on at the rate it is at the moment?**

I think so, certainly whilst funding is being received – after all, Diageo and Her Majesty's Government need to have someone to write their cheques to!

#### **Where will the remaining funds in the pot go when none of us are around?**

I don't think there will be any remaining funds – the last beneficiaries will make sure of that!

#### **Will the Trust start winding down soon?**

It depends what you mean by winding down, in terms of the capital held by the Trust – this will diminish over time. [The factsheet on Trust finances](#) is helpful and gives information about the Trust covenant, actuarial review, investments etc.

In terms of the services provided by the Trust in respect of health and wellbeing needs, then I think these will not be winding down, as our future health and wellbeing needs will not diminish.

#### **Will there always be Trustees overseeing how the Trust operates?**

I think this will always be the case.

**Please keep questions coming. If you have questions for the NAC, do write to the Trust or you can email [feedback@ttnac.org](mailto:feedback@ttnac.org)**

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## A Focus on Men's Health

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### Darren Mansell, Trust Volunteer

The Trust's Health and Wellbeing Staff, led by our Medical Advisor, Dr Susan Brennan, decided to do a focus on men's health as compared to women. The event was held online via Zoom in June 2020.

It seems men are more likely to drink alcohol, use tobacco, not see a doctor for regular check-ups, suffer in silence from emotional issues, such as depression or loneliness and find it more difficult to talk about health problems. This was following the Trust Survey which identified some of these issues.

We decided to specifically focus on issues such as urinary problems, mental health, prostate and erectile dysfunction as these are characteristically sensitive issues, so it was a good chance to bring up these issues and make them part of a regular conversation about health.

Dr Susan made a presentation on these issues before we started to discuss each of the main topics raised. Here is [a link to the presentation](#).



We also tried to talk about those issues which would affect the age group of the male beneficiaries the most. It was great to see beneficiaries sharing their own experiences of these health issues too with very frank and often emotional events being shared by the group. We did adhere to very strict confidentiality throughout the event which reassured the participants to speak freely knowing nothing would be shared outside of the event.

Everyone went away with further thoughts on the various tests and procedures available from the NHS. GPs and our own Medical Advisers are still available to discuss any issues or doubts you may have. If in any doubt, ask for advice.

With the pandemic still influencing how we meet each other and medical professionals, it is hoped to repeat the event and to consider hosting a separate event for women.

Please [contact Annabelle at the Trust](#), if you would like to be involved in future sessions.

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## Life Cover! Useful Planning Tool or Waste of Money...

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**Phil Williams, NAC member and Finance Committee Chair**



Following the Zoom session via the online [Positively Connected](#) group in February, I've been asked to do a short article on life cover. It's quite a dry topic and hard to inject humour in writing, but I promise there will be a lot more detail including fascinating case studies and Q&A at the Future Money Matters event in June.

Life **insurance** is different to life **assurance**. They are both forms of protection which will pay out money after the policy holder dies, but life insurance only covers the person for a

specific term whereas life assurance usually covers the person for their entire life. You might not need cover but if you do then the right type of cover is dependent on your unique circumstances. For example, if you have a debt(s), such as a mortgage, you may want peace of mind that it is repaid should you die so you are not leaving any problems behind. Life insurance might be well suited to this. In contrast, if you are concerned about an inheritance tax bill on your death then you might want to consider life assurance.

There are several different reasons one might want or even need life cover. As beneficiaries, it's very important we all remember how our allocations are affected by death. On death, any unused Annual Grant allocation at the Trust will be payable to your Estate. It will then be paid out according to the instructions in your Will or by the laws of intestacy. This is in direct contrast to the rules governing our unused Health Grant. On death, entitlement to unused Health Grant is lost. It's really important, in principle and based on your individual circumstances, all beneficiaries carefully consider drawing your Health Grant sooner rather than later after 1 June each year.

If you are interested in life insurance, there are three different types of cover: decreasing, level and increasing. They do exactly what their names say. So, if you had a repayment mortgage or larger personal loan, then each year your debt is falling so decreasing term life cover to match the debt is appropriate. If you had an interest-only mortgage, then a level cover might suit you. However, you might want life cover that increases each year in line with inflation so it retains its value. Of course, the monthly cost (the premium) would increase too.

If you apply for life cover, you will usually need to complete a medical questionnaire. In some circumstances, you might even need a medical. This happened to me, but truth be told that was lovely. As a stereotypical man, I historically only went to a GP or hospital if I had a critical or debilitating problem; my bad. So, having a nurse come to my home to give me a medical was actually very useful.

Once the insurance company has your information, several things might happen. You might be accepted on standard terms and you will be quoted a monthly or annual premium. At the other, unusual, extreme you might be declined. There are two other options known as rated or excluded. If your health record isn't the best, the cost you are quoted might be higher than the standard so you are quoted a higher figure to pay. Or, if you have some sort of pre-existing health condition (not simply thalidomide impairment) the insurance company might say to you the policy covers you if you die of anything except that reason or condition you already have. You then simply have to make a decision that suits you best.

So, to put the above into context, what have I done? Ten years ago, I had two young daughters. They are so lucky they inherited my looks and their mother's brains. My regular annual allocation is a reasonable proportion of our household income so I wanted to ensure my wife and children wouldn't be left short should I die – particularly as before I fractured my shoulder a few years ago, I was still skiing hard and full throttle, plus going on rugby trips drinking with the boys every year! I decided to take out a life insurance policy that lasts until my youngest is 21. I made it increasing so it rises each year with inflation. It's currently for a cover of £781,575.07 and I pay £163.19 per month. It was an easy process and I had a light touch medical in my own home as I mentioned.

I know some people who think it's a waste of money, but I have so much peace of mind. My rationale is that I saved £163 per month for say ten years then I would have £19,560 plus interest. Truth be told, that's less than one year's annual allocation for me so it wouldn't really help my family that much should I die! If you are interested in life cover, it is important to follow two golden rules:

1. Talk to an independent financial adviser (IFA) who can look at many companies rather than from a small number on a panel. If you want to find one local to you then try this website: [www.unbiased.co.uk](http://www.unbiased.co.uk)
2. Look at paying an agreed flat fee rather than commission.

For completeness, you might be aware the Trust offered life cover through a third party. Alas, you can no longer sign up. It was for level term insurance, but only to a maximum age of 60. The common amounts chosen were £25,000 or £50,000. I understand there are currently 18 beneficiaries with cover through the Trust, so if it's ending on your 60th birthday and you feel you might need life insurance or assurance, please do think about it.

On a related note, if you have any past personal pensions or Death in service Benefit (DISB) through a current employer, please ensure you have completed an expression of wishes nominating who you would leave this to – monies can then go directly and easily to your nominated beneficiary/beneficiaries should you die and be paid tax free by-passing your Estate. It's also worth checking the people you chose many years ago are still correct!

I cannot give advice but if you want to ask me any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07554 016303 or [phil@philipdavidwilliams.co.uk](mailto:phil@philipdavidwilliams.co.uk)

**Future Money Matters (FMM)** is a regular Trust Event covering a range of finance topics of relevance and interest to beneficiaries. This year it will be virtual. Go to the event on the [Trust website](#) to book your place! There are some great sessions including one on Trust Finances and another with a finance trustee speaking. I'm also running a fuller session on life cover.

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## The Ramblings of a Footless Gardner

**Maggie Boyd, NAC Member**

12 years ago, I moved from a five-bedroom bungalow with a large garden to a very old cottage with a small patio – 'twas a bit of a shock seeing as I was used to growing all my own veg and flowers. However, it's amazing what you can grow in pots and raised wooden beds to which I added wheels making it easier to move around. I have also managed to fit in a two-seater sofa and two chairs.

I have a gardener called Ron, an elderly gentleman, who I have to watch as he invariably removes what I have planted or cuts back the honeysuckle before it's had a chance to flower (honeysuckle only flowers on the previous year's growth)! He



invariably pops round at all sorts of times, I always know when by the fact my patio is mysteriously soaking wet – he just has to get that hose out! However, he is a godsend and has a heart of gold.

I have installed window boxes which look fab especially in summer. I do these myself, my winter/spring ones look great this year, wall flowers, rambling pansies with miniature daffodils create a bit of fun throughout the cold days. This



year I'm creating a larger patio area by knocking down a long sun/utility room, building a small but wider utility room, it will give allow space for my wheelchair plus family when I do barbeques. I should have room for building fixed wooden beds at the sides reducing the amount of pots that I have.

I'm going to keep a photo album of the work done and the creation of a new garden, exciting times ahead.



It's been a tough year due to Covid-19, thankfully this year at least I have the choice to go to garden centres and buy the plants instead of online. Last year I had to pot up 94 perennial plug plants, without a greenhouse they went on my windowsills, I gave away a few to Ron, the ones I kept went in my front border, I have to say they have done really well so this year I should get a really good display they are already emerging in the spring sunshine.

After all this I forgot to mention that I am a manual wheelchair user, I wore prosthetics until 15 years ago so have had to adapt the way that I garden. To me it doesn't matter if you have a huge or small garden, you can still enjoy plants no matter what your disability is.

### **Maggie's Top Tips for Hanging Baskets**

- Depending on what you like, surfinia/petunias are good, you get great colours ideal with trailing lobelia or trailing pelargoniums interspersed with dascia. I think verbena also looks great and also spider plants.
- It's all about trying out new ideas. For myself I go with the natural look, apart from my window boxes, for that I go for vibrant red trailing pelargoniums with dascia. A shot of red looks amazing!



- I use a granular plant food – just add it to compost. It is slow release and should last three to four months. Compost-wise, it's best to get one with a water retaining agent – you need to water daily.

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## Positively Connected – Meeting Up with Friends and Sharing Interests

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The beneficiary Meetup group, Positively Connected, continues to thrive. If you have not managed to make an event please take a look at what there is on offer below and contact the Thalidomide Trust office for more information or sign up to the group using this link

[www.meetup.com/Positively-Connected/](http://www.meetup.com/Positively-Connected/)

Here is a taster of groups on offer over the next few months:

- Carolyn's Coffee Break (host Carolyn Desforges) – **Alternate Mondays at 15:30**
- Virtual Coffee Break (host Helen Shore) – **Tuesdays at 14:30**
- Beginner's Watercolour (host Jacqueline Fleming) – **alternate Wednesdays at 9:00 or at 15:00**
- Weigh To Go – weight loss support group (host Sue Gooding) – **Monday evenings at 18:30**
- Stretch & Relax with Sue (host Sue Kent) - **Thursdays at 09:00 during May**
- Chill & Chat (host Geraldine Freeman) – **Thursdays at 14:30**
- Darren's Coffee Break (host Darren Mansell) – **1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays of the month at 10:30**
- How do you Garden? (host Maggie Boyd) – **fortnightly Friday at 15:00**
- Monthly Quiz night - **last Sunday of the month at 18:00**
- The Accessible Travel Show : holidaying like it should be – **Wednesday 5 May at 15:00**
- Men's Health Forum with Dr Susan Brennan – **Monday 14 June at 14:00**
- Lunch with the Boys: Introducing our new beneficiary Men's Health Champions – **Friday 18 June at 12:30**

We hope to see you at an online event soon!

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## And Finally...

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We do hope that you've enjoyed reading this newsletter.

If you have any feedback from this newsletter or would like to contribute to the next edition (help to get your thoughts for an article into writing can be provided), please email [editor@ttnac.org](mailto:editor@ttnac.org)

## Contact Us

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Here are the contact details of the NAC members if you would like to contact any one of them:

NAC member contact details	
Geoff Adams-Spink	<a href="mailto:geoff@ttnac.org">geoff@ttnac.org</a>
Mikey Argy	<a href="mailto:mikey@ttnac.org">mikey@ttnac.org</a>
Rowland Bareham	<a href="mailto:rowland@ttnac.org">rowland@ttnac.org</a>
Maggie Boyd	<a href="mailto:maggie@ttnac.org">maggie@ttnac.org</a>
Carolyn Desforges	<a href="mailto:carolyn@ttnac.org">carolyn@ttnac.org</a>
Nick Dobrik	<a href="mailto:nick@ttnac.org">nick@ttnac.org</a>
Sue Gooding	<a href="mailto:sue@ttnac.org">sue@ttnac.org</a>
Graham Kelly	<a href="mailto:graham@ttnac.org">graham@ttnac.org</a>
Craig Millward	<a href="mailto:craig@ttnac.org">craig@ttnac.org</a>
Helen Shore	<a href="mailto:helen@nac.org">helen@nac.org</a>
Guy Tweedy	<a href="mailto:guy@ttnac.org">guy@ttnac.org</a>
Phil Williams	<a href="mailto:phil@ttnac.org">phil@ttnac.org</a>

## Mission Statement

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The NAC is a user-led group that exists to represent the beneficiaries of the Thalidomide Trust by working in partnership with the trustees and the staff.

Our aim is to give the beneficiaries the resources to meet their increasing financial, health and other needs.

Its work is underpinned by a belief in justice, dignity and equality.

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