



SLOW Annual Report

Feb 2015 – Jan 2016

SLOW – Surviving the Loss of Your World www.slowgroup.co.uk
Registered Charity Number 1161337



Charity Details

CHARITY NAME

SLOW – Surviving the Loss of Your World

CHARITY REGISTRATION DETAILS

Registered Charity Number 1161337

Registered April 2015

FOUNDED

September 2007

TRUSTEES

Chair of Trustees

Tim Whitworth

Treasurer

Kelly Carter (resigned June 2015)

Position currently vacant

Acting Secretary

Finella Craig

Trustees

Phillippa Murray

Sara Portnoy

Andrew Wright

PATRON

Jason Watkins

ADDRESSES

Member Correspondence:

SLOW, St George and All Saints Church, Crayford Road, London, N7 0ND

Grants and Fundraising Correspondence:

SLOW, 11 Donovan Avenue, London, N10 2JU

www.slowgroup.co.uk info@slowgroup.co.uk Tel 07532 423 674

Our Objectives

The following objects are for the public benefit: -

- To promote and protect the good health of bereaved parents suffering as a result of the death of their child through the provision of self-help and mutual support
- The promotion of social inclusion by offering a sanctuary for bereaved parents to relieve the needs of those people and assist them to integrate back into society

Our Ethos

At SLOW, we have evolved a unique and successful model of bereavement support that is a direct response to what bereaved parents have told us they need. Our ethos has grown from the roots of a community, facilitated and supported by bereaved parents who have experienced first-hand the territory of parent's grief. SLOW cultivates a stance of 'coming alongside' parents, going at their own pace, within a non-pathologising culture.

At SLOW we know that a parent's grief cannot be fixed, and do not strive to 'make things better'. Instead we support and give space to parents, so they may in time harness their own resources in slowly rebuilding their lives. In this way, we believe there is **hope** to be found in connecting with other bereaved parents, **relief** in sharing the pain of grief, and **company** in bearing the unbearable, alongside others who are living with the death of their child.



SLOW Activities 2015-16

The heart of SLOW lies in the culture and the community of its two support groups for bereaved parents. It is here that parents come to find connection, company, comfort and hope after the death of their child. Parents themselves shape the content of the groups, offering each other support and their lived experience of grief, reducing the sense of isolation that bereaved parents feel. The group's aim is to cultivate an atmosphere of safety and strength within its structure, whilst also giving space for the suffering of grief to be witnessed and shared. Both groups are fluid and flexible with regular core members attending each week / month while others choose to drop in less frequently but as and when they need support.

There is a SLOW library of books relating to grief and bereavement, often recommended by parents, for members to use.

The Weekly Support Group

The weekly daytime group ran without fail for the whole year (during term-time). Newly bereaved parent members were supported by the longer term members. The reciprocal sharing of early grief and later grief provided a range of experiences in the discussions. Though circumstances surrounding the deaths of children, as well as their ages at death differed widely, the parents found a way to share and absorb those differences in a cohesive way. The culture of the group is welcoming and inclusive. A regular crèche enabled parents to take a break from childcare and share some of the difficult feelings around caring for young children often in the early months and years of grief. Parents paid a small supplementary cost for the crèche.

The weekly drop in meetings have between 6 and 15 attendees drawn from an increasing membership of 185+, with between 3 and 4 crèche attendees. The groups are facilitated by Nicola Whitworth and supported by volunteers Maria Wojszwillo and Liz Cancea and run 39 weeks of the year with each meeting lasting 1.5 hours.

The Monthly Support Group

We have developed and embedded our successful monthly evening support group, running ten groups over the year. The group is attended by a mix of bereaved mothers and fathers, who have experienced the death of their child in different circumstances, as babies, young children, young people and adults. The group enables parents who are working or have other commitments to come and talk about their child with those who understand. As a relatively new group, there is now an established core of parents who attend regularly. Some parents have been in touch with each other outside of the group, and attended other SLOW social events. In the evening group, the invitation to light a candle and place a photograph of your child on the central table at the beginning of the group has become established.

These meetings attract between 4 and 12 members and take place at the Peabody Community Rooms on Cathcart Hill, Archway, N19 on a Thursday evening at the end of each

month. The group is facilitated by Nicola Whitworth, Tim Whitworth and occasionally Jason Watkins and ten groups, each lasting 1.5 hours, are held each year.

SLOWsibs

The 'SLOWsibs' creative arts workshop came about in response to requests from parents using the SLOW weekly support group. Parents were concerned about the impact that their own grief and the subsequent changes in the family after the death of their child would have on their surviving children.

SLOWsibs provides a place for bereaved siblings to meet each other and develop their creative skills, with the aim of reducing isolation, building confidence through making new friends and exploring feelings in a safe space. Our creative activities are designed to support each child in living with their grief while building a hopeful future - to both commemorate their sibling who died, as well as express their own unique place in their altered family. The group has established a structure whereby each session begins with warmups and team building games, moves onto a creative project, followed by a much enjoyed tea (often with home-made cakes provided by a parent) and then a closing circle where each member of the group is invited to share their work if they wish.

The SLOW sibling group has been a huge success, with regular attendance of 6-12 children for each session with ages ranging from 5-14 years. SLOWsibs members are at different places in their grief and ability to express themselves, and with different understandings of death. It is therefore important that the activities are flexible enough to sustain different levels of interpretation and engagement.

In 2015-16 we have had an exciting year at the SLOWsibs with a variety of activities, some of which have been co-facilitated by visiting guest artists. We have also been very happy to welcome Kat Roberts and Rachel Nott from the Blackshaw Theatre production as volunteers.

We held the following four workshops over the year, each session lasting for two hours:

- **'Mum's the Word'** - March 14th 2015 cupcake decoration workshop. Creative decoration modelling and icing cupcakes, with each child taking home 6 cakes for their family. Discussions revolved around feelings within families with specific focus on mothers and what happens when families change after the death of a sibling.
- **'Incredible Eco-Planters'** - June 26th 2015. We made use of a sunny outdoor patio, making planters from recycled plastic bottles. We discussed themes of recycling, growth and renewal. Children chose to commemorate their sibling, or make gifts for other family members, choosing from a wide range of scented herbs and colourful flowers to customise their planters. Older siblings supported the newer members. Children also made a large flowering basket for the weekly SLOW group premises.



- **Drama and writing workshop** with Kat Roberts and the Blackshaw Theatre – October 10th 2015. An exciting new venture for the children, exploring team work through improvisation, storytelling and drama. Some children chose to do individual writing work - a great day for confidence building, and a new family were introduced into the group.
- **Christmas Decorations Workshop** - December 6th 2015. With generous donations of living mini Christmas trees and Christmas craft materials, the children decorated the trees, made memory glass baubles for their siblings who died, painted glass candle holders and handmade cards. Children took their trees and decorations home - a heartfelt and valuable contribution to the home at a difficult time for bereaved families.



Email and Telephone Contact

SLOW recognises that the first steps in reaching out for support are difficult to take for many bereaved parents. We offer a prompt telephone response to any enquiry about SLOW, and take care to arrange an initial telephone call to talk with parents about what has happened and how they would like to be supported. Parents' enquiries are then followed up by email or text after their first visit to the group. At times, parents may be unable to attend the group for a period of time due to work or family commitments. In these situations, the feedback that we have received is that parents value maintaining contact via email or via the active blog page where they may read articles and news about SLOW.

SLOW recognises that the charity may not meet the needs of every bereaved parent or other enquiry and will endeavor to signpost them on to other organisations that may provide a specific information service and support.

Collaborations, Partnerships, Events and Professional Outreach

- **Silk Screen and Batik Workshops** with Sofie Layton, Regent Studios Thane Villas N7. Between March and July 2015 a group of bereaved parents, tutored by artist Sofie Layton, created beautiful silk screen and batik prints, using images of their children, and other motifs as inspiration. All parents attending hoped that this could be funded as an ongoing project in the future, valuing the opportunity to express their love and grief for their child through an artistic medium.



- **Staying Alive** by Kat Roberts - a new play about the experience and impact of a mother's grief within her social group raised awareness of the issues facing bereaved parents as they attempt to rebuild their lives. The play drew on interviews between Kat Roberts and Nicola Whitworth and was received enthusiastically at the Pleasance Theatre, Islington for a three week run in November 2015. To hear the interview between Kat and Nicola about how they worked together on the material please go to this link:- <http://slowgroup.co.uk/2015/11/staying-alive-writer-kat-roberts-talks-to-slow/>



- **The Big Alliance** - Kelly Carter and Nicola Whitworth met with Lizzie Jones of the Big Alliance which builds connections between businesses and charities / community groups. SLOW has now registered with the Big Alliance and is hoping that they will be able to assist with the search for new Trustees.
- **Breathe Festival** - Art workshop with Lili Barcroft. On January 23rd 2016 bereaved parents and children from SLOW were invited to take part in a creative workshop led by screen set designer Lili Barcroft exploring the theme of 'Air' for the arts festival Breathe. We designed and created windmills for an installation at the Old Church Art Centre Stoke Newington.



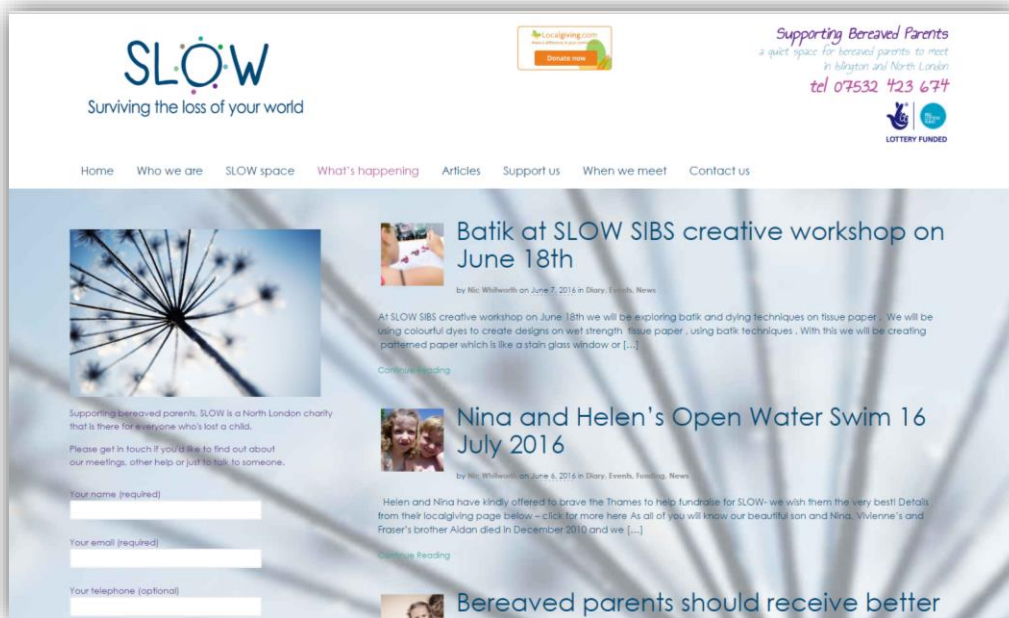
- **Rosie's Rainbow Fund** - we are very pleased to be developing our partnership with Rosie's Rainbow Fund, who support sick and disabled children in hospital, school and the community. Rosie's Rainbow was created in memory of Rosie in 2003, by her mother Carolyn Mayling. Rosie's Rainbow offer bereavement support for families and have generously funded the SLOWsibs workshop in order to provide professional artists to work on specific projects with the children, as well as donating materials for the Christmas workshop.

- **The Rainbow Trust** - SLOW gave a presentation of its sibling work to the Rainbow Trust, outlining its ethos and creative approach in the workshops, making links with the support work Rainbow Trust offers its families.
- **All Party Parliamentary Round Table - 'The Arts and Palliative Care, Dying and Bereavement'** - On November 2015 SLOW was invited to take part in this event at the House of Commons. Areas of work represented included oncology, general practice, hospice and end of life care, music therapy, psychotherapy, bereavement support, therapeutic writing, art therapy, film-making, and residential care. The group heard about SLOW's collaboration with Sofie Layton including the creative textiles project and the performance of REST. It was an incredibly positive discussion with all involved agreeing that the creative arts give a voice to people in grief, rather than pathologising and medicalising it. The chairperson, Baroness Finlay, acknowledged that young people who do not receive bereavement support can suffer greatly later in life as they make their way into the world and that the arts can provide them with a unique vehicle for expression at the time of their bereavement - a philosophy close to the heart of SLOWsibs.
- SLOW continues to value its ongoing links with other organisations that share and complement our work. These include Grief Encounter, Caris Bereavement Support Islington, The Stuart Low Trust, Child Death Helpline, Life-Force, Rosie's Rainbow Fund, Angus Lawson Memorial Trust, the Rainbow Trust, Helen House Dads group, NE London Sands, The Compassionate Friends and Great Ormond Street Hospital as well as our kind hosts St Georges and All Saint's Church.



The SLOW Website

- SLOW has updated its website with a complete redesign by designer Nick Ruskin, who kindly donates his time to SLOW as well as actively maintaining the site on an ongoing basis. We are proud to present our new blog based format, where articles, events, reports and future meetings can be posted.



Charity Application and Compliance

In April 2015 SLOW successfully registered as a charity. SLOW has also reviewed its compliance procedures and introduced a new member registration process. There is now an established practice for new parents to complete a short registration form with details of names, addresses, GPs details and details of their child who has died.

Trustees' Away Day

On June 29th 2015 the Trustees and staff of SLOW met for an Away Day, facilitated by Helen McDonough, a management consultant and long-term member of SLOW. The purpose of the day was to review the progress SLOW has made, take time out to discuss issues in a more expansive way and produce an action plan based on the day's discussions. Nicola Whitworth presented a report 'Going the extra mile' outlining SLOW's hallmark approach of tailoring support. Key issues raised were future planning for a Support Facilitator for SLOW and the possible use of an office space.

Personnel and Volunteers

The core work of running SLOW is carried out by Nicola Whitworth, Co-founder and Facilitator, and Kelly Carter, the newly appointed Business Development Manager, who moved from a volunteer to a paid role in June 2015. SLOW depends heavily on volunteers and we have expanded our volunteer base substantially during 2015-16. Volunteers are now responsible for assisting the facilitator, welcoming members and providing

refreshments at support meetings as well as setting up our IT systems, designing and updating our website, and assisting at SLOWsibs.

Training and Professional Development

Staff and volunteers of SLOW attended the following training: -

- Finance and Fundraising - VAI – attended by Kelly Carter (June 2015)
- The Impact of Suicide on Families – Child Bereavement UK attended by Nicola Whitworth (June 2015)
- Group Lives: Tales of Attachment’ - Institute of Group Analysis attended by Nicola Whitworth (December 2015)
- Attachment Workshop - attended by Maria Wojszwillo and Liz Cancea (November 2015)

SLOW continues to be recognised for its important work and the facilitator is provided with professional supervision from the Islington, Camden and Haringey Life Force team, who

work with families where a child has a life limiting illness.

Our Members

In December 2015 the SLOW membership base was 185+. which grows as new people contact us.

What our members say about SLOW



Member Case Study

In 2013 we were contacted via the SLOW website by a bereaved mother who had lost her daughter in very traumatic circumstances. The mother's daughter had died suddenly and unexpectedly in her home while caring for her young son. The daughter was discovered some hours after her death by her mother and father and the daughter's young child had been alone with his mother's body for hours.

When this bereaved mother started attending the group she often cited that she felt isolated. She attended the group regularly, and over time was able to vent and convey her devastating grief and pain alongside others. She shared with others the isolation, guilt and despair she felt, as well as the difficulties she experienced bringing up her young grandson without his mother.

Slowly with support from other parents she was able to find ways to support her grandson who was now living with her. She took hope from listening to others who were further along in the years of their grief, and formed strong connections with others in the group. She continues to pursue these friendships outside of the group and rebuild her life in the face of her loss. She is now an active volunteer for SLOW helping sustain its ethos and assisting the facilitator each week.

Case Study given with the member's permission and approval.

Financial Review 2015-16

Overview

This year's accounts are presented under accounting principles recommended by the Charity Commission where all income is included if it relates to activities undertaken and paid for in the same year. Equally, all expenditure related to the year is included whether it was actually paid for at the time or not. This provides a much more accurate picture of the finances relevant to the activities carried out in the year. It also has the effect of reducing what, as seen in previous years, might appear to be a large year-end surplus which is not accurate because the money is fully committed to the future.

The charity's income in 2015-16 of £26.7k rose by nearly £8k from the previous year, largely through receipt of a generous corporate donation. The Awards for All grant covered six months of activities in this year but SLOW was not eligible for an immediate reapplication which created a six-month funding gap between applications (SLOW has since received nearly £10k from Awards for All in February 2016). Expenditure was up from £14.8k in 2014-15 to £25k – reflecting more activity in groups and support for members. During the year SLOW committed additional funds to pay for project management and business development for future funding and activities in line with the decisions of the trustees at their 2015 away day and regular meetings.

Income and expenditure broadly matched resulting in a £1.6k surplus for the year to which we were able to add a surplus from 2014-15.

We start the new financial year 2016-17 with carried forward restricted grant funds of nearly £3.5k committed to specific activity as well as £7k of unrestricted reserves to pay for the planned development of the charity. The trustees' policy is to follow recommended practice and maintain reserves to cover 3 months' expenditure - this is in the event of the charity being required to wind up for any reason and accounts for £7K approx. of the unrestricted reserves carried forward.

Income

- **Continued Support from Islington** - SLOW received support from Islington in the form of grants from **Islington Community Chest** and the **Local Borough Initiatives Fund** for both St Georges and Junction ward.
- **SLOWsibs Support - The Marple Trust** also continued to support SLOWsibs for the second successive year and **Rosie's Rainbow** contributed towards the costs for a guest artist and Christmas craft materials.
- **New Grants** - Over the course of 2015-16 new grant applications were made to **Charles S French Trust, the Tudor Trust, Family Investments, the Good Neighbourhood Fund, Archers Trust, the Goldsmith Company Charity** and the **Lotteries' Awards for All** with many of them proving to be successful.
- **Corporate Donations** - SLOW secured two large unexpected donations from corporate donors – **ATASS** and **AWAC** - towards the end of the financial year.

- **Waitrose Community Matters** - SLOW had an unprecedented year in terms of support from Waitrose's Community Matters Scheme with the charity appearing in Holloway Road, Highbury Corner, Crouch End, Finchley, and Kings Cross stores.



- **Fundraising** - In June we held our annual information and fundraising stall at the Whittington Big Day Out raising nearly £400 from selling cakes.



Expenditure

Expenditure increased by £10k year on year. This can be attributed to the following new expenditure: - stepping up the capacity to undertake additional activities in contracting Kelly Carter to develop new services and the funding for them /more project outreach meetings and developing data recording systems'/presentations and project admin and finances. There was increased expenditure on professional outreach, the hiring of premises for the weekly group and the new monthly group sessional costs. In addition, the cost of professional supervision for the group facilitator increased in line with the demand in services – the cost of this supervision is generously supported in full by the Life Force Palliative Care team in NHS Islington and Camden. Whilst additional costs were incurred in contributing to the new and successful weekly meeting venue at St Georges, Peabody Housing continued to provide free accommodation for the monthly group at Cathcart Hill. The accounts do not reflect the costs in the considerable contribution of volunteers, which in this year included artists and drama tutors, Sophie Layton, Kat Roberts and Rachel Nott and facilitators Tim Whitworth and Jason Watkins working with groups. Charlie Davies, Kat Roberts and Rachel Nott supported work by Trustees in developing up to date and effective administrative and IT systems and Nick Ruskin continued to provide invaluable support maintaining and curating the SLOW website and blog. Helen McDonough provided help

working with the trustees to shape and define a sustainable future for SLOW and Richard Field provided a skilled eye in examining our accounts.

Reserves Policy

The Trustees have established a reserves policy whereby the unrestricted funds (not previously committed) should be at least three months of the current year's annual expenditure. SLOW is currently dependent on £20-25k of income per year to sustain its activities therefore the reserves figure equates to £7.2k.

At this level the trustees believe that they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding while seeking to replace the funding or alternatively wind the charity down. The main concerns of the board are to ensure that the staff can continue working to either secure new funding or close the charity, and to support members to move onto other services.

The SLOW Trustees will review this policy annually.

Contact Information



Nicola Whitworth

Co-founder and Facilitator

info@slowgroup.co.uk

07532 423674

Nicola Whitworth has been facilitating groups and working with individuals as a creative therapist for over 30 years. She studied at the Institute of Group Analysis in Group Dynamics and holds a Certificate in Counselling Skills from Birkbeck College, University of London. She more recently trained at the national Child Bereavement UK charity in 'Advanced Facilitation' Skills for Bereavement groups', in 'Traumatic Grief,' and in The 'Impact of Suicide on Families'.

Following the death of her daughter Naomi Grace in 2005, Nicola Whitworth co-founded SLOW to support bereaved parents. Nicola facilitates all the SLOW support groups and provides training on parental bereavement to charity and healthcare professionals. As well as her work for SLOW she is an honorary member of the National Child Death Helpline volunteer staff and as a Grief Support Practitioner at Angus Lawson Memorial Trust and Rosie's Rainbow. Nicola is a member of the Mindfulness Practitioners network. She teaches Mindfulness and is currently developing a Mindfulness for Grief programme.



Kelly Carter

Business Development Manager

admin@slowgroup.co.uk

07734 577407

Kelly is a bereaved parent having lost her daughter Esme in 2010. She first attended the weekly SLOW meeting in December 2011 and has been a regular member since that date. Kelly says "SLOW has been a lifeline for me and I am a staunch advocate of the group, fully signed up to its unique ethos and purpose".

Kelly began voluntary work for SLOW in December 2013 becoming increasingly involved by the day. Her current remit for SLOW includes planning and developing new services, grants and fundraising, project outreach and presentations and project administration and finances.

Kelly worked for 13 years in the Telecoms and Media Industry at News International and BSkyB in a variety of management roles, primarily in product marketing but also in project management and operational roles.

Our Trustees



Tim Whitworth - Chair of Trustees

Tim has many years' experience working with the public sector and supporting and advising new and small enterprises. A qualified training practitioner and executive coach, he worked with the Office for Public Management for over 9 years and now has his own consultancy and training practice running master classes in political and stakeholder engagement, doing more with less, commercial awareness and innovation skills for a number of large local authorities & NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups across the Midlands, East and North and providing team and performance coaching for health and local authority senior management teams.

Tim also works at a practical level managing major change within a community in East Oxford and redefining new ways of working, utilising community assets, providing social care and supporting vulnerable and older people. He has used his personal experience of the diagnosis and loss of his daughter Naomi in running a bereaved dads support group based at Helen and Douglas House Hospice in Oxford since 2011.



Dr Finella Craig - Secretary

Finella is a Consultant in Paediatric Palliative Medicine at Great Ormond Street and has worked as a paediatrician since 1989. She is on the management group of The Child Death Helpline, where she is a shift supervisor, and is a Medical Practice Facilitator with Child Bereavement UK.

Her palliative care training included two years with a community and hospital-based adult palliative care service as well as with the Paediatric Palliative Care team at GOSH. She has contributed to several national and international service and policy documents.



Philippa Murray - Trustee

Pippa joined SLOW in 2012, initially taking on the role of Treasurer for two years. She has a background in central government, having held a number of senior posts in HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs. Pippa was also a member of Great Ormond Street Hospital's Transformation Board between 2008-2012.

She has been a Trustee of the Brain Tumour Charity since 2008, chairing its Information and Support Sub-Committee and serves as a member of the Research Sub-Committee, having a degree in Biochemistry. She is also a non-executive director of Dasic Marine Limited, a marine engineering business based in Hampshire. Pippa has taken a career break since her 15-month old son, Lawrence, was diagnosed with a brain tumour. She cared for him until he passed away in September 2007 aged 3 years 9 months.



Andrew Wright - Trustee

Andrew currently works on communications, charity governance and grant making at cultural heritage and environmental charity Arcadia Fund. He began working in the charity sector at The Passage, a homeless charity with roles starting on reception but moving on to assisting senior management, human resources, volunteer management and fundraising which gave him a great introduction to how charities work.

He first encountered SLOW when he joined the Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Giving, where he was a programme officer for three years. Over that time, he got to know Islington's voluntary sector well, and, as manager of Islington Council's Community Chest, spent much time helping small, local organisations to develop their work. He hopes to bring this experience, along with skills and knowledge, to SLOW to help it continue its "brilliant, necessary work."



Sara Portnoy - Trustee

Sara is a Consultant clinical psychologist at University College Hospital, London, UK and has worked with children and their families for over 25 years in the health service. For the past 10 years she has worked with Life Force (Community paediatric palliative care and bereavement team) in Camden, Islington and Haringey with families where their child has a life limiting or life threatening condition and with families who have been bereaved. She has published and teaches on bereavement.

Acknowledgements

SLOW would like to thank its staff, volunteers, Trustees and our Patron for their hard work and dedication. None of our work would be possible without the support of our new and continuing funders including: Islington Local Borough Initiatives and Community Chest, Awards for All, the Marple Trust, the Charles S French Charitable Trust, Waitrose Community Matters, ATASS and AWAC. We are especially proud of the fundraising events organised by our members and are extremely grateful for donations from our members, their friends and families. Thank you.

Do you need support from SLOW?

Anyone who is a bereaved parent can attend our support groups. Parents can call us themselves or we can be contacted by a family member or health professional.

Please call 07532 423674 or email info@slowgroup.co.uk to make an initial enquiry, leaving a message if the answer phone is on. A member of staff, usually the facilitator Nicola Whitworth, will contact you within a few days to arrange a convenient time to phone and discuss with you whether the SLOW group will be able to help. This initial phone call puts you under no obligation to arrange to visit the SLOW support groups. If you wish to proceed, you'll be invited to attend a SLOW group (daytime or evening), after which Nicola will follow up your visit by telephone or email. Attendance at the group is flexible, parents may attend for as long and as often as they feel the group is providing them with the support they feel is helpful.

Bereaved siblings between 5 and 15 years that have lost a brother or sister can also welcome to attend SLOWsibs. For more information, please also call 07532 423674 or email info@slowgroup.co.uk.