

DrugFAM / The Nicholas Mills Foundation

Newsletter Summer 2020

We're writing this newsletter at the tail end of what has been an unusual spring and summer for everyone.

An Unwelcome Challenge for DrugFAM

The biggest challenge for DrugFAM this year has been the drop in our fundraising income because of Lockdown and the continuing social distancing measures. DrugFAM is not alone here - this has been a problem for many small charities. The challenges currently facing the sector were the subject of an inquiry by the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) committee of the House of Commons which found that more than 70 per cent of the charities surveyed by the Directory for Social Change feared they could close before the end of 2020 without financial support.

Fortunately, we have not had to furlough any staff and we have succeeded in maintaining our services throughout the pandemic. Our dedicated staff and volunteers have been working harder than ever to answer all the phone calls and emails that have been coming in – more on that later.

Unfortunately, our BEYOND project and play productions have been (temporarily) put on hold. There are plans to resume these in the near future when circumstances allow.

Drug and alcohol deaths during the Pandemic

Sadly, we have supported 33 bereaved families since Lockdown began. Our kindest thoughts and wishes are with these families. The quarterly bereavement groups are taking place online.

Drug use in England

The first report from Professor Dame Carol Black's independent review into the misuse of illegal drugs in England was published in February 2020. The review examined the harm that drugs cause and, among other issues, looked at the availability of drugs and the effects on young people and children. It is a very thorough report but did not contain much mention of the impact on families. A second report has been commissioned and is due to be published in December 2020. We understand that it will show a detailed picture of treatment, recovery and prevention and focus on making recommendations to the Government. We look forward to reading the second report.

Funding for the Charity

COVID-19 meant our main fundraising events were postponed indefinitely.

Much of the Government's £750 million package, generous as it is, did not apply to Addiction and Recovery charities or family-focused charities like DrugFAM. We have tapped into what is available from local authorities and have an on-going 'Coronavirus Community' application with The Lottery which has been passed to one of their regional offices for consideration. Other funding applications and appeals are in the pipeline.

In the diary for April was a music and drama event at Penn House, hosted by the very kind and energetic Lady Howe. Penn House is situated in Buckinghamshire, in the village of Penn close to Old Amersham and a short drive from our High Wycombe office. Lockdown came along so this could not take place. For the same reason a number of educational presentations at schools were also cancelled. These have recently recommenced online using Google Teach – let's hope Elizabeth's voice holds out.

Due to take place this month, DrugFAM's annual ball, in a physical setting, has been cancelled. This ball would have been the number one event of DrugFAM's year and a lot of fun. In its place we have a virtual campaign – have a look on our website.



Q: When is a DrugFAM Carnival Ball not a Carnival Ball?

A: When it is a Silent Ball!

Telephone system

Alas, our new telephone system, that went live last November, has not worked out as planned. Just about every member of staff and volunteer has reported problems when using their phone apps for answering Helpline calls. This has impacted the Helpline support that we offer and caused interruptions during calls. Call problems keep cropping up and, like COVID-19, these do not discriminate – even our Founder, Elizabeth, had to put up with calls cutting off when working on the Helpline last week. We sincerely apologise to our clients who have suffered disruptions during difficult phone calls. Rest assured we are working closely with our telecoms provider to find solutions and get everything working smoothly as it should. Sharon has found a real person to speak to (3 people actually, who have been very helpful) and is in touch with them nearly every day to ensure that progress is made.

DrugFAM really has gone online

We were heading that way anyway, but COVID-19 accelerated things which has been a good thing for the Charity and for many of its clients all over the country.

Since Lockdown began at the end of March the support groups are being held using Zoom, hosted by our wonderful facilitators, and going well. If you would like to join one of our support groups, please email office@drugfam.co.uk for details. We have recently opened a new National Group as by popular demand. One-to-one sessions are also held using Zoom. These sessions are popular, for good reason, and we are happy that we can give this amount of time and care to people who need it. We are also receiving more emails than usual. Clients who are not comfortable using technology are not forgotten! Phone support is always available.

Volunteer training is also moving online. DrugFAM's Gill and Steve have been creating modules for active addiction and bereaved by addiction – progress is excellent, and the quality looks very good. Regular catch up meetings are held via Zoom with staff, facilitators, helpline vols and those in training to help them feel connected and part of the DrugFAM team.

Annual Bereavement Conference

The 12th Annual Bereavement Conference will take place, online, on Saturday 10th October from 10am to 2pm. This will be the first virtual conference for DrugFAM's team and delegates. To prevent a few grey hairs the services of a professional events consultant have been engaged. The single, huge advantage is that people can attend from all over the country – details are on the home page of DrugFAM's website.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/drugfam-bereaved-by-drug-alcohol-use-virtual-conference-tickets-112477816176>

Very busy

Our own records have shown an increase of 72% in the number of phone calls and emails received during the second quarter of 2020 compared to the second quarter of 2019. During the first 6 months of 2020, 147 one-to-one sessions with 70 clients took place – at this rate the number of 'one-to-ones' in 2020 will more than double the number in 2019. If nothing else, this increased workload shows that life has been more challenging for many families during the pandemic. If you cannot get through to a family support worker when you call, please leave a voice message and bear with us – someone will call you back as soon as possible, usually within a day. It is a Helpline, not a call centre, so every caller is given the time they need.

Upgraded website

DrugFAM's website has often inspired positive feedback because it is clear, concise and speedy. But opinion is that it could do with a cosmetic make-over, to give it a more contemporary feel and so that it can hold more content whilst being easy to navigate. We are very grateful to have been offered the services, for free, of a nephew of one of our Trustees. Watch this space.

DrugFAM would like to welcome...

.....Sandi B to the team. Previously a volunteer, Sandi became a DrugFAM employee in June and has earned herself the title 'Call-Back Queen'. We love having Sandi working with us and hope that she is settling in well. We would also like to welcome Isobel M back to the board of Trustees. This is a recent re-appointment and we look forward to seeing Isobel at the next board meeting. A welcome must also be given to our 7 new trainee volunteers.

The Gambling Commission

As reported in the previous newsletter DrugFAM received a visit from the Chief Executive of The Gambling Commission near the beginning of the year. The Gambling Commission knows that DrugFAM supports some families who are dealing with gambling issues as well as drug and alcohol addictions. Two further meetings have taken place and they appear keen to work with DrugFAM, so we currently preparing a fresh proposal to put to them.

Birthdays

Several of the team were 21 again during the year to date. Coming up in October is a milestone birthday: Our very own Elizabeth will be celebrating her 70th! Her family told her she had to practise being 70 last year and Elizabeth has certainly enjoyed eating birthday cake every day since. Ever creative, she has launched a digital fundraising campaign with this as a theme.

Have a quick look!

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/drugfamspowerof7>

Power of 7 (at 70!)

Due to the Global Pandemic we are unable to hold our Carnival Ball this year so we have decided to do something a bit different!

From September 12th the day of the actual ball until Elizabeth's 70th birthday on October 5th we invite you to donate any amount of money with a 7 in it anytime during the next 23 days as the appeal will close on Elizabeth's birthday Monday October 5th.

Please log onto our Just Giving link below:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/drugfamspowerof7>



**Thank you so much
for your valued support
during these very difficult times!**

**To find out more about us call 0300 888 3853
or visit www.drugfam.co.uk**

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