



## A word from our Director



As we approach the lifting of restrictions on June 21st there is the sense of an ending that will be welcomed by us all. There is also a sense of beginning too as our professional team starts work to repair the damage wrought by the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

As Catherine mentions in her centre-piece article, we never tire of this; this is what we do and this is the principle on which our society was founded in 1984.

We are using this summer edition of our newsletter to thank you for your generous support over this last year, to keep you apprised of our work and to inform you about some exciting community news. We are also celebrating the success of several of our supporters who have found new ways to fundraise for us.

As we step out of the shadows of the Covid pandemic and its lockdowns, we are taking the opportunity to re-dedicate ourselves to our work across the Diocese of Brentwood. We want every family to know that we continue in our work to improve outcomes for young people and that we are committed to ensure there are no barriers to families who need to access our specialist support.

We have been thinking long and hard about how to do this and what this 're-committal' to our diocesan community should look like and we have decided to do what we have all done so well during this last year: to walk.

This summer, our aim is to cover 100 'legs' or routes across the diocese, linking up the more than 130 churches or mass centres with one another and we are asking for your help. Being a small team, we can't possibly cover this all on our own, so we are looking for parish representatives willing to walk a leg for us to deliver our message and be part of our relay of hope.

If you are an existing parish walk representative, you may already have been contacted by us to

enlist your help – thank you if you have agreed to join in. If you are interested in getting involved, you can read more inside and we would urge you to get in touch and pledge your support.

There is an important fundraising element involved in our walks too – we must continue to find new ways to increase our voluntary income in a landscape without mass participation events. If you are able to make a donation and be part of our new commitment, please complete and return the enclosed donation card in the knowledge that your contribution will help us to make a difference.

We look forward to seeing how our 'Relay 100' circuit rolls out during the summer months – there has never been a more urgent need to get our message across to every church and parish community in our diocese. We would ask you to please continue to pray for the success of our mission and thank you for responding to our need during this difficult year.

Bernadette Fisher  
Director



RELAY  
100

100 PEOPLE  
100+ CHURCHES  
500 MILES  
WALK, RUN, JOG

# Captain Tom 100 Challenge

We are so grateful to our three Captain Tom 100 Challengers who got behind this national movement to build on the amazing work of Captain Sir Tom Moore and raise much-needed funds for charity.

Over the first bank holiday weekend in May, Catherine, Ankush and Marie responded to our call to action and came forward to undertake a challenge around the number 100: Catherine ran 100 laps of her school running track, Ankush answered 100 maths questions set by his teacher and Marie cycled 100 circuits of her local area. Between them they raised nearly £1500 for us and we would like to thank them and their sponsors for their amazing dedication to our cause.

Without recourse to our usual income from events and challenges, we are keen to hear about new ways of raising funds and would love to hear from you if you have a fundraising idea you would be willing to undertake for us.



Marie



Ankush



Catherine

## Trusts & Foundations

Trusts and Foundations have become a major feature of the charitable landscape in the U.K. with thousands of organisations nationwide distributing billions of pounds in grants every year. These trusts all have different funding priorities, some focusing on giving to a particular type of organisation, some to a particular cause while others have a more general remit.

In the last year, we have been extremely fortunate to receive grants from several Trusts and Foundations which have helped us to fund:

- **The purchase of Zoom licenses to enable secure remote working**
- **The upgrade of IT equipment**
- **A Specialist Family Support Worker**
- **A Transitional Support Worker**
- **Music & Art Therapy**
- **Bereavement support work**

This funding makes a huge difference to the support, care and advice that we can provide to children, young people and their families and we would like to say a massive 'thank you' to each and every organisation that has responded to our need this year.

If you are a Trustee or a representative of a Trust and are interested in supporting our work, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Julie – [jabbott@bccs.org.uk](mailto:jabbott@bccs.org.uk)

# Relay 100: delivering our message across the diocese

We recognise that our community has played a vital role in sustaining us during this last year and is one of our most powerful blessings. As life slowly returns to some sort of normality, we see a unique opportunity to recommit ourselves with renewed energy to this community – the Diocese of Brentwood.

For many years we have enjoyed the support of a very dedicated band of supporters who have undertaken annual sponsored walks for us around the diocese. Last year, however, with the social distancing restrictions imposed upon us all, many coordinators were unable to make these happen for us and so, a year on, the coronavirus pandemic continues to have a massive impact on our fundraising income.

On the positive side, the pandemic has given rise to a spirit of charity and community that has moved and connected us all. This summer we are looking to harness that willingness to help and support as we undertake an ambitious journey to walk, run or jog across the diocese, to visit every church and mass centre, to link our communities together and to re-dedicate ourselves to our work. This is important because, more now than ever, it is vital that our message to families is passed on and understood:

***“We are here for you if and for as long as you need us”***

Our epic journey around the diocese will launch in June and will take place throughout the summer months with visits to every church and mass centre.

It will involve 100 individual sponsored walks, runs or jogs and for it to be successful all 100 legs must be completed. Covering almost 500 miles is a big undertaking for a small team and we will need your help to achieve it. But we are undaunted – you have helped us before, and we know you will rally round again.

By committing to complete a section of our relay you will not only help increase awareness of our work but also raise vital funds to support it. This is particularly important as our professional team begins the huge task of dealing with the after-effects of the pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of many of our children and families.



Full details of the event along with particulars of the individual legs can be found on our website [www.bccs.org.uk](http://www.bccs.org.uk) – look for the tab **Get Involved** and search for **Relay 100** under **Events**.

If you would like to make a donation in support of our Relay 100 journey please complete the enclosed donation card and return to us or if you would prefer to donate using your on-line banking, you can make a direct transfer to our bank account using **Relay 100** as a reference:

**Account Name:** Brentwood Catholic Childrens Society  
**Account Number:** 31094130  
**Sort Code:** 40 13 22

If you require any further information or are interested in supporting us in any way, please contact Damian for an informal chat on: 07912 308000 or email [ddillon@bccs.org.uk](mailto:ddillon@bccs.org.uk)



# Putting the Pieces Back Together

Our Head of Schools Services describes what we are finding as children and young people return to face to face learning



To simply say, 'thank you' all for your support over the past year seems lacking. We, and the families in our care, have benefited greatly from your active involvement and interest in all that we do. As always, we are eager to share with you what we have learned within our experience of the pandemic, and what we are now working to repair.

Our work in schools is divided into two areas: one is to support pupils and students by providing therapy, process groups, group therapy, art therapy and lots more. The other is to support staff who are working tirelessly to educate and care for the emotional wellbeing of their students and themselves, all at once.

And so, we have learned a lot over the past year. We have been particularly reminded about the resilience of the children, young people and families in our care. We are, however, learning about the effects of lockdown now that children and young people are back in face-to-face education.

Our work as therapists is heavily based in theory. Our job is to tolerate, experience and digest the feelings of a child or young person: we bear their unbearable emotions breaking them down into thinkable, manageable feelings. We are consistent, available and altogether present when we sit with a child, young person, or family.

Achieving this has understandably been much more challenging for us this last year. Typically, we seek to influence the therapeutic setting: we provide the same room, with the same objects and toys, we work at the same time each week, and we see that a child or young person is free of burden and emotion when they leave us and the room we have shared to go back to their day to day activities.

***'We have, in short, learned how vital our work is. We don't take that responsibility lightly.'***

During the lockdowns, we have noticed the impact of working remotely and via a screen. We couldn't ensure the environment was calm, ordered and belonged entirely to the child or young person because they were working with us within their home settings. We can't sit alongside them in the way we would in a room and we have had to work with them within the setting which has, in some cases, caused anxiety or worry or feelings of anger. This has been far from ideal.

The school system also offers this sense of 'containment' to children and young people by being a consistent presence, by caring and by having clear expectations of them; all vital experiences for a child's psychological wellbeing.

We have talked with all our schools since children have returned to face to face learning. They have noticed an increase in challenging behaviours in school and so we have been analysing this with them. Some children and young people have come out of lockdown full up and burdened by their experiences. They are acting out: some are presenting as challenging, aggressive or rejecting, others as withdrawn, retreating from social interactions, and quiet.

These students are experiencing the same emotions but presenting them in a different way. Why? They have also been without the vital containment of the school setting for a significant

period of time with their only connection to it being via a screen. Schools have not been able to set the tone and have not been able to capture their students within the forums of school Masses, Assemblies, or through Chaplaincy support and they have noticed their students have been affected by this. The challenging behaviour is an unconscious test of the school's care and consistency. We have been working hard with our schools to support them to understand and address this.

As always, our schools never fail to amaze us with their commitment to providing the right kind of support – they are being consistent and kind. Staff are leaning on us for our care and support and we are, of course, providing this. We have, in short, learned how vital our work is. We don't take that responsibility lightly. We continue, passionately, to rise to the challenge but our work now is reparative. We need to understand and to reframe the experiences of our children and young people, both in terms of lockdown and in what they present us with now. And then our therapeutic work can really begin. We never tire of this. But, as always, we need your support so that we can keep meeting the increased demand on our services at this time.

Catherine Munns  
Head of Schools Services & Clinical Development

**Children's  
COMMISSIONER**

840 million days of face-to-face schooling were lost by March 2021

The number of children harmed or killed by abuse or neglect in England rose by 27% in the first lockdown

In February 2021 Anne Longfield delivered her final speech as Children's Commissioner for England. She acknowledged the impact of the pandemic on children's wellbeing stating that less than one quarter of the 1.3 million children with significant mental health conditions received NHS treatment during 2020/21. Her findings are shocking and ones that we see evidence of every day in our work.

***"It's impossible to overstate how damaging the last year has been for many children - particularly those who were already disadvantaged."***

Two thirds of primary school children in England felt lonely – a 50% increase

The rate of clinically significant mental health conditions in England increased by 50%

# Supporting families in their loss

Over the past year we have been in the heart-breaking position of supporting children and families to manage the loss of a loved one. Bereavement is an always-evolving process for families and the loss of a loved one affects family members in completely different ways.

Parents who have lost a loved one will have to manage not only their own grief, but the grief of their children and perhaps their parents too. Children who have lost a loved one have to deal with the scary reality that people die, and they have no control over that. They are also witness to their own parent grieving and this can feel worrying for a child or young person.



We would like to share the story of an 8-year-old child that we are supporting. Her father died very suddenly from Covid and left her and her mother shocked and trying to grasp the incomprehensible. This little girl, who we will call Beth, was distraught and both her mother and the school were unsure how to help. When we first talked with Beth's mother, she told us that she hadn't been able to tell Beth that her father had died because she couldn't face or manage Beth's questions.

We hear this often: it is unthinkable for loving parents to share news with their children that they know will cause them pain and distress, so they avoid doing so. We are always available to help with this part of the process.

Because there was a lack of clarity, and no permission given to ask questions, Beth was calling her dad's mobile and leaving heart-breaking messages for him. Our first conversation with Beth's mum, therefore, was a "how to" conversation. We explained that Beth needed to know that her dad wasn't coming back and that avoiding the conversation was burdening her with more feelings than they both had to contend with. Beth's mum was worried about telling Beth in the wrong way, so we helped her with this and then celebrated her courage together.

*We work directly with bereaved families and we also provide practical support for school staff who are dealing with children who have lost loved ones.*

From this point, we needed to support Beth and her mum in managing their shock. We had regular, simple conversations with them initially about their anger and disbelief while acknowledging that it wasn't fair. We continued to name that they were incredulous that he had died, and this helped them to allow the reality to sink in, gently.

As they began to process their feelings of loss, Beth also began to talk about her fears: Who would bake with her at the weekends? Who would look after her Mum? What if she forgot him? What if she died of the virus? Had he been in pain? Would he be worried about her? What was heaven like? What would she tell her friends? These are normal child-like worries and we were able to validate and discuss them.

Beth's mum was remarkable. She shelved her own grief to support Beth through hers. We supported mum's grief in different sessions. We then supported Beth's mum to sit with Beth and explain that there wasn't any need to continue leaving messages for her dad. It was activating her fear of his absence and her emotions were going into a void; she needed some closure.

Supporting this process meant Beth was able to fully get to grips with the fact her dad wasn't coming back and so she couldn't reach out to him in that way. We looked at the many, other ways in which she could remember and celebrate him.

Supporting a child to accept their loss is a difficult and incredibly sad process. But it is a necessary part of their journey through grief. So that Beth could always have access to her dad's voice, we saved a voicemail of his and agreed she could listen to it when she needed to but agreed her mum would be there too.

This work is not yet nearly done. When death comes as a shock, children have so much to work through before they can even get to their grief and move through that cycle, that they may need someone else who can bear their shock and anger first. And so, we will continue to support Beth and her mum, and other families in this situation over the next few months.

## Connecting with Nature

We have all felt the benefits of being in nature and feeling its healing properties particularly during this last year. This is also true for our children and young people particularly when they are struggling with debilitating feelings of anxiety or loss.

In May, we joined with many during Mental Health Awareness Week to celebrate our natural world and to promote the discussion around mental health and the things in our daily lives that can affect it. We created resources for primary schools to use in class and to share with parents.

This has never been more important as teachers tell us they are finding some children have become 'hard to reach' and we are seeing many children who are burdened and full-up following their experiences during the lockdowns.



## Farewell to Tony

It was with great sadness we learnt at the end of May that our dear friend and former Director, Tony Galcius had died. Tony was Director of **bccs** from 1988 to 1998 taking over from our founder Mgr John Armitage. During his tenure, he oversaw the opening of a charity shop in Highams Park, a Family Centre at the Cardinal Heenan Centre in Ilford and a move of premises to the Ongar Road, Brentwood. During this time the Society also became known as The Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and became a Trust in its own right.

In 2014 in celebration of our 30th anniversary, Tony came together with former Directors to enjoy an Anniversary Mass and Garden Party at Childcare House with Bishop Alan and many staff, supporters and clergy from the Brentwood Diocese. We will always be grateful for the work that Tony did for us as Director and the legacy he leaves to the Diocese of Brentwood and the families we support. May he rest in peace.



## Our young champion journeys to Edinburgh - virtually



During the third lockdown, we heard about a young man who had set himself the challenge to walk, cycle or run 373 miles – the equivalent distance between his home and a special friend's home in Edinburgh. We helped Nathan through a particularly difficult time following the death of his Nan and in return, he decided to take to the great outdoors and do something positive to help support our work.

At the end of April, Nathan reached his virtual destination and in doing so he raised over £1000 for us which is a fantastic amount. Nathan has been an inspiration to other young people and his journey – both physical and emotional – has been followed by many on our social media platforms. When we asked Nathan how it felt to complete his virtual journey to Edinburgh, he told us:

*'I am very happy to have been able to raise awareness for young people's mental health and am incredibly proud about the sum of money I have raised for **bccs** who helped me through a very sad time.'*

We would like to thank Nathan, his family and everyone who sponsored him for supporting us in this way. He is a true champion to us and who knows, maybe one of our future London Marathon heroes too!

## Virtual London Marathon – can you run for us?

This year, the London Marathon is going to be held on Sunday 3rd October both in London and on roads and by-ways all over the world.

Last year, our marathon heroes had to run their London Marathon locally and so will take up their rightful places on the streets of London this year. Now, we are looking for 10 runners to take on the challenge to run the 26.4 miles wherever they like!

These challengers will have 24 hours to complete their marathon and will receive their own London Marathon Finishers' Medal and T-shirt. They will also have access to the official app which will allow them to plot their progress on the actual London course.

An estimated 50,000 people will take part in this iconic, virtual event which will also be an attempt to break a Guinness World Record!

If you enjoy running and would like to take up a virtual marathon place and raise vital funds for us, please email [Julie jabbott@bccs.org.uk](mailto:jabbott@bccs.org.uk) for more information.

## Our Ladies' Lunches – postponed but not forgotten!

Our Ladies' Lunches which usually take place during Ascot week and at Christmas have been a firm favourite in our event calendar for many years.

When we had to cancel our Ascot lunch in June 2020, we put out a 'call to action' and many of our ladies held their own '**Hats on for bccs**' fundraising events in groups of six in their own back gardens.

We felt sure that we would see our ladies for our Christmas event later in the year but unfortunately a global pandemic got in the way of that!

Little did we know, but these events would be the beginning of a year of remote and virtual fundraising and we were so very grateful to everyone who got involved.

Now, a year on and with the uncertainty around the full easing of restrictions at the end of June 2021, we are sad to have to postpone once again.

If you are a regular at our lunches, please do not forget us – we need you now more than ever. We hope we will be together again to celebrate at Christmas and will update you in our September newsletter.

## Lenten Appeal

We would like to send a heartfelt message of thanks to everyone who returned one of our Lenten Appeal cards and made a donation to us during Lent.

Without our usual income from events, parish talks and second collections, our community appeals have taken on an even greater significance. Thank you all for your unstinting support.



For further information on these events or help and support on hosting your own fundraising event, please contact Julie Abbott on 01268 784544 or [jabbott@bccs.org.uk](mailto:jabbott@bccs.org.uk)

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