

BENEFICIARY NEWS 2021



The Royal Society for the Support of Women of Scotland

Covid-19 – one year on

The past year has been an extraordinary and very difficult one for everyone. However, we know that many of the Society's beneficiaries have been forced to shield over the past year and you have told us just how hard it has been not to be able to see friends and family members. We also know that some of our beneficiaries work in key worker roles, and many are carers for family members and have had to step up much of the care they provide as the NHS and Social Care services have focused on treating people with Covid.

LIFE in
lockdown

Zoom meetings and “virtual” visits

This past year has also been one of significant adaptation for the Society – especially for our Staff Team. Committee meetings have moved to Zoom, assessment of new applications has had to be done by phone and all of our “visits” to beneficiaries have had to be “virtual”. As an illustration, in 2019/20 the Society's Caseworkers drove over 34,500 business miles mostly to visit beneficiaries, whereas last year it was less than 400 business miles (and none of those were on visits)!

Thank you

Catriona Reynolds, the Chair of the Society's General Committee, said *“I want to thank both the staff team for their flexibility and hard work over the last year, and all our beneficiaries for your perseverance in sending us so many screen shots and copies of documents. This has tried the patience of some at times, but it has also enabled the Society's support to continue without interruption”.*

Spotlight on useful services...

Help and advice around funerals



Advice, support and information about help with costs of funerals is available for people who have to arrange one through the “Down to Earth” project of QSA. Their key messages are to take your time and that often words, music and actions can be far more powerful than paying a lot for “extras”. You can contact them on 020 8983 5055 or downtoearth@qsa.org.uk but they can only provide 1:1 advice BEFORE the funeral has taken place.

Finding local advice and support if you are worried about money.



The Food Aid Network have leaflets covering 15 different areas in Scotland – everywhere from Aberdeen to West Dumbartonshire and plenty more in-between. Each provides information about local support organisations that can provide direct help and advice. See <https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/cash-first-leaflets>.

Tell us what difference our support makes for a chance to win £50!



The Society is always interested in feedback from our beneficiaries about our work. Next year is our 175th anniversary, so in preparation for this, we are asking YOU to tell US in your own words:

- What difference has the Society’s support made to your life; and
- How the Society is different from other charities and what is it that makes us special?

Please feel free to write as much or as little (or nothing at all!) and to be as frank as you wish. Your comments can be anonymous but, to encourage people to respond and by way of a thank you, we will make a £50 payment to 5 of the people who respond. This isn’t a competition, instead “winners” will be drawn at random at the end of August 2021. However, please add your name and address to your comments to be eligible otherwise we have no way of knowing who to pay!

Please either post your comments to RSSWS, 14 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, EH1 2BD or email them to ceo@rssws.org and thank you in advance for doing so!

Careful Planning for re-starting Covid secure visiting

Andrew Tweedy, the Society's Chief Executive, explained "we are all hoping that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that life will start to get back to something more like normal. We have been planning how we can slowly start visiting our beneficiaries again, but we will only start once the Government tells us it is safe to do so". Specific guidelines will be in place for visits which include:

- All Caseworkers will have had BOTH their vaccine jabs and will be testing themselves weekly for Covid.
- We will only visit beneficiaries who have themselves had BOTH vaccine jabs. For anyone who hasn't, we will offer telephone appointments.
- We will limit the number of visits to only one a week. This means initially our visits will be prioritised for people applying to the Society for the first time (where it is particularly important to meet face to face) and beneficiaries who need extra help.
- We will phone everyone the day before the visit to check that they are well and that their local area isn't subject to any restrictions.
- Caseworkers will drive to visits using their own cars – we won't be using public transport.
- At the visit Caseworkers will wear masks, sanitise their hands before and after the visit and we will ask the person we are visiting to do the same.

Keeping Visits Safe – How You Can Help

If a Caseworker is visiting you we ask you to do the following to keep the visit as safe as possible:

- Let us know BEFORE the visit if you are feeling unwell or if you have any symptoms of Covid. We will happily rearrange for another time when you are better and this will not affect your support from the Society.
- Do not ask other people to visit you during the meeting unless needed. If you want to have a family member or someone with you make sure that your Caseworker knows about this in advance.
- Wear a mask (unless you are exempt from doing so) and try to keep windows open during the visit. We know this is an imposition in your home, but these are important steps in reducing the risk of infection.
- Caseworkers will not be able to accept any offers of tea or coffee or to eat anything at the visit, so please don't be offended if they decline!



The Staff Team report to the Society's General Committee who are the Trustees of the Society.

New appointments



Bridget Mustard

Bridget is originally from Pittsburgh in the USA and studied in Ohio where she met her future husband, a Scottish Cello player. The couple moved back to Scotland in 1989 and have four adult children one of whom has complex needs. Bridget worked in Strategic Planning and Policy for local government in Moray for almost 30 years before recently retiring. Besides being a Trustee of the Society, she also supports a local charity that focuses on disability access and is undertaking a second Masters Degree in Gender Studies at University of Stirling.



Gill Fairley

Gill lives in Glasgow and feels she has walked every inch of the city during the lockdown! She worked as a marketing manager with British Airways for over 25 years travelling extensively around the world meeting a huge range of people and experiencing many different cultures. Gill has a wide range of corporate and marketing expertise but opted for voluntary redundancy at the start of the pandemic to look for new challenges including becoming a Charity Trustee for the first time.



Heather Smith

Heather studied Literature at the University of Hull and has a long career working in the Citizens Advice Bureau network. She managed the Central Borders CAB for many years and moved to Edinburgh in 2011 where she now works as the Information and Project Manager for Age Scotland. Heather brings many years experience of both supporting women struggling with low incomes and managing Charities to her role as Trustee.

Trustees stepping down

In addition, four Trustees have also stepped down from their role over the year:

Walter Thomson

Walter is a Solicitor and was the Society's Vice Chair for several years. He had been a Trustee since 2008.

John Hume

John is a Chartered Accountant and was the Society's Treasurer for several years. He had been a Trustee since 2014.

Anna Buchannan

Anna is a Solicitor and Chief Executive of the Life Changes Trust. She had been a Trustee since 2018.

May Storrie

May works in property and is the first woman to be Lord Dean of Guild of the Merchants House of Glasgow. She had been a Trustee since 2014.

Catriona Reynolds said "The Society is indebted to John, Anna and May for volunteering their expertise to the Society and helping steer our growth and development. Equally, I am delighted to welcome Bridget, Gill and Heather to the Committee, and I look forward to working with them to do the same over the coming years".

What we need you to provide at annual review visits

Part of our normal procedures involves regular visits (albeit by phone just now due to Covid) to our beneficiaries. We know that Caseworkers look forward to these visits and we hope beneficiaries do as well! However, part of the purpose of these visits is to catch up on any changes to people's circumstances including, importantly, their finances. To do this effectively we need to ask you to have available the following when the visit takes place:

- **Recent statements for EACH of your bank accounts showing AT LEAST 1 MONTH'S transactions.** You can download these and/or take screen shots of them which you can email or post to us. However, if you only have the originals documents, you can post these to us and we will return them to you.
- **Your annual Council Tax Bill.** Again, you can scan or take a photograph of this which you can email or post to us.

There may well also be other documents which your Caseworker will have to ask you for, but these are likely to be the starting point so please help us by having them available!

Staff Team—who we are and what we do



Helen Dalley – Welfare Manager

Helen studied Law and has worked in a variety of Charities before joining the Society. She was appointed our Welfare Manager in May 2020 having previously worked as both a Caseworker and Grants Eligibility Assessor for the Society.



Lucy McRitchie – Caseworker – North

Lucy worked as a registered nurse for 41 years before joining the Society. She supports Beneficiaries and assesses new applications from women in the Highlands, Islands, the North East and Highland Perthshire.



Sonia Love – Caseworker – South & East

Sonia worked as a registered Occupational Therapist before joining the Society. She supports Beneficiaries and assesses new applications from women in the Lothians, Fife, Borders and some parts of Central Scotland.



Pam Samson – Caseworker – West

Pam worked for RSABI before joining the Society. She supports Beneficiaries and assesses new applications from women in Glasgow, Argyll and Bute, the South West and some parts of Central Scotland.



Sharon Moffat – Administrator

Sharon joined the Society from college and has been with us for over 30 years. She ensures the smooth running of our office and we would all be lost without her!



Andrew Tweedy – Chief Executive

Andrew supports the work of the Society's Trustees and has been delegated by them to have day to day responsibility and authority for the operations of RSSWS and the grants that we pay.

Farewell to the “Transition Ladies”



In March the Society made a final payment to 83 beneficiaries, our so-called “Transition Ladies”. Grants to these beneficiaries had gradually reduced following a decision by the General Committee to focus the Society’s support more towards women on lower incomes and fewer resources. Andrew Tweedy, the Chief Executive, said “the Society sometimes changes its criteria and that may mean we are unable to keep supporting some beneficiaries. However, we know people rely on our support so we try to give as

much notice as we can of changes and we were very sorry to see these Transition Ladies leave the Roll of Beneficiaries as we had known many of them for a long time.”

The Society maintains a mailing list so we can keep people up to date with our work and we are pleased that many former beneficiaries, including some of the Transition Ladies, have asked to be part of this. To opt out of our mailing list please just contact the office.

Updated Privacy Policy

The Society will always take great care to keep beneficiaries’ personal information both safe and private. We also want to be open how we use this information so we have updated our Privacy Policy. The key changes are making the Policy clearer, allowing us to operate a mailing list so we can keep in touch with former beneficiaries and other people interested in our work, and allowing us to make referrals to other support organisations but only if a beneficiary ask us to do so on their behalf. Copies of the updated policy are enclosed with this newsletter or can be found on our website or by contacting the office.



2020 / 21 In Numbers

The Society's accounts are still in the process of being finalised but the following gives a good idea of the scale of our work over the past year:

- Our annual income from our investments was **£1,365,790**. This is virtually our only source of income, and it was **down 29%** from the previous year due to the Covid pandemic.
- We distributed **£1,170,100 in grants** paid directly to beneficiaries. This was 73% of our overall annual expenditure.
- We had an operational **deficit of £210,500** over the year because we were committed to maintaining our support to beneficiaries despite the drop in our income.
- By the end of the year our Investment Portfolio had recovered to over £45,806,740. The Society is incredibly fortunate to have these assets, but we cannot spend them because if we did so we would not have any income to distribute.
- Over the whole year, we provided support to a total of **988 women** overall.
- This included **68** beneficiaries who were admitted to the Roll for the first time during the year.

Final end to our old “@igf.org” email addresses

While the Society changed its name over 6 years ago, we know that many people still know us as the “IGF” and many staff continued to use their old “@igf.org” email addresses. This is now changing, and all the Society's email addresses are in the form of “@rsws.org”. Please make sure you update all the email addresses you may have for staff in the Society otherwise you will soon not be able to contact us.

Contact Us...

The Royal Society for the Support of Women of Scotland

14 Rutland Square • Edinburgh • EH1 2BD

T: 0131 229 2308 • E: info@rsws.org • W: www.rsws.org

Our office is normally open Monday to Thursday from 9am to 2pm

