

A photograph of two young children in a grassy field, likely participating in an Easter egg hunt. The child on the left is standing and looking away, wearing a grey jacket and white bunny ears. The child on the right is crouching and looking down at the ground, wearing a maroon jacket and pink bunny ears. Several colorful Easter eggs are scattered on the grass. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. A green rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text 'NEWSLETTER SPRING 2020'.

NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2020

The logo for Family Support Work. It consists of three stacked squares on the left: a blue square with a white letter 'F', a purple square with a white letter 'S', and a green square with a white letter 'W'. To the right of these squares, the words 'Family', 'Support', and 'Work' are stacked vertically in a sans-serif font, each corresponding to the color of the square to its left.

**F** Family  
**S** Support  
**W** Work

The Sussex Charity for Children  
Since 1890

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



As we look forward to spring and Easter we see many symbols of new life; symbols of hope and joy that we welcome in many different ways. These symbols may be of fire and light or small chicks and lambs (and of course always chocolate), but however we welcome the signs of new life at this time, we should all be thankful for the hope it brings.

At FSW, when working with our families we look for the small signs that show a family is starting to grow and overcome the challenges that their life brings to them. Maybe it is celebrating the small steps - a reluctant child attending school for a day, a depressed dad engaging with his children in a play session or a mum having a few minutes for herself.

Whatever the small step is, it brings hope to that family that things will improve, and you are a part of that hope. The hope that is brought to the family by the FSW Practitioner or Playworker with emotional support or because of the bag of food that they bring. This is only done because you are there with them, supporting and encouraging our families through your gifts, and for that we are thankful.

As we move into the new financial year we will be looking to appoint another Family Support Practitioner, this time a role that will look after families in both Petworth and Midhurst Deaneries. This has been made possible because of a gift from the estate of the late Miss Jill Marchant. We are continuing to look for new sources of funding so that other areas can benefit from a Practitioner too, so as we continue our work we can bring hope and new life to other families across the Diocese.

With best wishes

**Martin Auton-Lloyd**  
CEO



# A BUSY CHRISTMAS



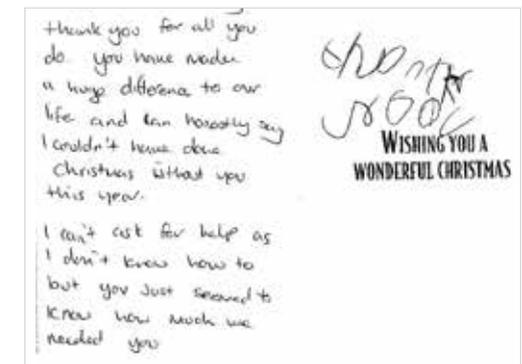
The months of November and December are always extremely busy at FSW, and 2019 was no different.

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of churches, schools and other community organisations who arranged collections of food and toys for us – in total over 70 groups supported us in this way. We were also invited to speak at a number of Sunday services throughout Sussex during Advent. These gave us the chance to update longstanding and newer supporters about our work throughout the year and to explain more about how Christmas can be particularly challenging for the families we help. Following on from the success of the event in 2018, we held another carol service at Holy Trinity Church, Hurstpierpoint, at which Rt Rev Richard Jackson, Bishop of Lewes, presided in one of his last engagements before taking up his new role as Bishop of Hereford. We were delighted to welcome the High Sheriff of East Sussex to the service as well as several of our Bishop's Champions, funders and other supporters.

Our Christmas parties for families began at the end of November and this year we were very pleased to welcome special guests including the High Sheriff of West Sussex, the Archdeacon of Horsham and the Deputy Mayor of Crawley. We also held a Christmas party at Lewes Town Hall for local schoolchildren invited by the Mayor of Lewes. In total almost

600 children and their families across Sussex came to one of our events and spent quality, fun time enjoying the festivities and being able to forget about other pressures for a while. The food donations from our supporters were all gathered together one morning when a small group of staff and volunteers put together 110 Christmas hampers. With the addition of fresh, free-range turkeys, provided again by Anthony Harris of Bridgers Farm, we were able to give our families everything they needed to make a full Christmas dinner.

On behalf of all of them, we'd like to thank everybody who contributed donations, or volunteered at one of our events. We couldn't have done it without you, and we wanted to share this card with you that we received from one of the families:



# LEANNE'S STORY

## From her Family Support Practitioner

I have been working with a parent for the past year. She has severe social anxiety bordering on agoraphobia. She is a disabled lone parent with a degenerative condition. Her three children are on the autistic spectrum and display school refusal, anxiety and sometimes obnoxious behaviour.

When I started working with her she had high levels of anxiety, low self-esteem and presented as having little control as a parent. Her autistic child has pathological demand avoidance and was school refusing; she knew how to 'tap into' mum's sense of self-worth and often got her own way. I did some 1:1 sessions in school with her around emotional literacy. It was clear she lacked the ability to see things from the perspective of others. I gave the mother emotional support to empower her to

feel in control as a parent, using NVR strategies. The child's school attendance improved dramatically and mum felt more in control as her parent.

Just recently, the mother attended her first ever group using NVR that I have set up. She tried to find excuses not to come, but I encouraged her to do so. She came to the first session but was very nervous in a group setting and had a panic attack. The group supported her and she found strength to carry on. I texted her later on that day and said how proud I was of her for being so brave. She said "It was really nice to talk to other women. It felt like a breakthrough for me".

# A DEEPER LOOK AT OUR DAY-TO-DAY WORK



**By Elaine Waight, Director of Services**

I wonder if you realise the depth of issues that our practitioners are working to support? Yes, it is true that the majority of our families are struggling with long-term poverty, but often this is a result of long-term health and disability issues. Many of the families we support have one or more members with a physical disability or a mental health concern.

Often we are asked to support a child who is struggling at school. Sometimes the child is exhibiting extremely high anxiety about attending school. Maybe they are being bullied; maybe they are completely overwhelmed by the experience of entering the school each day. Children's behavioural issues are not always about a child being "naughty"; often it is the result of underlying mental health conditions, autistic spectrum disorders or attachment issues. Supporting children in school with mental health is currently a government priority, but services to support children and families are still abysmally poor. I attended a conference in London a few weeks ago and heard of lots of local initiatives being set up across the country to support children, but the funds are not there to effectively deliver these services to all children in need. We are endeavouring to support children and their families by providing them with more tools to cope and by signposting other services. We are working much more closely with schools to help them develop a more holistic approach to wellbeing. Last year some colleagues and I took part in 2 school events in the Weald and Rother areas. This was a bringing together of agencies that support children and families to talk to both the teaching staff and to parents. We will be involved in this again for the Weald group in April.

Another way that we are supporting parents is to put on specialist Connective Parenting courses (also known as Non Violent Resistance). In the last 2 years parents in Bognor, Rustington and Haywards Heath have taken part in this course and this year it is being run in Rural East Sussex. This way of parenting is especially good for families where there are children who have been adopted, fostered, living in kinship care, or are on the autistic spectrum. The process isn't necessarily easy but it is worth it in the long run. We now have a group of parents who feel much more confident in their parenting and much happier children.

Recently we are finding that "kinship carers" have been referred to us more regularly, as they do not receive support from local authority, yet they are taking on a complex task of care of a family member's child. These children often display a range of unsettled behaviours that need careful understanding and support, as they do not always respond to mainstream parenting methods. We have set up a kinship carers support group to enable them to meet together and share experiences and knowledge, which we hope will develop into a strong peer support network.

These are just some of the complicated issues that our practitioners are currently supporting. It is because of our holistic way of working that we can spend time on engaging with family members at different levels to give them guidance and support to build their skills. This is a vital aspect of our work that makes us so different from other services. If you would like to know any more about these issues or have any questions about how our services work on a day-to-day basis then do get in touch and I would love to tell you more.

# OPEN GARDENS

## EAST SUSSEX

### 29 Fairlight Avenue

Sat 23 May: 12-5pm  
Hastings TN35 5HS

### Seaford Gardens (5 gardens)

Sun 31 May: 12-5pm  
BN25 1QH

### Kitchenham Farm

Thur 4, Tue 9 Jun: 2pm-5pm  
Battle TN33 9NP

### Luctons Open Garden

Sat 6, Sun 7, Tues 9 Jul 1pm-5pm  
North Lane, West Hoathly, RH19 4PP

### Seaford Gardens (9 gardens)

Sun 14 June: 11-5pm  
BN25 1QH

### St Leonards-on-Sea (4 gardens)

Sun 14 June: 11-4pm  
TN38 OUU

### Waldron Gardens (2 gardens)

Fri 19 June: 1-5pm  
(2 gardens) TN21 OTB

### Burwash Hidden Gardens

Sat 27 June: 1-5pm  
TN19 7EN

### The Barn Etchingam

Sat 4, Sun 5 Jul: 11-5pm  
Sat 29, Sun 30 Aug: 11-5pm  
Etchingam TN19 7AZ

### Bexhill-on-Sea Trail (5 gardens)

Sun 5 Jul: 12-5pm  
TN39 4LR

### Knightsbridge House

Wed 22, Sat 25 Jul: 2-5pm  
Wed 9, Sat 12 Sep: 2-5pm  
Hailsham BN27 4HH

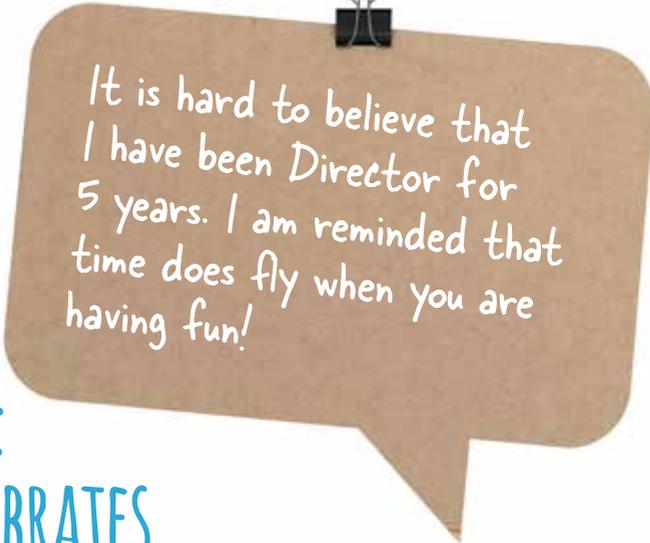
## WEST SUSSEX

### Hassocks Village Garden Trail

Sun 7 Jun: 1:15-5pm  
BN6 8EY

### Luctons

Sat 20, Sun 21, Tue 23 Jun: 1-5pm  
West Hoathly, RH19 4PP



It is hard to believe that I have been Director for 5 years. I am reminded that time does fly when you are having fun!

## A LOOK BACK: MARTIN CELEBRATES 5 YEARS AT THE HELM OF FSW

The last five years have been fun at times but also there have been sad times and many challenges along the way. So what have we achieved? Well we now have 11 practitioners, more than double what we had when I first joined FSW; we have a space for our ever growing food bank; a team of professional fundraisers; a charity shop and an increasing family of friends and supporters.

Yes, at first glance we have changed over the five years but have we changed that much? I don't think so; we are still that group of people who will not pass by as someone struggles with the challenges of life. We still work alongside the same organisations as before but our work is much more focused on delivering services directly to the families that are referred to us.

We are proud of our heritage as a faith based charity and the role our founders played in developing not just our organisation but also the concept we now refer to as Social

Work. Let us never forget that before the state, organisations like FSW were the providers of support to struggling families. Our partnership with the Diocese is stronger than it has been for many years. Our supporter basis is growing, not just with people from the church but from many different walks of life, people who all care for the wellbeing of the families of Sussex. We now have seven Bishop's Champions who are working hard to bring FSW to the attention of new people and help us develop new networks of support for both the Association and our families.

So after five years of hard work what next?..... more hard work of course, more fun as we grow, no doubt more challenges and sadness too. But I am confident, and I hope you are too, that FSW will be here for the long term supporting families in Sussex and working so that every child that lives in our county will have the best possible start in life.

# MUSU'S STORY

## From her Family Support Practitioner

Musu is a lone parent with 3 children. She is originally from the Gambia but has lived in the UK for 14 years. She was referred to me by another agency which could not support her with all of her difficulties. Musu has poor physical and mental health and is unable to read or write, which makes daily life a real struggle, particularly when trying to understand official forms or liaise with her children's school. The family was also experiencing real financial hardship.

Once I got to know Musu it was evident that it was a priority to support her with accessing everything she was entitled to as a lone parent with significant difficulties. I helped her to fill out forms and read her post so that she was more in control of her daily life, and I also assisted her to acquire a disabled bus pass to give her more independence. The family's accommodation was lacking in basic necessities so I secured some grants for household items and furniture that greatly helped to relieve some of the physical symptoms relating to her illness. I was also able to help her with food parcels and winter fuel payments so that what little money she did have she was able to prioritise on essential items for her children.

Once the basics were in place I continued to see her frequently, sometimes 3 times a week. I took her to appointments with medical professionals and brought her to local support groups to increase her social interaction, as she was leading a very isolated life. Her mental health began to improve and she started to feel a little more in control of her life and her ability to support her children.

However, Musu's illiteracy was still a real problem in managing successfully with day-to-day life and it was imperative to try and help her learn to read and write. With the support of FSW's local support group I was put in touch with a local retired primary school teacher, who is now working intensively with Musu 3 times per week to improve her reading and writing skills.

Although Musu and her family are now in a much better place than they were when I first started working with them, I am still the only adult that she sees regularly. She often says that she would be lost without me, so I am really pleased that I can continue supporting her and her children for as long as they need me.

# COULD YOU VOLUNTEER?

We wouldn't be able to support as many families as we do without the volunteers who help us.

Whether they help out regularly at weekly group sessions, support individual families with a specific need or make themselves available on an ad-hoc basis for things like transporting families to appointments, our volunteers carry out vital tasks that give our practitioners more time to spend on our intensive family support work. In September Melissa, whom many of you will know, took over the role of volunteer co-ordinator and has been working hard to support the practitioners by finding volunteers to help with specific tasks. We have some really interesting opportunities for people who might have some free time to help their local practitioner and help to make our service even better, so we'd be very grateful if you could have a look at our needs and let Melissa know if you could help. Melissa can be contacted on 01273 832963 ex.304 or by email [melissa@familysupportwork.org.uk](mailto:melissa@familysupportwork.org.uk)



## VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

### Worthing

Help with refugee support group (1 x month)  
Driving/transporting families to appointments (ad hoc)

### Bognor Regis

Help with after school club (2 x month)  
Help with school holiday activity sessions  
Driving/transporting families to appointments (ad hoc)

### Peacehaven/Newhaven

Befriending a parent (ad hoc during school hours)  
Supporting children at drop in (fortnightly)  
Handyperson and drivers (ad hoc)

### Haywards Heath/Lindfield

Lego therapy club (2 x month)  
Homework club (every Thursday during term time)  
Playwork (various ad hoc)

### Uckfield/Rotherfield

Driving/transporting families to appointments (ad hoc)

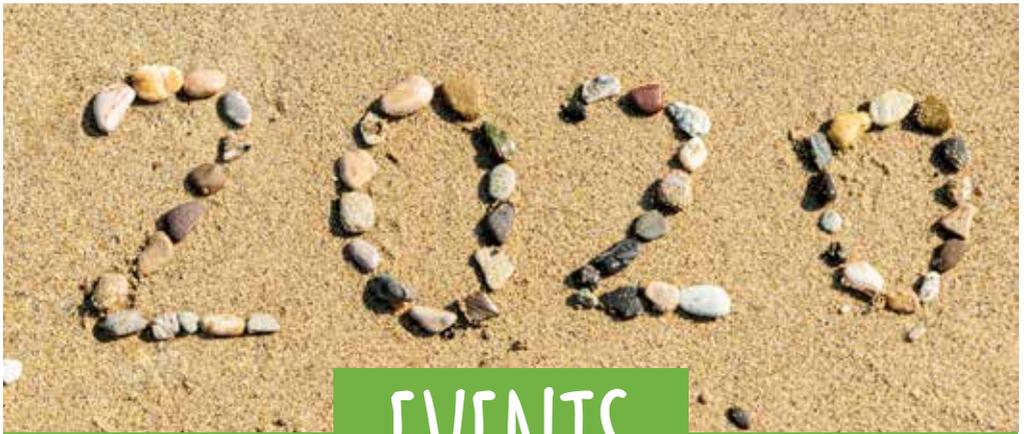
### Crawley

After school club help for children  
Adult reading and writing support (1 x week)

### Garton House (head office)

Foodbank support (administration and sorting donations)  
Fundraising volunteers (to assist with events - regular or ad-hoc)

If you feel you could help with any of the above please contact Melissa  
01273 832963 ex.304  
[melissa@familysupportwork.org.uk](mailto:melissa@familysupportwork.org.uk)



# EVENTS

## **April**

Monday 13 Easter Walk, Alfriston

## **May**

Open Gardens (various dates until September), see centre pages

## **June**

Thursday 11, Friday 12, Saturday 13  
South of England Show, Ardingly

## **August**

Thursday 20 – Amberley-Arundel sponsored walk

## **September**

Saturday 19 – Sponsored abseil, Peacehaven Cliffs

Chichester Diocesan Association for Family Support Work  
Registered office: Garton House, 22 Stanford Avenue, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6AA

Telephone: 01273 832963  
email: [admin@familysupportwork.org.uk](mailto:admin@familysupportwork.org.uk)  
website: [www.familysupportwork.org](http://www.familysupportwork.org)

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