

Newsletter

February 2022



Do you feel that time has felt different during the pandemic? For me each month has felt long while it is happening but I am not sure where the past two years have gone. There have been fewer markers of each year – the normal life events such as birthdays, holidays and family get togethers have been different. The work of Choices has continued on the Pregnancy Crisis counselling and we are now thankful that we have been able to return to the Relationship Revolution classes in schools. This Newsletter lets you know about some of the changes that have been happening at Choices and we say thank you and farewell to two members of the board and are excited to introduce you to some new members of the board who are now getting involved in many ways.

Thanks and farewell Hello and welcome

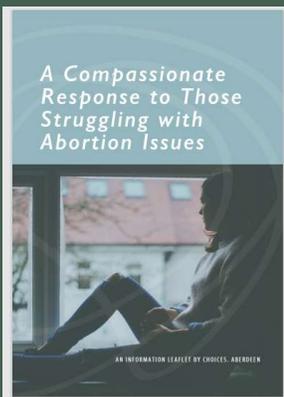
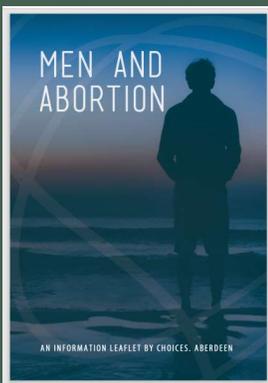
Chair of the Board of
Directors Sheena Holt
gives an update on what
has been happening at
Choices

Thanks and Farewell Hello and welcome

2021 has been a challenging year for everyone in the Charity Sector and we are thankful for the constant support of our staff, volunteers and funders and the various ways they have continued to deliver, develop, fund and promote the work of Choices.

The Board of Directors has seen a number of changes over the past two years: we owe a debt of gratitude to both Dr. William Harrison and Mr Neil Hendry for their many years of service to Choices. We wish them both well as they continue to serve their local communities at work, and through other charities and churches they are involved with.

We welcomed Dr Senga Vang, Dr Joy Miller and Helen Lovelady (Midwife) to the board and look forward to working with them as we continue to oversee the work of Choices and to further



Just some of the leaflets available please contact us if you would like copies

develop the training of staff and volunteers, so that they can offer services that are current and innovative. Both Senga and Helen have undertaken Pregnancy Crisis training to be able to be involved directly with clients and you can read more about this training in the article by Senga Vang in this newsletter.

The Pregnancy Crisis and Pregnancy loss work has continued to bring support and healing to individuals and families, helping them through one of the most challenging seasons of life. Because counselling services were already being delivered to some clients by telephone and online, Choices staff were quickly able to offer this service to the majority of clients when the Covid-19 restrictions made face-to face counselling problematic. We are grateful to the health services and network partners that have continued to signpost clients to our services and for our staff's ability to manage to offer therapeutic listening services without a waiting list.

The Website continues to be one of the ways we can reach out to people in need, not just from the local area but to people in different areas of Scotland and across the globe. We have a number of information leaflets on the Website that offer advice and direct people to a variety of sources of help. However, we would love to develop the Website to make it easier to post new information and to make it more user friendly, and it is part of our vision to get to work on this in the coming year. If you have expertise in this area and can offer us any support, we would be pleased to hear from you.

Pregnancy Crisis support training Spring 2021

[Dr Senga Vang describes the Pregnancy Crisis Support training undertaken by both Senga and Helen Lovelady](#)

Earlier this year I was able to complete a Pregnancy Choices Support training course with the support of Choices Aberdeen. I had joined the board of trustees in Spring 2020, and I was glad to have an opportunity to become more involved in the work of Choices.

The course was developed and run by Pregnancy Centres Network (PCN). PCN is an organisation set up to offer training and support to Pregnancy Crisis Centres throughout the U.K. As well as offering training for practitioners PCN encourages best practice in the centres and builds common resources that support continuing professional development.

Pregnancy Crisis support training

Teaching was carried out on Zoom with a weekly teaching session over 12 weeks. This was supported with extensive reading and written assignments. We were a small cohort of students from across the UK and were able to help and encourage each other through small group discussions and through a WhatsApp group. The course included teaching on communication skills, supporting decision making, and safeguarding, as well as knowledge-based teaching around pregnancy, adoption and termination.

There was a particular emphasis on approaching every client we support with grace. We recognise their inherent value regardless of their circumstances. We respect their free will, offering non-judgemental and non-directive support. We also spent time considering how to provide such unconditional support while staying true to the Christian principles we hold.

Please continue to remember the work of Choices Aberdeen in prayer. I would particularly appreciate prayer as I begin putting what I have learned into practice in supporting women in pregnancy crisis.

Pregnancy Centres Network Conference October 2021

In this second article by Dr Senga Vang she describes the Pregnancy Centre Network Conference and how it informs practice for Pregnancy Crisis Centres across the UK

Pregnancy Centres Network Conference October 2021

In October last year Dawn Williams and I attended the Pregnancy Centres Network Conference, held at the Hayes Christian Conference Centre in Derbyshire. The conference provided a great opportunity to network with 120 delegates from pregnancy centres across the UK. We were the sole representatives from Scotland. This year there was a group of delegates from Northern Ireland for the first time. They are in the process of setting up new centres there, following the changes in NI abortion law introduced in 2019.

It was interesting to hear how the COVID pandemic has changed how centres work. Many have found that telephone and online contact with clients is working well and allows centres to serve a wider area. Most centres have noticed an increased demand for post-abortion support over this period.

As well as informal networking there were sessions for prayer and spiritual encouragement and for practice development.

Celia Wyatt from Islington led a seminar on linking faith to best practice, thinking through how faith-based organisations can balance biblical principles with expectations for professional standards and qualifications.

Relationship Revolution returns to school

By Sheena Holt

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Professor John Wyatt, neonatologist and ethicist, held a seminar exploring various ethical issues raised by the COVID pandemic. These included the impact of the temporary changes to abortion law, allowing access to early medical abortion at home, without the requirement for face-to-face contact. Concerns have been raised around the safety of home abortions, with clients often going through the experience alone and reduced opportunities for safeguarding.

The conference was a great encouragement for Dawn and me, at different stages in our involvement with Choices. We returned, challenged by the great need to support women in our area and encouraged to continue being involved in this work.

Relationship Revolution returns to school

Delivery of the Relationship Revolution school partnership work was able to start again in early November and although the way the workshops are delivered has had to change, the main focus of the sessions, equipping young people to develop strong healthy relationships has remained the key goal of this work. As we have seen in recent media reports that it is essential for our young people to be developing skills and resilience to be able to manage relationships wisely and to be able to recognise when a relationship is harmful or toxic.

Our Relationship Revolution educational workshops help pupils develop the necessary skills and through mentoring and discussion to build the resilience that is required to promote good mental health and wellbeing. The introduction of the pilot Social Media Awareness Workshops for Primary 7, was very successful and we were sad that these workshops have been put on hold until schools return to more normal class delivery. The materials have been further developed and we are ready to expand this service to a wider range of schools when the opportunity comes. We are thankful that the counselling sessions and chat lines for young people have continued to be available and to be able to support the mental health of young people through this service.

Your support and prayers are, as ever, much appreciated, please feel free to get in touch at mail@choicesaberdeen.org.uk