



REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER (1182656)

Our impact 2023/2024  
30 years of support



# Providing financial and emotional help to the families of sick children in hospital or who have sadly been bereaved.

Sincere Support has assisted hundreds of families with sick children in hospital or who have sadly been bereaved. We are an organisation, helping those who have no other means of financial support to cover the non - medical expenses that arise when a child needs to be sent to Sheffield Children's Hospital or out of town for surgery or on-going treatment. Those expenses cover a broad spectrum of needs that are individual to each family. Sometimes it is the need to look after accommodation for the months the family will be away or to cover the cost of day-care for siblings left behind while parents are with their sick child. Whatever the need, Sincere Support has always been there to help ease the financial burden the family must face.

Every family Sincere Support has helped endure a myriad of emotions from fear to frustration. Sometimes the outcome is tragic, we don't always win. The pain of losing a child is unimaginable to most of us and even more heart-breaking if it happens after months of being away from home. That reality is unbearable. It's not only the child and their families who win, by having 'more tomorrows' but all of us who have helped to make it happen.

We are able to share joy of success not only when we get the call that the surgery is over and "My child is doing great!", but every time we get a letter, a Christmas card, a picture or a thank you from a very grateful family.



## Overview

### **Supporting Families in Crisis**

**PID: 20229971**

**Whole project cost £255,726.00**

**Reaching Communities funding £255,726.00**

**Grant period – three years**

**Start date: 24/09/2023**

**End date: 23/09/2026**

### **Impact outlined and the difference the project will make**

Supporting Families through Crisis aims to improve and provide the best circumstances for parents/carers who have received a devastating diagnosis/prognosis about their child, have a seriously/terminally ill child, or have suffered bereavement.

It provides an accessible respite centre supporting people with counselling, and building an understanding of, and access to, health and welfare systems, and other agencies. The aim is to improve mental and physical wellbeing and self-esteem, reduce isolation and build more cohesive families to prevent later crises.

The project will support 300 new clients and 100 existing clients per annum totalling 900 new and 300 existing clients over the three year project lifetime. Clients may be individuals or families.

The project will also help 73 volunteers to continue to develop skills and take fulfilling community roles leading to increased confidence and self-esteem.

The project will progress the capacity of the organisation and develop its sustainability.



## HIGHLIGHTS

252 Families received  
practical support

4 Sessional workers  
recruited

17 Volunteers joined

Redeveloped our  
website and social  
media

NLCF funding received  
for 3 years

### From our Chair – Stephen Lister

For 30 years Sincere Support has supported children and families as they face life with a serious childhood illness. Brexit, the cost of living and COVID-19 continues to take its heavy toll on the everyday lives of many of the families we support and the care that we could safely deliver. In 2022/23 our main priorities were to: Re-build referrals to pre-pandemic levels Reach more children and families by developing online support, establish a new Ambassador Team, Increase volunteer support for families with less intense needs, Develop new partnerships with health and social care providers. Despite the challenges of the year, we made good progress and in this Impact Report you can read more about our achievements. We want to say a massive thank you to all our supporters. Your donations large and small ensure that seriously ill children and their families get the support they need.

100% of our  
families gave  
positive feedback  
of good or  
excellent

# The impact we made

**24 Families  
stopped receiving  
help as they felt  
better able to  
cope**

**63 New families  
started receiving  
help and support**

**252 Families  
supported**

**784 Total people  
we reached over  
this last year**

## How we achieved it

We restructured our management team to make sure we covered all the skills needed to be able to efficiently meet the needs of our families and the services we provide. Our volunteers all have specific expertise and knowledge we can call upon, this significantly increases our ability to reach new families across the region and provide the individual needs of those families.

Following generous funding from the National Lottery Community Fund we were able to solidify and boost our family support services to really make a difference to the lives of those who are suffering the trauma of a child in hospital or the tragedy of bereavement.

We have further completed in house training for our workers in first aid, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults & basic bereavement training counselling.

## The difference we have made



### **252 Families supported across the region.**

With the devastating news that your region child has a life threatening or terminal illness your whole world may feel like it's falling apart. Sincere Support provides a range of support to parents and families from diagnosis through treatment and beyond. We support the whole family both emotionally and practically including siblings and grandparents. Families received

Direct help can be given or specialist counselling can be accessed relevant to individual needs.



### **176 Siblings supported.**

We understand having a child with a life-threatening illness or bereavement can affect the whole family. Our Support Workers and professional counsellors help siblings cope through one-to-one support, and sibling groups and events. It might be spending time playing, talking to our support workers or going on outings to football matches, leisure parks etc. Their world can be drastically changed in a moment, they might not be able to be with their brother or sister, and they could feel isolated and alone. Our support plays a vital role in their development and understanding of what is happening, helping them with coping strategies, school work, building a support network for them.



### **252 Families supported at home.**

Sincere Support provides a range of support to parents and families from diagnosis through treatment and beyond. We support the whole family both emotionally and practically including siblings and grandparents.

Support is available to anyone concerned about, or working with people suffering illness or bereavement. Support could be in the form of cleaning, hygiene care packs, shopping, laundry services (pick up and drop off services), and food hampers.





### **88 Families supported at hospital**

Sincere Support can offer a service designed to assist parents and their families whilst the child is in hospital or after discharge. We can offer practical and emotional support during hospital visits and at home both before and after discharge

Support can be in the form of transport, care packs, food provision, errand running, laundry done etc.



### **71 Families supported with transport.**

Sincere Support can provide safe, free transport to and from hospital or to appointments.

We have a fabulous team of volunteer drivers to assist with direct transport or specialist assistance can be accessed relevant to individual needs through our partners.



### **24/7 support to families across the region.**

People are able to cope better if they

- Know what is going on
- Questions are answered honestly and truthfully
- They are surrounded by people they can trust
- They are allowed to express their feelings and they are supported
- Given opportunities and time to talk

Sincere Support feels in counselling the following needs are important and it prides itself on

Empathy: The ability to feel the individuals' emotions - Congruence: The individual needs to see that you are a real person genuinely interested in them - Unconditional Positive Regard: listening without judgment - Dedicated time to explore difficulties, stressful situations, or emotional upset faced by an individual - Helping the individual see their situation and feelings from a different viewpoint, potentially to facilitate change - Building a relationship based on trust and confidentiality.

## Supporting Mental Health



Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Caring for a seriously ill child or going through bereavement can be one of the most stressful experiences families can go through, it could last many months or years

This year we continued to provide essential practical and emotional support to help alleviate the immense pressure many parents were under. As the cost of living increased creating additional family stresses, we provided direct family support, sign-posted parents to financial help and provided high

levels of transport support. This alleviated the worry of expensive trips to hospital for appointments and treatment that could be miles away from a family's home. Our Family Support Workers do not provide counselling, but their extensive experience of working with families with a seriously ill child can equip them to spot potential mental health issues and to act at an early stage. We were able to provide an important support network that improved families' emotional well-being as they could talk about how they were coping to someone who understood and never judged.

Sincere Support is in the process of organising a bespoke Mental Health/Grief Counselling course combined in 2025. We have not used our allocation of money for training in year 1 so we can increase the quality and content of the training course using our funding for year 1 and year 2 together.

Taking a mental health/grief training course can be incredibly beneficial for several reasons:

1. **Increased awareness:** Our work force will gain a better understanding of issues associated with mental health and grief, which can help candidates recognise signs of distress in themselves and others.
2. **Support environment:** These courses will give them the tools to create a supportive environment, whether at work or in their personal life. This can lead to more open conversations about mental health and grief and reduce stigma.
3. **Improved wellbeing:** Learning techniques to manage stress, anxiety and other mental health/grief challenges can improve overall wellbeing.
4. **Enhanced skills:** They will develop skills to support others who may be experiencing mental health/grief issues, making them a valuable resource within their community and work place.
5. **Productivity and performance:** For workplaces, mental health/grief counselling training can lead to improved productivity and performance by fostering a healthier, more supportive work environment.



## Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of our charity. Throughout the last year our great team of volunteers have provided direct support to families and helped us raise much needed funds.

Volunteering allows Sincere Support to carry out our important mission, ensure we meet the needs of service users, keep day-to-day operations ticking along, raise money and awareness, and broadly support our community.

We welcomed 17 new volunteers to our fold and although this fell short of our target it helped us reach more families.

There are tons of essential benefits to volunteering, allowing them to gain new skills, find new friends, improve confidence, and give back.



71 Volunteers  
gave us their  
time and  
support

## Fundraising

- Our supporters are incredibly important to us and raise vital funds to help us be there when it matters.
- **Here are some qualities of the Sincere Support team which enabled successful fundraising**
- **Organisation:** We our teams were organised and planned ahead.
- **Building Trust:** Establishing trust with our audience is vital, this has been built up over the last 30 years.
- **Genuineness:** Our teams are authentic and passionate about our cause.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Building a rapport with potential donors has been a particular success with the introduction of our team of ambassadors taking more of a lead and using their particular individual skills.
- **Commitment to the Cause:** Showing dedication to our mission.
- **Determination and Resilience:** We have been particularly persistent and resilient even throughout the current economic climate.
- **Integrity and Honesty:** Maintaining ethical standards, as part of our Ethical Fundraising Policy, the charity employs a code of conduct which sets out key principles and behaviours that we expect all charity personnel to adhere to.
- **Storytelling:** Our new animated video contains compelling stories to connect with donors. (attached to this report)
- **Research:** This year we have researched our target audience to better understand our donors and tailored our approach toward these donors.
- Our fundraising teams work tirelessly to raise money in a number of different ways – through corporate fundraising with local companies and national partners, soliciting gifts from trusts and foundations, as well as individual donors via our appeals and events fundraising.



## Ian Hammond – Cycling Fundraiser

### CYCLING BY NUMBERS Facts & Figures

26 games

84 separate cycle rides

946 miles ridden – more than Lands' End to John O'Groats

2 Mount Everest's climbed (59,221 feet)

11 grounds visited

8 bike repairs (2 sets of brake pads, 3 inner tubes, 1 chain, 2 tyres)

1 minor accident

760 GBP raised for SINCERE SUPPORT

When I first heard about Sincere Support, I was immediately struck by the profound impact they have on families in some of the most challenging times of their lives. Organizations like Sincere Support provide a lifeline, offering both practical help and compassionate care and their mission resonated with me and I wanted to do something to support this incredible cause.

Families dealing with a child's illness or loss often find themselves overwhelmed, not just emotionally, but financially as well. The costs associated with hospital stays, treatments, and the necessary time away from work can be devastating. Sincere Support steps in to alleviate some of these burdens, allowing families to focus on what truly matters: being there for their children and ensuring families can stay together during these critical times.

But it's not just about the money. The emotional support Sincere Support offers is equally vital. Having someone to talk to, someone who understands what you're going through can make an enormous difference. Sincere Support connects families with counselling services, support groups, and a network of people who have faced similar challenges. This sense of community can provide comfort and strength during the darkest times.

Inspired by the incredible work of Sincere Support, I decided to embark on a unique fundraising challenge - as the manager of my son's football team, Young Owls, during the 2023-24 season every week I cycled the round-trip distance between our ground and that of our opponents (or a minimum of 30 miles, whichever was the greater). Fundraising for Sincere Support has been a rewarding experience. It's not just about the money raised but the awareness spread, and knowing that our efforts can help ease the burden for families in crisis is incredibly fulfilling.

I encourage everyone to learn more about Sincere Support and consider how they can contribute. Whether it's through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading the word, every little bit helps. Together, we can ensure that no family faces these challenges alone.

In conclusion, my charity cycle ride for Sincere Support was a very meaningful endeavour. It allowed me to contribute to an organization that provides essential services to families in need and I am proud to support their mission and grateful for the opportunity to make a difference.





## Family G

Evening Beverley/Stephen,

Today you both gave myself and Jack some hope, for over 2 years now we've struggled alone, not knowing who to seek help and advice from, for over a year we've had social care involved and we are still alone struggling, hospital appointments cause so much stress due to the worry of just parking and paying or the gamble of avoiding tickets... One call with yourselves and immediately you've resolved one of the biggest battles we've been facing.. Over a year or more services all-knowing each week the trauma this causes and they couldn't support us. You have, words can't explain or even come close to how grateful we are, I'm still so emotional thinking about your generosity and I'd like to say it, but a gift of kindness, I will forever be indebted to you both.

I've taken photo copies of all jack's current diagnosis, also copied evidence of new referrals, so rather than list the whole ins and outs of his health problems in depth I can pass these on to Stephen Monday? I have attached a photo of a letter received on Feb, with just some of his current conditions he is being treated for however he's now had a further 5 new referrals for other issues.



- High BMI with complications from excessive weight
- Short stature
- Insulin resistant
- Low vitamin D
- Abnormal liver function
- Subclinical hypothyroidism
- Bilateral sensorineural hearing loss

Left ear cholesteatoma

- 
- Sleep disorder breathing
- Aden tonsillectomy

Picture and name used with the express permission of Jack's mum, Amy



# Nottingham Panthers Ice Hockey Player death

Nottingham Panthers' player Adam Johnson died on Saturday 28 October 2023 after being hit in the neck by a Sheffield Steeler's player's skate during a match at Sheffield's Utilita Arena.

The game was abandoned after the incident and the 8,000-strong crowd was asked to leave as Mr Johnson, 29, received medical attention. He was pronounced dead in hospital.

The following Tuesday, Sincere Support were contacted by Matt Hall from Sheffield Steeler's (he is also one of our lead ambassadors) to see if we were able to offer/provide any help to the club as the players were meeting the next day for the first time as a team back at the Arena.

As the scale of the event was so huge and given that the trauma was witnessed by Sheffield Steeler's players, Management, staff, families and supporters and also witnessed by the public on TV we felt it needed to be handled by a very specialist organisation.

Through our contacts and associations we were able to reach out to the Professional Footballers Association and Sporting Chance charity based in London. The following day the players and staff met with 3 very experienced counsellors, including one of Sincere Supports lead counsellors, who held group and individual sessions to help them begin their mental health recovery. This has carried on continually even to this day and it was also extended to players/staff families and friends who were trying to deal with the trauma. The Steelers' player involved in the tragedy has, and continues to have, 1 to 1 sessions with one of our counsellors as his trauma and also the investigation into the event goes on.

The Sporting Chance charity are in the process of putting together a structure for the Elite Hockey League to be able to provide mental health awareness sessions/understanding to all its members. All this counselling assistance has been given free of charge.

Sincere Support is proud to have been able to help using its partner specialists during this terrible time for many people and although cannot quantify numbers realises that many hundreds of people have been assisted on their road to mental health recovery.





Dear Bev and Stephen,

I wanted to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for the urgent assistance you provided to the Sheffield Steelers during such a difficult time last October. In the wake of the sudden and tragic passing of one of the Nottingham Panthers players whilst playing in a game against our club, your quick support and compassion truly made a difference.



Your efforts in connecting us with Colin Bland and the Sporting Chance organisation, which led to arranging psychiatric assistance for our team were invaluable. It helped our players navigate through the emotional challenges they faced during this time of grief, trauma, and uncertainty. The care and support offered by both your organisations have meant more to us than words can express.

Colin had arranged for two psychiatric consultants and a mental health consultant to be on site within 15 hours of asking, and they have continued to work with the club for the past 11 months to present day. We have players who will continue to receive help, and support from the charity and on a private basis for some time to come I imagine.

We are sincerely thankful for your partnership and the role you played in our ongoing healing process. Your dedication to helping others in moments of need is truly remarkable, and we will always be grateful for your kindness and professionalism throughout these difficult times.

With heartfelt thanks from the Sheffield Steelers organisation and myself.

**From Matt Hall – Sincere Support, Lead Ambassador**

## The road ahead



This year is certain to have more than its fair share of political, economic, and social change. But we've also entered a year of choices, challenges, and opportunities.

Our latest Road Ahead plan is to analyse major trends and issues for 2024/5 to help create a path through the year. As well as helping our families make decisions, this plan will also demonstrate how we at Sincere Support deliver – and adapt – the support and guidance we offer to our families and the wider community. We are expecting considerable change for both our sector and our society.

We believe Sincere Support will play an even bigger role in this transformational year for our families, particularly by raising our collective voice about the issues that matter and the realities facing our communities. Sincere Support hopes to shine through once again in 2024/5. But we also need to see the government tackle the issues facing our society. This requires greater collaboration in the voluntary sector to navigate the challenges ahead and create the most impact for the people and communities we support. This isn't just a cost of living crisis, for charities like Sincere Support, who give so much, this is a cost of **giving** crisis. As costs continue to climb, funding opportunities fall, charities fight for the same pound, our sector could be in crisis. We need urgent support, or our families and the communities we assist will be at risk.



During this 1<sup>st</sup> year we reviewed our transport mode and decided to go for a more economical vehicle to assist with the day to day running expenses. The cost of fuel has risen quite dramatically so we opted for a Hybrid vehicle to lower our fuel costs. This has worked quite well however it has also backfired in the fact that we cannot manage as much luggage, buggies, and mobility scooters etc. due to its load capacity. After discussion with our management committee we need to source funding to be able to purchase a slightly bigger Hybrid vehicle to satisfy our families' demands/needs and effectively cater for these requirements.

Some of our partners and supporters

