

Sunflower

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Autumn 2019
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Baby Skye - Patrick and Sabrina's beloved daughter and sister to Ryan.

At five months old most babies are sitting up, smiling brightly, enjoying their first taste of solid food. Their exhausted parents taking delight in their every giggle and smallest milestone. But for Sabrina it was a very different story. Her precious little girl died just five short months after birth.

Skye's death was very unexpected. She had an underlying cardiac condition and was having treatment in Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin. And then,

just before Christmas, Sabrina's beautiful baby girl was gone. **"My mind and my emotions were everywhere. I was just so upset. All I wanted to do was go with my little angel on a cloud,"** she said.

The death of a child is harrowing. A loss of a life so young brings unimaginable pain, an aching void that can't be filled. As well as the emotional, psychological and physical distress, the death of a child can also place other strains on the family. In Sabrina's case, her family experienced significant financial stress in the aftermath of Skye's death. Sabrina lost her Carer's Allowance which she had been in receipt of while caring for Skye. Her husband Patrick also needed to take an extended period of time off work to cope with the tragedy.

"We didn't know what to do or who to turn to. We weren't going to be able to pay our mortgage or our bills. My head was all over the place with worry," she said.

It was the staff at Temple Street Children's Hospital who introduced Sabrina to Rosabel's Rooms, the child loss project working in partnership with us here at the Irish Hospice Foundation, providing support to grieving parents and families all over Ireland.

It was named after Rosabel Monroe who died in her cot at her Galway home in April 2017. She was just 16 months old. Following her sudden death, her parents Suzanne McClean and Gary Monroe began their collaboration with the Irish Hospice Foundation.

Since July 2018, Rosabel's Rooms has supported numerous families across the country to cope with the death of a child. One of the strands of the project is Rosabel's Room-to-Heal Fund which provides financial support to help parents take much needed time off work, to pay for funeral costs and more.

"The Fund helped me, my husband and my son Ryan so much," said Sabrina. "To know one of my worries was sorted really made such a big difference. Only parents who have lost a child know the heartache and the worries we are going through. Rosabel would be so proud of her mum and dad for the incredible work they are doing in her name."

Through our Design & Dignity Programme, Rosabel's Rooms is also developing family-friendly bereavement suites in Emergency Departments around Ireland. The Rosabel's Room to Talk Fund will ensure therapeutic supports are made available to anyone impacted by child loss in Ireland.



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To see how you can support more parents who have lost a child visit our website **hospicefoundation.ie**

Transforming Ireland's Mortuaries

We are on a mission to transform Ireland's mortuaries, so that grieving families have peaceful areas to bid their final goodbyes.

In Ireland, over 40% of all deaths occur in hospital and the majority of people are brought to the hospital mortuary. Through our Design & Dignity programme in partnership with the HSE, we are transforming the way these spaces are designed. We believe hospital mortuaries should be sanctuaries and convey a sense of reverence and respect for life, death and bereavement.

So far, thanks to generous people like you, over 40 hospital projects have been funded, including 13 mortuaries. Eight of these projects are now complete, including Beaumont Hospital Mortuary (pictured), which was transformed from a drab unit that could facilitate just one family, to a purpose built haven with multiple viewing rooms, family rooms with tea and coffee facilities, garden space and designated parking.

The death of a loved one is never easy, but having the dignified and private space in those difficult days can make a difference and provide some comfort to a grieving family.



Homemade wills - a recipe for disaster?

When it comes to making a will, is it best to consult a professional or will a DIY job hack it? Sharon Cahir, Solicitor for Probate and Will and Succession Advice gives us her opinion.

People often think it is cheaper or indeed free to create their own will and avoid using a professional. But there are a number of common pitfalls when making a homemade will, which can lead to the will being overturned and made void. A simple mistake can mean paying a much higher price – not just financially, but as a result of family feuds that can arise from the uncertainty of a homemade document.

Making a will follows a very specific set of rules. But if the rules are not followed correctly, and to the letter of the law, the document can be easily overturned and deemed invalid.

Before making a will, think about how you would like to look after your family and friends. You may also wish to leave a gift to charity, to ensure your legacy is one that makes a difference to people in need.

The Citizens Information Office set clear requirements of a valid will:

- » You must be over 18 (if you are or have been married you can be under 18)
- » You must be of sound mind
- » You must sign or mark the will or acknowledge the signature or mark in the presence of two witnesses.
- » Your two witnesses must sign the will in your presence
- » Your two witnesses cannot be people who will gain from your will and they must be present with you at the same time for their attestation to be valid. The witnesses' spouses/civil partners also cannot gain from your will.
- » Your witnesses must see you sign the will but they do not have to see what is written in it.
- » The signature or mark must be at the end of the will.
- » The will must be in writing

Each of these points may seem simple, but small mistakes can result in a will being overturned. Get expert help and don't leave your affairs to chance or a costly court case!

Sharon is speaking at our Forum on End of Life, Dublin Castle, 24th October 2019.

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**Love, live and
leave a legacy**
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Remember us in your will and make a lasting impact. Please contact **Clare** at **01 679 3188** or email **clare.martin@hospicefoundation.ie**
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Midlands' school community guided through their grief

When a number of deaths, including suicide, impacted students at three local primary schools in the Midlands earlier this year, their teachers sought guidance to help their pupils in their grief.

The principal of one of the schools, Linda Dowling, reflected on the challenging time. "The entire school community was in shock following a number of very sad deaths. Our school psychologist advised us on how to explain the bereavements to children in our classes and how to settle children on their return to class. However we had a lot of questions and staff were feeling very anxious about how to approach the topic of death in the classroom."

In particular Linda said staff were worried about explaining death to their youngest pupils, and how to know if a child needed extra support.

"We wondered how our young children aged between four and eight understood the concept of death and how could we support them in their grief. We thought about how each child is unique and would express their grief differently, and we had questions regarding time frames for the grieving process and how to know if a child should be referred to outside interventions such as Rainbows."

Linda contacted our Bereavement Department to source specialist bereavement training for over 70 staff from across the three schools. Our Training Manager Breffni McGuinness taught them how to understand the grieving process, about

different types of death, including suicide, and how to care for their pupils, colleagues and themselves.

The training was a great resource for staff said Linda. "We now feel that we have the tools to provide support for our youngest pupils and we are much more aware of the range of outside supports that are available should the children or their families need them."

Teachers and school staff play a unique role in supporting bereaved children. The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network has developed a number resources for teachers, and anyone supporting someone through a bereavement. They are available on www.childhoodbereavement.ie

How to Support a bereaved child

- » Acknowledge the loss is important and that it matters.
- » Listen to their thoughts, feelings and opinions.
- » Let them know it's okay to ask questions.
- » Maintain the day-to-day routine as much as possible.
- » Reading can be a really good way to support them in talking about their feeling and concerns.



Residents and staff at Moate Nursing Home in Westmeath set out their vision of what the best end-of-life care means to them.

The project is part of their involvement with our Compassionate End of Life (CEOL) programme for residential care centres and nursing homes across Ireland. The programme supports staff and residents to have open

Moate Nursing Home proves to be visionary

conversations together about death and dying, so that staff can deliver more person-centred care to residents and their family members.

Jaya Ninan, the Assistant Clinical Nurse Manager there, said it was hugely important that residents and staff collaborated on the project. "We were very keen from the start that the residents would be included in creating this vision. We already had good end-of-life care practices but our participation in CEOL has empowered us to further enhance our skills to support our

residents and staff. We would like all our residents to be comfortable in discussing their end-of-life care wishes with any member of staff and our vision will help us achieve that goal."

Every year, over 7,500 people in Ireland die in residential care centres and nursing homes in Ireland. Thanks to your support, we are able to work with more centres around Ireland to build a culture that puts the needs of residents at the heart of every decision for their end-of-life care.

Being there for the bereaved

The loss of a loved one is devastating. Unfortunately we are all likely to experience bereavement at some point in our lives. Grief can be isolating, lonely and confusing. But, with your help, we are working to ensure more bereaved people get the support they need.

In May, we hosted our first ever 'Living with Loss' evening for those grieving in Cork. The emotional evening saw former Cork hurler Dessie Fitzgerald share his own journey through grief following the death of his two brothers.



Upcoming events

Thursday, 14 November, Clayton Hotel, Galway

Thanks to you, there is more to come. We are currently preparing for our first ever 'Living with Loss' event in Galway on Thursday, 14 November in the Clayton Hotel. Radio presenter Meghann Scully will talk about dealing with the death of her brother and father in the space of two short years.

Thursday, 7 November, Alex Hotel, Dublin

Our annual 'Living with Loss' Dublin event is also set to take place on Thursday, 7 November at the Alex Hotel. Both events are free to attend, and will see a range of support services available to offer advice and information.

For more information on these events, and help to cope with bereavement visit www.bereaved.ie



Wheels still in motion a decade on
Cyclists pedal past €2m fundraising target

Thousands of kilometres have been clocked up, resulting in many a saddle sore backside and much sweat dripped over the last ten years of our IHF Cycle Challenge. But the phenomenal effort of our cyclists, together with support from our sponsors Kingspan and our ambassador Paul Kimmage, has raised over €2m since 2009!

Over the decade hundreds of cyclists have braved the distance, taking in terrains in countries like Spain, France and Italy, while contributing to our most crucial annual fundraiser.

Their fantastic efforts have enabled us to fund palliative care for terminally ill children, night nursing care for end-of-life patients in their homes, and bereavement support.

A special mention must go to Liam Egan, Paul Edson, Martin O'Neill and Noel Gavin (pictured) who have taken on the challenge ten times! The Fabulous Foursome have clocked up serious mileage and tens of thousands of euro in support of our work. We are so grateful for their commitment to ensure that everyone has best care at end of life.

The IHF Cycle returns in June 2020 with another stunning route across Europe. Take on the challenge of a lifetime, contact Louise on **01 679 3188** or email louise.mccarron@hospicefoundation.ie

Wish List

Help us continue to help those that need it most
Together we can:

- » Transform End-of-Life Care in hospitals one room at a time.
- » Provide dedicated nurses for children facing end of life at home.
- » Be there for those who will face death and grief alone this year.
- » Grant financial support to parents, after the loss of a child through Rosabel's Room-to-Heal Fund.



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