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ADVERTISING FEATURE

Passion to lead from the front

Bereaved parents need support to get through the tragedy of losing a child, says Ken Mann

why. About 40 families every year are left not only with the crushing grief of losing a son or daughter, but with no idea why it happened.

(SCDT) is the only charity in Scotland which addresses the needs of these devastated families.

Apart from improving and extending support for families, the charity has two other main aims: educating public and healthcare professionals about cot death and ways of reducing the risks, and raising funds to continue research into the elusive answer to its cause or causes.

Founded in 1985, with graceand-favour accommodation at the Queen Mother's Hospital in Glasgow, the Scottish Cot Death Trust is inviting applications for the post of executive director.

As leader of a team of just four of the charity, explains why the

N SCOTLAND, on average, and a half members, the role is one child dies every nine most definitely hands-on. The days – and no-one knows outgoing executive director, Denise King, says that, although the team is small, she has also worked closely with the executive committee, made up of five board members. "They are there to The Scottish Cot Death Trust support you," she says, "and to maintain a balance when it comes to the plans and progress of the charity. They are extremely helpful, which is particularly useful at the beginning when you're getting used to the new environment."

This does not restrict the role, however. "You can propose things and develop things," adds Ms King. "They encourage the role to be the one that meets the stakeholders and progresses the agenda, for example, in the Scottish Government. So, at the same time as working with the board, you have that chief executive

Ian Halliburton, vice-chairman

role doesn't carry the "chief executive" title: "We feel 'executive director' fits the size of our charity better. Bigger charities will have committees where functions can be delegated. Here, the role is to manage people but it really is much more than that. I would say that a lot of what I would describe as corporate individuals wouldn't

The mix of skills required



ranges from dealing with people at high levels, including government, to having the empathy and tact to deal with someone in extremis.

"With so few people in the office, the phone needs to be answered if no-one else is there: on the end of the line could be a bereaved parent."

Experience of fundraising is obviously preferred as, like all



The post takes her all over Scotland to visit families who have been bereaved. On average, there are 40 new families every year.

MULTI-TASKER: Outgoing SCDT executive director, Denise King

charities, SCDT is constantly looking for sources of funding and feels the constant pressure of finances.

"The role keeps things going," adds Ms King. "It would appeal to people who like to multi-task. That means everything from getting the photocopier fixed to making sure the trust and grant applications are up to date."

Mr Halliburton adds that some knowledge of the National Health Service is ideal, although not essential. One of the key members of the team is the community services nurse, who works from Glasgow but needs to reach out across the whole of Scotland.

"That is one of the challenges," says Ms King. "The community services nurse post is funded by the Big Lottery and takes her all over Scotland to visit families who have been bereaved. On average, there are 40 new families every year, and they can be anywhere. She has been to Inverness three

times this year already." Families are supported for at least two or three years and, with many of the nity services nurse, and others parents in their twenties, many will go on to have another baby, which is obviously a stressful time.

This autumn the SCDT will host an inaugural event for all groups involved when a baby or child dies suddenly.

The reaction of professionals at the time can be crucial to the recovery process of the family. That includes everyone from paramedics to the procurator fiscal. What is often forgotten is the

fact that a family home becomes a crime scene when the sudden death of an infant occurs.

"It's all about the approach," adds Ms King. "Not only do the parents need support when they lose a child but they have to endure this attention from the cannot believe that they can ever passion for the cause."

recover or even go on living themselves. The support of the commuwho have been through similar experiences, can be the only thing that lets them know it will eventually get easier."

EMPATHY: Ian Halliburton, vice-chairman of the cot

death charity, SCDT.

The fundraising aspect of the role is key to the ongoing research. "At the moment, we can't categorically prevent cot death. The research into an area such as genetics is something we can't fund ourselves, but we can work alongside bigger organisations," says Ms King.

"However, we do punch above our weight," says Mr Halliburton, "and are recognised on a global basis, with papers based on research that we've funded."

Having been in the role, Ms King is clear about what is required: "Rather than any qualification as such, the role would suit someone with a passion for police."A newly bereaved parent health or social care. A real

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