

# MEERKAT MAIL

HELLO MARVELLOUS  
MEERKATS!

Issue 14



## WELCOME TO ...

Welcome to the Meerkat Mail! We have had a fun packed summer here at Meerkat Central.

We had our brilliant Summer Party at the Rowans, which was great fun. Read all about it and have a look at the photos inside!

You can also find out lots of information about Kate, one of the members of the Meerkat team. She has been interviewed by Rowan and has told him lots of interesting facts about herself and her role in the Meerkat team!

In this issue, you can also find out about the Starlit Walk that is planned for 30th October. This year's theme is 'Silver and Sparkly' so grab your shiny clothes and sign up for this amazing event.

There is an article from Phoebe, one of our Meerkat Teenage Troupe. Phoebe talks about how she was supported by the Meerkat team after her dad died.

There is also a section about the Meerkat Mentors and the brilliant job that they do here at Meerkat Central.

On the back page there is a question and answer section that may help with your return to school. Hopefully you can see that lots of children we work with find it difficult to go back to school, especially when someone they love has died or is ill. There is no wrong or right way to feel and it is important to remember to talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling.

*Happy reading,*

**Rowans**  
**Meerkat Team x**



# Meerkats Summer Party

From face paint to a DJ and photo booth, the Meerkats Summer Party had it all! It was great to see fantastic teamwork come into action as competitive challenges took place and laughter filled the air. With such an array of different activities from start to finish there was absolutely no time to stand still (except for an energy boost at the sweet tubs!), even leaving the party required a game of limbo to go out the door. It truly was a wonderful party where everyone could come together and make so many happy memories with each other.



## Phoebe's story

I'm Phoebe, I am 17 years old, and I wanted to write a piece in the Meerkat Mail to tell people a bit about my story and my journey with Rowans Hospice. In July 2017, my lovely Dad was diagnosed with Leukaemia, he was in and out of hospital taking on chemotherapy and a stem cell transplant until February 2018. He was so selfless and had told me he was only doing this to gain more time with me and my family. Shortly after he was told he was in remission and was cleared from cancer, which was incredible news. Unfortunately, shortly after he had relapsed and went into hospital for more chemotherapy, which turned out to be unsuccessful. My incredible Dad was losing his battle, after all that fighting, he returned home and was on palliative care. Throughout his last weeks, the Rowans nurses that visited and cared for him were so supportive, not only for him, but for our family. They suggested the Rowans Meerkat service, which I hadn't heard of before. I met with Debs at the beginning of this year, and she has supported and guided me throughout the upsetting and overwhelming journey of grief. It has been so scary at times, but Debs has talked me through it all and helped me come to terms with what has happened and that what I am feeling is completely expected. Meerkats enabled me to realise I am not the only person going through this, and there is a whole group of us who support each other. The group events have been so lovely to meet up with other people that are in the same boat, and I feel we have all given each other more confidence and hope. I have learnt I am always going to have bad days



and weeks, but it does get better; you can't have a rainbow without any rain. We must still talk about our loved ones because our memories are much too special to just "pack them away." No matter how big or small those moments were, we don't want them to fade, we want to remember them forever. I will always love and miss my hilarious, talented, loving Dad, but I get my strength from him, he was my hero, and I will continue to reminisce on all the wonderful memories we shared during our short 16 years together.

Rowans has helped me so incredibly much, and I wanted to say thank you to everyone here who has supported me, especially Debs; I'm looking forward to giving back by attending events and runs. You are never alone and remember to ask for help when you need it.

## Starlit Walk 30 October 2019



Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

This October, join us for a special 10th children's Starlit Walk around the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and the HM Naval Base.

Children up to 16 years old can join a 3 mile walk around the dockyard with entertainment and a special 'Sparkly' to celebrate. We will also be celebrating the Hospice's Silver Jubilee.

Now is the time to book your sponsors to help support the walk. The money you raise helps us to continue our work.

It costs £5 per child to join (the grown up goes free)! For more information visit [rowanshospice.co.uk](http://rowanshospice.co.uk)





ard  
parkly fun adventure as we celebrate  
Walk through the Portsmouth Historic  
val Base.  
f age can choose from a 1.5 mile or  
ockyard which will include street  
mba band. This year's theme is 'Silver  
e the 10th birthday of the walk and  
r Jubilee.  
k your place and start getting your  
ort Rowans Hospice. Every £1 that  
ontinue the work that we do.  
o register (your accompanying  
Register online here: [www.k/starlit](http://www.k/starlit)

# Rowan catches up with...

...Kate, Job Title: Clinical Psychologist



## Did you always want to be a clinical psychologist?

Initially I wanted to be an egg seller, going door to door selling fresh eggs or a clown. However I then became interested in psychology, when as a child I had a few bereavements and saw the positive impact people around me gained from seeing a psychologist.

## What does your role involve?

My role as a clinical psychologist means I get to work in the Psychology and Bereavement team, for two days a week. Then within the Meerkat team for three days a week. Working within the Meerkats means I get to support children and their families, who have a grown-up who either has a life limiting illness or has recently died.

My role gives me the opportunity to work with children before the person has died and after. Helping them understand what has happened and letting them know it is ok to have lots of questions. I also help children understand the difficulties they might be having, where they have come from and develop ways to cope with them; skills I hope will help them now and throughout their life. This takes place either through groups or on a one-to-one basis and generally ends up involving lots of glitter!

## Glitter? Tell me more

We love to make lots of things whilst talking about the special person, from canvases to making bracelets, necklaces or painting stones. There is always an excuse to get some glitter involved.

## What is your favourite craft activity?

Obviously something involving glitter! I really like making memory jars, which involves colouring the salt with chalk, which is quite hard but fun. We fill up a jar with layers of different coloured salt. Each layer represents a special memory you hold about that person.

## Do you also support grown-ups?

Yes working in Meerkats I get to work loads with parents. It is a really hard to tell your children that someone is poorly or going to die, so we give them advice about how to have this conversation and to think about the questions that their child might ask and how to answer these questions, to make sure child can understand what is happening.

Also we like to make sure parents realise that it is ok for children to see that they are sad and they may need a good cry at times, as this is natural.

## Does your job make you feel sad?

Sometimes it is sad as I get to hear lots of sad stories, so that feeling can't be avoided. But what is great is that I get to meet those children, in a really difficult situation and see how they progress, to come out the other side and carry on with their lives, which is wonderful.

## Are you excited about the plans set out for the Meerkats area in the Silver Jubilee Appeal?

Yes so excited about having lots more space. Especially gaining some dedicated space for our groups and parties! The children came up with amazing ideas in the refurbishment workshop, so fingers crossed these can be used.

# Your Questions:

Hi! Here at Meerkat Central we get asked lots of questions from children, especially at this time of year when you are going back to school after a long holiday.

Here are the answers to some of the most commonly asked questions:

## 1. Who will know about the death of my special person?

Ideally someone you know at school, this may be a teacher or learning support worker, will meet you and talk to you about your wishes on who and what you want to be told when you return to school.

## 2. What happens if I get upset at school?

School may give you a 'Time Out card' so you can go to a safe place for a period of time. You may have an identified mentor that you can go talk to. Your friends can help support you.

## 3. How should I respond when someone asks how I'm feeling?

It's okay to say 'I don't want to talk about things'. It's also okay to talk about how you're feeling and it's okay to get upset and maybe cry.

## 4. How do I manage in a lesson if the subject reminds me of my special person?

Talk to the teacher. Use a 'Time Out card'. It's fine to be honest about how you're feeling with the teacher. It's okay to excuse yourself and leave the lesson and find someone to talk to.

## 5. I don't want to go back to school!

It can be difficult thinking about going back to school after a bereavement but getting back into a familiar routine can be helpful and a good distraction. It is good to be with your friends and doing fun things again. You may still feel sad sometimes but that is a normal part of grief.

C O U N S E L L I N G F A M X O  
Q S Y T R I D D Z S E F G K C I  
R E R O H I F N M E N G G R Z P  
P I W P V I F R L E N A S F X F  
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V D D S T A K R E E M A D M X P

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# Meerkat Mentor

## JOB ADVERT:

Hi, Megan and Amelia here, we are the current Meerkat Mentors for the Rowans Meerkat Service and we need YOUR help. We need some extra special help from any teenage Meerkats who would like to become Meerkat Mentors themselves.



### Tasks:

- Think of ideas of ways to boost the success of the services
- Be flexible with time
- Think on your feet

### Duties/Responsibilities:

- Take part in running groups and parties for all ages
- Be a friend and support to fellow meerkat members

### Do you...?

- Want to give back to the service that has helped you and your family?
- Wish to help children like you get through difficult situations?

The best part of being a mentor for me is cementing incredible relationships with children and their families who are involved with Rowans Hospice. I love walking into reception before a party and seeing lots of smiley faces, children, parents and grandparents, and even more so when all those people leave with such happiness on their faces knowing that I have made that happen. Although sometimes difficult, learning each individual's story makes the Meerkat Service that little bit stronger in dealing with a multitude of scenarios and situations. Can't wait to meet all our new mentors as it's such a rewarding environment to be part of!! *Megan*

I enjoy being a mentor as I get to see the transition of the children from when they first begin and when they make friends and start to understand the situation they have been through. I enjoy helping out at all the activities and parties too. *Amelia*

Contact: [meerkatmentors@gmail.com](mailto:meerkatmentors@gmail.com)

## We'd love to hear your thoughts on Meerkat Mail!

Was there anything you liked or didn't like?  
What would you like to see in future Meerkat Mail issues?

e: [meerkats@rowanshospice.co.uk](mailto:meerkats@rowanshospice.co.uk)

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**Rowans**  
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Rowans Meerkat Service  
Rowans Hospice  
Purbrook Heath Road, Purbrook  
Waterlooville PO7 5RU