Francine was left as a single parent to three young children when her husband, Jason took his own life.

Jason was a serving officer with Devon and Cornwall Police.

Five years on from her husband’s death, Fran explains how The Gurney Fund has helped her and her children Sacha, Seb and Delphi.

She said: “In July 2013 my husband took his own life and our world fell apart in the blink of an eye. You can’t prepare for it, you don’t have any idea it’s going to happen. It’s the trauma that massively hits you and your life just reels into this vortex.

“You can’t put the brakes on, you don’t know how to stop it, you don’t know what’s coming next. In those first few weeks we faced losing our home as I didn’t understand how I was going to provide for my children or how I could work.

“I had a career as a nurse but I couldn’t do that because I had three very distressed children. All I remember thinking is that I had to try and be aware of their mental health and try to stabilise things because I couldn’t change anything.

“Then my massive concerns were how I would cope with being a mum and a dad and, as my husband was the financial breadwinner, how I would cope with providing for my children whilst also holding them up emotionally.

“Then The Gurney Fund stepped in pretty early on, within a few days.

I was told this charity would be able to provide us with some financial support. This just took such a pressure off my mind.”

Francine has received money from The Gurney Fund, which she says goes straight to the children. Horse riding lessons, football tours, and residential trips to Germany and Paris are just some of the ways the children have spent their money.

She says the financial contributions mean she can focus on her children’s emotional wellbeing.

She continued: “The financial contributions from The Gurney Fund meant I could work more reasonable hours and then throw myself into parenting and not worry when a bill came through the door.

“My mantra to the children is that life’s short, it’s not all about just having fun, there’s lots of experiences and emotions to be had during your lifetime.

“In the early days, because of The Gurney Fund money, I would do things like taking my children out with all their friends and I did it because it brings a lot of fun and good memories and it’s a good lesson for my children.

“The children still keep the cards that The Gurney Fund send them for Christmas and things. It’s a kind of blessing to us and I totally think that it gave me that time to look at ways I could help them in other ways.

“It took the financial pressure off, without a doubt. We don’t take it for granted, but I just think it’s given us a big break.”
Thank You For All Your Support

Myfanwy from Gwent is grateful to The Gurney Fund for helping her throughout university.

She said: “I would like to thank The Gurney Fund enormously for all of the support they have given me and my family.

“My father, a sergeant in Gwent Police, passed away in 2002, so the support has always been much appreciated and cherished by us.

“The Fund’s continued help while I was at university ensured that I could access the textbooks I needed, enabling me to study at ease, and eventually I was able to graduate university with First Class Honours.

“This also gave me the opportunity to move to Japan, where I now work on the JET Scheme as an assistant English teacher.

“I think The Gurney Fund is a wonderful charity and I am extremely grateful for their invaluable support over the years, and for the opportunities that come about to people like me because of their assistance. Thank you very much.”

‘I Admire The Gurney Fund’

Amber from Thames Valley has been a Gurney Fund beneficiary for 18 years. She graduated in with a first-class degree in Economics from the University of East Anglia in 2016.

She then joined the Government as an intern economist, and worked within the Committee on Climate Change and the Home Office, before completing a Master’s degree in Economics from University College London. Amber now works as an analyst at an economics consultancy.

She said: “I’ve noticed my peers mostly come from particular backgrounds. Many have been privately educated, with affluent families, and I’ve noticed a lack of ordinary people in these roles.

“Coming from an ordinary background might make it difficult enough to gain an influential career, but the challenges for an orphaned child are tremendous.

“I have been lucky enough to move past this setback and still succeed, thanks significantly to my strong and supportive mother, and of course thanks also to The Gurney Fund.

“I’m still all too aware of the statistics and chances for other orphaned children and I admire greatly the work of The Gurney Fund.”

What A Wonderful Time!

Laura from Surrey would like to thank The Gurney Fund for offering her daughter Isabel a place on the activity holiday this year. She said: “Isabel had a wonderful time and met so many fantastic, lovely people. To spend time with children who can relate to her was amazing. The helpers were truly wonderful and eased her worries within hours. I appreciate all of your support.”

Melanie from Hampshire emailed a picture of presents under the tree for her son Jack, a Gurney Fund beneficiary. Mel says “A thank you for all you do. Jack’s presents bought with money from The Gurney Fund are under the tree ready. Thank you all”.
Whilst Chaplaincy to the police was first noted in London in the middle of the 19th Century, at the same time that Catherine Gurney was doing so much good work, it would be true to say that it has only become an increasingly integrated part of policing over the past 25 years, writes David Wilbraham, National Police Chaplain.

The day-to-day role of Police Chaplaincy can be summarised as:

• Provision of sensitive personal, pastoral and, where appropriate, spiritual support to officers, staff and their families. Respecting confidentiality.

• Providing an independent, informed and distinctive voice to assist where operational and faith considerations interact.

• The provision of consistent mutual support in response to a major or critical incident within the service and in the wider community.

Police Chaplaincy serves all people – ‘those of faith and of no faith’ – and guards that principle strongly.

Chaplains are available for anyone who needs them in whatever way that might be. Chaplains play unique and spiritual roles in the police force and support staff and families in the issues of life, death, belief, and meaning, as well as being alongside people whether or not they have a defined religious belief.

Chaplains are available to be a ‘listening ear’, a source of counsel and advice to support people in particular need.

At present there are around 650 chaplains, the majority local volunteers, from a range of faiths, working in forces across the country.

Those involved in policing are part of two families – their own immediate family but also the wider police family. Sometimes in the life of those families tragedy can strike and cause anguish, pain and distress. It is the very time we need to support those in need. The Gurney Fund is a valuable source of such needful support, compassionate caring and practical help.

Police Chaplaincy UK is building stronger links with the charity to strengthen that provision and be available to assist when and where required. If you feel that someone from the chaplaincy team may be of help then please make contact via The Gurney Fund or me on david.wilbraham@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk to link you with a local chaplain.

The Gurney Fund has helped answer some of the questions young Luke had about the work his dad did.

Luke’s dad died from cancer when he was just eight years old. And mum Victoria says he has really benefited from being part of the Gurney gang, which has provided so much more than just financial help.

She said: “Duncan, my husband, paid into The Gurney Fund because he was passionate about helping others less fortunate than us. We have three children: Keelan who’s 13 soon; Faith, nine; and Luke, our eldest at 17.

“Luke would have been around 11 when he started going on the residential trips.”

It was those trips which helped transform Luke from the quiet and depressed youngster who just wanted his dad into the young man he is today.

Duncan, like Victoria, was an officer with Devon and Cornwall Police. She explained: “Luke was just a really unhappy little boy and he didn’t know anyone else who was in the same boat as him.

“He went away for the first week with John Apter [Gurney Fund Trustee] at PGL and he had that much needed break where he could just be a child.

“Luke made friends that he’s still got now – they can all message each other and get in contact so he knows he’s not on his own.”

“The Gurney Fund does so much – I didn’t think I’d need the Fund, but without them I wouldn’t now survive.

“My children wouldn’t have the quality of life and the life experiences that they’ve got.

“It’s leaving that legacy behind for somebody else as well. It’s not just my children, the Fund is like an extra family.”
Could You Volunteer To Sail?

Do you sail? We are looking for police officers or staff who would like to volunteer to join us on The Gurney Fund sailing holiday.

The holiday has been popular for more than 25 years and is great fun; it is also a big responsibility and we need confident people who have qualifications to the level of RYA Day skipper or equivalent experience.

We currently use 40-foot sailing boats travelling around the Solent, visiting a number of different marinas, sharing life on board with a group of youngsters aged 16 to 18 years.

Each of our six boat needs a qualified skipper and an experienced mate for the holiday, which this year takes place from 12th to 19th July.

The sailing is obviously important but you will also need to want to spend time with the youngsters, helping them get the most from the experience.

This includes expanding your own horizons in terms of music appreciation, catering, time keeping, cleaning and fancy dress opportunities.

We promise it will be a rewarding week and look forward to telling you more.

If you are interested please call Chris or Sherral at The Gurney Fund on 01903 237256 and they will put you in touch with the holiday leader. Alternatively you can email gurney.fund2@btconnect.com.

At our February Trustees’ meeting we awarded just over £20,200 in grants towards music, swimming and driving lessons; school uniform; books; laptops; sports equipment; and various school trips including to France, Austria, America and China.

*The closing date for applications for the next Trustees’ meeting is 12 April.