23/24

The Children's Grief Charity

Impact Report

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Message From Our CEO



One of our founding patrons, Kevin Wells, once shared with me that grief, though devastating, can also be transformative — inspiring strength, compassion, and positive change. As we've gradually returned to face-to-face sessions over the past year, Kevin's words have resonated with the enormous

value of that shared space — for connection, comfort, and healing. And when our bereaved children and young people support a peer going through a similar loss or fundraise in memory of a loved one, we witness that transformation in action.

To further enhance the positive impact of our work this year, we launched our new Bereavement Support service, extending the scope of our support line beyond therapeutic to meet practical, everyday challenges. From guiding parents on sleep difficulties to assisting students who've experienced the sudden bereavement of a peer, this service ensures that sensitive, timely and impactful help is available whenever needed.

However, this year has not been without its challenges, most notably rising costs and the difficulties in recruiting staff, mirrored across our sector. In the face of these pressures, I'm very proud that we have not only sustained but strengthened our therapeutic offering — a testament to the passion and commitment of our staff, trustees, volunteers, and generous supporters. But at the heart of everything we do are our remarkable children and young people. Their courage and resilience in the face of unimaginable loss is what drives us to continually evolve and expand to ensure no bereaved childneed ever grieve alone.

Suzanne Turner-Jones
CEO

Message From Our Chairman



I'm delighted to introduce Grief Encounter's Impact Report for 2023/24.

There is an overwhelming demand for our services given that over 46,000 children and young people experience the heartbreak of loss each year. For this reason, I am proud to present this insight into the difference we are making to a growing number of lives impacted by premature bereavement.

Our extraordinary team of professionals has, this year, launched our Bereavement Support Service as a critical first point of contact and further expanded our range of services including art, play, music, drama and sleep therapy. These achievements are especially remarkable since we receive no government funding and rely entirely on voluntary donations to deliver our services free of charge. Without the generosity and ongoing commitment of our donors, thousands of bereaved children and young people across England and Wales would have little or no access to the help they so urgently need.

To every person who has donated, volunteered or advocated for us this year: thank you. Together, we will continue to transform lives and ensure every grieving child has the tools and support to build a bright and positive future.

Alan Bloom
Chairman

Bereavement Support

Our new Bereavement Support service was launched in June 2024 and acts as the first point of contact for anyone wanting advice, guidance and information. Our trained Bereavement Support Workers work with the wider team to diligently review each referral to ensure we are providing the most appropriate, meaningful and impactful support.

For children, young people, and families, we offer bereavement support sessions that provide a safe and supportive environment to build resilience, strengthen emotional wellbeing, and promote the understanding of grief. These sessions empower families with the tools and confidence to support their children with their grief.

Our Bereavement Support service offers a wide range of support, guidance, advice and resources for bereaved families, schools and our community, which are also used in our therapy sessions. These include our award winning Grief Book and our Mr. Good Grief puppet which enables children to explore their emotions in a safe and creative way. People can also access a series of online guides to help them navigate sensitive topics such as terror attacks and emotionally significant days like Mother and Father's Day.

Guidance can also be provided over the phone with our Support Line, or by getting in touch by email. We recognise that every bereavement is unique,and our initial call about the child or young person considers all the aspects impacting their life and how Grief Encounter support may help them.

"One of our school families has recently suffered a bereavement and your resources have already made a huge difference, especially Mr. Good Grief which the youngest sibling found very comforting."

One-To-One Therapy

Every bereaved child grieves differently. Our one-to-one sessions allow our experienced therapists to develop a support plan tailored to each young person's unique circumstances and emotional needs.

This year, we have supported 963 children, young people and families navigating some of the most complex cases of loss - from students grieving a classmate who died by suicide to a child who lost her sister to knife crime. We have worked closely with economically disadvantaged communities, where young people are more likely to have suffered the death of someone close but are less likely to have access to support when needed. Our team have used a combination of therapeutic approaches to help each child express their grief and build resilience.

These include:

Art Therapy: harnessing a range of artistic techniques from painting to sculpting to collaging, to unlock traumatic memories and express emotions that are too difficult to verbalise.

Drama Therapy: exploring feelings of grief and creating a 'new normal' through role play, stories, poems and improvisation.

Music Therapy: using the power of music to connect with different senses, evoke positive memories, and reduce feelings of isolation and distress

Talking Therapy: equipping children with the language to talk about death and grief through mindfulness and emotional regulation techniques.

Sleep therapy: enhancing the quantity and quality of sleep through calming bedtime routines, improved sleep hygiene and by resolving night terrors.

Case Study

Nathan* was nine-years-old when his dad was hospitalised during the COVID pandemic. For the next six months, they only saw each other via video calls – until his dad died.

Nathan was referred to Grief Encounter two years later when his mum found his anger increasingly unmanageable and he also began to experience incontinence. At first, Nathan was reluctant to engage in sessions, but the calm and reassuring presence of his therapist gradually helped him relax and he started to look forward to attending his therapeutic sessions.

During one session, he drew a picture of an angry monster guarding treasure in a cave full of traps. With gentle guidance from his therapist, Nathan realised that the treasure represented memories of his dad and his fear that, over time, he might lose them. Together, they created a treasure chest of memories filled with drawings, photos, music and stories so that Nathan could feel reassured that those precious memories would stay with him forever.

As his sessions continued, Nathan learnt to recognise how his feelings of anger manifested physically, contributing to incontinence and within a few months, this had stopped completely.

Today, Nathan feels calm and confident and appreciates how important it is to be open and honest about his feelings.

“Grief Encounter was a place where I didn’t have to hide how I felt. It made me understand myself better. I still get sad, but I don’t let those feelings take over anymore.”

*Name and details have been changed to protect their identity

Residentials

Grief Encounter's residential weekends offer bereaved families the opportunity to connect, reflect and heal.

This year, our two residentials in London and Bristol welcomed 19 families, creating space for both children and adults to escape the pressures of everyday life. Through team-building activities and outdoor challenges such as abseiling and tobogganing, they stepped outside their comfort zones and built resilience and inner strength. They also took part in crafting workshops and memory building activities, where stories were shared and memories made.

"Grief Encounter's residential was the first time I'd seen Amy relaxed and happy since her father died. It really helped that she was surrounded by children who had been through a similar experience and made her feel 'normal'."

"I appreciated the chance to meet other parents and discuss daily challenges and coping strategies. It has opened the door for peer support, and I've already met up with one of the mums since."

"Seeing my boys deep in thought with a smile on their face thinking of memories of their dad meant the world to me"

Forever Night

We also welcomed 15 families to our annual Forever Night, an evening dedicated to remembering loved ones and making new memories.

With special guests, celebrity dancers AJ and Curtis Pritchard, our families took part in pebble decorating and memory bear making and gathered round a remembering bonfire to share what 'forever' meant to them.

"Forever holds a unique and individual significance for bereaved children and young people who often wonder 'will it be like this forever?'. This is why our Forever Night is so important – to help them recognise that living with longing can be soothed by treasuring the memories shared and giving a sense of comfort long after their loved one has died."

Suzy Turner-Jones, Chief Executive



Work With Schools

Bereavement is one of the most challenging conversations for teachers to have with their students. Yet, with an estimated 46,000 children and young people losing a parent each year in the UK, it's a conversation that many teachers are likely to face.

Over the past year, Grief Encounter has partnered with five schools including Beal High School and Clifton College to help educators feel better prepared and more confident in supporting bereaved pupils.

As well as delivering one-to-one sessions for grieving students in the familiarity and safety of their school environment, we hosted classroom talks and assemblies to gently break down the stigma and silence that often surround dying and bereavement. These sessions helped both students and staff understand what grief can look like in a young person and how to respond with empathy. In the event of a sudden or traumatic death within a school, we also provided first responder support working alongside the mental health charity JAMI.

To further support school communities, we developed and shared age appropriate resources that make it easier for staff to open up discussions about loss in a thoughtful, and encouraging way. Together, these efforts are creating more informed, sensitive school environments, where bereaved children feel seen, understood and supported.

"Grief Encounter has been a lifeline for me during an incredibly challenging time. As a schoolteacher dealing with a sudden death in our community, the support and resources provided by Grief Encounter have been invaluable and helped me navigate the complexities of grief."

Jane, Primary school teacher, London

Training

Throughout the year, Grief Encounter has delivered best practice bereavement training to schools, colleges, businesses and organisations.

Through webinars, workshops, lunch and learns, and our accredited Good Grief Training course, we have given professionals who work with children the tools to have constructive and age-appropriate conversations around grief and loss.

For many attendees, the sessions marked the first time they felt confident to discuss these sensitive topics and meaningfully support a bereaved young person in their care.

“As a professional counsellor, Grief Encounter has been an indispensable resource in my practice. The comprehensive training and ongoing support have enhanced my ability to help individuals navigate the difficult path of grief.”

Sarah, Counsellor,
Essex

Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding access to our grief training nationwide, ensuring that every child who experiences loss is met with compassion and understanding, no matter the setting.



Volunteer Case Study

“I became involved with Grief Encounter after they supported me and my daughters when my husband passed away unexpectedly. He was just 38. Our girls were 8 and 6 at the time.”

Now, Ali volunteers weekly at our Bristol centre, welcoming families, offering empathy and understanding. From helping at the front desk to supporting major fundraising events — including our Gala Dinner and Golf Days, Ali is always ready to lend a hand, and sometimes, to share her story when it helps others feel less alone.

“I am now in a position where I volunteer for Grief Encounter. This is giving me an opportunity to give something back to a charity that supported me and my family when we needed them most. They gave me the support and strength to help me through the worst time in my life and gave me the courage to face the future without the person I thought I was going to grow old with.”



Fundraising

Grief Encounter receive no government funding and are entirely reliant on voluntary gifts. This was a non-Gala Dinner year for Grief Encounter, and in a challenging climate, you helped us raise £1.6 million.

We are incredibly grateful to:

The Grant-making trusts that invested in our work.

The companies who chose us as their Charity of the Year.

The fundraisers who took on challenge for us.

Our Patrons for their ongoing commitment.

Supporters who hosted their own events.

Our regular donors for their continued support.

A highlight of the year was our Grief Encounter Comedy Night in November 2023, featuring the incredibly talented Simon Brodkin, Jen Brister, and Showstoppers! Over 400 supporters joined us raising over £80,000 to reach more children and young people, so they can find hope and healing following the death of someone

close. We were so honoured to hear from our Founding Patron Kevin Wells, at our Comedy Night, and Victoria Stepsky, who was bereaved of her father at only 13 years old, and who bravely shared her story with us.

“Grief Encounter gave my family the opportunity to talk about our feelings and connect in a space where talking about grief was ok and normal. For the first time, we weren’t the odd ones out. We weren’t the ones whose dad died – we were understood and heard. Without Grief Encounter, I honestly don’t know where we would be.”

Victoria Stepsky, guest speaker

Our Impact

963 Children, young people and families were supported during 2023/24

645 Grief Relief kits were sent out

2198 Face to face therapy session delivered

Hours of therapy: 1048 online hours, 1570 in person hours

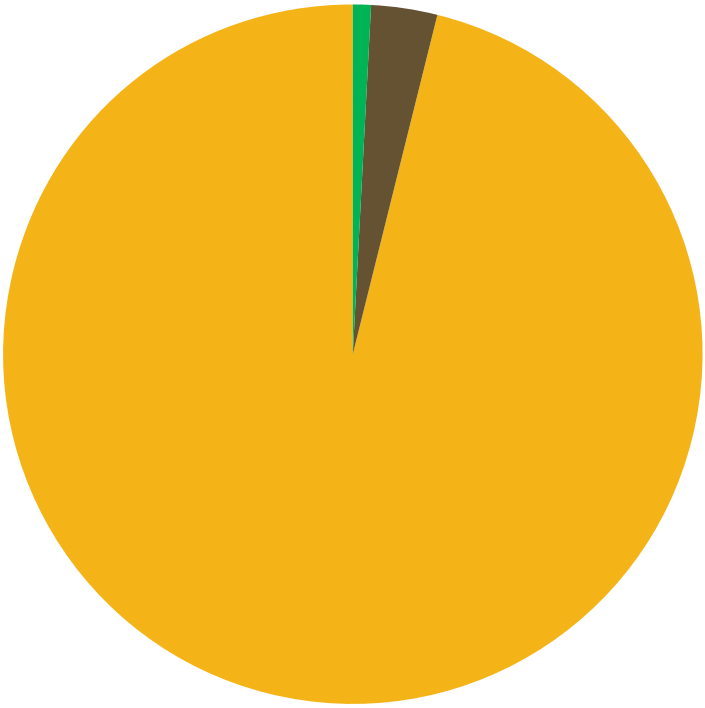
1809 Online therapy sessions delivered

23 Members of staff trained in sleep therapy

Finances

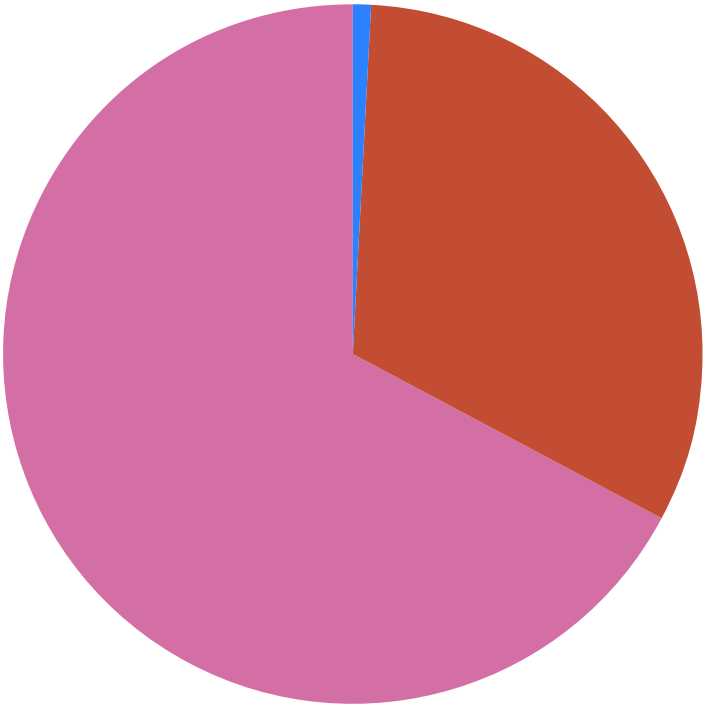
Income
£1,652,918

96% Voluntary Income
3% Investment
1% Charitable Activities



Expenditure
£2,586,040

67% Therapeutic Services
32% Fundraising
1% Information and Resources



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