24/25

The Children's Grief Charity

Impact Report

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Message From Our CEO



To reflect on the year without honouring the remarkable children and families we meet would not feel right. Their courage and resilience in the face of unimaginable loss continually remind us why our work matters.

The year 2024/25 marked a significant milestone for Grief Encounter as we celebrated 20 years of supporting grieving children, young people, and their families. Two decades of standing alongside those facing deep sorrow, helping them find hope, create treasured moments, and build lasting futures. This anniversary year also paid tribute to our Founder and Lifetime President, Dr Shelley Gilbert MBE, whose vision has shaped Grief Encounter into the charity it is today. From humble beginnings, our mission has always been bold, with childhood at the heart of everything we do. This year, we expanded our support through new initiatives and the growth of our Bereavement Support Team, ensuring every call for help is met with care and compassion. None of this would be possible without our staff,trustees, volunteers, and supporters, who ensure Grief Encounter remains a place of understanding, and hope.

Guided by the bravery of the children and families we meet, we move into 2025/26 with clarity and commitment, ready to build on our legacy and embrace the possibilities ahead.

“Over the years, thousands of children and families have found understanding, hope, and healing through Grief Encounter.”

Suzanne Turner-Jones
CEO, Grief Encounter

Message From Our Chairman



It is a privilege to present Grief Encounter's Impact Report 2024/25, marking a landmark year as we celebrated our 20th anniversary and the vision, compassion, and determination of our founder, Dr Shelley Gilbert MBE.

The need for our services remains profound. Each year, over 46,300 children and young people in the UK experience the heartbreak of loss, often without access to the specialist support they need. This report highlights the difference we are making, particularly in economically disadvantaged communities, where support is limited.

Our dedicated teams of professionals and trained volunteers have strengthened our Bereavement Support Service, a vital first point of contact, while continuing to deliver therapies including art, drama, music, dance, sleep, and talking therapies, alongside residential programmes. Our schools programme expanded to Brighton, supporting pupils and educators navigating grief. Remarkably, all of this has been achieved without government funding. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and patrons, we raised over £3 million this year.

To everyone who has donated, volunteered, or advocated, we offer our heartfelt thanks. Together, we will continue to ensure grieving children, young people, and their families receive the support they need to build a brighter future.

"Each year, over 46,300 children and young people in the UK experience the heartbreak of loss, often without access to the specialist support they need."

Alan Bloom
Chairman

How We Are Making a Difference

When Jane* was 10, her mother died suddenly. One morning, she was taken out of class and told that her mother had collapsed and died — she never saw her again.

This left her struggling with guilt and confusion. Her father found it difficult to cope, and although her nan was supportive, she could not replace the warmth and support of her mother. Jane began to withdraw. Her school work suffered, and she constantly wondered if she had somehow caused her mother's death.

Concerned about her behaviour at home and in school, Jane and her 7-year-old brother were referred to Grief Encounter. Both children received one-to-one therapy, which helped them manage their emotions and behaviour. For Jane, this support was life-changing.

Through therapy, she explored her sense of responsibility toward her family and worked through these feelings. She began to recognise the benefit of allowing her nan to be there for her rather than pushing her away. The help provided to her father also had a positive impact on her, contributing positively to her own well-being and strengthening family bonds. Grief Encounter also worked closely with her school to provide extra support during difficult times.

Jane also attended group therapy, where she connected with other bereaved children, and took part in a Grief Encounter therapeutic residential weekend with her nan. These experiences gave her space to reflect, share, and remember her mother.

Through these interventions, Jane gradually processed her grief, made sense of what happened, and rebuilt meaningful connections with her family and friends.*Name and details have been changed to protect their identity

"I can still miss Mum, but I don't have to carry it all by myself anymore."

"Jane began to withdraw. Her schoolwork suffered, and she constantly wondered if she had somehow caused her mother's death."

Our Impact

2,263 people supported by Grief Encounter in 2024/2025

60% of referrals come from the most deprived 30% of communities in England and Wales.

130 marshmallows toasted at Forever Night

350 pens, crayons and gems used in art therapy sessions

6 children were mascots at a celebrity football match

120+ attendees to our theraputic events

756 Grief Relief Kits sent out to families in need.

Our Impact

32 sleep therapy sessions delivered

213 Bereavement support sessions attended

77 Grief Encounter Volunteers

"I cannot say how impressed I am with Grief Encounter and how far you went on one call."

"Grief Encounter's residential was the first time I'd seen Amy relaxed and happy since her father died."

Our Impact

32 Corporate partners trekked Snowdon

Fun Fact: our jumps have taken us 90,000ft above the ground

Fun Fact: 3,179 km cycled in support of Grief Encounter

959 support calls received by Grief Encounter

One-To-One Therapy

Every bereaved child experiences grief in their own way. Many of the young people who come to us have faced extremely difficult circumstances. In our one-to-one sessions, experienced therapists create a personalised support plan that addresses each child's unique situation and emotional needs.

This year, 961 children, young people, and families have been supported through therapy as they navigate some of the most complex experiences of loss. These include students grieving the suicide of a classmate and a child mourning a sibling lost 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 offers children and young people access to a combination of therapeutic approaches.



Ways We Support Children Through Grief

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.

Dance movement: involves organised steps, gestures, and patterns that convey ideas, emotions, or a story.

Bereavement Support Service

In June 2025, our Bereavement Support Service marked its first year of operation, providing a critical first point of contact and ongoing practical and emotional support to bereaved children, young people, and their families through the Support Line. Over the year, the team has grown, enabling us to reach and support even more families.

The team provides tailored bereavement support sessions that build resilience, strengthen emotional wellbeing, and encourage a deeper understanding of grief. These sessions empower families with the tools and confidence to support their children through their loss.

Alongside this, the service offers a wide range of resources for bereaved families, schools, and the wider community. These Include our award-winning Grief Book and Memory Book, as well as our Good Grief puppet which enables children to explore their emotions in a safe and creative way. People can also access a series of online grief guides to help them navigate sensitive topics or emotionally significant days like Mother and Father's Day.

"My son was sent a Grief Relief Kit when we lost his sister... He really found the Grief Book helpful. He would sit and go through all the pages, either alone or with us. He has kept it and sometimes still brings it out to read."

"When we finally found Grief Encounter and received your email with all the information included, we thought, 'Oh wow, this is the jackpot.' For the first time, we felt we had finally found the support we needed and deserved."



Our Events

Grief Encounter's events programme offers children, young people, and families safe spaces to connect, reflect, and build resilience through shared experiences.

Building Resilience Through Our Therapeutic Residential Weekends

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 54 people, creating space for both children and adults to escape the pressures of everyday life.

Through activities and outdoor challenges such as abseiling, they stepped outside their comfort zones and built resilience and inner strength. They also made new friends with people who understood, forged new relationships with people in similar circumstances, and created intimate memories.

"The children also had a wonderful time meeting other bereaved children which was an exceptional experience for them."



Remembering and Making Memories

Fifty people attended our annual Forever Night at the end of Children's Grief Awareness Week, an evening dedicated to remembering loved ones while creating new memories.

All families took part in a variety of activities, including helping grow our Hope Tree, making masks to express their feelings, and decorating photo frames to hold treasured memories. The evening came alive with music, magic, and song, as children toasted marshmallows and connected with others who had experienced similar grief.

"It was such a lovely event and gave us the opportunity to reconnect with other families we had met at previous events."

"Singing around the campfire was such a joy. Peter made friends, had an amazing time, and was able to just be the little boy he was meant to be."



Exploring Grief Through Art

Exploring Grief through Art In 2025, we launched our first ‘Grief Speaks’ event at the Graphic Art Centre in London, providing a safe and creative space for young people to express their grief. 11 young people, aged between 14 to 25 attended, taking part in spoken word and screen-printing workshops, where they could explore their emotions and share their experiences.

“It was wonderful to connect with others and share our experiences freely, in a space where we could speak without fear of judgement.”



Remembering Loved Ones in Nature

In July, families joined us at Avon Woods for a day outdoors in remembrance of their loved ones. Activities included bug hunting, wildlife spotting, wax crayon rubbings, and creating a colourful nature mandala. A special highlight was hanging notes on our Grief Encounter Memorial Oak Tree, a living tribute open to all families.

“The memory will stay with us forever, and being able to visit the trees planted in memory of Julie makes it an incredibly meaningful place.”



Working with Schools

Bereavement is one of the most challenging conversations for teachers to have with their students. Yet, with an estimated 46,300 children and young people losing a parent each year in the UK, it's a conversation that many teachers are likely to face.

How We Support Schools and Educators

Over the past year, Grief Encounter expanded its reach to more schools. In Bristol, we worked closely with 8 new schools across areas including Yate, Pill, Blaze, Kingswood, and Knowle. In London we continued to support educators, helping them feel better prepared and more confident in supporting bereaved pupils. In Brighton, we launched the beginnings of a new in person support programme and have connected with 6 schools to provide tailored bereavement support and guidance.

As well as delivering in person therapy 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.

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 compassionate communities and sensitive environments, where bereaved children feel seen, understood and supported.

Training

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

Through webinars, workshops and 'lunch and learns', we have given teaching professionals the tools to have constructive and age-appropriate conversations with children and young people 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.

"The training was informative and engaging, helping us reflect on grief and how we support it in school. The team's expertise was invaluable in planning our bereavement strategy."

Volunteers

When someone volunteers for Grief Encounter, they are not just giving their time—they are making a meaningful difference in the lives of bereaved children, young people, and their families, while gaining valuable experience and connections along the way.

Making a Difference for Bereaved Families

As a Bereavement Support Worker Volunteer, Sarah received training from Grief Encounter to provide compassionate guidance to families. She volunteers weekly on Fridays from 12 pm to 3 pm, supporting them in accessing advice, support, and the charity's full range of resources, including the useful guides and Grief Relief Kits, over the phone and via email.

Her experience as a secondary school teacher has given her firsthand insight into the devastation and disorientation young people can face when returning to school after a bereavement, an experience that continues to inspire her volunteer work.

"Volunteering with Grief Encounter was a new experience, but it quickly showed me the difference empathetic support can make. I now bring these insights back to my classroom, helping children and young people navigate grief while still holding their loved ones in their hearts. I feel privileged to support a charity that transforms lives."

Inspiring Change Through Volunteering

Jessica was first introduced to Grief Encounter several years ago when she took part in a workplace volunteering initiative. From the beginning she was deeply moved by the compassion at the heart of the charity's work. Seeing the difference, it makes to bereaved children and families inspired her to become involved as a regular volunteer. Since then, she has supported Grief Encounter at events including community events, Grief Encounter's Forever Night and the Royal Parks Half Marathon.

"Volunteering at the Royal Parks Half Marathon with #TeamGriefEncounter was inspiring. Every cheer made a difference!"

Fundraising

Grief Encounter receives no government funding and relies entirely on the generosity of its supporters. To mark our 20th anniversary, we held our flagship Gala Dinner, and over the course of the year, we raised an incredible £3 million to support bereaved children and young people.

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.
- Our Patrons for their ongoing commitment.
- The fundraisers who took on a challenge for us.
- Supporters who hosted their own events.
- Our regular donors for their continued support.

A special thank you to the Betty Messenger Charitable Foundation, whose generous closing gift of £150,000 has brought their total support for our work to over half a million.



A Milestone Celebration

In November, we celebrated 20 years of Grief Encounter at our Gala Dinner in London, raising a record-breaking £1.8 million to fund our vital and free services.

Geeta and Mukesh spoke movingly at the event, joined on stage by their daughter Niki, who had been supported by Grief Encounter, and shared their heartfelt reflections, saying:

“When our daughter Riya died, the grief that overwhelmed us was indescribable. Before Grief Encounter came into our lives, we felt utterly lost. We were drowning in our grief. But with their support, we’ve been able to come up for air, find our footing, and, most importantly, help Niki, Riya’s sister, through this unimaginable journey.”

The evening also honoured our inspirational founder, Dr Shelley Gilbert MBE.

Our 20th anniversary celebrations continued with the Bristol Gala Dinner, which raised an incredible £66,000 and offered a wonderful opportunity to share stories and create lasting memories.



Celebrity Support at BGC Charity Day

England international Conor Gallagher served as our Celebrity Ambassador for the BGC Charity Day in September. Held annually on 11th September in memory of colleagues tragically killed on 9/11, BGC donates all revenues raised on the day to participating charities.

Conor was incredibly popular with BGC brokers and clients, and Grief Encounter received a generous donation of £47,500. He was joined on the day by Sonny and Archie, two children supported by Grief Encounter following the death of their father.



Leading the way in Fundraising

To strengthen our fundraising efforts, we established the Fundraising Advisory Board (FAB) with 11 founding members. In 2024–25, the FAB were responsible for generating an impressive £603,698 for Grief Encounter, through a combination of Gala Dinner tables, sponsorship and auction prizes, and their own fundraising initiatives.

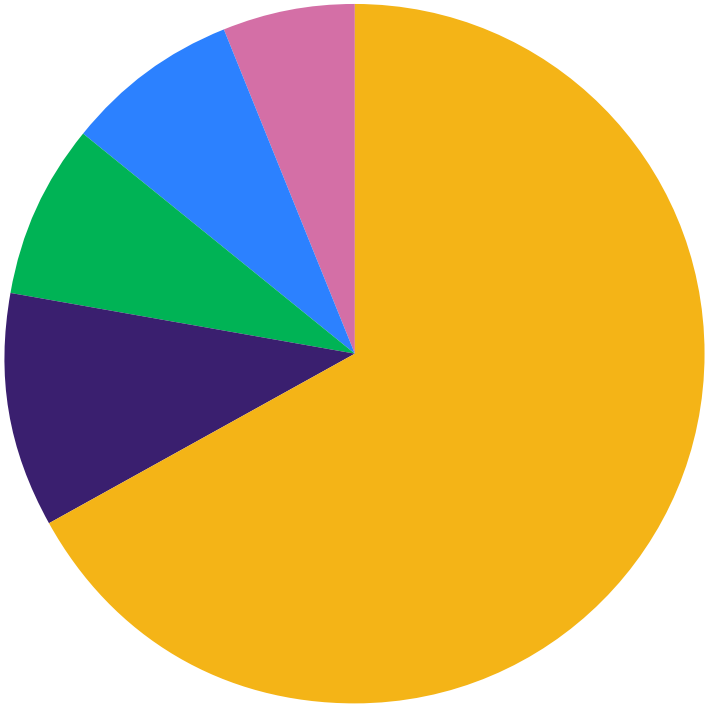
“Serving as co-chair of Grief Encounter’s Fundraising Advisory Board and supporting the 20th anniversary Gala Dinner has been a true privilege. Working alongside such a dedicated team and seeing the positive impact of our efforts on bereaved children, young people, and their families has been profoundly rewarding.”

David Green,
Fundraising Advisory Board Member

Finances

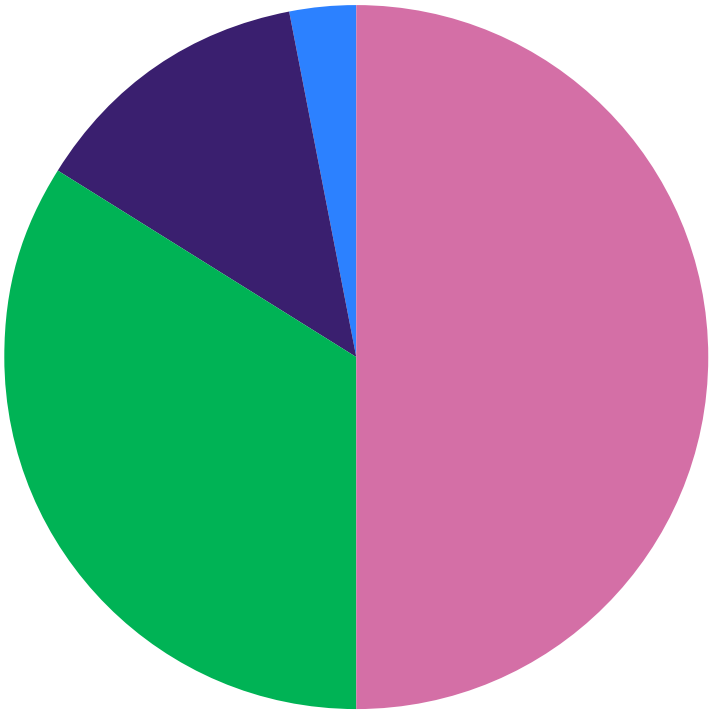
Income
£3,000,000

67% Event and Patronage
11% Trust and Grants
8% Corporate
8% Other Donations and Gift Aid
6% Corporate



Clinical Expenditure
£1,300,000

50% 1-2-1 Therapy
34% Bereavement Support Work
13% Resources
3% Events



Total spending in 2024/25 was £2.4 million. Fundraising costs were £1.06 million, higher than usual due to the Gala Dinner. Clinical expenditure totalled £1.3 million, coming in under budget as a result of staff vacancies.

“I just wanted to pass along my thanks to Grief Encounter for the box of goodies you sent. We received it this weekend, and Ella has really enjoyed looking through the materials and stuffing her grief bear. I know she will lean on these items in the years to come. Poppy, mum of a bereaved child.”

“As a bereaved dad, I hesitated about the residential, but then I realised that I had not given my own grief any time, as I was so busy looking after the children. It was such a great experience being with other bereaved parents. I have come away with more support and good friends. The children also had a wonderful time meeting other bereaved children which was an exceptional experience for them. Roy, dad of bereaved children”

Contact Us

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Chief Executive Officer

Alan Bloom
Chair of Trustees

Trustees: Gary Sacks, Pam Firth, Andy Hart (stepped down 2026),
Sasha Wiggins, Nick Deyong, Phanella Fine, Rupert Levy,
Louise Forsyth (stepped down 2026), Terry Willat and David Green

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