




DONATIONS







Our services are free. We are a registered charity and welcome donations.

APPOINTMENTS

Please contact the office during the following times to make an appointment:

Monday - Friday: 9.30am - 1.30pm
2.00pm - 5.00pm

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CHILDREN'S GRIEF CENTRE

Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030



“Making a Difference in the Lives of
Children and Young People Affected by Loss”



Introduction

The Children’s Grief Centre (CGC) is proud to present its Strategic Plan 2025–2030 a roadmap for delivering compassionate, effective, and sustainable support to grieving children and their families. Over the next five years, this plan will ensure our service continues to evolve, reaching more children, expanding our school outreach, and strengthening partnerships with families, communities and statutory agencies.

The plan outlines four key strategic priorities: expanding access to services, enhancing the quality of care, increasing awareness and strengthening our organisational sustainability. It has been developed through broad consultation and evidence-based analysis to ensure that it reflects the needs of those we support.

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About

The Children’s Grief Centre was founded in 2009 by Sr. Helen Culhane to meet the needs of children and young people (aged 4-18 yrs) affected by loss through death, parental separation or divorce. Initially operated by volunteers, the Centre now employs a team of professional support workers, and is governed by a voluntary Board of Management.

Our work is grounded in the Listening Ear model, a child-led approach that enables young people to express their thoughts and emotions through creative mediums such as art and play. This non-clinical, age-appropriate support helps children explore their grief in a safe, calm and nurturing environment.

For the purposes of this plan, the term child, children, young people refers to both children and young people aged 4–18 years who access the centre.

Our Journey So Far

Since its foundation the Centre has provided support to over 2,500 children, welcoming families from across Ireland. In 2014 charity status was

granted by the Charities Regulator and renamed the Children’s Grief Centre. In 2020, the organisation became a company limited by guarantee. Today, the CGC continues to rely primarily on family donations, corporate sponsors, and philanthropic funding, with only limited state support.

Our current premises in Mount St. Vincent, generously gifted by the Sisters of Mercy has been transformed through a successful fundraising campaign into a healing space designed specifically for children, young people & and their families. It is a safe and calm environment where children and families who have been bereaved can access support. The Centre continues to provide its services free of charge with access available via direct referral from parents or guardians. A consistent waiting list highlights the need for us to expand our capacity and reach.

In 2024 the Children’s Grief Centre commenced a pilot school outreach programme to facilitate children & young people who were unable to attend the centre. School children could then access bereavement support in their school environment. Two schools in Limerick City were part of this pilot programme and it is our hope that we can expand this service to other schools requiring support.

Our Mission

To support children and young people between the ages of 4 and 18 years who are affected by loss as a result of death, parental separation or divorce. Through our work, we aim to support families, help children process their grief, build resilience and move forward with hope and confidence in a safe and compassionate environment.

Our Vision

A future where no child or young person faces their grief alone—where every child has access to the tools, support and understanding they need to heal from loss and thrive emotionally.

Our Aims

To fulfil our mission, we aim to:

- Help children and young people understand that grief is normal and enable them to process and express their feelings.
- Support children and young people to develop healthy coping mechanisms to navigate grief and loss.
- Provide parents and guardians with insight into the grieving process to enable them to support their children and young people.
- Educate teachers, other professionals and the wider community on the impact of grief and loss on children and young people and provide the tools to support them appropriately.

Our Core Values

- Care:** We provide a calm environment where children & young people feel supported, valued and at ease.
- Safety:** We offer a secure and comforting space where children & young people feel safe to express themselves and be heard.
- Non-judgement:** We offer impartial and non-directive support-our focus is entirely on the needs of the child & young person.

- Inclusivity:** We provide a welcoming and inclusive space for all children regardless of background, culture, beliefs, identity or life circumstances
- Accountability:** We operate with transparency and integrity, maintaining the highest standards of governance and professionalism in all aspects of our work.

Our Approach

We recognise that grief is a natural and necessary response to loss. The loss of a loved one through death or separation, can be a challenging and sometimes traumatic event in the lives of children and young people. How children experience and navigate grief is shaped by the emotional support available to them.

Our child-centred approach includes:

- One-to-one listening support using play, art, music, creative expression and age appropriate techniques.
- A dedicated team of qualified support workers and trained volunteers.
- A holistic focus on both the child and their family, with parental guidance and practical support.
- Tailored support that reflects the child’s age, emotional development and personal experience of loss.
- Trauma-informed practice grounded in empathy, safety and trust.

The Children’s Grief Centre’s STAR framework



Supporting Children, Young People and their Families

We offer children and young people who have experienced a bereavement a ‘listening space,’ in which we can help them feel heard. Through talking children and young people can better understand the situation and learn that others share similar experiences.

Child Centred Framework

Through the one-to-one sessions a bereaved, grieving and separated child or young person can start to accept their feelings as normal, can verbalise and address their fears and find a new sense of safety in the world.

Compassionate Care

The Children’s Grief Centre is here to walk the journey with each child and young person. We provide support, care and a listening ear to hear their story.

Service to the Community

We arrange talks and workshops for people and professionals who specifically address the issues of grief and loss in their work with children and young people.

Non-Judgemental Approach

At our sessions children & young people can talk freely and openly about their feelings – in a safe environment without fear of being judged or having to ‘take sides.’

Strategic Priorities 2025 – 2030



1

Expand Access to Services

OUTCOME:
At the heart of our mission is the commitment to ensure that every child and young person experiencing grief can access timely, compassionate support.

- OBJECTIVES**
- Reduce waiting times through expanded staffing and optimised scheduling, aiming to reach our full delivery capacity of approximately 100 appointments per week.
 - Increase outreach service in schools and communities where parents and guardians find it difficult to access the Centre for their children. This will include forming partnerships with schools and local agencies/stakeholders to provide grief support in accessible and familiar environments.
 - Recruit and retain additional qualified professionals to meet growing demand.
 - Offer flexible service options, including in-school sessions and community- based supports, to improve accessibility for diverse family circumstances.

2

Enhance Quality of Care

OUTCOME:
Deliver consistent, effective, and child-centred bereavement support through strengthened practices, staff development and evaluation mechanisms. To deliver the highest standard of care to every child, young person and family who engages with the Children’s Grief Centre. Enhancing the quality of our services means continually reviewing, refining, and strengthening our approaches, ensuring they are child-centred, trauma-informed and grounded in best practice. We will foster a culture of continuous improvement centred on the needs and wellbeing of those we support.

- OBJECTIVES**
- Expand the Centre’s expertise in supporting children affected by more complex losses, such as those linked to suicide or traumatic bereavement. Develop employee skills and knowledge through formal and informal learning methods.
 - Provide ongoing professional development, supervision, and reflective practice for staff and volunteers.
 - Strengthen young people’s mental and emotional health through educating children on strategies / techniques they can use in times of emotional overload or distress.
 - Offer practical and emotional guidance to parents, guardians and care givers.
 - Provide evidence-based research on our listening ear model and the impact it has on the lives of children and young people.
 - Maintain robust safeguarding policies and uphold all legal and regulatory obligations.
 - Provide telephone and in-person support for parents and guardians.
 - Collaborate with partner agencies to provide coordinated, wrap-around support for grieving children.
 - Measure the impact of our work on the lives of children and families who access our service through child/ parent evaluations, three monthly reviews following completion of support sessions and school community feedback.

3

Increase Awareness

OUTCOME:
Raising greater public and professional awareness of the Centre’s mission and services is essential to ensuring that children and families in need can access timely grief support.

- OBJECTIVES**
- Strengthen visibility across multiple platforms including an enhanced website, newsletters and active social media engagement.
 - Facilitate community education through workshops, school talks and events for parents, teachers, and professionals.
 - These efforts aim to reduce stigma, increase early referrals and empower families and professionals to better support grieving children.
 - Foster strategic partnerships with healthcare providers, schools, social services, and other relevant stakeholders to amplify our message and build a more coordinated, community-wide response to childhood grief.
 - Share accessible online resources on grief, loss and supporting children through bereavement.

4

Strengthen Capacity & Sustainability

OUTCOME:
Secure the long-term viability of the Centre through strategic governance, resource development and risk management.

- OBJECTIVES**
- Develop and implement a sustainable funding strategy including pursuing increased statutory funding, developing philanthropic partnerships, and expanding our fundraising efforts through campaigns, events and donor engagement initiatives.
 - Introduce a robust data collection system to measure outcomes, demonstrate impact, and guide continuous service improvement to adapt services in response to changing needs.
 - Enhance governance through board development, diversification, subcommittees and policy reviews.
 - Ensure compliance with Charity and Sector Standards through policy reviews and adherence to reporting requirements.
 - Maintain a comprehensive risk register and ensure that key organisational policies reflect current best practices and legal standards.

Implementation & Monitoring

By 2030 the Children’s Grief Centre aims to provide 4,500 appointments annually, supporting approximately 450 children (averaging 10 sessions each). Staffing will increase from 7.3 full-time equivalents in 2025 to 8.3 by 2026.

Progress will be monitored quarterly by a Strategic Oversight Group and reported to the Board of Directors. Annual reviews will track performance against objectives, including quality, capacity and impact measures.

Evaluation will draw on participant feedback, outcome tools and analysis of referral and waiting list data.



In order to provide this increased number of appointments the staffing level will increase from 7.3 fulltime equivalent in 2025 to 8.3 in 2026.

Measuring Our Impact

The Children’s Grief Centre is committed to ongoing evaluation and accountability. Measuring the impact of our work ensures that we continue to deliver high-quality, meaningful support for children and young people affected by loss. Impact will be assessed through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, aligned with national policy outcomes.

Baseline and follow-up tools	At the beginning and end of support, children and or parents/guardians will complete brief feedback forms designed to assess emotional wellbeing, coping skills and confidence in expressing feelings.
Parental and teacher feedback	Structured surveys will capture observed changes in behaviour, concentration, communication and relationships.
Support worker observations	Staff record progress through anonymised case notes and reflective supervision logs.
Quantitative data tracking	We monitor the number of sessions delivered, waiting list times, referral sources and engagement rates.
Qualitative evidence	Case studies and anonymised testimonials illustrate the personal stories behind the numbers, showing the transformative effect of the Centre’s work.
Annual analysis	All data is collated into an annual outcomes report, reviewed by the Board of Directors and shared with funders and stakeholders.

Impact will continue to be measured across key outcome domains.
Outcomes include:

Emotional & Mental Wellbeing Increased confidence, resilience and emotional awareness among children. Sustained wellbeing among children, reducing the risk of prolonged/complicated grief.	Learning & Development Improved focus, participation and school engagement. Improved educational attainment and social participation.	Connection & Relationships: Strengthened family communication and peer relationships. Families realise stronger communication and emotional bonds following support. Children are able to engage socially and have greater confidence in making friends.	Economic Opportunity: Children & Young People access high-quality support regardless of financial or social circumstance.
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Through this evidence-based approach the Children’s Grief Centre will continue to demonstrate its effectiveness and accountability, ensuring that every investment directly supports the wellbeing and future of grieving children and young people.

Consultation and Co-Design

This Strategic Plan was developed through a comprehensive consultation process involving staff, volunteers, parents, young people, the Board of Directors and external stakeholders including schools, community groups and referral agencies. Facilitated by an external consultant, these discussions helped identify strengths, gaps and emerging priorities.

Direct engagement with young people and parents ensured that the voices of those with lived experience shaped the plan. The consultation outcomes informed our SWOT analysis and strategic framework. This process commenced in October 2024 and included group discussions, one to one interviews with young people and their parents, board and staff workshops, surveys, meetings and focus groups.

Evidence of Need

A National Survey conducted by the Irish Childhood Bereavement Network in 2023 highlighted that “ childhood bereavement supports in Ireland are mainly integrated into existing services for children and families with very few stand alone childhood bereavement organisations”. The Children’s Grief Centre is a service dedicated to providing bereavement support to children and families in Ireland.

An evaluation of the service was carried out spanning the period 2018-2024 to understand and learn from the experience of its service users (both Parents and Children over 18 years of age) from Limerick City & County. Access to the service was for support of bereavement and loss (60%), separation (23%) and divorce (7.1%).

The demand for our services continues to grow. In 2023 we supported 358 children and their families, maintaining a waiting list of 150-200 children at any time. Referrals come from parents/guardians who are signposted to the service by schools, GPs and statutory agencies such as CAMHS highlighting the trust placed in the Centre by both families and professionals.

National research highlights that approximately one in 10 children will experience bereavement before the age of 13. Many more are affected by parental separation or divorce. Over 4,915 people in Ireland were granted a divorce in 2022: a 38% increase from 2019 (CSO 2022). The effects of divorce on children generally tend to be negative in the areas of social and psychological development (Anderson 2014). The central statistics office data indicates that approximately 35,000 people die each year in Ireland (CSO 2024). Growing up in Ireland study 2023 revealed that between 4% and 5% of children will be bereaved of a parent by 18 years of age. These findings underscore the need for accessible, professional and child-focused grief support services.

Policy and Environmental Context

- The Centre’s work operates within a national framework of policy and legislation, including:
- Children First Act 2015. Tusla’s Child & Family Agency Priorities
 - National Standard for Bereaved children and Young People (ICBN, 2023)
 - Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014-2020
 - National Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028.

These policies emphasise children’s right to safety, participation, and wellbeing. The Centre aligns its work with these national priorities operating to the highest standards of governance while maintaining a strong community focus.

Voices of Those We Support

At the heart of the Children’s Grief Centre are the children, young people, families and professionals who experience the impact of our work every day. Their words capture the difference that compassionate listening and care can make.

“The support from walking in the door felt like someone giving us all a hug.”

- Family of Service User

“I could not get the help we needed anywhere else. I could access the service despite my financial situation.”

- Parent of Service User

“My child dealt with separation and bereavement, and they felt they could open up and be heard. They felt safe to express themselves — which is vital.”

- Parent of Service User

“It’s like the difference between night and day.”

- Teacher referring to a child before and after engagement with the Centre.

Children and families report that they leave each session feeling lighter, calmer and more confident. Many describe improved sleep, reduced anxiety, stronger relationships and a renewed sense of hope. Parents observed increased confidence, resilience and emotional regulation, while teachers note improvements in focus, behaviour, participation and peer connection.



FREE

service
delivery model

12

month wait period in
2023

3

month wait period in
2025

Conclusion

This Strategic Plan embodies our vision for a compassionate, professional, and inclusive service that continues to respond to the needs of grieving children and their families. It reflects the voices of the children, families, and communities we serve, as well as the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and supporters. Through collaboration, evidence-based practice, and sustainable growth, the Children’s Grief Centre will continue to ensure that no child faces grief alone. Our free service delivery model will continue to ensure any child who is bereaved has easy access to a professional support service.

The Plan highlights the importance of the continued service delivery for children and families whose lives have been affected by loss. Waitlists and continued referrals from parents/ guardians highlight the need for our service. Despite increased service provision the waitlist remains consistent however the waiting time due to increased staff compliment has reduced from a wait period of 12 months in 2023 to 3 months in 2025.

The expansion of our service to include the school outreach has enabled children to avail of support within their school setting and therefore reducing barriers to their attendance.

The provision of workshops and training for teachers and other professionals has highlighted the importance of knowledge and understanding on how to support grieving children in schools and communities.

