Petals

The baby loss counselling charity

Our impact

2025-26

Hello, I’m Georgia



My beautiful son was stillborn at 36 weeks and 4 days. The silence in that scan room, followed by the sound of my mother-in-law screaming when the sonographer told us there was no heartbeat, still echoes inside my head.

When Oaklee was born, the feelings were so overwhelming. He was the most beautiful, perfect little boy I had ever seen. He had the most peaceful face, tiny fingers and toes, soft hair and he just looked like he was fast asleep. I held him close, stroked his skin, kissed his forehead and whispered everything I’d ever wanted to say to him. Every single minute was so special, nothing else mattered.

When it was time to say my final goodbye, I wanted to walk him down to the mortuary so I could be with him right until the very last moment. I didn’t want to let my baby go. In the end, my partner had to physically pick me up and carry me out of the room.

The days and weeks afterwards felt impossible to navigate. Nothing made sense anymore. I felt like I'd failed my son, my partner and my whole family, and I couldn't see a way out of those thoughts no matter what anyone said to me. I struggled to sleep, I couldn't eat properly, I found it impossible to concentrate or find any joy in anything at all. I struggled deeply with the fact I'd never get to do all the things I'd planned with him, never hear him cry or see his smile, and that everyone else was celebrating babies while I was grieving mine.

I had no idea to survive this experience. Thankfully, my bereavement midwife referred me to Petals.

Before Petals Counselling, I felt like I had to hide my pain or put on a brave face for everyone else, but in our sessions, I could be completely honest and raw. It was a safe place where nobody rushed me, nobody made me feel like I was grieving 'too much' or 'for too long', that my loss didn't matter, or that my son wasn't important. My counsellor helped me understand that everything I was feeling was normal, even the darkest and most confusing emotions. She gently helped me work through the guilt I carried, showed me that it wasn't my fault, and that being a good mum meant loving him as much as I did. It gave Madison a safe, non-judgemental place where he could talk freely himself. I'd no idea what he was going through or how much pain and heartbreak he was carrying too because he felt he had to be strong and steady just for my sake.

I honestly believed Petals saved me in so many ways.

This is what you are making happen every day. Welcome to our impact report.

Introduction

What we do

Petals exists to help parents, like Georgia and Madison, find hope after the devastating loss of a pregnancy or baby. We do this by providing specialist counselling, free of charge.

Petals Counselling has been uniquely developed in partnership with healthcare professionals, those with lived experience and using established psychological theories. It is designed specifically to help both parents process the trauma they have experienced, so they can grieve healthily, together. Sessions are held online by our expert and highly trained Petals Counsellors.



Why we do what we do

Every four minutes in the UK a baby will be miscarried, stillborn or die shortly after birth. If the parents are left unsupported, this trauma can lead to higher rates of mental illness and relationship breakdown. There is no dedicated psychological care on the NHS and as well as not being specialised, private counselling is unaffordable for many.
While peer support and helplines provide comfort, they cannot replace the clinical expertise required to process trauma and begin healing.

We believe every parent in the UK should have easy and timely access to specialist counselling following baby loss.





The achievements of 2025/26 outlined in the following pages are testament to the support you have given, as you help us continue towards the goal that one day, parents will not need to suffer the trauma of pregnancy and baby loss alone.

One to one counselling

One to one counselling between either an individual or couple and our Petals Counsellors forms the core of our service. All clients have a triage session with one of our counselling managers, which is where we assess their needs and they can find out more about Petals Counselling. This is then followed by five sessions with their allocated counsellor, who will guide them to process the trauma they have been through, understand their grief and find healthy ways to move forward.

Cases (be they individuals or couples) seen in total:





46%

Number of counselling sessions delivered:



Number of individuals supported:



2311

Katie and Sarah's first child, Marnie, was stillborn at 37 weeks.

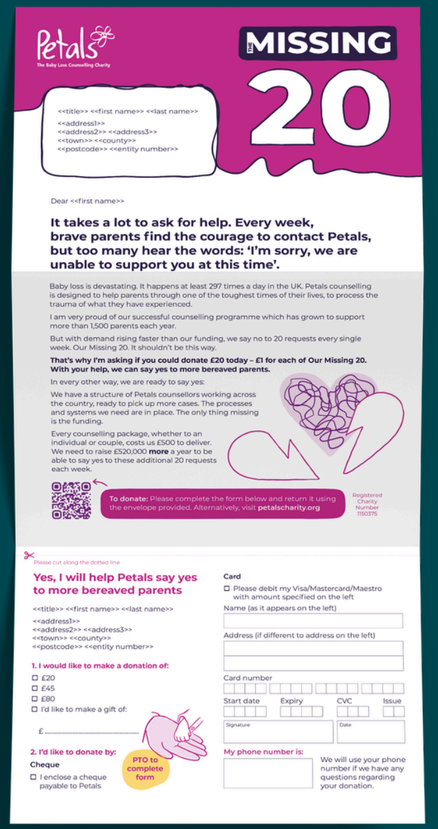


We knew we wanted help, and Petals were so responsive, with the triage meeting and then matching us up with a counsellor. We decided to do our sessions together, because Sarah needed it just as much as I did. It was amazing that we were both able to utilise the counselling sessions and I think we enjoyed going together, because it just allowed us to open up more to each other. Yes, you can speak to friends and family, but it's different to talk to a counsellor – someone who is trained to talk about this, who you know won't pass any judgement or say the wrong thing. It was a really safe space. I have more coping mechanisms because of the counselling, and I can vocalise how I'm feeling to people in my life, advocate for myself and protect myself.

One to one counselling

Petals Counselling is funded via two income streams: NHS funding and charitable income. This year, the number of partnerships secured with NHS providers has risen to 34. Some of the partnerships are agreed directly with hospitals, others at a higher level, for example Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), who typically fund services in a number of hospitals within a region. A number are funded by charitable donations from hospital charities, foundations and corporate donors. These contracts ensure that patients who experience baby loss within the specific hospitals have a smooth referral into Petals Counselling.

For patients across the country who attend hospitals without a partnership with Petals, self-referral is available. However, the number of referrals we can accept this way are limited by our charitable income. In September we launched 'The Missing 20' a campaign aiming to highlight the number of people we turn away due to insufficient funding. The fundraising campaign has been successful, as shown in this year's extraordinary growth. The number of cases we saw through this pathway has risen from 330 in 2025/26 to 595 this year.


Petals
The Baby Loss Counselling Charity

MISSING
20

<<title>> <<first name>> <<last name>>
<<address1>>
<<address2>> <<address3>>
<<town>> <<county>>
<<postcode>> <<entity number>>

Dear <<first name>>

It takes a lot to ask for help. Every week, brave parents find the courage to contact Petals, but too many hear the words: 'I'm sorry, we are unable to support you at this time'.

Baby loss is devastating. It happens at least 297 times a day in the UK. Petals counselling is designed to help parents through one of the toughest times of their lives, to process the trauma of what they have experienced.

I am very proud of our successful counselling programme which has grown to support more than 1,500 parents each year.

But with demand rising faster than our funding, we say no to 20 requests every single week. Our Missing 20. It shouldn't be this way.

That's why I'm asking if you could donate £20 today – £1 for each of Our Missing 20. With your help, we can say yes to more bereaved parents.

In every other way, we are ready to say yes:

We have a structure of Petals counsellors working across the country, ready to pick up more cases. The processes and systems we need are in place. The only thing missing is the funding.

Every counselling package, whether to an individual or couple, costs us £500 to deliver. We need to raise £520,000 **more** a year to be able to say yes to these additional 20 requests each week.

To donate: Please complete the form below and return it using the envelope provided. Alternatively, visit **petalscharity.org**

Registered Charity Number 1160775

Please cut along the dotted line

Yes, I will help Petals say yes to more bereaved parents

<<title>> <<first name>> <<last name>>
<<address1>>
<<address2>> <<address3>>
<<town>> <<county>>
<<postcode>> <<entity number>>

1. I would like to make a donation of:

- ☐ £20
- ☐ £45
- ☐ £80
- ☐ I'd like to make a gift of:

£ _____

2. I'd like to donate by:

Cheque

☐ I enclose a cheque payable to Petals

PTO to complete form

Card

☐ Please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro with amount specified on the left

Name (as it appears on the left)

Address (if different to address on the left)

Card number

Start date | Expiry | CVC | Issue

Signature | Date

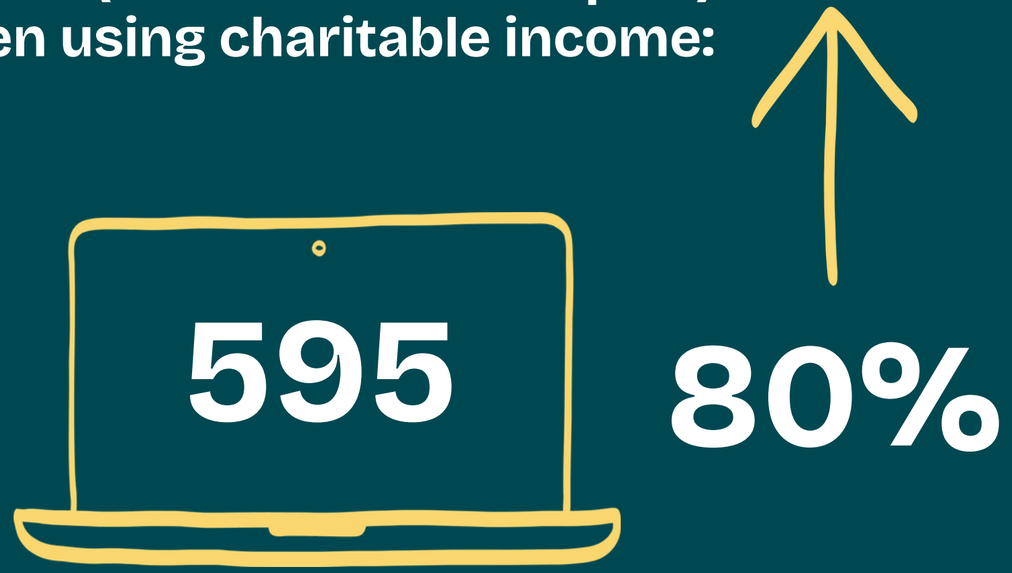
My phone number is:

We will use your phone number if we have any questions regarding your donation.

Cases (individuals or couples) seen via NHS pathways:



Cases (individuals or couples) seen using charitable income:



This therapy was like a gateway back to life – in the most gentle and supportive way.

Petals client

What our clients tell us

We gather feedback from our clients in two ways. We use the clinically validated CORE-OM tool, which measures change across four key domains (wellbeing, problems/symptoms, functioning and risk), showing both clinical and psychological change. This measure consistently shows a high reduction of the prevalence of each of these domains. This assessment is used from the triage, throughout sessions and in the closing session. In addition, clients are sent a feedback survey which asks them to reflect on the impact of Petals Counselling on a number of key areas, such as on their ability to process the trauma they have experienced.

CORE-OM reporting:



Pre-counselling, **75%** of our clients report with clinical mental health issues when first assessed at triage.



This reduces to **36%** following Petals Counselling

Through our feedback surveys across 2025/26:

100% of clients **felt understood** by their counsellor.

99% felt that Petals Counselling had helped them **understand their grief.**

94% reported being able to **process any trauma** they had experienced.

86% reported **improved mental health.**

Group therapy

Our therapy group dedicated to mothers who have experienced a termination for medical reasons (TFMR) has been running for two years. It was started in response to the increased levels of isolation experienced by mothers and the high demand for support from this particular type of loss. Three mothers attend the therapy sessions, which are held by one of our senior counsellors. We were able to significantly grow the number of participants in 2025/26, increasing the number of senior counsellors trained to run the groups. Feedback is consistently overwhelmingly positive.

Number of participants to our termination for medical reasons (TFMR) therapy groups



226%

Through our feedback surveys across 2025/26:

- **100%** of clients **felt understood** by their counsellor.
- **100%** felt that the group helped them **process their loss.**
- **100% felt understood** by the other group participants.
- **100%** reported **improved mental health.**

Chloe's daughter was diagnosed with a rare and incurable heart condition at 17 weeks.

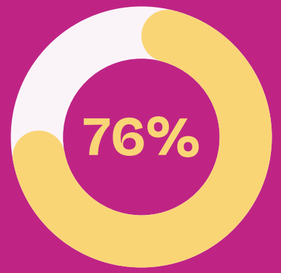


It was so important to have this space to talk, to ask questions and dig deeper into things, without ever being pushed. Everything was at my pace. If I wanted to share, I did. If I wanted to cry, I did.

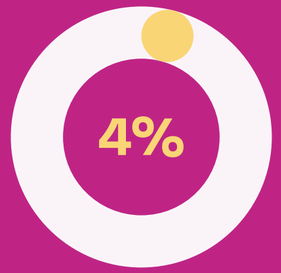
Petals helped me process the trauma of the labour and delivery, I don't think I would be able to even think about that right now, if I hadn't been to counselling.

I've been able to focus on the love and joy Ronnie gave me. And I think that's really important, because it's those things that help keep his memory alive.

What do we know about our clients?



Of our clients are women*.

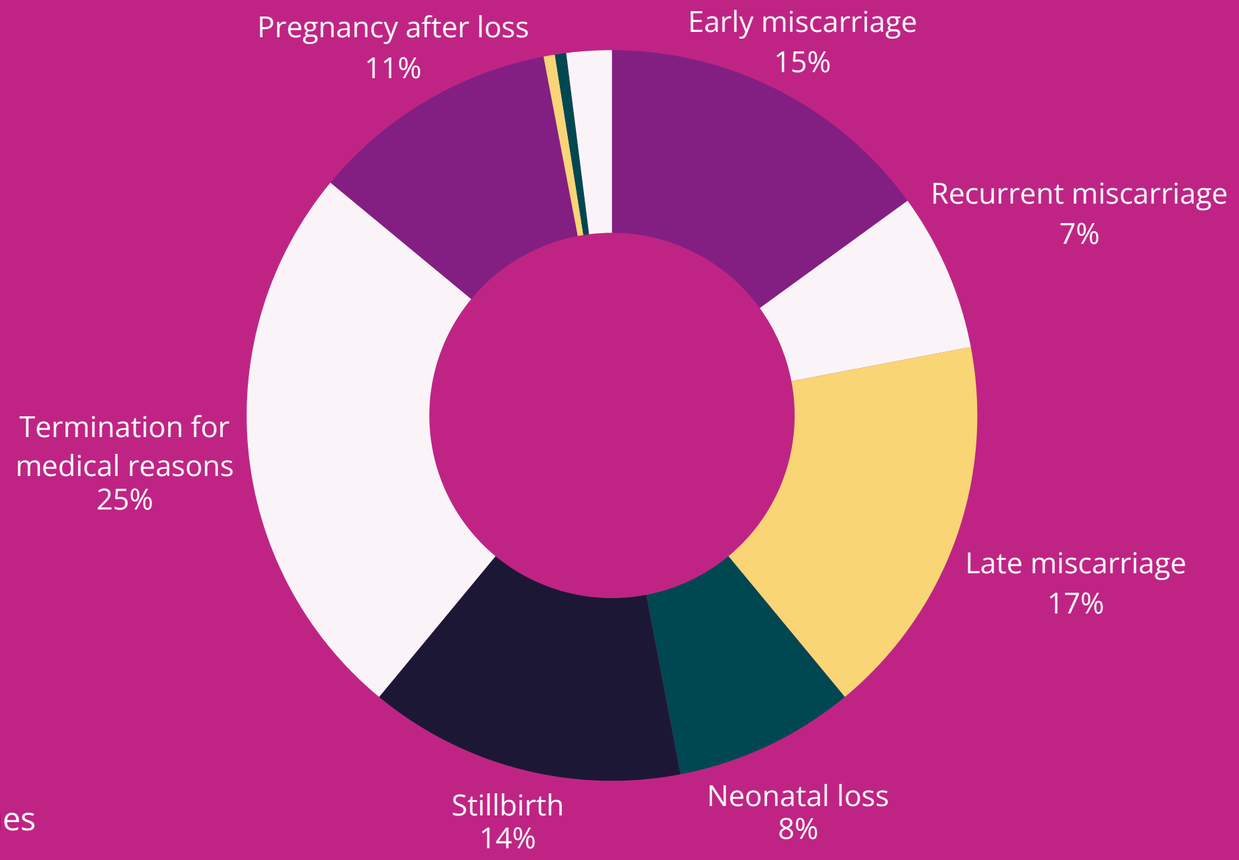


Tell us they have a disability.



Of our clients are not White British.

The types of loss experienced by the clients seen in 2025/26



*The number of men attending Petals Counselling is rising, and it continues to be our preference that couples attend their sessions together.

How our service operates



The operational side of Petals Counselling is managed by a small team of admin staff, who are responsible for the efficient processing of referrals. It is of fundamental importance to us that referrals are responded to promptly and compassionately, as we know the importance of that acknowledgement. Triage appointments quickly follow, and sessions usually begin within days. This can vary though, with some parents choosing to wait until after milestones such as funerals, or the outcome of post-mortems.

Average wait from referral to first contact: **1 day.**

Average wait from referral to triage: **11 days.**

Average wait from triage to first counselling session: **10 days.**

The personalisation of the care I experienced was amazing. From the first triage session with Russ who let me just sob my way through my story, to then being assigned to Anna, herself a former midwife, as I am, and who helped with discussing the difficulties returning to work. My counselling sessions have been a complete life and sanity saver.

Petals client

Our Petals Counsellors



Petals Counsellors are experts in their field. They are carefully chosen for this specialist work and the majority are subcontracted, but trained to work within the framework of our Petals Model.

Recruitment of new counsellors

In early 2025, we began the process of recruiting new Petals Counsellors, in response to the success of our new partnerships and growth in fundraising income. The process is rigorous, with applicants needing to meet strict measures, which, in addition to significant relevant experience, also needs to include emotional depth and the ability to hold grief and trauma with compassion. The new recruits then undergo our bespoke training, which includes specialist insight into understanding baby loss and in the Petals Model - our unique programme. The new counsellors will work alongside senior Petals Counsellors as they begin to see clients, receive supervision before every session and are supported throughout their assessed probation and beyond.

Bi-annual away days

Twice a year, we connect with our Petals Counsellors - who live in towns and cities across the country - in person. The away days offer us valuable time to learn, reflect and support each other. We usually invite external speakers - this year that has included research nurse Leanna Brace, to talk about early pregnancy loss and research into hyperemsis, and Manisha Sheth, talking about cultural alignment within counselling. The day will also include time for reflective practice and training, as well as delicious food and the opportunity to catch up.

Meet Sumita

Sumita is one of our senior Petals Counsellors. As well as seeing clients on a one-to-one basis, Sumita supports clients through the termination for medical reasons therapy group too.

How would you summarise your approach to Petals Counselling?

I want every parent to feel safe enough to bring whatever they are carrying, without fear of judgement or feeling they have to protect anyone else. Pregnancy and baby loss is unlike any other bereavement. You are grieving the life of someone you never got to know, yet you knew them inside out, loved them deeply and had already begun to imagine the life you would share together. Alongside the loss of your baby comes the loss of the future you had imagined, and that can feel incredibly lonely.

I am always clear with the parents I support that I cannot take away the grief of losing their baby, nor would I want to. It is entirely understandable that they feel devastated. My hope is that I can help remove the burdens that make grief even harder to bear, so they are free to grieve their baby with love rather than becoming stuck in guilt, fear or shame.



Why is Petals Counselling so important?

It is a profound and often misunderstood bereavement. Many parents tell us they feel isolated because, despite their best intentions, family and friends do not always understand the depth of their grief. Specialist counselling gives parents permission to talk about their baby and their experience with someone who understands the unique impact of pregnancy and baby loss. Feeling those difficult emotions is painful but avoiding them often makes them even harder to carry. Having a safe, compassionate space to process grief can make an enormous difference. Every parent deserves access to that support. No one should have to navigate one of the hardest experiences of their life on their own.

What do you love about your job?

Seeing someone move from feeling overwhelmed and alone to feeling more connected to themselves, their baby and those around them is a real privilege.

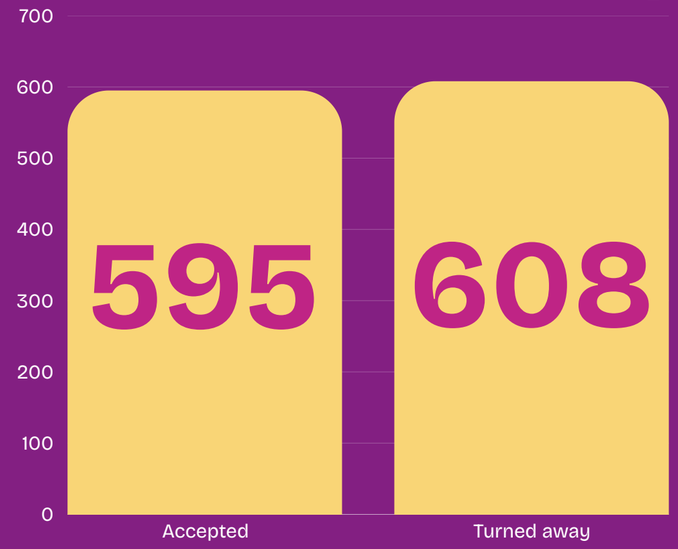
Those we cannot help

1 in 2 referrals were turned away in 2025/26. Despite a year of exceptional growth, demand for Petals Counselling from individuals and couples outside of our hospital partnerships still far exceeds what we are able to provide.

Referrals for Petals Counselling (outside of NHS partnerships) in 2024/25 (individuals or couples)



The number of referrals we accepted vs the number we turned away



These people weren't turned away because they were not eligible, or their need wasn't strong enough. It is because of insufficient funding. We are ready to say yes to more. We have Petals Counsellors working across the country, ready to pick up more cases. The processes and systems we need are in place. The only thing missing is the funding.

Those we cannot help

Laura’s first pregnancy was ectopic, resulting in emergency surgery and the loss of a fallopian tube.

One minute I was excited about becoming a mum, and the next I was grieving a baby while recovering from major surgery. It felt incredibly isolating and like people focused on the medical emergency without realising there was a bereaved parent underneath it all.

I wasn't coping well, and I found Petals while looking for specialist support. Knowing there was a charity offering counselling specifically for people affected by baby loss gave me hope. I felt that speaking to someone who understood this type of grief could help me process everything that had happened, rather than trying to carry it on my own.

I remember sitting at home completing the referral. It took me quite a while because writing everything down made me relive the experience all over again. Asking for help wasn't easy, but it gave me hope that perhaps I didn't have to keep struggling on my own. When I was told no, it was incredibly disappointing, a door had been closed and it left me feeling alone again. I’d finally found somewhere that understood my experience, but the support wasn’t available to me. Instead, I know I’ve tried to simply carry on and have buried the trauma rather than processing it. It may not have taken away the grief, because nothing can do that, but I think it could have helped me understand it, cope with it and feel less alone.

Laura’s story is sadly, all too familiar. She should not have been left to feel alone. Nobody should have to face pregnancy or baby loss alone.
We are determined that one day, we won’t have to turn anyone away.

Your support in numbers



9,256
kms walked or ran by fundraisers
(approx. the distance from Petals HQ to Shanghai!)

85
runners in the Cambridge Half Marathon raising
£61,376

86
regular donors



£13,728
raised in one week through the Big Give to support parents experiencing the loss of a baby at Christmas

595
couples funded through Petals counselling though charitable income

Two years
of funding pledged by Global's Make Some Noise



67
people organised their own events for Petals

Chosen as charity of the year by the Bank of England

Thank you

We are deeply grateful and moved by our astounding and ever-growing network of supporters who share our beliefs. Our number one aim remains the continued and sustainable growth of Petals Counselling, so that more parents are able to access the specialist psychological support they need following the loss of a pregnancy or baby. We will not achieve this without the dedication of our supporters, trusts, foundations, companies, volunteers and ambassadors. Whatever your contribution, thank you.

Petals