



Petals

The baby loss counselling charity

**Delivering specialist counselling
support to bereaved parents
following pregnancy and baby loss.**

Petals is the Baby Loss Counselling Charity.
Our vision is that every parent in the UK has easy and timely access to specialist counselling after pregnancy and baby loss.



Petals provide specialist counselling to support the mental health of individuals and couples who experience pregnancy or baby loss. **Our counsellors provide a safe space** to guide parents through the grief and trauma of their devastating experience, to a place of reconciliation and **hope for the future**.

We strongly believe that **bereaved parents require specialist support due to the unique psychological impact the death of a baby can have**. Our counselling intervention focuses not only on grief, depression, and anxiety but also on trauma, **aiming to reduce or prevent the development of PTSD**.

It is our mission to ensure that free specialist counselling is available to all parents in the UK who suffer the loss of a baby. We are, therefore, working hard to duplicate our successful model in partnership with both NHS Services and other organisations across the country.

Click [here](#) to read more about our current partnerships

Why Petals?

The death of an infant is now recognised as one of the most traumatic life events that an adult may experience. Although grief is a normal and natural response to loss, the importance of providing quality care in the time surrounding an infant's death has been repeatedly demonstrated.

A wide range of short-term and long-term negative outcomes for parents have been reported as a result of infant death:

- Increased levels of depression and anxiety are common among bereaved parents
- Bereaved parents identified as a high-risk group for complicated grief
- Perinatal death is associated with increased rates of hospital admission owing to postnatal depression.
- Mothers, partners and children are all at risk of prolonged severe psychological reactions including post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Men demonstrate less guilt, anxiety and depression than women themselves, but they can also develop post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Research has demonstrated the increased use of alcohol as a method of coping in men following a perinatal loss.
- Parental relationships have a 40% higher risk of dissolving after stillbirth compared with live birth.
- One trial suggested that women who underwent termination of pregnancy for fetal anomalies had slightly worse outcomes than those who had experienced stillbirth or neonatal death.
- Increased infant attachment associated with modern obstetric practices, such as prenatal diagnostic procedures, assisted reproduction and graphic ultrasound imaging has been reported to increase the intensity of mothers' grief.

In an evaluation of the latest Bereavement Care Pathway, Donaldson (2019, reported in Centre for Mental Health 2019:5) identified that 'in terms of emotional and psychological support in the community, parents revealed a large unmet need'. He continues to state that this is a result of a 'lack of services in the community' or because individuals were 'not considered ill enough to access psychological support'.

Petals have successfully evolved an easily accessible service, that works with the consequences of all aspects of this often-devastating life experience, facilitating recovery, healthy relationships and return to work.

The specialist nature of our counselling relationship has enabled Petals to gain real insight into the psychological impact of the death of a baby and the resulting cocktail of trauma and grief that manifests for bereaved parents.

Why Petals?

Petals works collaboratively with NHS Trusts whilst remaining independent as a specialist voluntary sector organisation. Over the past 12 years, we have led the way in recognising and meeting the psychological needs of parents affected by pregnancy and baby loss through the delivery of specialist, trauma-informed counselling and bereavement support. Our counsellors are uniquely trained in miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal death, termination for medical reasons (TFMR), pregnancy after loss, and trauma relating to pregnancy and birth, providing support that general mental health services are not designed to deliver.

The annual statistics representing pregnancy and baby loss in the UK are a stark reminder of the scale of need facing both families and healthcare professionals:

- Approximately 3,000 babies are stillborn each year
- The UK stillbirth rate ranks 24th out of 49 high-income countries
- Around 60,000 babies are born prematurely
- 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage
- Approximately 5,000 pregnancies are terminated for medical reasons (TFMR)
- Around 11 in every 1,000 pregnancies are ectopic

(Statistics sourced from ONS, Tommy's, CBUK and ARC)

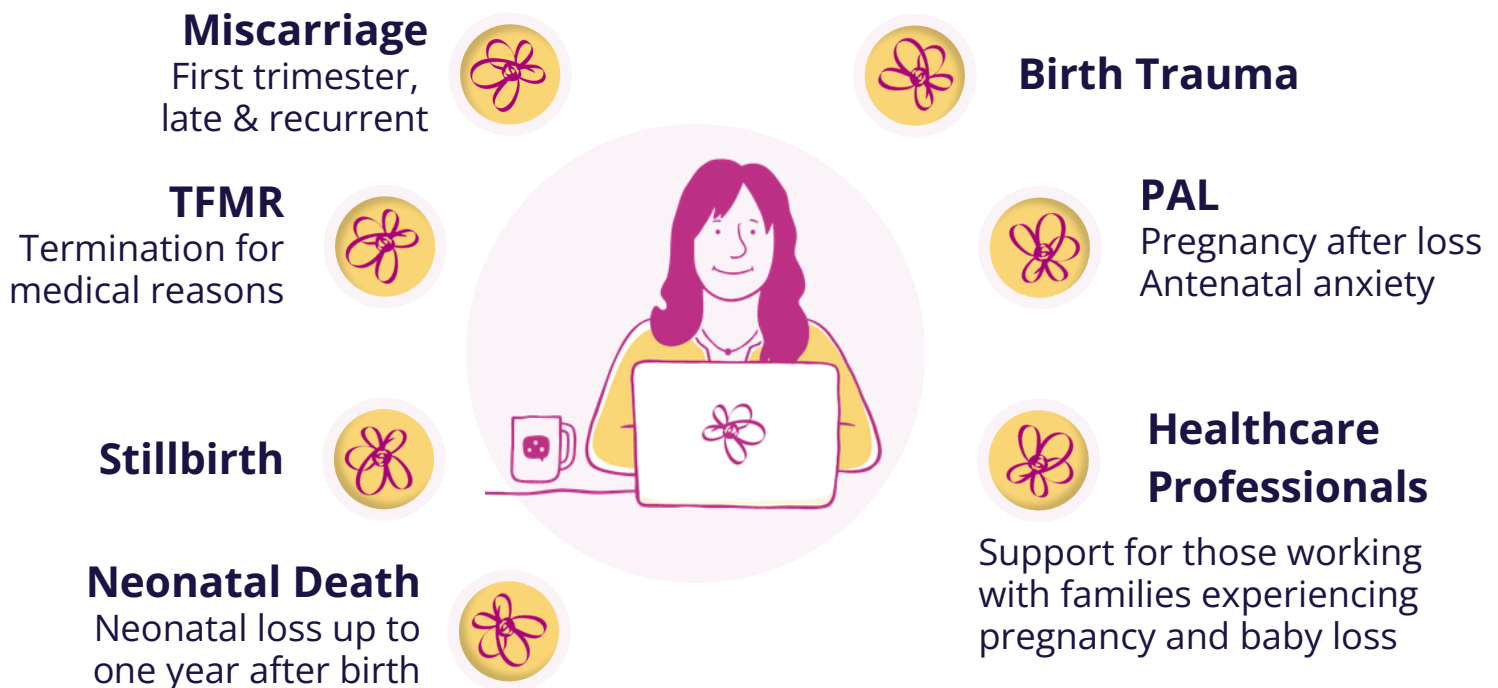
Pregnancy and baby loss can have a profound and lifelong impact on parents, increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, relationship difficulties and challenges in subsequent pregnancies. Yet specialist psychological support is not routinely available through NHS services, and many bereaved parents do not meet the thresholds for secondary mental health services despite experiencing significant distress. Petals fills this gap through rapid access to specialist counselling, with initial contact within 48 hours of referral, triage within 14 days, and counselling often commencing within weeks rather than months. This early intervention helps prevent psychological difficulties from becoming more entrenched, reducing the likelihood of future reliance on NHS mental health services.

The RCOG recommends counselling as best practice for bereaved parents, and Petals provides a responsive, evidence-based service aligned with the National Bereavement Care Pathway, the Ockenden Report recommendations, and national priorities to improve perinatal mental health. Unlike general talking therapy services, Petals offers specialist trauma-informed counselling delivered by practitioners with extensive expertise in pregnancy and baby loss, supporting individuals, couples, partners and co-parents. There are no waiting lists, no exclusion criteria, and support is tailored to each family's circumstances, including future pregnancies after loss.

Petals delivers strong, measurable outcomes, with significant reductions in trauma, anxiety and depression, reducing clinical mental health scores from 75% pre-counselling to 36% post-counselling. Additionally, 82% of clients report improved mental health, 92% find ways to cope with their loss, and 91% report improved trauma processing following counselling. By working collaboratively with NHS Trusts and Integrated Care Systems, Petals provides equitable access to specialist bereavement support, improves psychological outcomes for families, supports staff affected by traumatic cases, and delivers a cost-effective service that helps reduce longer-term demand on NHS mental health provision while ensuring bereaved parents receive the compassionate care they deserve.

What we can offer

We support people who have experienced early or recurrent miscarriage and termination for medical reasons, through to stillbirth and neonatal loss (up to one year post loss), as well as those going through a pregnancy after loss.



Petals' standard offer is **a series of one-hour online counselling sessions, delivered by professionally registered and accredited perinatal counsellors**, all of whom have expertise in pregnancy and baby loss. We offer this to both individuals and couples, with flexibility around whether their partner attends some or every session.

The number of sessions initially offered will depend on the severity of the trauma experienced. This is taken into account at triage but can be adapted over time as appropriate. The average offering is triage plus five counselling sessions. We can then offer further sessions to our clients to help manage anxiety during pregnancy after their loss(es).

We are also able to offer our partnerships:

- Counselling support for healthcare staff who are directly involved in traumatic maternity cases.
- Regular quantitative and qualitative data on the referrals benefitting from your funding.
- Access to our private Facebook peer support groups: [Petals Together](#) (for anyone who has experienced pregnancy and baby loss), [Petals Dads](#) (for bereaved fathers), [Petals Grandparents](#) (for anyone who has lost a grandchild following pregnancy or baby loss) and [Petals Pal](#) (for those currently pregnant following a loss.)
- Option to join our Petals Community of previous clients

Our impact

Petals is a member of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance and has specialist expertise in supporting individuals and couples experiencing mental health problems as a result of trauma and loss, related to pregnancy or birth.

We have been delivering specialist pregnancy and baby loss counselling for over 15 years and we currently have over 40 specialist counsellors who support individuals and couples across the UK.



The success of Petals' Counselling is always measured by improvements in parents' mental health and we use the Core 34 Outcome Measure (Core-OM) throughout our counselling programme.



What our clients say

The constant demand for our service from bereaved parents is highlighted by the fact that, since the launch of our counselling service in Cambridge in 2013, we have supported over 10,000 client cases. In 2025 alone, we delivered over 6400 counselling sessions. At the end of their counselling, we ask all clients for their feedback on the support they have received and we continue to be genuinely moved and humbled by the numerous responses we receive:

I didn't think anything could help
- but this is the one thing that did
- and because of this, I think
other things started helping me
too. This therapy was like a
gateway back to life - in the most
gentle and supportive way.

We were simply shells of ourselves
when we first met our counsellor after
the loss of our little girl Ivy. She helped
us explore our complex emotions and
created the most beautiful, safe space
where we felt safe to be honest and
vulnerable. She was one of the few
people that truly embraced our little
girl's existence and purpose. We will be
forever grateful for being able to access
such support.

Petals have been brilliant and
really supported me during a
difficult time. I never thought
I would be in a position to
need counselling and so glad
there is support for people
coping with a loss. Thank you
so much.

Response times

All referred patients are contacted via email within 48 hours (2 working days) of referral receipt and are provided with a link to book a Triage Assessment appointment with a Petals Counselling Manager.

We aim to deliver Triage Assessments within 14 days of referral receipt during which we will:

- Conduct a full psychological counselling assessment
- Conduct a full risk assessment
- Explain the counselling procedure, agreement, waiting times and next steps
- Agree on the number of counselling sessions to be provided

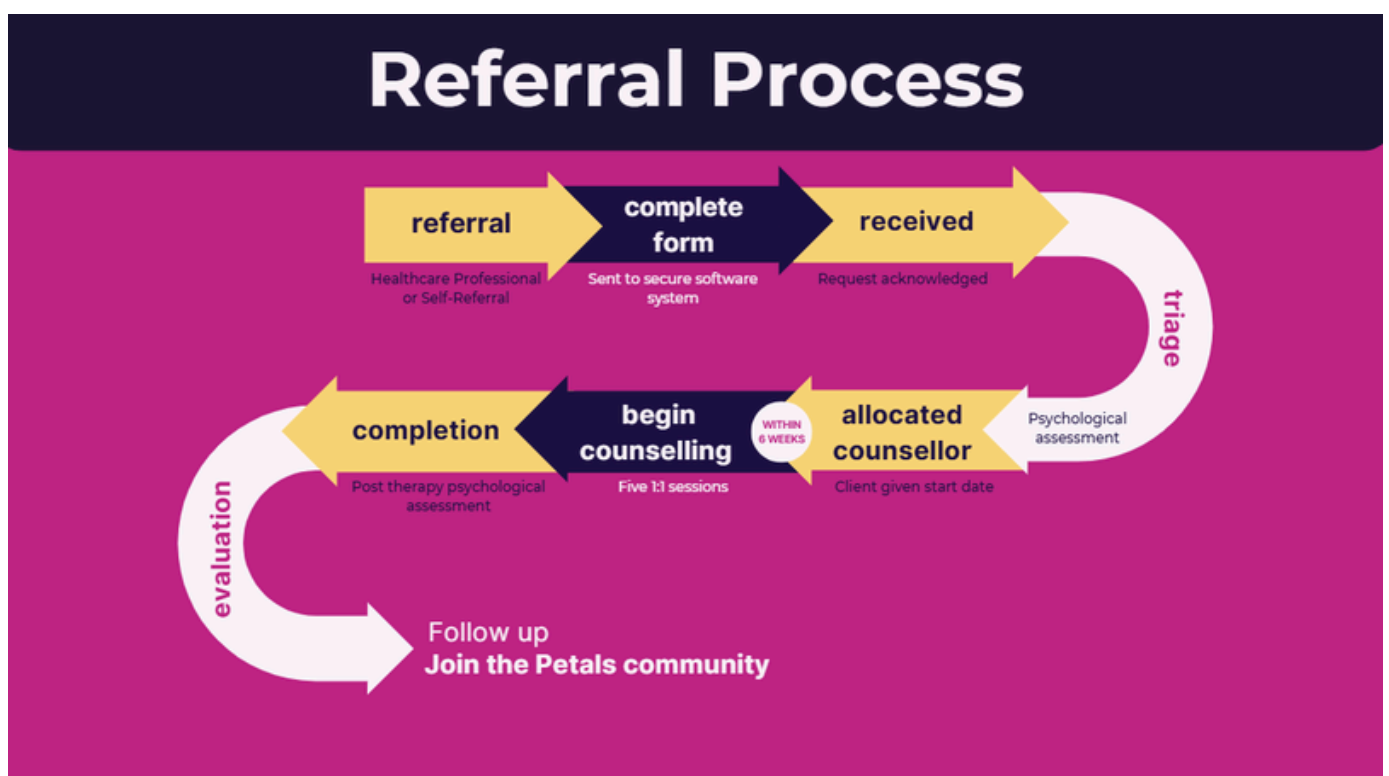
Within four weeks of the triage appointment, clients will be invited to complete the Petals Counselling Agreement, before being allocated to a Petals Counsellor.

We aim to ensure that all accepted referrals have the option to start our counselling programme within six weeks of referral.

Any clients who attend triage but do not then book in for counselling will be given a follow-up email or phone call within six weeks.

The agreed counselling sessions will be delivered within six months with each client case being reviewed monthly by the counsellor and a counselling manager.

These timeframes represent our standard service pathway and reflect our commitment to providing timely access to specialist support. However, Petals recognises that every bereavement journey is unique. We therefore maintain a flexible and person-centred approach, tailoring the timing and delivery of support wherever possible to meet individual circumstances, levels of need, clinical risk, and personal preferences, ensuring that clients receive the right support at the right time.



Response times

Whilst remaining an independent specialist provider, we work collaboratively with NHS clinical teams to ensure seamless care for bereaved families. Our referral pathways are integrated with Local Maternity Systems (LMS), Maternal Mental Health (MMH) services, maternity and neonatal teams, and the hospitals we partner with. We can establish bespoke referral pathways to ensure that patients requiring specialist baby-loss counselling can be referred quickly and efficiently, or provided with information to enable self-referral. Referrals may also be received from GPs, health visitors and other healthcare professionals. We work flexibly with each Trust, ICB or partner organisation to develop a service model that best meets local needs.

A key element of our service is timely access to support. We recognise that many parents present at a point of significant emotional distress, and we aim to intervene as early as possible to prevent difficulties escalating. Where a triage assessment identifies elevated levels of psychological distress, risk or trauma symptoms, we will prioritise allocation to a suitably qualified Petals counsellor to ensure support is provided as promptly as possible.

Petals is best placed to support individuals and couples experiencing mild to moderate psychological distress associated with pregnancy and baby loss, including grief, trauma responses, anxiety and adjustment difficulties. Where a client presents with moderate to severe or severe mental health needs that fall beyond the scope of our specialist counselling service, we will work with them to identify the most appropriate support pathway. This may include notifying the referrer and GP, and signposting or referring to more specialist mental health services. This does not necessarily preclude access to Petals counselling; rather, it ensures that clients receive the level of care most appropriate to their clinical needs, with any involvement from Petals considered as part of a wider package of support.

Equality of access

A priority for us at Petals is to understand and overcome barriers to accessing our specialist counselling service. As part of our commitment to inclusivity, we have partnered with the interpretation service Language Line, enabling bereaved parents from diverse backgrounds to access our vital support.

We are also able to provide support to parents who are deaf or have hearing impairments through a partnership with an independent British Sign Language professional.

Furthermore, we are working hard to diversify our counselling team to ensure we are continually developing our understanding of cultural sensitivities that may impact peoples access to and experience of counselling.

What the professionals say

At Petals, we pride ourselves on the relationship we build with everyone we work with. This is particularly important to us when it comes to the healthcare professionals who so often provide our first connection to the bereaved parents we support. We are always looking to improve our service in any way we can and feedback from bereavement teams is a crucial part of this process; we are proud to share these words from just some of the incredible bereavement teams we continue to work with:

Petals is a vital part of our ongoing bereavement service at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust. We refer most of our bereaved families to Petals as not only do we recognise how important they are in the healing process following baby loss but the feedback we receive from our bereaved families often tells us how supportive the counsellors are and very accommodating to the individuals/couples needs. We did give Petals some feedback regarding the prospect of having more than English speaking counsellors which they very much took on board and now employ a vast range of different language counsellors. Petals is invaluable in our bereavement care and we see them as part of our wider bereavement team. Thank you Petals for continuing to be amazing.

**Specialist Bereavement Midwife
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust**

We have been working with Petals at Watford for a few years and our women find their expertise and service invaluable when navigating the devastating loss of a baby, whether it's through miscarriage, TFMR, stillbirth or neonatal death. We have always found their service to be quick and efficient and a few of our families have even written testimonies for the Petals website!

**Bereavement Midwife
Watford General Hospital**

We have worked with Petals for the last two years and in this time found the team to be flexible in adapting to our changing needs, professional and compassionate in their approach. As a service, we feel we have commissioned an invaluable offer through Petals to support our maternity and mental health colleagues who are impacted by trauma and loss. We would encourage anyone to develop a working relationship with Petals and hope that ours will continue.

**Lancashire and South Cumbria
Reproductive Trauma Service**

Since my first experience of working with Petals, I have found the team so approachable, friendly and accommodating. Working as a bereavement midwife providing emotional support to families, I found there was a gap in specialised professional counselling for bereaved parents following the loss of their baby. Petals is a fantastic charity that can provide that specialised counselling, and provide a follow on for parents when they require additional support. We are so grateful to have this indispensable service to support our bereaved families.

**Bereavement Midwife
Harrogate & District NHS Foundation Trust**

Reporting and costs

CONTRACT MONITORING

For all our partnerships, Petals will submit a quarterly finance report and a six-monthly or annual (dependent on size of contract) full report which will include financial activity as well as client data, quantitative activity and qualitative outcome data.

A GUIDE TO COSTS



Package price of counselling

£500 per case regardless of couple or individual

Includes:

- Triage assessment with a Triage Counselling Manager
- 5 x 1 hour counselling sessions working through the Petals evidenced based model with a Petals Counsellor

There will also be a set up charge dependent on the size of the contract



Training

Petals deliver training workshops targeted at any professional counsellor, psychotherapist, psychologist, midwife or maternity healthcare professional working in the field of baby loss.

You can find out more about the training we offer here: <https://petalscharity.org/training/>.

Further training programmes for professionals working with the specific psychological needs of parents who have suffered baby loss can be tailored to the needs of the workforce.

Thank you very much for this training.
I have done some other training on the subject but this was head and shoulders above anything I had previously done.

I really appreciated the significant knowledge and experience of the facilitators.

Find out more

If you would like to find out more about partnering with Petals to support bereaved parents in your area, please contact:

partnerships@petalscharity.org

Web: www.petalscharity.org

Social: [@petalscharity](#)



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