



## Supporting women and their families experiencing bereavement transition from hospital to home

For families navigating the devastating loss of a pregnancy or a baby/young child, the transition from hospital care to home is an isolating and frightening experience. With a grant of £60k from NHS Lothian Charity, Women's & Children's Services have partnered with Held in our Hearts to improve bereavement support during this transition phase. Held in our Hearts, is a charity with over 40 years of specialist experience. The Specific Funds grant enables women and families experiencing loss in pregnancy or loss of a child under age 5 to access long-term emotional support after leaving NHS Lothian's hospitals for the next 3 years (2025-2028).

### Support in the first year

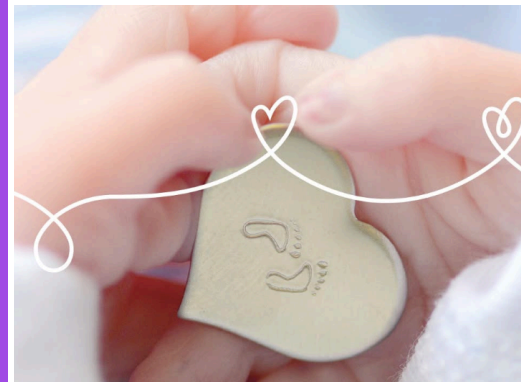
While the NHS Lothian Bereavement Service provides vital short-term care within the hospital, Held in our Hearts complements this by extending support into the community through a streamlined referral process involving midwives, GPs, nurses and other professionals. In the first year, women and their families have benefited from:

- 333 'Hospital to Home' support visits: 6 tailored sessions delivered in the home by Held in our Heart worker shortly after the loss for 6 months.
- 582 peer support sessions: connections with trained staff with lived experience.
- 631 counselling sessions: mental health support that is free to access.



"A glimmer of light during an extremely dark time."

Family member

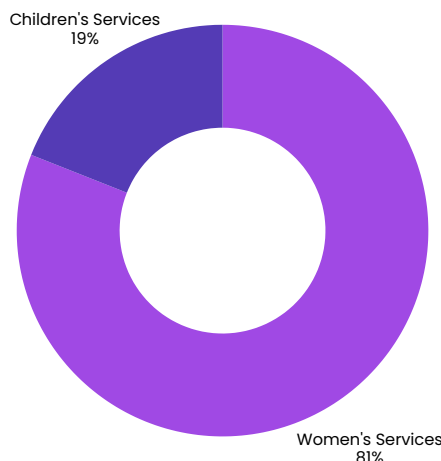


### The beneficiaries

# 81

Women and their families supported by the Service in the first year.  
(21 additional families were referred but didn't go forward with support.)

% of referrals by Service in year 1



# 1,546

Hours of support provided in the first year.

\*Referrals from Children's Services are a little higher than anticipated as this element was new in 2025.



## Impact on women and their families

### A trauma-informed approach

Hospital-based bereavement care can be distressing for families who associate the clinical setting with their loss. To provide a more trauma-informed service, support is offered in environments and at a pace chosen by the family, such as their home or a neutral community space. By moving support out of the hospital, it removes environmental triggers and hands control back to the family, a vital step in trauma recovery that reduces stress and encourages deeper engagement with the support offered.



Leaving the hospital was the most heartbreaking day of my life but to know that the worker would soon be visiting me at home helped me feel less scared and gave me something to focus on."

Family member

### Reduced isolation and providing a buffer to prevent further decline

The service prevents families from spiraling into deeper isolation and provides immediate emotional support during the transition time to home, often the most acute phase of grief.



The service supported us in the hardest time of our lives. We felt understood and heard by our worker and her amazing support."

Family member



Without that initial help and contact from the worker, we would have been very lonely and in a much darker place."

Family member

### Increased opportunity to express their voice

Support from people who have lived experience provides a no-judgment zone where families feel they don't have to protect the listener from their grief.



I could talk to her about anything and she wouldn't be shocked or surprised like family, friends may have been."

Family member



Her phone calls, messages and visits gave us someone to talk to that truly understood how we were feeling."

Family member

### Increased ability to cope with daily life beyond grief

Trauma often makes simple tasks feel impossible. By helping with difficult tasks and providing coping strategies, the service reduces the heavy load on grieving parents.



The grief and sadness is still there, but I can handle daily life better than I ever imagined I would at this point."

Family member



The worker helped us immensely by assisting with some tasks that were unbearable for us at the time."

Family member

Report compiled by Rebecca Caulfield, Evaluation Manager, NHS Lothian Charity

