

# Our Impact 2021/22



**“Cruse Scotland lets you fall apart in a safe space, and then gives you tools and support to rebuild yourself.”**

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 | Freephone helpline: **0808 802 6161**

 | Webchat service: **crusescotland.org.uk**

 | Email: **support@crusescotland.org.uk**

## Scotland's dedicated bereavement charity

We are Scotland's dedicated bereavement charity, helping people understand, process and navigate their grief.

We provide professional support to anyone struggling to come to terms with a death, regardless of when or how it happened.

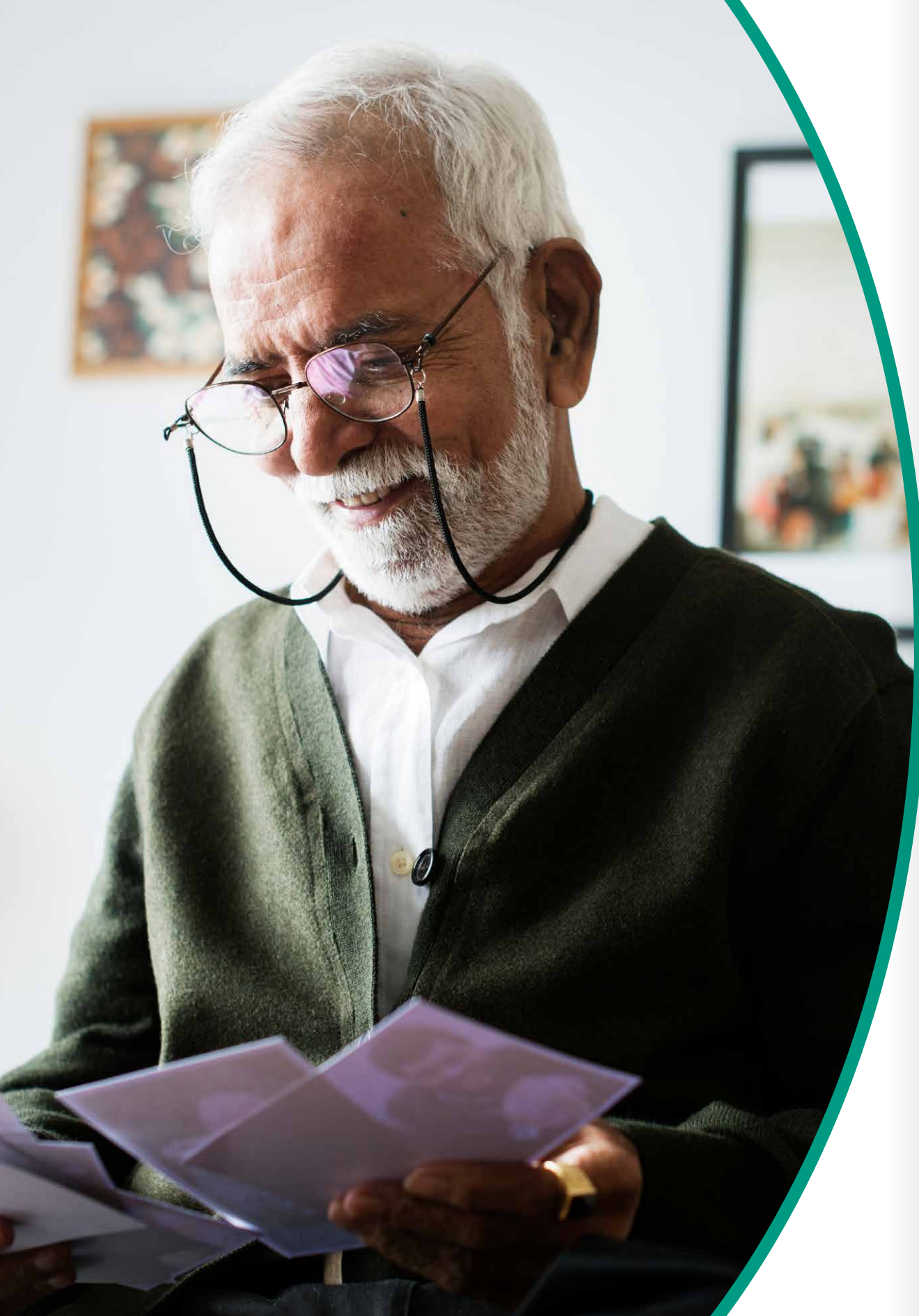
Our listening and counselling services are available and free to everyone, no matter their age, beliefs, background or relationship to the deceased.

We help bereaved children, young people and adults by offering:

- Information and advice,
- A national helpline and webchat service,
- One-to-one counselling and listening,
- Specialist support for children, young people and families,
- Group and peer support.

Our small but committed team of **22 staff co-ordinate, train and assist more than 250 volunteers** to carry out this important work across the whole of Scotland.





## Welcome

This report covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic and a period where we continued to meet the challenge of a changing environment.

Although the worst of the pandemic was over, people's grief was present and ongoing. We are proud that our volunteers and staff were able to respond to increased demand for our services and support clients to live with their grief.

At Cruse Scotland, we had one of our busiest years. More than 6,000 people received support from us. Many of these people were seeking support after 'parking' their grief whilst the world focussed on the pandemic. We supported many individuals who were unable to say goodbye to loved ones, could not receive support from family and friends, and were denied traditional funeral rituals.

We were able to sustain developments introduced in the previous year. These include: increased capacity to support our volunteers and to deliver specialist training, increased helpline capacity, and greater client accessibility to immediate support.

Other highlights for 2021/22 included working with the Scottish Government to deliver training to the Health & Social Care workforce and providing support to workplaces in the aftermath of bereavement by suicide. Improvements were made to the support we offered to people in the early stages of grief, and we further enhanced our supervision policy, which helps safeguard our volunteers, clients, and the organisation.

Behind the scenes we completed the first phase development of our website, introduced new branding, and appointed a Fundraising team.

It is fitting that in the final year of our *Building Resilience Strategy* we were able to undertake key tasks and create new roles that will help underpin the charity going forward.

## Highlights for 2021/22

### Helpline

- Continued as a freephone number
- Available seven days per week
- Opened every day during the festive period
- Increased the number of helpline volunteers
- Further developed our webchat service in collaboration with GriefChat.

### Developed counselling and support services

- Increased our virtual and phone counselling services
- Created new facilitated support groups for clients in the early stages of grief
- Improved and expanded our support to clients on an individual basis
- Introduced a walking group to our peer support service.

### Strengthened supervision practice

- Developed and implemented a new Supervision Policy
- Recruited a team of highly qualified supervisors to underpin our therapeutic practice
- Offered both individual and group supervision to all volunteers in client-facing roles.

### Recruitment of a team of freelance trainers

- Increased capacity to deliver a wide and expanding range of training
- Delivered training and support sessions to Health and Social Care Partnership staff – commissioned by the Scottish Government.

### Delivered support to workplaces in the aftermath of suicide – on behalf of the Scottish Government

Thank you to all our funders and community supporters over this difficult and challenging year for making sure we were well resourced, flexible in our approach and available every single day to support the bereaved people of Scotland.

“I have been surprised how well telephone counselling has worked. Clients have commented on the ease of anonymity, feeling they can open up more.”

June, Bereavement  
Counsellor

## “The weekends were lonely”

As a Support Worker in the care sector, Vanessa was aware of Cruse Scotland but had never had to contact them herself until her partner, John, tragically died in June 2020.

John was diagnosed with gall bladder cancer on Christmas Eve 2019, unfortunately chemotherapy didn't work for him and as his condition worsened, Vanessa gave up her job to care for him. Lockdown occurred during this period, which made the experience more intense, but Vanessa was glad to be able to look after him until he died at home, aged 49.

Vanessa understands she was suffering from 'anticipatory grief' before John's death, as she had known his condition was terminal, but she still felt "shell-shocked" when he died. A Macmillan Nurse gave her leaflets. She looked at the Cruse Scotland website, and at first tried to cope on her own. However, a few months after John's death, she was having a particularly terrible day and she called the Cruse Scotland helpline, sobbing. She expected to be given a ten-minute call slot but it lasted 45 minutes, during which she felt heard, supported and able to offload some of her grief. She used this service several times and found

it especially helpful at weekends: "it was a godsend as the weekends were lonely". And she remembers one Helpline Volunteer explained: "grief feels as if you are in the middle of the ocean and you can't see land" – an analogy she found very relatable.

Vanessa felt she was in limbo following John's death and, still in lockdown, she formed a 'bubble' with her parents. She was actually quite glad not to see anyone else, but when Covid restrictions lifted, it hit her that this was how her life was going to be – without John.

Vanessa realised that she would have to reconstruct her life somehow and in May 2021, she started online counselling sessions with Cruse Scotland, and this helped immensely. She was especially grateful that her counsellor was able to schedule sessions on difficult days, like the first anniversary of John's death and the day which would have been his 50th birthday.

It is now two years since John died and Vanessa has learned to allow her grief and sadness to exist alongside the capacity to laugh and enjoy things in life. She feels lucky to have had six months at home with John – spending quality time together, talking about what mattered most and having the chance to say goodbye to each other.

She urges others in a similar position to her to reach out for help: **"for anyone in that dark pit, just phone the Cruse Scotland helpline!"**



## Proud of the difference we've made

We're not just one team or one service. Our range of services covers many sectors and offers support throughout the year.



### Training

Increased demand for our grief and bereavement awareness training; 55 sessions trained more than 700 participants  
2,615 NHS staff completed one or more Cruse Scotland eLearning modules and access was granted to 50 staff from other organisations



### Providing information, advice and reassurance

9,505 calls received on national bereavement helpline  
1,571 support conversations took place on our webchat service, with 662 people requesting further information packs or support  
544 people requested information on grief and support via email  
58% of our clients were signposted to Cruse Scotland from their GP or NHS advisor



### Counselling and listening sessions

505 adults in the first six months of their bereavement attended 815 early support sessions  
1,122 new clients attended assessments for bereavement support needs  
1,018 adults attended 6,041 listening/counselling sessions  
111 clients were identified as at risk of suicide or self-harm following initial evaluation



### Children and young people

69 children and young people attended 376 specialist support sessions, tailored to their individual needs



### Support groups

60 members of our Step-By-Step support groups across Fife met regularly throughout the year

Over the winter months, we piloted group support in eight workplaces that were affected by suicide. This important initiative was supported and funded by the Scottish Government

## Our evidence-based service evaluation shows that Cruse Scotland intervention has a significant impact.



**90%** clients reported significant impact on wellbeing



**85%** felt able to return to work (if employed)

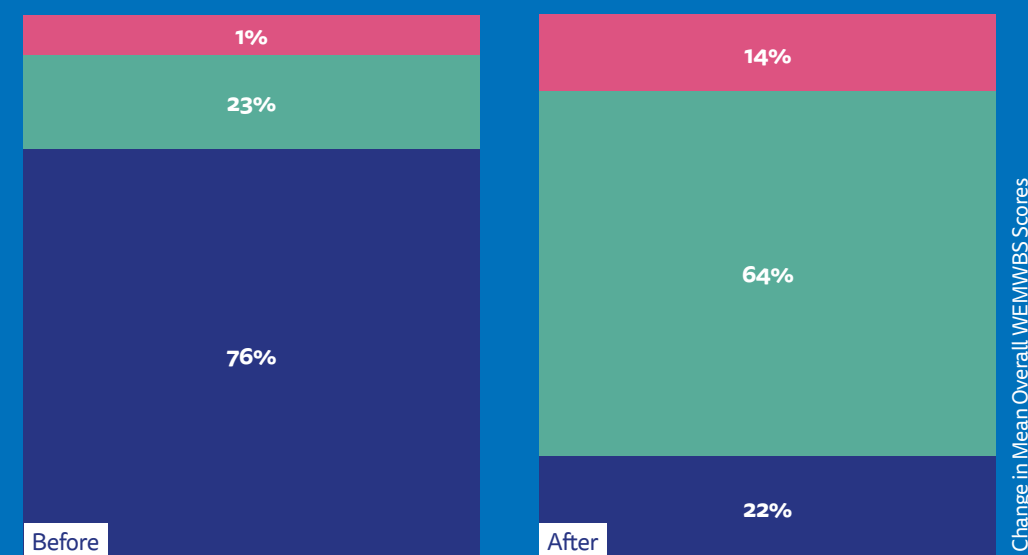


**82%** felt less isolated



**74%** clients visited their GP less often

### Proportion of clients in each group before and after intervention\*



Wellbeing:

High

Moderate

Low

Change in Mean Overall WEMWBS Scores

## “When you’re on your own, you’re on your own”

Arthur is in his eighties and regularly attends one of Cruse Scotland’s Step-by-Step groups in Fife.

About 58 years ago, Arthur went on his last blind date. That’s when he met his wife, Shirley. They’d been married for 56 years when she died. That’s a long time together.

Following her death, Arthur felt incredibly lonely: “When you’re on your own, you’re on your own. You’ve only got the walls to talk to, to shout at.” So, he contacted Cruse Scotland.

*“I didn’t really know what to expect from the Step-by-Step group. I had joined a group run by another organisation but wasn’t really satisfied – it was quite cliquey, in my opinion. But it was easy to make contact with Cruse and get details about the meetings. The first time I went, everyone was sitting in one circle so we could all talk to each other. It was very welcoming and inclusive. In fact, there’s always someone who makes sure everyone is okay.”*

The group meets once a fortnight and Arthur hasn’t missed a single session since he started going three years ago. *“It’s a good opportunity to meet new people and make a few friends – there’s a couple of people I’ve got to know in the group and now see outside the group.”*

Sometimes Step-by-Step arranges visits to places – for example, the Fife Folk Museum and the Japanese Garden. *“It’s more fun going to places with other people. You can talk to them about what you are seeing and hear what they think.”*

When asked what advice he’d give to anyone thinking of joining one of our groups, Arthur said, **“Be yourself. Don’t be afraid to come and to speak out. You can tell your story and you can hear other people’s stories. You can meet new people and find friendships. It helps beat loneliness.”**

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Cruse Scotland is grateful to The National Lottery Community Fund for support of our Step-by-Step project.

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## Thank you to our volunteers

Thank you to our amazing volunteers who showed unwavering dedication and adaptability in the face of personal and professional challenges.



**250 volunteers contributed  
12,000 hours**

**equivalent to 342  
working weeks**

*"I had a very pleasant experience with Cruse Scotland. My counsellor was extremely supportive, reassuring and helpful. He encouraged me to talk about my grief - giving me the time I needed to talk about every aspect of my grief journey, from the happy memories to the hard days. I was initially apprehensive about reaching out for counselling but I feel it has helped me through my grief, giving me better ways to cope, and helping me to understand the way I was feeling is totally normal after losing my Grandpa."*

*"It helped me in such a positive way, and I always felt safe when speaking about my feelings and thoughts."*

*"I would very much like to thank the volunteer I spoke with yesterday evening and thank her for her call. Thank you, you're a wonderful organisation."*

What difference do you think Cruse Scotland made to people grieving during the pandemic?

*"I have no doubt that having someone to listen to stories of their loved ones, hear how much they miss them and to reassure them that they did all they could do has helped a lot of callers to relieve their anxiety."*  
**Amanda, Helpline Volunteer**

*"In many cases, Cruse Scotland was the only support that some had, and the helpline the only means for them to share their grief."*  
**Graeme, Helpline Volunteer**

*"Clients have had a safe space to be able to express their fears and anxieties around the pandemic as well as explore and recognise how the pandemic impacted their grieving process."*  
**Marion, Bereavement Counsellor**

How has the pandemic changed the way you work with Cruse Scotland?

Whilst some volunteers discovered challenges with remote working – such as their own isolation, poor internet connections, clients' mobile phones failing and dogs barking in the background – there were many positives also reported:

*"Being able to take on extra clients from all over Scotland, rather than my local area, via phone, has helped bring down the waiting times for clients... [meanwhile] working from home has enabled me to give nearly 230 hours' volunteer time."*  
**Marilyn, Bereavement Counsellor**

*"I was very surprised to find that having no face-to-face contact was not a barrier to communication but, rather, an aid! Across a telephone connection, there are no visual cues so we are relieved of all the usual 'weighing up' and simply respond to the voice, the tone and empathy inherent and the words of the speaker."*  
**Lilian, Bereavement Counsellor**

## Supporting Cruse Scotland

During the past 12 months some inspiring individuals have taken part in some very impressive physical challenges to help raise vital funds for Cruse Scotland. Huge congratulations and a big thank you to everyone who has undertaken a fundraising challenge on our behalf. Here are just a few examples of the amazing feats:



Wearing tartan and big smiles were our **'six Big Strollers'** who each took on the **15 mile distance at the Aberdeen Kiltwalk**. What is even more inspiring is that three of the team are also Cruse Scotland volunteer counsellors!

Including the 50% Kiltwalk top-up, **more than £3,000 was raised through their efforts!**

**Kezia Falconer raised £2,000 by taking on the Edinburgh Sunset Marathon** – a unique experience for her first 26.2 mile race! Ahead of the challenge Kezia stated "I love to run baths, occasionally I run late and I've perfected running to the shops... but wish me well running 26 miles!" We are very grateful for her determination and delighted to share that she completed the marathon in five hours and 16 minutes.



By supporting us you help give hope to people in Scotland struggling with their grief.

Cruse Scotland relies on your generosity to ensure adults, young people and children struggling to cope after a bereavement, can access our professional services and receive the right help at the right time. **£10 could cover costs of one hour of the helpline, £50 would**

**pay for a one-to-one counselling session. £100 would train a helpline volunteer and £500 would pay for a specialist to receive Children and Young Person support training.**

Here are just a few ways in which you can get involved and make a difference.

### Create

Use your talents for good and get creative. Who doesn't love cake? Organise a bake sale! Or if you prefer to knit, make greeting cards, Christmas decorations or draw caricatures, get crafty for Cruse Scotland!

### Have fun

**Live Stream** – if you're a gamer, why not hold a championship or stream your skills online asking for tips as donations?

**Quiz night** – lots of fun and friendly competition can be had by organising a pub quiz or a trivia night at home or online, charging for entry and holding a raffle.

**Dress up or dress down** – workplaces and schools can have a dress down for £2 day, or why not pick a theme and dress up with fancy dress or a simple Christmas Jumper day.

### Get physical

We often have free or discounted entries to challenge events all across Scotland including the Kiltwalks and running festivals.

Whether you want to take on a family fun 5km jog at night around the Kelpies, a 13 mile walk while wearing tartan in Aberdeen, or beat your personal best in a marathon in Edinburgh, we can find the perfect event for you. We're also here to support you if you wish to set up your own activity – get in touch!



**Cruse  
Scotland**  
Bereavement Support

If you would like this report in large print, braille, audio, or in another language please call 01738 444 178.

**Registered Office:**

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Cruse Scotland is a company limited by guarantee, no. SC218026 and a registered Scottish charity, no. SC031600.

\*Results spreadsheet Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)  
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