

# Held in our Hearts



*The Accelerate programme gave us a 360-degree view of our organisation, showing us what we are doing well and how we can improve. This support has been invaluable to the future of our organisation.*

## Background

Held In our Hearts was formed in 2020, having previously operated as SANDS Lothians, and is the only charity in Scotland providing specialist, long-term baby loss counselling for individuals and families.

The organisation currently has premises in Edinburgh and Livingston, servicing the Lothians and central Scotland. A baby loss counselling and peer support services is also available to communities across the Highlands and the Borders. Held in our Hearts now operates in 6 of the 14 Health Board areas in Scotland.

In recent years, the need for providing basic health and wellbeing support has increased dramatically and when placed in the context of baby loss and bereavement this results in even more pressures being placed on individuals, families, and the statutory and voluntary services designed to support them. Since 2021 and 2022 alone, Held in Our Hearts has experienced a 60% increase in monthly referrals.

## Need for support

In view of this increasing demand, coupled with a changeable funding environment, Held in our Hearts accessed support through Accelerate to undertake an external impact exercise to identify and understand the difference its work makes to those who use the service as well as where and how it supports and complements existing infrastructures and services.

Importantly, the report was also designed to help identify areas where the organisation could further develop and evolve, highlighting existing gaps or unmet needs – as well as diversifying its funding streams and generating income.

## What we did

Accelerate worked with Held in our Hearts over a six-month period and produced an Impact Report in June 2023.

The report confirmed that the service provided by Held in our Hearts is highly valued by those accessing its services as well as other external stakeholders and partners. The report provides a strong platform from which to promote and raise awareness of its services to even more NHS Boards in Scotland – helping to create a 'national footprint' across the country.

It also identified some gaps or opportunities for the charity to extend its reach – whilst not jeopardising the existing quality of service. These could include providing professional development and training services to NHS staff and engaging with employers to provide training/awareness raising to staff who may have experienced baby loss.

Together, the report will enhance Held in our Hearts' opportunities to work collaboratively and forge partnerships at both an operational and strategic level. These actions will contribute to its longer-term sustainability and help ensure that such an important and high-quality service is accessible to as many individuals and families across Scotland as possible.

[Watch the video case study here](#)

