

## Grief Support Services AGM General Managers Annual Report 2023-2024

The 2023-2024 year at Grief Support Services has been marked by staff changes, increasing demands for our services, new systems and opportunities.

We farewelled Sharon Blythe, Amy Colonna, Rachel Burne and Janine Flowers. Anne Shilston has taken up a paid role, moving from volunteer to staff. We also welcomed new staff; Michelle Burling, Andrea Clark and Pamela Shennan. Some staff members have taken on extra hours in response to increased service demand. Jen Murray, Funding Coordinator (subcontractor), continued to support us with fundraising applications, website management, marketing and social media. Thank you. I have joined the team as the General Manager in August 2023, and GSS has successfully navigated changes and challenges, and is excited about the future.

Throughout the year we have averaged 13 staff members (most of them part-time), 1 student counsellor and 6 volunteers. Scheduling and managing the clients' comings and goings is effectively organised by two administration staff who job-share. They have a busy workload, including reorganising appointments for those who did not attend (DNA's) – this occurs for a range of reasons such as caring responsibilities, sickness, Covid-19, etc. We have been exploring a range of options to reduce DNAs and therefore reduce the wasted time and opportunity they cause. It is one of many KPI's the Board actively monitor.

Paid staff, volunteers and students are passionate about their work at GSS, with the common goal to provide the best services to our clients. The positive impact of their dedication can be seen in our satisfaction and client outcomes responses (attached in summary at the end of this report).

Staff engaged with an array of professional development (PD) activities, including GROW training which was negotiated by APG and hugely appreciated by GSS. PD is crucial in ensuring our staff keeps learning and brings back to GSS latest knowledge in counselling, grief, loss, and leadership.

The demand for our services in the Western Bay of Plenty continues to rise. We see children (aged 6+), young people, families/whānau, and individuals, and deliver our services at our offices and out in the community. Detailed demographics of those using our services are shown in the data at the end of this report. We do our best to tackle our waiting list and minimise the waiting time with resources available to us, but funding is still our biggest barrier to expand our services.

In addition to 1:1 counselling sessions for those affected by grief and loss, we have continued to provide:

- Our Suicide Bereavement Support services: Riverlight Katikati/Waihi Beach and Horizons Papamoa groups; SLS Peers service; and WAVES programmes. We also organised a Remembrance Concert in September to recognise the loss of loved ones to suicide.
- Community presentations about grief, loss and support available.
- Presentation for professionals and non-professionals.

Plus, we started a bi-monthly bereavement group in partnership with Elliotts Funeral Service.

We have kept our budget tight and successfully moved to an IT based HR system that has made administration behind the scenes simpler and has ensured we are compliant with the latest HR policies and procedures.

We have not had any major health and safety issues over the last year. Health and safety information is monitored by the Board to make sure if anything arises it is addressed promptly.

We would not be here for those in need of our support if it wasn't for the kind and generous support of philanthropic groups, donors, supporters and corporate partners who have supported us this year - we have received money, grants, discounted services and free services from them. This accounts for two thirds of the money we need to operate the service.

The remainder comes from a Te Whatu Ora (TWO) / Health New Zealand (HNZ) contract to support those bereaved or affected by suicide/suicidality which was renewed for a further 2 years. GSS was successfully audited by them receiving very few recommendations that were actioned immediately, including minor changes to our Smoking Policy and the implementation of a Death/Tangihanga Policy. We have also gone through their He Ritenga audit, and are currently actioning on their recommendations, including the reinstatement of cultural supervision for staff, and the development of a Māori Health Plan.

We are extremely grateful for the financial and in-kind support we received from our funders, donors, supporters, and corporate partners. Thank you! We also thank the local artists that have placed art on the walls, for all to enjoy, and purchase if wanted. Furthermore, we would like to say a huge thank you to our amazing volunteers who bring their lived experience to GSS services.

Last year we talked about further financial adversity we would face in the new financial year (2024-25) based on our latest annual performance report, conversations with funders, increasing service demand, change in government, potential contract cuts, and current climate including rise in the cost of living and higher expenses. Therefore, a huge part of 2023-24 financial year was used to explore new opportunities. I worked on a range of plans to diversify our income in the 2024-2025 financial year including our new 'Grief in the Workplace Support Package' for businesses; new corporate partnership opportunities; our very first 'ARA 2024 – Arts, Recognition and Awareness Event'; 'Learning Over Kai' mini workshop sessions for professionals; fundraising activities in schools; and more!

We also worked hard and developed a tight budget to ensure resources were put towards the most important things to deliver our services. We continue to responsibly manage our budget and resources and to be diligent in reporting and recognising our funders, who provide so much to Grief Support Services and ensure we remain viable.

I would also like to thank our Board of Trustees for their ongoing support, in particular Bronwyn Jackson for her crucial support during the Te Whatu Ora (TWO) / Health New Zealand (HNZ) audits; Lynne Cotter for her support with the previous end of financial year accounts; and Amanda Webb for leading the development and implementation of a comprehensive risk management framework that has been adopted by the Board.

Ana Toneato, General Manager - November 2024

	2023/2024	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020
EOY Waiting List	84	115	46	62	45
Carried fwd clients from previous year	246	247*	127	86	123
New clients	567	568	476	435	392
Total clients seen	1040	1059	605	521	515
TWO sessions	821	634	734	816	564
Other/PHO sessions	2303	2296	1900	1592	1557
Total sessions	3124	2930	2634	2408	2121
Av. Sessions/month	260	244	220	201	176
Attendance rate	80%	77%	80%	81%	81%
<24 hours notice	13%	15%	13%	13%	12%
Did not attend	7%	7%	7%	6%	7%
Rescheduled appts due to Covid 19	86	99	165	4	-
WAVES attendance	82	51	73	90	50
Horizons T07	36	37	20	60	0
SLS Peers – meeting with clients	32	33	21	28	0
Av. Wait time (calendar days)	35.4	27.2	39.0	24	30.3
Breakdown sessions: Pd staff	96.6%	83%	78%	72%	76%
Volunteer	0.4%	7%	11%	11%	14%
Student	3%	10%	11%	17%	10%

\* This figure has been recalculated by using the same methodology utilised to calculate the 2023/2024 figure.