



Our vision and strategy

A better approach
to dying and grief

Sue Ryder

**Because no one
should face death
or grief alone**

Our vision and strategy

We are pleased to present our vision and strategic goals, which aim to transform the experience of everyone facing dying or grief in the UK. We are proud to be leading this movement for urgent change, growing our impact through our unique expertise and presence in communities across the UK, with the support of our experienced staff, dedicated volunteers and our supporters.

Our research shows that the healthcare sector is facing a crisis, and we must act immediately. Demand for palliative and end-of-life care across the UK is increasing and people who have been bereaved are not able to access the support they want and need. Conversations about dying and grief are too often avoided, which can leave people unprepared for their own or a loved one's death and many others unable to reach out for support with their grief.

We believe that there is an urgent and growing need for change to improve how we care for people who are dying and grieving in the UK. Our vision and strategy is our commitment to:

- Rapidly develop and expand our expert palliative and end-of-life care services, doubling the number of people we care for in the next five years.
- Continue our work with the Government and local decision-makers to ensure that the voices of people living with life-limiting conditions or with grief are heard, and access to the care and support they need is unlocked.
- Reduce the stigma around death and dying to enable everyone to have open and honest conversations about dying and grief with their friends and family.
- Share our extensive expertise with wider society for the benefit of people who are dying and grieving, today and in the future.

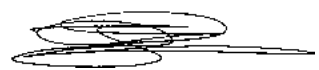
- Use our presence in communities across the UK to have a positive impact and ensure people are supported through dying and grief.

To deliver our strategy, we must remain agile and unapologetically bold, while putting the needs of people at the end of their lives and those living with grief at the heart of our work. When it comes to equity of access, the sector needs organisations like Sue Ryder to drive the urgent change that is necessary to address challenges in the health and care system. We are focused on breaking down barriers so that people from all communities can access high-quality, culturally relevant palliative care and grief support. We are determined to help create a society where communities are equipped to support each other and people can access a range of services and advice when they need it.

We must not wait. Our vision and strategic goals set out how we plan to build a society that supports everyone through dying and grief. It's the kind of society we will all need at some point, and we invite you to be part of it.



Dr Rima Makarem
Chair of Trustees



James Sanderson
Chief Executive

The challenges we face

Right now, across the UK, many people who are approaching the end of their life or living with grief are unable to access the support they need, with appropriate services inaccessible to certain communities. End-of-life care is fragmented, and services and funding haven't evolved to meet the changing and increasing needs of the population. Bereavement support is patchy, often leaving people with nowhere clear to turn.

To ensure people can live and die well, now and in the future, we must urgently rethink how palliative and end-of-life care is delivered in the UK.

The palliative and end-of-life care (PEoLC) system is not set up to care for people who are living longer, with increasingly complex conditions. Currently, 43% of deaths occur in hospitals*, and a third of hospital inpatient care is for people in the last year of their life†. This puts pressure on services and staff and can lead to poorer experiences for patients and families.

People increasingly want to be cared for and die in their own homes but are often unable to access the support they need.

There's a taboo when it comes to talking about death in the UK. This means difficult conversations about end-of-life and after-death wishes often go unspoken. This can deter people from accessing palliative care services earlier on and leave loved ones wondering if there was more they could have done.

People who are bereaved tell us that they often feel unable to reach out for support from friends and family and struggle to find the support and information they want in the form it is needed.

For some people, the right support means specialist palliative care or professional bereavement support. For others, it means access to information and resources, signposting to financial help, or support from within their community.

The system in the UK needs to change, to allow everybody who is grieving or living with a life-limiting condition and their families to be supported through the most difficult of times.



* Office for National Statistics. <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/what-primaryand-community-services-do-people-who-die-at-home-receive>
† BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care. https://spcare.bmj.com/content/14/Suppl_1/A20.3

The figures

These stark numbers show why we must urgently transform palliative and end-of-life care and grief in the UK, to meet our population's ever-increasing and changing needs.

- Every year around 600,000 people die in England, Scotland and Wales,¹ and it is estimated that five people are affected by bereavement for every death.²
- Sue Ryder polling found that almost nine out of ten people in the UK have not recorded their wishes in what is known as an advance care plan (ACP).⁸
- The demand for palliative care services is expected to have risen by 55% between 2021 and 2031.³
- According to our research, 70% of people who experienced a close bereavement reported they could not access the support they wanted.⁹
- 43% of deaths still happen in hospital⁴ when most people (74%) would choose to die at home with nurse and carer support.⁵
- Almost one in five people cited that the barriers preventing them from accessing bereavement support were a lack of culturally relevant services.¹⁰
- 84% of terminally ill people have had either little or no discussion with a healthcare professional about palliative and end-of-life care options.⁶
- 88% of people who have been bereaved in the UK feel alone in their grief.¹¹
- Over two-fifths (43%) of people have not spoken to their loved ones about their end-of-life care wishes.⁷
- 51% of people feel they are bad at talking about death and grief, while 83% think the UK as a whole is bad at talking about death and grief.¹²

1. ONS (2024), 568,613 deaths registered in England and Wales: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathregistrationsummarystatisticsenglandandwales/2024> NRS (2024), 61,585 deaths registered in Scotland: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/deaths-registered-weekly-in-scotland/>

2. A.M. Verdery, E. Smith-Greenaway, R. Margolis, & J. Daw, Tracking the reach of COVID-19 kin loss with a bereavement multiplier applied to the United States, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 117 (30) 17695-17701, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2007476117> (2020). Please note: This figure is from line 1 of Table 1 and is based on parent/sibling/spouse/child loss.

3. Sue Ryder research, Modelling demand and costs for palliative care services in England, February 2021.

4. Office for National Statistics. <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/what-primaryand-community-services-do-people-who-die-at-home-receive>

5. Attitudes to palliative care research conducted by Censuswide and commissioned by Sue Ryder, March 2022.

6. Terminally ill people's views on assisted dying polling conducted by YouGov and commissioned by Sue Ryder, between 27th March – 5th May 2025.

7. Attitudes to palliative care research conducted by Censuswide and commissioned by Sue Ryder, March 2024.

8. Attitudes to palliative care research conducted by Censuswide and commissioned by Sue Ryder, March 2024.

9. Sue Ryder (2022), A better route through grief. https://media.sueryder.org/documents/A_better_route_through_grief_report.pdf

10. Sue Ryder (2022), A better route through grief. https://media.sueryder.org/documents/A_better_route_through_grief_report.pdf

11. 88% of 1,001 bereaved UK customers, in research conducted by Censuswide and commissioned by Sue Ryder, October 2024.

12. 88% of 1,001 bereaved UK customers, in research conducted by Censuswide and commissioned by Sue Ryder, October 2024.



Our vision

We want a society that supports everyone through dying and grief.

A society where the voices of people who are dying or grieving are heard, where everyone gets the care and support they need and services are integrated with the wider healthcare system.

A society where everybody can have open and honest conversations with their friends and family to help them prepare for death and where people with a life-limiting diagnosis are supported to live well in the time they have left.

Where trusted resources, information and bereavement services are accessible to everybody who needs them and where communities across the country provide support and empathy to those in need so that nobody grieves alone.

Our five strategic goals

To ensure our strategy becomes a reality for people across the UK, we have set ourselves five strategic goals:

**Transforming our
palliative and
end-of-life care**

**Growing our grief
support**

**Using our evidence,
voice and campaigns to
create positive change**

**Ensuring we have a
positive impact on
communities**

**Using our expertise to
support wider society**

Transforming our palliative and end-of-life care

We want to lead the way in developing a new ecosystem for palliative and end-of-life care, to ensure everyone approaching the end of their life can access the care and support they urgently need.

We will:

- Double the number of people we care for in five years, by growing our support for people in their own homes, increasing the services we offer in the community, and working with partners to develop new and innovative ways of providing care.
- Help people to access this essential care in a coordinated way, by working with the NHS to provide proactive care in specialist hospices for people in their last 1,000 days of life and those living with complex conditions. This will ensure the right expertise is used to support people approaching the end of their life.
- Progress plans to provide a radically improved approach to hospital care to support the NHS and ensure people dying in hospitals have a better death.
- Challenge society's reluctance to talk about death and dying and support people to plan and prepare for palliative and end-of-life care by working with partners to develop digital options for this.



Growing our grief support

We want to offer more support to people living with grief, through our online grief support and volunteer-led support networks across the UK.

We will:

- Help people who are grieving to find the support they need, by increasing awareness of our grief support and expanding our personalised grief services, like our online Grief Guide platform.
- Support and empower communities across the UK to set up peer-to-peer grief support networks, bringing people together as they navigate their grief journey.
- Support the continued growth of our Online Bereavement Community, ensuring this space meets people's needs and reflects all communities.
- Improve understanding of grief across the UK; using our own evidence and insights to start conversations, share stories, and provide knowledge, information and guidance. We will help to create a society where people feel comfortable talking about grief and where support is readily available from friends, family and the wider community so that no one goes through grief alone.

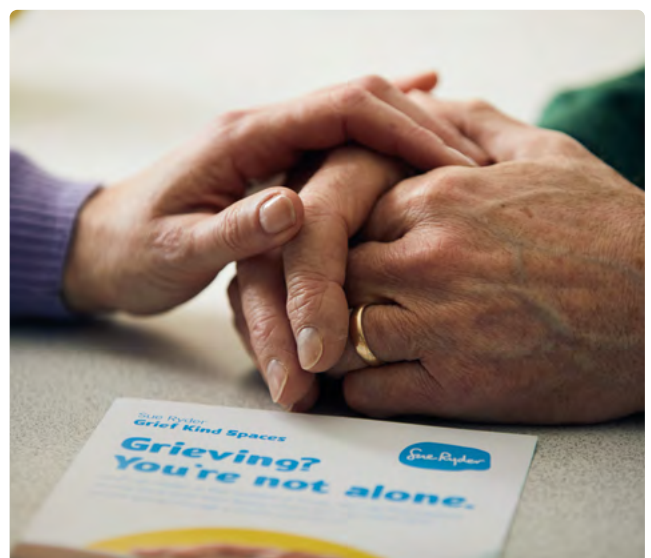


Using our evidence, voice and campaigns to create positive change

We want to break the taboo of talking about death and dying; raise awareness of the issues that are important to people; and amplify the voices of people who are dying or grieving.

We will:

- Increase public and political recognition of our work and of the critical issues affecting people who are dying or grieving so that they are high on the agenda and more people understand what we do and why it is important.
- Build new partnerships and work collaboratively with the wider end-of-life and bereavement sector, government, and local and national stakeholders, to make the biggest difference for people who are dying or grieving, so that sector issues are addressed in a coordinated way.
- Use our powerful research, evidence and insight to work with MPs and policymakers and drive urgent change to better support people who are dying or grieving.
- Amplify the voices of people who are grieving or facing the end of life and use their views and experiences to evidence issues and to campaign and call for change to improve outcomes.



Ensuring we have a positive impact on communities

We want local communities to have access to the information, resources and support they need to support each other, helping to build a society where people feel comfortable talking about dying and grief.

We will:

- Lead a national movement for community-led peer-to-peer grief support and use our presence on hundreds of high streets to provide information and knowledge to communities. We will create engaging grief support materials to use in our shops and identify how these spaces can be used more effectively to benefit local communities and help people support one another through dying and grief.
- Deepen our connections with communities through our high street shops, introducing new product ranges that support wellbeing and help people live more sustainably. We will also develop the relationship between our retail and fundraising offers to support income growth so we can meet the surging demand for our services.
- Continue to provide a vibrant and engaging volunteer experience, which appeals to people living in the communities around our shops and services and reflects the diversity of the areas we serve.
- Continue to actively ensure that our retail spaces are welcoming for all, using our position as a national employer to support inclusion and diversity drives.



Using our expertise to support wider society

We want to engage with healthcare professionals, organisations and the public to provide the right resources and share our expertise to build a society that supports everyone through dying and grief.

We will:

- Provide vital education and training to healthcare professionals on palliative and end-of-life care and bereavement, so that more healthcare professionals can use our expertise to support patients and their families. Through our Sue Ryder International Learning Academy, we also want to equip professionals with the skills and confidence to have effective conversations about care wishes, which our research shows is urgently needed.
- Develop accreditation programmes for our training courses to help raise standards across society and ensure high quality in palliative and end-of-life care and bereavement support.
- Provide resources including webinars, training and information to help businesses and other organisations improve their support to people who are experiencing palliative and end-of-life care or grief. We believe dying and grief deserve better in the workplace and the right support is essential for employees' health and wellbeing.
- Reach across borders to provide international expertise, by establishing international partnership opportunities and sharing training and research insights with international audiences.





Sue Ryder is here to make sure everyone approaching the end of their life or living with grief can access the support they need. There is no one size fits all when it comes to how we cope and the help we need, but with our support, no one has to face dying or grief alone. We are there when it matters.

For more information about Sue Ryder

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This document is available in alternative formats on request.



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