

**RAINBOWS BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GREAT BRITAIN**

**STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**JULY 2015 – JULY 2018**

**Charity No: 1058476**

**Company Number: 03231375**

## INTRODUCTION:

Rainbows Bereavement Support GB is a well-respected national charity having a positive impact on the lives of children, young people and adults grieving a significant and often devastating loss in their lives.

Rainbows Bereavement Support GB offers training in bereavement and loss, and supports communities in reviewing or developing their own bereavement policy and procedures. Through locally based Registered Directors, the charity offers training in the use of Rainbows age related peer support programmes which help foster emotional healing among children, young people and adults. On-going support is provided to affirm and advise the trained facilitators and co-ordinators that run the programmes in schools, colleges, prisons and other community settings.

## OUR VISION AND CURRENT POSITION:

The vision of Rainbows Bereavement Support GB is quite simply for every child and young person in every school in Great Britain grieving a significant and often devastating loss in their lives, to be understood and supported appropriately. Rainbows Bereavement Support Great Britain, founded in 1992, now operates in over 1060 schools in England, Scotland and Wales. It is currently available to over 85,000 children and young people.

Strongly rooted in the Catholic Church, training and programmes are available to all, irrespective of faith, ethnicity, gender or ability. The Institute of Our Lady of Mercy has provided tremendous financial and practical support including a previous National Director in Sr. Philippa Kohlbecker. Other well respected National Directors of Rainbows GB have been Deacon Nigel Bavidge, now deceased, Sr. Pat Daly, a member of La Sainte Union and Sue McDermott (from 2010 to May 2015). During this time a programme of regional expansion and restructuring took place; the National Resource Centre and Registered Office was relocated, new regional structures were developed, new resources created and new staff appointed.

In May 2015 Sue McDermott was appointed Non-Executive Director and Trustee to ensure effective transition to a new model of two part-time National Co-Directors. Following due process, the Trustees were delighted to appoint Katrina Avery and Sarah Knightley to lead the charity.

In so doing we continue to believe that training in bereavement and loss should be part of every school’s programme for the continuous professional development of all staff; that Rainbows programmes should be available to all children and young people; and that all schools should have a bereavement policy and procedures in place. We believe there needs to be statutory provision for bereavement support in schools, including other characteristic contemporary forms of loss, such as parental relationship breakdown.

We acknowledge that there are a number of national and regional organisations working in the same field as ourselves. We respect the valuable work of these organisations and continue to collaborate through the sharing of good practice and expertise wherever appropriate. We believe that the scale of need amongst children and young people is such that in order to continue to be true to our values we need to work in partnership with them and view them as partners in serving grieving children.

## INDEPENDENT RESEARCH:

An independent evaluation of the direct impact of the Rainbows Programme was undertaken in 2011 in South Yorkshire.

The study found strong evidence that Rainbows makes a tremendous difference to children and young people who are grieving a significant loss through a death, divorce, separation or any other painful transition in their lives (Hutchings, 2011).

In particular, participants benefited by having a trained, trusted adult who facilitates peer group work in a safe, community setting It is the nature of provision within an existing, established community setting in which the child participant is already a member that is a unique feature of the Rainbows programme, offering as it does the possibility of on-going support after the programme and demonstrating the setting’s commitment to the aims of the programme.

The findings show that Rainbows benefits the participants’ self-esteem and emotional development, their ability to form and sustain relationships and their inclusion in school life. Examples of what children, young people, parents and headteachers said can be found below:

***“It’s a time when I can say everything to someone I trust”*** Mollie (Year 9 student)

***“It helped me with my family problems I couldn’t talk about at home”*** Elijah (aged 14)

***“Rainbows helps me by listening to my problems and talking … no matter how many times I cry, being in a bad mood isn’t going to make them come back and so they help me get back on track.*”** (17 year old student)

The children’s and young people’s comments were supported by the responses from parents and carers who recognised the value of the programme in offering the opportunity for their child to talk about their experiences to supportive others outside the family environment.

One mum said **“*Rainbows has made my child grow in confidence, he has come out of his ‘shell’, rather than getting angry he sits and talks his feelings through.”***

And a father whose wife had died talked about the impact of Rainbows on his son ***“… he was finding losing his Mum so very difficult to come to terms with. Since attending Rainbows he can now speak openly about his mum and ask a variety of questions.”***

Of the headteachers questioned during the research project 97% believed the Rainbows programme had helped to develop the professional skills of the staff in the school. It was also seen to make a valuable and unique contribution to the ethos of the school and promoted school partnerships with parents.

***“I couldn’t imagine our school without Rainbows – it’s part of our induction programme for new staff too”*** (Headteacher, Primary School)

***“Rainbows has proved to be a cost effective means of supporting vulnerable children and young people within our school. It has developed the professional skills of staff and has fostered positive relationships between home and school”*** (Headteacher, Community High School)

***“We’ve run Rainbows programmes for years – it’s an integral part of our curriculum in nurturing human wholeness. All our staff, students and parents are aware of it … so are OFSTED!”*** (Headteacher, Catholic High School)

Rainbows programmes have also been introduced into a number of prisons through the work of the Prison Chaplains. The nature of this population and the institutional environment means such work requires considerable sensitivity and is a role that could only be undertaken by a trusted member of the community. Security issues meant it was not possible for the researcher to access prisoners directly nonetheless the Rainbows facilitator commented on the very positive experiences of prisoners who have accessed the programme:

***”Those who traced their behaviour and reasons for their imprisonment back to the death of a close family member, can have real issues with forgiveness and acceptance”*** … and the Programme ***“has been of great benefit in supporting the more vulnerable in some groups”*** Prison Chaplain

This served to highlight the significant need for the Rainbows programme to be available to children and young people in all schools and communities because intervention and support at an appropriate time can help prevent emotional and behavioural problems in later years.

The research findings show that Rainbows programmes benefit the participants’ self-esteem and emotional development, their ability to form and sustain relationships and their inclusion in school life – all important characteristics of healthy mental well-being.

## OUR PLANS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS:

## 2015 – 2018

## GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Trustees will ensure clear direction for the charity over the next three years.

Priority will be given to:

* Supporting the newly appointed National Co-Directors through a planned programme of induction, support and supervision
* Succession Planning at all levels of the organisation to secure continuity of our vision and mission
* Expanding the National Management Committee to further broaden the expertise and experiences of its members
* Appointing a number of new Trustees following the retirement of two long serving members of the Board
* Further strengthening the regional structure of the charity throughout Great Britain by deepening the effectiveness of regional support/management groups and reviewing the regional terms of reference
* Reviewing and updating all employment policies to ensure the charity continues to meet all statutory requirements

## FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

The Trustees will encourage and support members of the Finance Committee to take all necessary steps to further financially secure the charity through:

* Submitting applications for funding to appropriate trusts, organisations and national government
* Significantly increasing the number of individuals who donate to Rainbows through direct debit and gift aid declarations
* Encouraging local fundraising initiatives in regions while at the same time seeking direct and robust funds to strengthen the national organisation
* Ensuring that all new regions have secure financial procedures and controls in place
* Seeking the most effective use of existing funds and savings

## CONSOLIDATING AND DEVELOPING RAINBOWS GB

The Trustees will work closely with the National Co-Directors and the National Management Committee in seeking to secure, consolidate and further develop Rainbows GB through:

* Promoting proven and effective strategies for the on-going support to the existing 1000+ schools using the Rainbows programmes.
* Promoting regional conferences, high quality communication, bereavement training of new headteachers, staff, co-ordinators and facilitators
* Communicating the work of Rainbows Bereavement Support GB to appropriate Government Departments and other bodies. In particular the proven impact of Rainbows programmes benefiting the participants’ self-esteem, emotional development, their ability to form and sustain relationships and their inclusion in school life – important characteristics of healthy mental well-being.
* Encouraging the growth of Rainbows in new geographical areas including Nottingham/East Midlands, Southwark/Kent, Northamptonshire, Portsmouth and Scotland
* Updating the website and exploring other means of electronic communication
* As in our previous successful strategic development plan, establish the Rainbows programmes in at least one hundred new settings. *(Our 2012 – 2015 Plan saw the establishment of 141 new settings)*

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF RAINBOWS REGISTERED DIRECTORS (RAINBOWS DEVELOPMENT WORKERS)

The Trustees will support the two National Co-Directors and National Management Committee to ensure the highest standards of continuous professional development for all personnel involved in the delivery of Rainbows by:

* Updating the successful and effective training programme for new Registered Directors in light of new census data and strategies to promote mental health well-being
* Maintaining and further developing the current systems of communication with regular newsletters and information updates as new resources are published
* Ensuring that the successful annual opportunities for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) continue with a strong training element and pastoral support
* Ensuring the well-being of all Registered Directors, voluntary or paid, by clarifying their professional roles, responsibilities and expectations

## REVIEWING AND DEVELOPING THE RAINBOWS PROGRAMMES

The trustees will work closely with the two National Co-Directors and National Management Committee to encourage the planned review of existing Rainbows programmes and the development of new programmes.

In particular, the following programmes will be reviewed and if funds allow, up-dated and re-printed:

* Levels One, Two and Three of the Rainbows Programme
* SunBeams (For the youngest children)
* Sunrise (for adults with learning difficulties) to be adapted for children with special educational needs

*Approved at a meeting of the Trustees on 23rd June 2015*

***National Co-Directors****:*

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