



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Welcome!

Chasing Rainbows Charity was created in 2020 following the Founder, Sam's, own lived experience of baby loss and requirement of fertility treatment. Sam reports to have felt alone and isolated following her losses which drove her to create and build the charity.

Chasing Rainbows Charity provides a wide range of compassionate, practical, and advocacy-led services to support individuals and families navigating infertility, pregnancy loss, and life after loss. The charity has a reach locally, nationally within the UK and globally.

At its core, the charity focuses on making sure no one feels alone in these experiences. It offers free online fertility coaching, giving accessible guidance to those trying to conceive. Alongside this, it runs face-to-face peer support groups, creating safe, understanding spaces for people dealing with infertility, recurrent miscarriage, pregnancy after loss, and the devastating realities of late-trimester loss, stillbirth, and neonatal death.

For more personal support, the charity provides 1:1 telephone calls, ensuring individuals can speak privately with someone who truly understands. This is complemented by a fully established peer support (pen pal) service, which connects people going through similar journeys, helping them build meaningful, supportive relationships over time.

Chasing Rainbows also works beyond direct support. It delivers training to businesses and healthcare professionals, improving awareness, sensitivity, and care standards around baby loss and fertility struggles. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting patient voices and self-advocacy, empowering individuals to feel heard and respected within healthcare systems.

The charity also supports hospitals by supplying bereavement memory-making facilities, such as hand and foot casting kits, helping families create lasting memories of their babies.

In terms of innovation and advocacy, it introduced the first pregnancy-after-loss lanyard, following recommendations from the UK parliamentary pregnancy loss review. This initiative helps healthcare staff identify and better support those who are pregnant after experiencing loss.

In April 2026, the charity reached a major milestone by opening the first dedicated baby loss hub in Yorkshire, creating a central, supportive space for community, care, and resources.

Alongside all of this, it maintains a highly impactful social media presence, focused on validation, awareness, and breaking the stigma around infertility and baby loss—ensuring people feel seen, understood, and supported every day.

Overall, Chasing Rainbows Charity combines emotional support, practical resources, advocacy, and innovation to create a truly holistic support system for those facing some of life's most difficult experiences.

Our Mission

The charities main objectives are:

To raise awareness and understanding in the subject of fertility, baby loss and recurrent miscarriage and into its effects on women and their partners, whether physical, medical, psychological or social

The relief of physical and mental sickness of persons in need by reason of baby loss and recurrent miscarriages, in particular by provision of peer support services, to provide support and assistance for women and partners who are suffering from any physical or mental illness or distress as a result of baby loss and/or infertility.

The three ethos' we aim to adhere too, are:

'Never give up on a bad day'

'If you can't see the light, I will sit in the dark with you'

'Keep on Chasing Rainbows'

All Loss Matters

Chasing Rainbows truly believes that all loss matters therefore, we offer support a variety of different people. Whilst volunteering you may come across a variety of experiences, it can be helpful to have an understanding of different losses.

Chemical pregnancy – A chemical pregnancy is an early pregnancy loss that occurs shortly after implantation, usually before the fifth week of gestation, often before an ultrasound can detect a gestational sac.

Spontaneous miscarriage – A spontaneous miscarriage is the natural, involuntary loss of a pregnancy. An early miscarriage is between 6-13 weeks and a late miscarriage is 13-23 weeks and 6 days.

Missed Miscarriage – A missed miscarriage occurs when the pregnancy stops developing but the body does not immediately recognise the loss, resulting in no bleeding or pain. An early missed miscarriage is between 6-13 weeks and a late missed miscarriage is 13-23 weeks and 6 days.

Ectopic pregnancy – An ectopic pregnancy occurs when the embryo implants outside of the uterus, most commonly the fallopian tube. This resulting in a non-viable pregnancy and potentially life threatening situation for the woman, sometimes resulting in the loss of her fallopian tube. Although less common, Caesarean section scar ectopic is when the embryo implants into the scar tissue of a previous caesarean section scar.

Molar pregnancy – A complete or partial molar pregnancy is when abnormal fertilisation has occurred and clusters of tissue form instead of a healthy pregnancy.

Termination for medical reasons 'TFMR' – An interruption of pregnancy following a diagnosis of severe fetal anomalies detected via screening methods or a risk to the mothers health.

Stillbirth – The death of a baby after 24 weeks of pregnancy and before birth.

Neonatal death – The death of a liveborn baby within the first 28 days of life.

Infant/child death – The death of a baby/child after 28 days.

Sibling loss – This can occur during pregnancy or following birth of a multiple pregnancy where one or more babies die. It is often identified by a 'purple butterfly'.

Role of a Chasing Rainbows volunteer

We cannot thank you enough for sparing your time to volunteer for Chasing Rainbows. We understand that there a wide variety of way in which a person could represent or volunteer for us, therefore this handbook aims to provide a guide for many different eventualities.

What you are	Definition	This means	Examples
A compassionate listener	Your primary role is to listen and acknowledge someone's experience.	• Allowing them to share at their own pace • Accepting their feelings without judgement • Not trying to 'Fix' or change their emotions	"That sounds really hard, thank you for sharing that with me"
A consistent and reliable presence	Consistency builds trust – especially for people who may be feeling isolated or let down	• Respond within agreed timeframes • Let the person know if you are unavailable • Keep communication predictable and steady	
A source of validation	Help the individual feel understood and accepted	• Normalising a wide range of emotions (grief, anger, jealousy) • Reassuring them that their feelings are valid	"It makes complete sense you are feeling that way after everything you have been through"

A safe and non-judgemental space	Create an environment where someone can be honest without fear	• Avoid assumptions • Respecting different choices, beliefs and coping styles • Being open to emotions that may feel uncomfortable	
A Sign poster	You may guide someone towards additional support when needed	• Encourage them to speak with a health professional • Share trusted resources provided by the charity	See page for services to signpost to

Communication Guidance

Communicating and supporting somebody experiencing infertility or baby loss can feel daunting. You may feel worried about saying too much, too little or the wrong thing – what matters most is kindness, honesty and presence...not perfection.

1. Be human, not perfect – It's okay if you don't know what to say. A simple genuine response such as 'I am really sorry you are going through this' can be the most powerful.
2. Listen more than you speak – Try to focus on their experience and not your response. Let them lead the conversation avoiding interrupting or redirecting where possible.
3. Validate, don't fix – People want to feel heard more than they want solutions.
4. Follow their lead – Try to match their emails emotional tone and level.
5. People wish to talk about something other than their fertility/loss, it is important to allow this space as often learning about their bigger picture can be helpful with continuing support.

Safeguarding and Escalation

Safeguarding is about protecting the wellbeing and safety of the people we support – and also protecting you as a volunteer.

As volunteer, you are not expected to manage crisis situations alone. Your role is to notice concerns and respond appropriately by escalating them.

What is safeguarding?

- Taking concerns about someone's safety seriously
- Acting when someone may be at risk of harm
- Ensuring people receive the right support

Your responsibility as a volunteer?

- Being alert to signs of distress or risk
- Respond with empathy
- Never promise confidentiality if someone is at risk
- Report concerns using the correct process – you are not responsible for resolving the situation yourself

What to do if you are concerned?

1. Stay calm and supportive
2. Escalate promptly
 - Contact Chasing Rainbows team – 07415753535 / 07944930447
 - If uncontactable and life threatening, contact Emergency services.
3. Record what was said clearly
 - Email Chasing Rainbows and include what was said, dates/times, change in behaviour

Confidentiality and Privacy

Confidentiality is central to creating a safe and trusting space for those using the pen pal service. Many people will be sharing deeply personal experiences of infertility and baby loss, often for the first time.

As a volunteer it is your responsibility to respect and protect this information.

What is confidentiality?

- Keeping personal information private
- Not sharing what someone tells you outside of appropriate channels
- Respecting the trust placed in you

Your responsibility as a volunteer?

- Keep all personal information shared with you confidential
- Only share information when required by safeguarding processes
- Follow the charity's policies and procedures
- Treat all information with sensitivity and respect

Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

Every person's experience of infertility and baby loss is shaped by their culture, identity, beliefs and life experiences. As a volunteer, your role is to provide support that is respectful, inclusive and free from judgement.

It is not expected that you know everything about every culture – but you do need to be open, curious and respectful.

Cultural sensitivity

- Being aware that people's experiences and beliefs may differ from your own
- Respecting those differences without judgment
- Avoiding assumptions about what someone believes, feels or needs

Inclusivity

- Creating a space where everyone feels welcome and respected
- Recognising and valuing diversity
- Ensuring no one feels excluded, judged, or misunderstood

Volunteer Wellbeing and Self-Care

Supporting others through infertility and baby loss is incredibly meaningful – but it can also be emotionally challenging. Taking care of your own wellbeing is not optional; it is an essential part of being a safe and sustainable volunteer.

“You cannot pour from an empty cup”

As a volunteer you may hear deeply emotional and pain experiences, be reminded of your own experiences or losses and possibly feel a strong sense of empathy and responsibility. Without self-care, this can then lead to emotional fatigue and burnout.

Setting healthy boundaries

- Sticking to the agreed communication times
- Keeping communication within appropriate platforms
- Not taking responsibility for outcomes
- Only share the parts of your personal life you feel comfortable with

Practical self-care strategies

- Take a break – let us know if you are at capacity.
- Seek supervision or support from somebody at Chasing Rainbows team

Code of Conduct

As a volunteer, you play an important role in representing the charity and supporting individuals experiencing infertility and baby loss. This code of conduct outlines the standards of behaviour and values expected of all volunteers.

It is designed to ensure that everyone involved feels safe, respected and supported.

Our Values

As a volunteer, you are expected to uphold the charity's core values:

Compassion – Approaching others with kindness and empathy

Respect – Valuing each person's experience and perspective

Integrity – Acting honestly and responsibly

Inclusivity – creating a welcoming and non-judgemental space

Confidentiality – protecting the privacy of those we support

Expected Behaviour

Be respectful and non-judgemental

- Treat all individuals with dignity and respect
- Accept different beliefs, experiences and emotions
- Avoid criticism, judgement or assumptions

Communicate with Care

- Use kind, thoughtful and appropriate language
- Be patient and understanding
- Follow the communication guidelines in the handbook

Maintain Boundaries

- Stay within your role as a volunteer
- Do not offer professional advice or counselling
- Keep communication within agreed platforms and guidelines

Be Reliable and Responsible

- Respond within agreed timeframes
- Communicate if you are unavailable
- Follow through on commitments where possible

Follow policies and procedures

- Adhere to safeguarding, confidentiality, and data protection policies
- Escalate concerns appropriately
- Seek guidance when unsure

Unacceptable Behaviour

The following behaviours are not acceptable and may result in removal from the volunteer role:

Breaching confidentiality

- Sharing personal information outside of appropriate channels
- Discussing conversations with others

Discrimination or Harassment

- Any form of discrimination based on identity (e.g. Race, gender, sexuality, religion)
- Offensive, inappropriate, or harmful language

Overstepping boundaries

- Attempting to act as a therapist or professional
- Becoming overly involved or dependent

Giving harmful or unqualified advice

- Medical, legal or psychological advice
- Pressuring someone into making decisions

Inappropriate use of social media

- Sharing identifiable information about your role or somebody you encounter during
- Posting about experiences in a way that could breach confidentiality

Professional Conduct

Although you are a volunteer, you are expected to act in a professional and responsible manner. This includes:

- Being mindful of your tone and language
- Respecting boundaries at all times
- Representing the charity positively

Accountability

All volunteers are accountable for their actions. If concerns arise:

- They may be reviewed by the charity team
- Support and guidance will be offered where appropriate
- In serious cases, the volunteer role may be ended

When You Are Unsure

It is always better to ask than to guess, if you are unsure about how to act:

- Refer to this handbook
- Speak to the charity's volunteer coordinator
- Ask for guidance before taking action

Looking After Yourself

Following this Code of Conduct also means:

- Recognise your limits
- Maintaining your own wellbeing
- Asking for support when required

Commitment To The Role

By volunteering, you agree to:

- Uphold this Code of Conduct
- Act in line with the charity's values
- Provide safe, respectful and compassionate support

FAQs, Tips and Tricks for Volunteers

Tips and Tricks

- Make a conscious effort to always mirror the individuals language e.g. if they use their baby's name, then you use it too
- If somebody is asking how they can obtain support, please encourage them to self-refer via the website

What if I do not know what to say?

This is one of the most common worries – and completely normal. You do not need perfect words; simple, honest and sincere responses are often the most meaningful.

You could say:

“I’m really sorry you’re going through this”

“That sounds incredibly difficult”

“Thank you for sharing that with me”

What if I say the wrong thing?

Its okay to make mistakes – what matters is how you respond. If you feel you have said something unhelpful: acknowledge it, apologise and refocus on them.

You could say:

“I’m sorry if that didn’t come across as I intended”

What if I do not relate to their experience?

You do not need to have the same experience to offer support.

What if I feel overwhelmed?

This type of volunteering can feel emotionally heavy and you are not expected to carry this alone. If you feel overwhelmed:

- Take a break before responding
- Consider ceasing your volunteering by letting the Chasing Rainbows team know

What if I feel like I am repeating myself?

This is absolutely fine and often really helpful. People in the trenches of grief often struggle to retain information therefore reassurance and consistency are more important than variety.

What if they express anger or frustration?

This is a normal part of grief. It is your role to stay calm, not take it personally and acknowledge their feelings. You could say:

“It sounds like you’re feeling very frustrated – and that is totally valid given everything you have been going through”

What if I am worried about them?

If something concerns you, it is your responsibility to:

- Act on it
- Do not manage it alone
- Follow the safeguarding and escalation process

Support and Contacts

The Penpal service is a peer support service and not a primary/secondary care service. If you are worried about a pen pal please direct them to the following:

Urgent support

- A&E (if in crisis)
- Emergency services – Call 999
- NHS Urgent Mental Health Helpline – 111

National Emotional Support and Listening Services

- Samaritans – Free, confidential support 24/7 – Call: 116 123
- Shout – 24/7 text-based mental health support – Text: SHOUT to 85258

National Infertility, Baby Loss and Pregnancy Support

- Tommy's – Online website offering helplines and resources
- Sands – Support following the death of a baby – Call 0808 164 3332
- The Miscarriage Association – Support and information following miscarriage – Call 01924 200 799
- Fertility and Infertility Support – Support for those experiencing infertility – Call 0121 323 5025
- Skye High Foundation – Supporting loss during a multiple pregnancy - Call 0207 458 4772
- Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC) – Supporting antenatal choices following suspicions of fetal anomalies – Call 0207 713 7486

Mental Health Support

- Mind – information and support for mental health – Call 0300 123 3393

Local Support to Hull and East Yorkshire

- Mental Health Crisis Team – 0800 138 0990
- Let's Talk (Hull) – 01482 247111
- Emotional Wellbeing service (East Riding) – 01482 335451

Local Support to Hull and East Yorkshire requiring written referrals

- House of Light direct access
- Maternal Mental Health Service
- Perinatal Mental Health Service