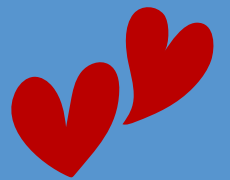


# Annual Impact Report

1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025

Making a big difference  
for little hearts



**CHILDREN'S  
HEARTBEAT  
TRUST**

Northern Ireland's  
Children's Heart Charity  
Charity no: NIC 102410

# Welcome Messages



## Chair's Message

This has been a truly remarkable year for Children's Heartbeat Trust. Each time I hear from a family, attend an event, or see the dedication of our team, I'm reminded of the incredible progress we've made and the lasting impact our work has on the lives of children and families across Northern Ireland.

Our services have continued to grow and strengthen, shaped by the voices and experiences of our heart families. From hospital visits and family support groups to youth activities and our STARS bereavement programme, every part of our work reflects the compassion and care at the heart of this charity.

Children's Heartbeat Trust is powered by people - those families who share their journeys, the volunteers and staff who go above and beyond, and the supporters whose generosity, time and energy make it all possible.

I am truly grateful to my fellow Trustees for their steady leadership and support, and to our exceptional staff team, guided with care and vision by our CEO, Joanne McCallister, for their compassion, creativity, and dedication.

To all our families, partners and supporters — thank you. Your trust, encouragement and involvement inspire us every day. Together, we have built a community that supports, celebrates, and remembers every young heart.

With gratitude and excitement for what lies ahead.

Nichola



**Professor Nichola Rooney,  
Chairperson**



## CEO's Message

This year, more than ever, I've been reminded of the incredible power of community — of what happens when families, supporters, and friends come together with one shared goal: to make life that little bit easier for children living with heart disease and those who love them.

Thanks to your kindness and generosity, we've been able to reach more families than ever before — providing comfort during long hospital stays, support during difficult times, and moments of joy and connection that mean so much.

Our Family Support Groups continue to be the heartbeat of our charity. Run by amazing parent volunteers, these groups have offered friendship, advice, laughter, and understanding to families right across Northern Ireland. It's humbling to see how families lift one another up, forming bonds that last far beyond a single event or meeting.

This year also saw the development of our STARS bereavement group, a space filled with compassion, courage, and love. STARS has become a place where bereaved parents can connect, remember, and honour their little ones together — keeping their memories shining brightly within our community. It has been a

privilege to walk alongside these families as they support one another through the hardest of journeys.

Our newly formed Youth Council have excelled themselves in their first year, bringing together a perfect mix of their rich knowledge of living with CHD and fun to help make the journey a little easier for those who follow.

Thanks to the unwavering generosity of our donors and fundraisers, we've continued to grow and strengthen our vital services for children and families affected by congenital heart disease across Northern Ireland. Every event entered, mile walked, and donation made has directly helped us provide emotional, financial, and practical support where it's needed most.

To everyone who has donated, fundraised, shared your story, or simply cheered us on — thank you. Your support makes everything we do possible. Together, we are building a community of care and understanding that wraps around every heart family who needs it.

With heartfelt thanks,

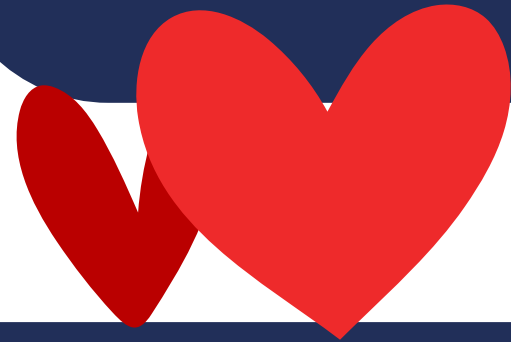
Joanne



**Joanne McCallister,**  
**Chief Executive**

# Family Support

**59** Antenatal families supported emotionally and financially



Financial Support of **£90,835** granted to **193** families facing long term hospital stays or travelling outside of Northern Ireland for cardiac care.

**124** parents stayed in our hospital based parent accommodation.





**30** Music Therapy  
sessions delivered to **72**  
patients and caregivers.



**684** emotional support  
visits made to **273** families  
during in-patient hospital stays.





# Hospital Support



“We got financial support while our daughter was in hospital after having surgery. This was a huge help as we had to take unpaid leave from work, and we were over in England. It was a massive expense being away from home and also trying to keep the house up and running as my mum moved into our house to look after our other son.”

Heart Dad, Magherafelt

“CHT had a massive impact on me and my son. It was such a stressful and worrying time. The financial help meant that I didn’t have to worry about bills but the biggest impact was the calls I received from the support team. I felt like they were with me through every step. My son was in hospital for a long time and a Family Support Worker called or text every few days to check on us. That meant so much and I was very grateful for the support. It was lovely to talk to someone who had been through it and who knew exactly how I felt. Children’s Heartbeat Trust is so special to us as a family and we are so thankful for everything that you have done to support us in this journey.”

Heart Mum, Lisburn







"It was so beneficial having someone come over and chat to us that wasn't clinical and to ask how our son was doing and how we were coping - the comfort of also using accommodation made me feel very secure only freshly postpartum I didn't want to be separated and this was what I needed as a mother."

Heart Mum, Omagh

"The support from Children's Heartbeat Trust helped our family during a very stressful and anxious time, financially and emotionally. They contacted me following my sons surgery to check up on us and see how we were coping, it was just so kind. I am very grateful for the support we were given during such a worrying time."

Heart Mum, Belfast





# Community Support



**10** support  
groups across  
Northern Ireland.

**31** bereaved  
families took part in our  
STARS programme.

"Bringing other heart families together is invaluable, it's great support, as a CHD mum I'm always anxious about taking my son out but when outings are organised by the Children's Heartbeat Trust I'm a lot more relaxed about attending as I know other families with CHD children will be attending and it feels ok to do so. I don't have to explain why he's tired and he's not as self-conscious about his feeding tube because he sees other kids with it. He doesn't feel different, and we are both so much more relaxed."

Heart Mum, Bangor

**580** people  
**(145 families)**  
enjoyed our seasonal  
family fun days.





**6** new instalments  
of our Heart Heroes  
Podcast, with over  
**400** streams.

**189** families  
attended support  
groups throughout  
the year.

**91** individual, family or youth  
counselling sessions delivered.

"It was really good to see  
other kids and families  
we have met along our  
journey, just them being  
there. No nurses, no wires,  
no oxygen. Just kids being  
kids and what a beautiful  
sight it is to see everyone  
so happy."

Heart Mum, Antrim

**71** families  
benefited from  
a short break  
at one of our  
respite caravan  
stays

"CHT STARS has been such a massive help to us and we  
can't thank Children's Heartbeat Trust enough for that.  
We truly appreciate all the care and kindness that you  
have put into keeping our little ones memory alive and  
introducing us to other parents who understand how  
important that is."

Heart Mum, Armagh



# Bereavement Support

**CHT STARS is a unique bereavement support group for parents of children who have sadly passed away due to congenital heart disease. STARS stands for Support, Trust, Acceptance, Resilience, and Strength, representing everything the group provides.**

CHT STARS offers a safe and caring space where parents can come together with others who truly understand what it means to lose a child. We share, listen, laugh, cry, and support each other through the ups, downs and in-betweens of navigating life with loss.

Throughout the year, we hold parent-only social activities and wellbeing workshops, giving parents a chance to connect and find comfort in friendship and shared experiences. Our annual family fun day is

open to the wider family and is a lovely way to honour and remember all our little heart warriors, celebrating their lives and the love that continues to surround them.

CHT STARS is more than a support group, it's a community filled with compassion, understanding, and hope. It's a place where parents and families come together, memories are cherished with new memories made along the way, and where support grows into lasting friendships.





# LYNDSAY'S STORY

"Children's Heartbeat Trust has been in our lives since Hugo was less than a day old. Even though we had never physically met any of the wonderful staff due to going to London for surgery, we felt incredibly supported not only financially but emotionally and in the most stressful time in our lives, we knew the staff were championing both Hugo and us from home.

Whilst Hugo unfortunately passed away at ten months, we have remained part of this wonderful charity. Before the STARS chapter, I attended some of the other events with another bereaved parent. These events were lovely, but our experience was loudly different

to the mums of living children and in some ways I felt like I was bringing an uncomfortableness to them. I guess a large part of this feeling is what brought forward conversations about a bereaved parents group.

Fast forward two years and what a fabulous bereaved parents group we have in STARS. The group has an unspoken bond and we spend time sharing about and remembering our heart warriors in the most creative and therapeutic ways. Thanks to the resources of Children's Heartbeat Trust there is now a peer support network for bereaved parents within the STARS group."

**"This isn't the kind of group any one wants to be part of or that you want to see growing in numbers and unfortunately it has since the beginning but how fabulous to have this kind of a group in some of the darkest times."**



# Youth Support


First Youth Council  
established with **14** members.

This year, we proudly launched our very first Youth Council, bringing together 14 incredible young people aged 14 to 21 who all live with congenital heart disease. From day one, they've thrown themselves into action: co-designing a brand-new Youth Programme for their peers, helping to secure funding through

focus group participation, and even reviewing research information alongside PhD and clinical teams. Their creativity and passion have also shone through in producing a 'Top Tips' guide for other young heart warriors on telling friends about your condition and contributing to a new Transition to Adult

Services booklet. All while organising social events that reduce isolation and build lasting friendships.

Their voices are shaping the future of our work, and we couldn't be prouder of what they've already achieved.



**13** young  
people and their  
families attended  
Paediatric – Adult  
Transition Day.



"It was really good, I always feel different but I don't here."

Young person, age 14

"I didn't even want to come to be honest, like I really didn't but I'm so glad mum made me. Best thing I've done in ages, I love my friends at home but it's nice to not have to sit and explain why I can't do some things. "

Young Person, age 17

"I laughed so much, I really thought it was going to be a bit sad but I loved it."

Young person, age 14

**14** young people with CHD attended our annual Summer Blast residential.





# Fundraising

## COMMUNITY

### 40 Miles in May!

In 2024 we proudly celebrated 40 years of Children's Heartbeat Trust. To mark this incredible milestone, we launched our '40 Miles in May' fundraising challenge!

Supporters and families were invited to walk, run or cycle 40 miles during the month of May, one mile for every year of support and care provided by Children's Heartbeat Trust.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported our '40 Miles in May' campaign! Together, you helped raise over £26,200, enabling us to continue providing practical, emotional, and financial support to children with heart disease for many more years to come.



**It's your generosity that keeps our support services going.**

We are incredibly grateful to every single supporter who helps make our services a reality. While there are too many of you to name individually, we want to acknowledge the vital role played by our community fundraisers, event participants, individual donors, and families who go above and beyond to raise funds.

Whether you took part in our 40 Miles In May, ran the Belfast Marathon, held your own fundraiser or simply made a one-off donation, it is your generosity that ensures we can continue providing essential care and support to local children living with heart disease and their families. We are so proud and honoured to have your support.

Thank you!





# Remembering Rosie

"On the 8th of January 2024, our beautiful baby girl Rosie gained her angel wings after bravely battling a serious heart defect. Though her time with us was heartbreakingly short, she showed so much strength and touched more lives than we could ever have imagined."

In August 2025, we held a fundraiser dance & auction in the Waterfoot Hotel in her memory, hoping to raise around £3,000 for two charities that mean so much to us – Children's Heartbeat Trust and the Children's Health Foundation. Both were a source of support during Rosie's journey, and we wanted to give something back in her name.

What happened that night & in the run up to the event, was nothing short of overwhelming. Family, friends, and local businesses came together with incredible generosity and love. When the total was counted, we were speechless – more than £34,000 had been raised.

As Rosie's mum & dad, we cannot put into words how much it means to see so many people honour her life in this way. We hope the money raised has gone on to support other children and families facing the same battles we did. Knowing Rosie's legacy will help others brings comfort to us in the hardest of times.

We are forever grateful to everyone who supported us and stood with us in Rosie's memory. She may be gone from our arms, but she will never be gone from our hearts."

Donna & Richard Cummings, Rosie's parents





# Fundraising

## CORPORATE



Alongside the generosity of families, community groups, and individual supporters, we would like to formally acknowledge the invaluable contributions of charitable trusts, grant-making bodies and corporates. Their support over the past year has played a crucial role in sustaining and developing our services, ensuring we can continue to meet the needs of children with heart disease and their families.

Dormont Accounts Fund NI, Danske Bank, AIB Community Fund, Ulster Garden Villages, The Grace Trust, Eoin Henry Foundation, Jessie's Fund, Halifax Foundation, The Hospital Saturday Fund, Grant Thornton, Key Hardware, CES Quarry Products, Copeland, Survitec, Co-Ownership, Cavanagh Kelly, Gordon Stewart Trust, Pinsent Mason, The Boys Brigade Northern Ireland, Belfast Giants.





# Giant Wins!

In November 2024, The Odyssey Trust, comprised of The SSE Arena, Belfast, the Belfast Giants, W5, and W5 LIFE, selected Children's Heartbeat Trust as one of its charity partners for its upcoming 25th anniversary year.

From the very beginning, the partnership was truly collaborative. Our heart children were invited to design a special Children's

Heartbeat Trust jersey featuring Clark Bear, which was made available for heart families and the public to purchase and proudly wear at the Valentine's Match.

Other memorable highlights included local heart families taking to the ice to skate with the Belfast Giants and attending matches throughout the season.

This special partnership not only helped raise vital awareness of congenital heart disease but also generated an incredible £22,268.30, enabling us to continue supporting children and young people with heart disease across Northern Ireland.



# Research & Social Impact

Children's Heartbeat Trust recently worked with an independent agency, the Rose Regeneration, to determine the positive impact the charity has on society beyond its financial and operational goals.

**FOR EVERY £1 INVESTED IN CHILDREN'S HEARTBEAT TRUST, £6.22 OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE IS RETURNED.**

Understanding the social and economic value of our services is crucial for our development and growth. However, it can be challenging to measure and evidence.

Children's Heartbeat Trust appointed the independent services of the Rose Regeneration to identify a monetary value that represented the impact of its support services over a 12-month period.

The Rose Regeneration used the Social Value Engine, which is accredited by Social Value International, a global standard setter of social value measurement.

**Over 12 months, £1,644,398.59 of social value was generated in delivering "Good Health and Wellbeing", a key category within the Social Value Engine that is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.**

## Good Health and Wellbeing Outcomes:

- Reduced anxiety, stress and isolation
- Increased emotional support
- Enhanced ability to thrive
- Reduced caregiver burnout
- Empowered young people
- Smooth transition to adult services
- Decreased financial strain
- Greater understanding of individual conditions
- Hope





# The Congenital Heart Disease Intervention Programme (CHIP) – 24 years on:

Learning together from our findings  
Riddel Hall, Queen's University Belfast



For over 20 years now Children's Heartbeat Trust and Royal Belfast Hospitals have been supporting research into long-term outcomes for children with significant congenital heart disease and their families. We have been especially interested in psychosocial outcomes such as behavioural and emotional outcomes, impact on the family, developmental, educational and occupational outcomes.

We have followed up three cohorts of children from birth into young adulthood. Our findings have a story to tell about what outcomes look like, what are risk and protective factors and whether a family focused intervention programme (CHIP) has made a difference.

We recently held a seminar at Queen's University to present preliminary findings to CHIP wave III participants, who are now young adults. Many parents and clinicians were also present. Importantly,

the event provided an opportunity for CHIP III participants and their parents to help guide the next steps of the research project. They told us how findings chimed with their experiences, informed us about things we missed and helped shape our next steps. Their perspective has greatly enriched the project's future direction, ensuring it continues to speak to the needs of those affected by congenital heart disease. We are so grateful for their time and expertise.

## Research Partnerships



In collaboration with the All-Ireland Network for Paediatric Cardiology, we supported seven research projects across Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. The projects cover a range of topics from exercise and receiving a diagnosis, to education and flourishing, and seek to enhance the lives of children and young people living with CHD in Northern Ireland and beyond. We work to ensure that our families have a voice and contribute to the development of academic research.



# Communications & Awareness

## Heart Heroes

Every year, we are continually blown away and deeply honoured by the number of families who choose to share their personal stories with us. These stories are powerful, moving, and often filled with both challenges and moments of incredible strength. They remind us of why our work matters and how vital it is to provide support, connection, and understanding for families living with congenital heart disease (CHD).

Over the years, we realised that while these stories were being shared within our community, they deserved to be heard on a much larger scale. They carry the ability to raise awareness, inspire others, and provide comfort to families walking a similar journey. From this idea, **The Heart Heroes Podcast** was born.

The Heart Heroes Podcast has been created with the aim of championing local

heart families and young people affected by CHD. Each episode offers a safe and supportive platform for families to raise their voices, share their experiences, and talk openly about life with CHD—the highs, the lows, and everything in between.

Through these conversations, we hope not only to celebrate the bravery and resilience of our heart heroes but also to foster greater understanding and awareness in the wider community. By amplifying these voices, the podcast helps us to continue shaping the support we provide, ensuring it reflects the real needs and experiences of children, young people, and families across Northern Ireland.

In sharing their stories, our families are helping to create a stronger, more connected heart community, one that listens, learns, and supports together.

Watch on YouTube: [CLICK HERE](#) [SCAN HERE](#)



Listen on Spotify: [CLICK HERE](#) [SCAN HERE](#)



To date, there are now 8 episodes of the podcast available on YouTube and Spotify.

We hope you enjoy and look forward to sharing more.



PODCAST

Children's Heartbeat Trust



# Social Following



Our network of Facebook followers has reached **325.9k** people.

---



Our Instagram page reached over **100k** people.

---



We reached **500** followers on LinkedIn

---



Our YouTube channel was viewed **84.5k** times and gained over **200** followers.

---



Website:  
**[www.childrensheartbeattrust.org](http://www.childrensheartbeattrust.org)**



# Year In Numbers

2024/2025



**684**  
bedside  
emotional  
support visits  
made between  
**273**  
heart families



**59**  
antenatal  
families  
supported  
through  
pregnancy



**31**  
bereaved families  
supported  
through our  
CHT STARS  
programme.



**14**  
young people  
with CHD joined  
our newly  
established Youth  
Council



**13**  
young people  
and their parents  
attended a  
Paediatric to  
Adult Cardiology  
Transition event



Our new Heart  
Heroes podcast  
has had  
**400**  
streams over 6  
episodes



**189**  
families attended  
our local family  
support groups.



**91**  
counselling  
sessions  
delivered



**71**  
families enjoyed  
a short break at  
one of our respite  
caravans



**124**  
parents availed  
of our parent  
accommodation  
in Royal Belfast  
Hospital for Sick  
Children



**30**  
group music  
therapy sessions  
held on Clark  
Clinic



**13**  
young people  
attended our  
annual Summer  
Blast Residential



**£90,835**  
of payments to  
**193**  
families for long  
term hospital  
stays or travelling  
outside NI for  
cardiac care



**8**  
coagucheks and  
**12**  
sat monitors  
purchased for the  
hospital

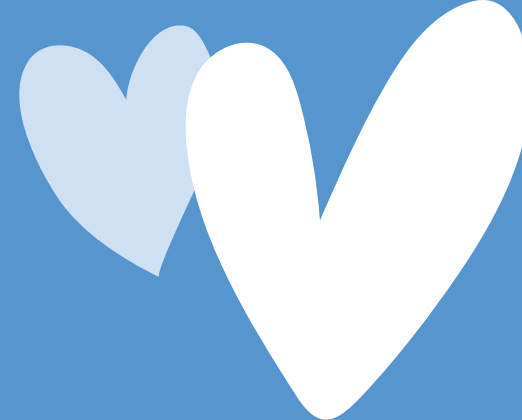
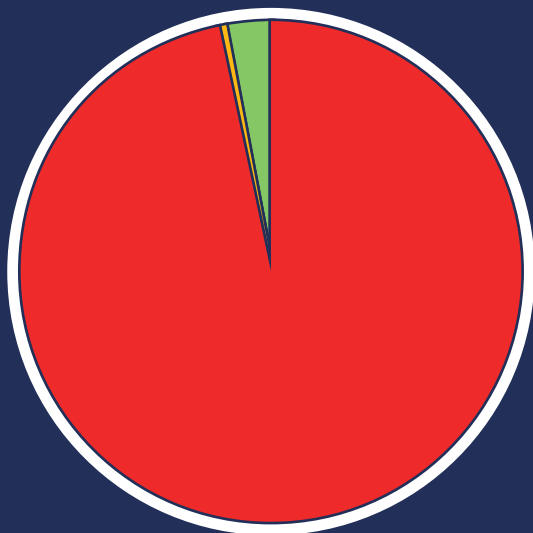


# Revenue

## INCOME

- Donations and legacies: **96.79%**
- Charitable activities: **0.45%**
- Other: **0.04%**
- Investments: **2.72%**

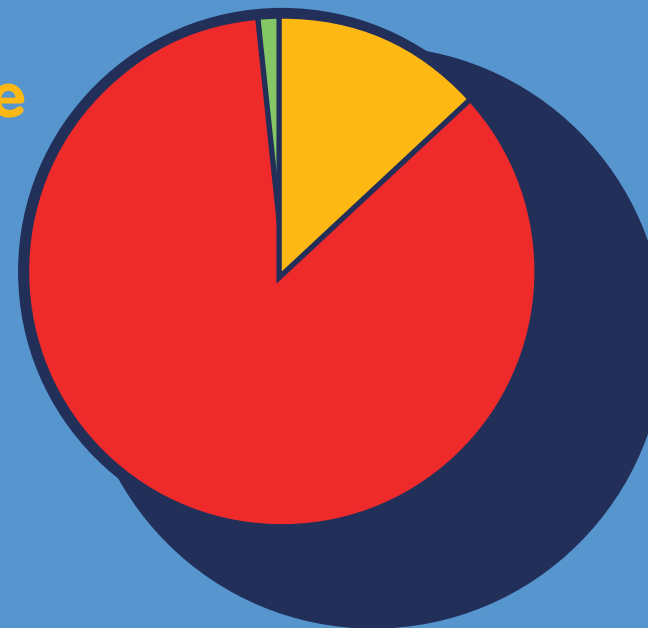
**Income  
Total:  
£699k**



## EXPENDITURE

- Raising Funds: **13.23%**
- Support Services: **85.37%**
- Governance: **1.4%**

**Expenditure  
Total:  
£569k**





CHILDREN'S  
HEARTBEAT  
TRUST

Northern Ireland's  
Children's Heart Charity  
Charity no: NIC 102410



Registered with  
FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR  
The Charity  
Commission  
for Northern Ireland

 Instagram: [childrensheartbeattrust](https://www.instagram.com/childrensheartbeattrust)

 Facebook: [childrens.h.trust](https://www.facebook.com/childrens.h.trust)

 LinkedIn: [children-s-heartbeat-trust](https://www.linkedin.com/company/children-s-heartbeat-trust)

 X: [@Chldns\\_Hrtbeat](https://twitter.com/Chldns_Hrtbeat)

 YouTube: [@childrensheartbeattrust](https://www.youtube.com/@childrensheartbeattrust)

 Spotify: Children's Heartbeat Trust

Children's Heartbeat Trust  
Howard Building, HF12, Twin Spires Centre  
155 Northumberland Street, Belfast, BT13 2JF

Email: [info@childrensheartbeattrust.org](mailto:info@childrensheartbeattrust.org)

Tel: **028 9031 2228**

Charity Number: **NIC102410**

