

**Let's Grow Together  
Strategic Plan 2026-2030**

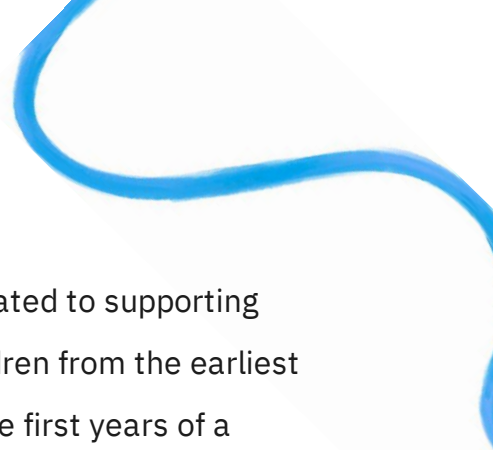
# **Rooted in Community, Reaching for Every Child**



**Let's Grow  
Together**  
The best start for every child

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# Introduction

Let's Grow Together (LGT) is a charity based in Cork and dedicated to supporting the healthy development, wellbeing and learning of young children from the earliest stages of life. LGT was founded on a deep-rooted belief that the first years of a child's life are the most important, developmentally, emotionally and socially, and that every child, regardless of background or circumstance, deserves the very best start.

This 4-year strategic plan marks a pivotal moment for LGT as the charity defines a clear direction ahead, reflecting both LGT's core values and the continually evolving needs of the families, children and communities it serves across the northwest area of Cork City, and beyond.

The strategy will help LGT make confident decisions about where to focus its time and resources, what to turn down, how to communicate its value to funders and partners, and how to stay accountable to the children and families who depend on its work. It gives LGT a framework to grow sustainably and stay focused on continuing to deliver real, lasting benefits to the children and families it serves.

To make sure this strategy reflects the real lives of those LGT work with and is shaped by those who enable that work to happen, a focused and meaningful consultation process was undertaken. This included engagement with families and caregivers who use LGT's services, front-line staff and management, community partners and collaborators, funders and statutory agencies, and the LGT Board. Their voices, experiences and insights have shaped the priorities and actions in this plan.

This strategy is a living document, not something to be filed away once written. It is grounded in evidence, developed carefully and written with genuine care for the people supported and engaged. It is meant to be used regularly, returned to often and reviewed as circumstances change. It should sit at the centre of Board and team discussions to help guide decisions about priorities and

resources and be updated as LGT learns and grows. The value lies not in its existence, but in how actively it is used and communicated throughout the organisation.

***“We are a community-based service in Cork, that works alongside families and key people in children's lives to support their earliest development and wellbeing.”***

### **What Makes LGT Special**

The qualities recognised by those we work with.

- **Relational Approach:** Families feel welcomed, listened to, and supported
- **Vital Connector:** Bridges fragmented systems and prevents duplication
- **Innovation & Responsiveness:** Adapts to emerging community needs
- **Values-Driven:** Non-judgemental, community-centred, infant-focused
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Strong partnerships across sectors

## Background

LGT's roots stretch back to 2011–2012, when professionals from different services working in Knocknaheeny and the wider Northwest area of Cork City came together with a shared question: how could they work better together to improve outcomes for young children? Drawing on research and best practice, this group - known as a Consortium and supported by funding from Cork City Council - designed a prevention and early intervention programme called Young Knocknaheeny, which was hosted by Niche Health Project Cork (NICHE).

That early ambition quickly gained national recognition. In 2013, the Consortium became one of just twelve Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programmes across Ireland, funded through Tusla's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support structure. This was a significant moment – it brought the work into a national, government-backed framework focused on breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. In 2016 an Infant Mental Health (IMH) specialism was added, and the Home Visiting Programme began - informed by the Michigan Association of Infant Mental Health model - marking a significant deepening of the organisation's reach.

In 2021, following a decision to create an independent, sustainable organisation, Let's Grow Together was formally established as a Company Limited by Guarantee and Registered Charity and was officially launched by An Taoiseach Micheál Martin. All staff and programmes transferred across to the new organisation, and by 2022 LGT had achieved full compliance with the Charities Governance Code.

Today, LGT delivers a wide range of programmes and services from its base in Young Knocknaheeny, supporting young children from before birth through the early years of life, alongside their parents, caregivers and the wider community. At the heart of everything LGT does is a belief that strong, confident families are the most powerful environment in which young children can grow and thrive and that

the best way to support children is to work alongside the people who know and love them most.

The scale and reach of this work is considerable. In 2025 alone, LGT delivered 581 home visits, carried out 72 Newborn Behavioural Observations, and delivered more than 40 programmes, services and activities. These included the Peep Learning Together Programme, Circle of Security Parenting, Parents Plus, Baby Massage, Pregnancy Yoga, Elklan Let's Talk With Your Baby, Doodle Families, and a dedicated Dad's group. Every programme is grounded in an Infant Mental Health approach and delivered through a strengths-based, relationship-focused model that sees families as partners, not just recipients of support.

Beyond direct services, LGT also plays an active role in building the capacity of other practitioners and influencing wider systems change. Taken together, this is an organisation that has grown steadily and purposefully to a nationally respected, evidence-informed charity with a distinctive and positive contribution to make to the lives of children and families in Cork and Ireland.

LGT now stands at an important crossroads. It has earned the trust of its community, built a strong portfolio of services, and developed the experience and organisational capacity to think ambitiously about the future. This strategic plan is the next step, the opportunity to consolidate what is working well, to expand impact and benefits, and set out a clear and confident vision for the years ahead.

## Current Landscape

The early years sector in Ireland is going through a period of real change and increased investment, which opens up new possibilities for community-based organisations like LGT. At the same time, the pressures facing families in Cork, including the cost and availability of housing, changing communities, and the lasting effects of the pandemic, continue to grow. Children need safe spaces to play, learn and thrive, and LGT's response to these needs must be thoughtful and grounded in evidence.

The early years, from birth to around six years of age, are widely recognised as the most important period of brain development. These years lay the foundations for a child's learning, health, behaviour and wellbeing for the rest of their life. Investing well in this period benefits not just individual children and families, but society as a whole.

In Ireland, this understanding has gained growing recognition, and the wider policy environment is broadly positive for LGT's mission. *Young Ireland 2023–2028* sets out a whole-of-government commitment to children's rights and wellbeing. *First 5 2019-2028* is the government's strategy for babies, young children and their families and drives commitments around family leave, parenting support, infant mental health, tackling early childhood poverty, and the quality and affordability of early learning. The launch of *Equal Start* in 2024 providing targeted support for children experiencing disadvantage, and commitments in the 2025 Programme for Government to reduce childcare costs and expand the pre-school programme all signal continued, if still insufficient, investment in the sector. Despite this progress, real inequalities remain. Access to good-quality, affordable early years care is still uneven, particularly for families in lower-income communities, and waiting lists, service gaps, and the rising cost of living continue to put pressure on families and the organisations that support them.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is a central part of this landscape for LGT. Established in 2014, Tusla is the state agency responsible for improving outcomes for children, and through its Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) structure it funds early intervention and family support programmes nationally. LGT has been part of this national framework since 2013, funded through the Tusla Cork office. Tusla's Corporate Plan 2024–2026 sets out an ongoing programme of internal reform and reorganisation. This period of internal change and reorganisation within TUSLA creates both uncertainty and opportunity for organisations like LGT that rely on its funding and partnership. It makes it even more important that LGT has a clear strategy of its own, so it can engage and partner confidently with TUSLA from a position of clarity about its purpose, evidence base and the outcomes it delivers.

For community-based charities like LGT, this landscape presents both opportunity and responsibility. As government investment grows, organisations with deep roots in their local communities are increasingly well placed to deliver meaningful, locally impactful support. At the same time, funders and government bodies are rightly raising the bar on accountability, quality and demonstrating real outcomes - making clear strategy, good governance and strong evidence of impact more important than ever.

The policy momentum, the growing expectations, and the changes happening within Tusla, makes the community and voluntary sector's position a complex one. Charities are dealing with staffing pressures, rising costs, and the challenge of planning for the future when many still rely on funding renewed year by year. It is in this environment, full of both possibility and real pressure, that LGT's Strategy 2026–2030 has been developed.

The SWOT and PESTLE analyses that follow provide a structured examination of the internal and external factors shaping LGT's position, and together they form the evidence base from which this strategy's priorities have been drawn.

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Deep roots in the Knocknaheeny community – LGT is trusted, known & valued by the families it serves
- A strong & distinctive specialism in Infant Mental Health
- A wide & evidence-based programme offer, spanning prebirth through early childhood, that addresses the whole child & the whole family
- The Home Visiting Programme-reaching families who might not engage with centre-based services
- Strong & purposeful partnerships with medical professionals, particularly maternity links & GP services
- A strengths-based, relationship-focused approach that treats families as partners
- Established relationships with key statutory partners
- Active involvement in national networks & advocacy
- A committed & skilled staff team with specialist expertise
- Full compliance with the Charities Governance Code

### Weaknesses

- Heavy reliance on a small number of funders
- Annual funding cycles making it more difficult to plan ahead
- Capacity can be stretched – particularly when staff are balancing direct delivery with governance, reporting & development work
- Limited resources for communications & profile-raising, meaning LGT's work & reach are not as wide as it could be
- Dependence on key individuals – the loss of experienced staff can have a significant impact on continuity & expertise
- Limited unrestricted or reserve funding, which reduces the organisation's ability to respond quickly to new opportunities or unexpected challenges
- Geographic focus, while a strength in terms of community connection, also limits reach & may constrain funding opportunities that require broader coverage

### Opportunities

- Growing national policy momentum around early years, creating a favourable environment for LGT's mission
- Tusla's reorganisation creates an opportunity to strengthen LGT's position as a valued partner
- Growing recognition of the importance of infant mental health- LGT could play a stronger leadership role nationally
- Potential to diversify funding through trusts, foundations, corporate partnerships & philanthropic sources
- Opportunity to grow the organisation's profile & reputation by telling its story more effectively
- The development of this strategic plan itself – providing a strong platform from which to engage confidently with funders, partners & the wider sector
- Demand for practitioner training & capacity building in infant mental health & early intervention
- Development of further partnerships with medical professionals

### Threats

- Tusla's ongoing reorganisation creating uncertainty around funding structures, relationships & priorities for ABC Programme Partners
- Annual & short-term funding arrangements making forward planning genuinely difficult
- Staffing & recruitment challenges across the community & voluntary sector
- Rising costs putting pressure on budgets
- The cost-of-living & household crisis deepening the needs of the families LGT serves
- Risk of policy priorities shifting
- Growing expectations from funders around governance, reporting & evidenced impact, placing additional administrative burden on small organisations
- Competition for funding from a growing number of charities & community organisations
- The risk of key staff leaving taking with them years of expertise & community relationships

## PESTLE Analysis

### Political:

- Currently growing government commitment to early years & children's rights reflected in policy documents and government commitments
- Local politicians connecting positively with LGT work and services
- Local council and health services engagement - local waiting lists and policies around equity of access may influence access to grants and/or collaboration opportunities
- Oversight by Charities Regulator and ongoing compliance with governance and financial requirements
- Risk of political priority shifts – early years investment, while growing, remains vulnerable to changes in government or budgetary pressures and is piecemeal

### Economic:

- Cost of living crisis placing significant pressure on families in Knocknaheeny and the wider Northwest Cork area
- Many community and voluntary organisations, including LGT, operating on annually renewed funding making long-term planning difficult
- High competition for grants and donations requires strategic fundraising and diversification of income
- Housing pressures and socioeconomic disadvantage continuing to affect the families LGT serves
- Growing evidence that investment in early years generates strong long-term returns for individuals and for society strengthens the case for LGT's funding
- Staffing and pay pressures across the community and voluntary sector, affecting recruitment and retention of skilled staff
- General economic instability affects donor capacity and increases demand for services, especially in deprived communities

### Social:

- Shifting demographics in Cork and Ireland, changing the profile of communities and the needs of families
- Fathers and male caregivers increasingly recognised as vital to children's early development
- Lasting effects of the pandemic on children's development, family wellbeing and community connection
- Persistent inequalities in access to early years services for families experiencing disadvantage
- Growing recognition of the importance of infant mental health and early attachment - an area where LGT has deep expertise
- Increasing mental health concerns, child poverty, and social isolation drive demand for holistic support services in the community
- Lack of coordinated services in communities e.g., housing, childcare services

- Strong community roots and trusted relationships - LGT is seen as part of the community, not an outside service
- Public Trust - Scandals or media scrutiny can affect reputation and donor confidence

### Technological:

- Leveraging social media and digital campaigns can enhance reach of services, communications, and potential donor engagement
- Growing use of digital tools and online platforms to deliver programmes and reach families - accelerated by the pandemic
- Risk of digital exclusion - some families LGT works with may have limited access to technology or digital health literacy
- GDPR compliance and secure data handling are essential for safeguarding beneficiaries and donors
- Increasing expectations from funders around data management, reporting systems and evidence of impact
- Opportunity to use data and digital systems more effectively to track outcomes and demonstrate impact

### Legal:

- Full compliance with the Charities Code achieved in 2022 - a strong foundation, but ongoing obligations require attention
- Employment law responsibilities as a growing employer in the community and voluntary sector
- Evolving regulatory requirements for charities around governance, financial reporting, and accountability
- Strict regulations around working with children and vulnerable adults require robust policies and training
- Data protection and GDPR obligations, particularly given the sensitive nature of the families and children LGT works with

### Environmental:

- Growing expectation from funders, partners and the public that charities operate in an environmentally responsible way
- Opportunity for LGT to model environmentally conscious practice in how it runs its programmes and facilities
- Community spaces and safe outdoor environments for children to play and explore are increasingly valued and increasingly under pressure from housing and development
- Climate and environmental factors affecting community wellbeing, particularly in disadvantaged areas that often have fewer green spaces

## Consultation Process and Key Themes

### What You Told Us

You told us our warmth, trust and quality are our greatest strengths, and that the world needs to know it. You were clear that early intervention for children aged 0-4 must stay at our core, with strong community links to support continuity of care. You asked for more spaces to connect, stronger communication, and bolder leadership in infant mental health.

To ensure that this strategic plan reflects both the realities on the ground and the aspirations of those LGT serves, a comprehensive and inclusive consultation process was designed and conducted in the months preceding the drafting of this document. This process was guided by a commitment to listening to, and learning from, the full range of voices connected to LGT's work.

The consultation engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including families and caregivers who access LGT's programmes and services; staff members across all levels of the organisation; community partners, board members, collaborators and peer organisations; funders and statutory bodies; and local community representatives. A range of methods were used to ensure that participation was accessible and meaningful, including workshops, one-to-one conversations, surveys and structured interviews.

The consultation revealed strong and consistent appreciation for LGT's relational, strengths-based approach and the quality of its programmes. Families, and partners praised the warmth, trust and welcome that defines LGT's team and work. Stakeholders described the organisation as a vital connector between services and a trusted advocate for children and families. LGT's deep roots in the community and its ability to bridge fragmented systems and avoid duplication were repeatedly highlighted as distinctive strengths. Opportunities for more informal opportunities for families to connect with each other, through parent and toddler

groups, community events, and welcoming physical spaces where people feel safe to drop in were strongly advocated for.

The consultation also identified important areas for development. Across all stakeholder groups the need for the work to be better understood and communicated emerged as a critical priority. Partners, community members and stakeholders noted that while the quality of LGT's work is excellent, it is not communicated effectively enough, potentially limiting the charity's ability to reach more families, attract diverse funding, and amplify the voices of children and families at a systems level. Many highlighted the opportunity to measure and tell LGT's story more powerfully, in ways that resonate with the wider community and funders. There was also strong appetite to continue positioning LGT as a national leader in infant mental health through research, training, policy advocacy and thought leadership, building on existing expertise. Funding sustainability and diversification also emerged as a pressing concern, with a recognised need to explore and develop new sources of income.

A consistent theme across the consultation was the critical importance of LGT's focus on children aged 0-4 and its unwavering commitment to prevention and early intervention in supporting social and emotional development during the earliest and most formative years of life. Stakeholders across all groups emphasised that this is where LGT's impact is most powerful and most needed, and this is the heart of everything LGT does. Alongside this, the importance of ensuring that the progress made with children and families in the early years is not lost as children transition into new settings was highlighted. Maintaining strong strategic partnerships with schools, healthcare providers – particularly maternity services and GP's - as well as other community services enables a joined-up approach.

The themes, insights and priorities that emerged from this consultation have shaped this strategic plan - from the values that underpin it, the outcomes it sets out, and the actions it commits to taking. LGT is deeply grateful to all those who gave their time, shared their experiences and offered their perspectives. The full consultation report can be found in Appendix 2 in this document.

## Foundations

The vision, mission and values set out below form the foundation of this strategic plan, providing the organisational framework within which all priorities, decisions and partnerships are situated.

The vision and mission remain unchanged from LGT's current direction. The values have been significantly reviewed as part of this consultation process involving both the Board and staff and have been updated to reflect the core principles and behaviours that guide how LGT works at every level of the organisation.

A Theory of Change, developed by the Senior Management Team is included in Appendix 1, which sets out the rationale for LGT's chosen approach and articulates how the organisation's work is expected to lead to meaningful and lasting outcomes for children and families.

**Vision:** Our communities are places where children experience happy, healthy, and thriving childhoods that last a lifetime.

**Mission:** To work in partnership with everyone important in children's lives, sharing knowledge, skills, and resources, empowering families, and enabling children through their relationships and in their communities to be nurtured, fulfilled, achieving and learning.

## Values:

### **We are Inclusive in our work with families**

We build trusting and supportive relationships with families, recognising that families include everyone important in a child's life. We know that transformative change is possible through an accessible and flexible approach that meets families where they are at.

### **We are Informed by the science of early years development**

We understand that babies and young children can't wait – the early years are a critical window for brain development and lifelong outcomes. We translate research and evidence into action, and we are committed to speak up with urgency for children's needs.

### **We are Responsive to the needs of the communities we work with**

We care deeply about the communities we work with. We treat everyone with respect and we create warm, welcoming spaces where families feel valued. We listen to families lived experiences and actively seek new research and evidence-based approaches, in order to maintain a high-quality early intervention practice.

### **We maintain Integrity in all aspects of our work**

We are committed to working in solidarity with families and we are sustained by our belief that every child deserves the best start in life. We strive to be a consistent and dependable presence in the community and the lives of families we work with.

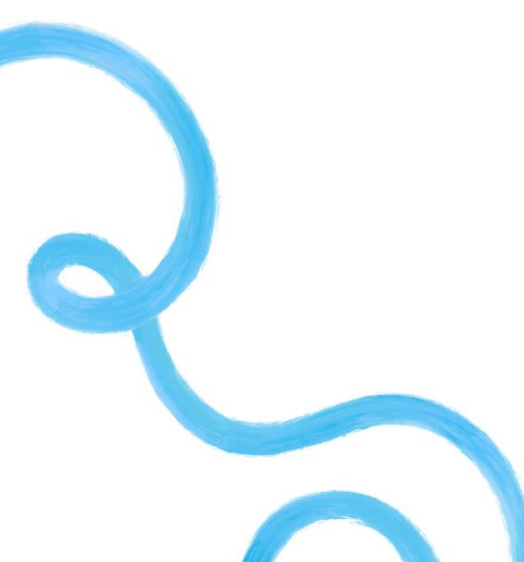
### **We Collaborate to achieve shared goals for children's wellbeing.**

We work together as an inter-disciplinary team, and collaborate with partners across community, education, and health sectors. We support each other, we

empower families, and we work collectively toward shared goals for children's development and wellbeing.

**We are Innovative in our approach to supporting healthy child development**

We are innovative, dynamic and progressive. We create enjoyable and positive environments, and we constantly adapt to ensure our services are engaging and effective for babies, young children and their families.



## Strategic Outcomes and Objectives

Based on the consultation findings and LGT's ambition to develop and grow its services, influence and impact, four key strategic outcomes have been developed for the period 2026–2030. These outcomes are achievable within the four-year timeframe, though delivering them in full will require LGT to work collaboratively with partners, funders and other stakeholders to secure the necessary resources and relationships.

To make these outcomes actionable, each one has been broken down into a series of objectives and operational activities. The operational activities across the four strategic outcomes have been organised into three priority tiers to support clear planning and decision-making. Foundation activities are those that should happen in Year 1. Importantly, year 1 will include a staffing and organisational review, the findings of which will support both the immediate priorities and the wider strategic plan. The foundations activities are the building blocks on which subsequent activities depend. Build activities follow once foundations are in place, typically spanning Years 2 and 3. Sustain and Scale activities run continuously across the life of the plan, ensuring that the high-quality work of LGT is maintained, developed and embedded over time. This framework is intended to support the Senior Management Team and Board in sequencing decisions, allocating resources and tracking progress.

The strategic outcomes and objectives will be supported by detailed annual operational plans developed by the Senior Management Team. Each year's plan will be responsive to the charity's position and the wider context in which it operates, ensuring that LGT remains both focused and adaptable as circumstances change.

## **Outcome 1: We communicate clearly and consistently so every family who needs us can find us, join us and grow with us.**

**Objective 1:** Establish and maintain a consistent voice across multiple communications channels including our website, social media, and local community spaces so families know what we do, and how we can support them.

**Objective 2:** Promote clear, accessible information about early childhood that parents can understand and use.

**Objective 3:** Actively reach out to families who could benefit from our support, communicating in a way that makes sure they know support is available and how to access it.

**Objective 4:** Champion the importance of the early childhood social and emotional development through regular, authentic communication that centres children's voices and family experiences.

### **Operational Activities for outcome 1**

#### **Foundation: Year 1**

- Recruit a dedicated communications role.
- Redesign LGT website to become more family/parent friendly.
- Develop and implement of an LGT communications strategy.

#### **Build: Years 2–3**

- Create and implement a community visibility strategy.
- Develop outreach strategies to connect with families in the community.

**Sustain and Scale: Ongoing**

- Develop communications in plain language and multiple formats to ensure information is easily understood and inclusive.
- Continue to develop of parent focus group with diverse representation.



**Outcome 2: We embed prevention and early intervention services in communities by supporting parents and families of children aged 0-4 with practical, evidence-informed guidance on early years development.**

**Objective 1:** Continue building our Home Visiting programme as a proven model of early childhood intervention, expanding its reach and impact to be replicable nationally and internationally.

**Objective 2:** Sustain and develop our existing family support services that show positive impact in promoting early childhood development and track their impact each year.

**Objective 3:** Expand our reach in a sustainable way, working towards LGT's early intervention approach being available where it can have the most benefit.

**Objective 4:** Create accessible, welcoming services that respond to community needs, ensuring all families and children can participate meaningfully regardless of their backgrounds, cultures or circumstances.

**Objective 5:** Maintain and develop our existing strategic partnerships across health, education and community services to support continuity of care, so that the progress made with children in their earliest years is sustained and built upon.

## Operational Activities for Outcome 2

### Foundation: Year 1

- Develop an evidence base and replication model for flagship Home Visiting programme.
- Develop informal drop-in events and volunteer-led sessions at LGT buildings that visibly embeds LGT in community and introduces LGT's work into families lives in a relaxed, informal way.
- Perform regular accessibility audits of all programmes, communications and physical spaces to ensure inclusive participation for families with diverse needs and circumstances.

### Build: Years 2-3

- Recruit community outreach worker to lead on community inclusion.
- Organise and host annual open days to bring partners together, showcase LGT's work, and strengthen collaboration.

### Sustain and Scale: Ongoing

- Continually review and evaluation of programmes using appropriate frameworks.
- Establish partnerships and pilot sites to test scalability of flagship programmes in new geographic contexts.
- Continue fostering strong relationships with key community partners such as schools and healthcare providers to increase awareness and referrals.

## **Outcome 3: We strengthen early years systems and professional practice.**

**Objective 1:** Expand our 'Community of Learning' by building on our existing training programmes, helping more professionals develop their knowledge, confidence and skills in science-based early childhood development.

**Objective 2:** Promote better understanding among decision-makers and policymakers about how embedding prevention and early intervention services in communities prevents problems later, through an evidence-based advocacy campaign that puts children and families at the centre.

**Objective 3:** Lead and collaborate on research and evaluation that advances practical knowledge of early intervention, informs service design and delivery and drives continuous improvement.

**Objective 4:** Champion professional practice that's grounded in the science of early childhood development, including social and emotional development.

### **Operational Activities for outcome 3**

#### **Foundation: Year 1**

- Create a comprehensive research plan that establishes clear priorities, integrates with broader organisational work, guides funding applications and resource allocation and includes a framework for measuring outcomes and impact.
- Establish protocols for each programme or intervention that define what the intervention consists of, its intended impact, and how success will be measured.

- 
- Scope and plan for LGT Accredited Partner certificate programme.

**Build: Years 2–3**

- Design and deliver an advocacy campaign to maximise understanding and influence, including development of campaign tools (case studies, policy briefs and campaign toolkit).
- Utilise networks, events, parliamentary engagement tools, and media platforms strategically to raise awareness and influence policy.

**Sustain and Scale: Ongoing**

- Embed child and family voices across all advocacy and campaign efforts
- Continue collaborative work and networking with the early years community, statutory bodies, healthcare providers, charities, and policy organisations to influence, inform, and drive systemic change.
- Develop an administrative system to support the continuation and expansion of the core training programme, alongside a communications plan to promote training opportunities and benefits.

**Outcome 4: We grow steadily and responsibly, investing in our staff and governance structures so everyone can thrive and deliver on our ambition.**

**Objective 1:** Continue strengthening our team, systems, and governance so we can grow responsibly and deliver high-quality early childhood services.

**Objective 2:** Expand and diversify our income streams so we can maintain and grow our impact over the long term, while maintaining rigorous financial stewardship and accountability.

**Objective 3:** Maintain and strengthen a workplace where staff are valued and developed, with policies and practices that support quality early childhood intervention work.

## **Operational Activities for Outcome 4**

### **Foundation: Year 1**

- Undertake a review of organisational structure and roles.
- Implement a CRM system to improve data for outcomes measurement, inform decision making and support communications and advocacy work.
- Develop yearly operational and individual workplans with measurable targets and indicators of success.
- Undertake an inclusion audit to embed inclusive practices organisation-wide.

### **Build: Years 2–3**

- Recruit fundraiser to diversify funding opportunities beyond core funding.
- Expand the internal training and professional development framework and pathways.

- Create and implement a volunteering strategy to recruit, manage and develop volunteers.

### **Sustain and Scale: Ongoing**

- Grow existing income streams and explore new funding sources.
- Regularly review the implementation of best-practice policies and procedures, including risk management; to identify, monitor and mitigate organisational risks.
- Ensure all safeguarding policies, child protection frameworks and ongoing staff training are regularly reviewed and updated.
- Ensure GDPR compliance and data management adhered to, to protect sensitive information with digital communications growth.
- Continue to develop the Board structure to ensure effective accountable leadership and oversight, including succession planning.
- Proactively keep up to date with emerging technologies (including AI) to identify organisational opportunities and risks.
- Consider how working practices meet environmental sustainability needs to support overall aims of creating a better environment for children.
- Maintain and resource communication platforms to ensure continued focus on effective communication with all stakeholders.

# Appendices



## Appendix 1



## LETS GROW TOGETHER - OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

### ULTIMATE GOAL; EVERY CHILD HAS THE BEST START IN LIFE.

The outcomes for young children are **measurably improved** because we have engaged with families, professionals and services within the community.

LGT is a proven effective model of a **promotion and prevention universal service** for babies, young children and their families in the community.

### PROBLEM

Children born in areas of deprivation can experience **inequality** from birth, affecting health, education, employment. Parents' experiences of **trauma/toxic stress** and **environmental stresses** can impact parenting and relationships with services.

### SOLUTION

**Supporting parents** to understand child development, play, reading, bonding.

Evidence-based **early intervention** focused on measurable improvements in early development (pre-birth to age 4).

**Capacity building** for professionals and community leaders.

**Pre-Birth:** Pregnancy Yoga, peep getting to know your baby .

**Ages 0-4:** Home Visiting, Newborn Behavioural Observation, Baby Massage, Elklan Let's Talk with Your Baby, Peep Learning Together Programme, Circle of Security, Parents Plus healthy families workshops.

**Community:** Storytime, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, CPD.

**School Age:** Parents Plus healthy families workshops , Doodle Families & Doodle STEAM, Well Schools.

**Systems Change:** Capacity building, undergraduate input, research, policy engagement.

### ACTIVITIES

### OUTCOMES

Improved **parenting confidence** and competence, positive high **quality relationships**, improved **engagement**, optimal child social, emotional, language, literacy **development**; routines, **professional skills**, **trauma-informed practice**, **evidence** of effectiveness, improved **interagency working**, national understanding of **early years development** and support.

### IMPACT 2030

Improved outcomes for young children; critical mass of supported mothers, fathers & babies; professionals trained; systems engaged. Establishment of Best Start Hub; proven effectiveness in disrupting intergenerational cycles of poverty

**Critical Enablers:** Evidence-based relational approach, staff expertise, trust & relationships, community approach, advocacy, empowered culture, inclusion, child's voice, national programme support.

**Appendix 2**

SQ CONSULTING

December 2025

# LET'S GROW TOGETHER STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2029 CONSULTATION REPORT

## Introduction

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This strategic planning process marks a pivotal moment for Let's Grow Together (LGT) as the charity seeks to define a clear, future-focused direction that reflects both LGT's values and the evolving needs of the communities it serves. Strategic planning for a charity is not simply an exercise in setting goals; it is a deliberate process of connecting vision, resources, and actions to achieve sustainable, positive and measurable impact for beneficiaries. To ensure this strategic plan is grounded in reality and shaped by those most affected by LGT's work, as well as those who enable this work to happen, an extensive consultation with stakeholders was undertaken, including families and caregivers, staff, partners, funders, collaborators and community representatives.

The purpose of this consultation was twofold: first, to listen to the experiences, priorities, and aspirations of those who engage with or influence LGT's services; and second, to identify opportunities and challenges that will inform strategic choices over the coming four years. I wanted to learn what is working well, where gaps exist, and how LGT can strengthen its role as a trusted, responsive organisation. The findings provide rich insights into themes such as collaboration, communication, programme delivery, funding sustainability, and organisational identity. These insights will directly shape the strategic plan by guiding priority-setting, resource allocation, and the development of actionable objectives. Furthermore, they will inform follow-up engagement with stakeholders to ensure transparency, shared ownership, and continued dialogue as LGT moves from planning to implementation.



# Methodology

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To ensure the strategic plan reflects the voices of those most connected to LGT's work, I adopted a comprehensive mixed-methods approach. This combined quantitative content analysis with qualitative thematic analysis, presented in a narrative format to make findings accessible and meaningful. Engagement was intentionally broad, spanning families and caregivers, staff, trustees, funders, partners and collaborators, and members of the local community (see Appendix 1).

Four online surveys formed the backbone of the quantitative data collection: 21 responses from families and caregivers, 40 from partners and funders, 14 from staff, and 5 contributions from the local community. These surveys captured both structured feedback and qualitative insights. To deepen understanding, I complemented survey data with 16 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, alongside a full-day staff workshop. This multi-layered approach allowed consideration of a wide range of perspectives and validate emerging themes.

Analysis identified recurring concepts, tensions, and opportunities, supported by frequency analysis to gauge the prominence of issues raised. Direct quotes were selected to hear perspectives in their own words, and mapping was used to connect themes to actionable strategic recommendations. While the consultation achieved strong engagement—particularly from staff, partners, funders and collaborators - limitations included the relatively small number of local community responses and the time constraints inherent in balancing breadth with depth.

In this report I have broken down each element of the consultation into themes. As a charity it is important to understand which areas are priorities for each group. In a resource-constrained environment where every interaction counts, these insights enable meaningful connections to be made with speed and purpose.

# Key Themes and Findings

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## Surveys

### 1. Partners, Funders and Collaborators Survey

A total of 40 respondents from 32 organisations participated in the survey (Appendix 2), providing 204 qualitative entries for analysis. From these contributions, several recurring themes emerged. The most prominent was Collaboration & Partnerships. This was followed by Communications, Funding & Resources, and Training & Upskilling. Additional themes included Evidence & Impact and Programme Strengths, Reach and Inclusivity, and New Initiatives & Ideas.

#### *Collaboration and Partnerships*

The responses reveal positive sentiment towards LGT, with stakeholders consistently describing the partnership as extremely useful and impactful. As one partner observed, the organisation serves as "a vital connector between services," while another highlighted its strength in "advocating for families and supporting community development." This appreciation for the work forms the foundation of stakeholder engagement and suggests strong goodwill for future collaboration. Looking forward, stakeholders proposed ambitious collaboration opportunities that could deepen impact and influence. There was particular interest in "joint research projects with universities" that would provide evidence for programme effectiveness while contributing to academic knowledge. Several respondents suggested "linking with national policy and advocacy work," building on the positioning of LGT as a voice for children and families at strategic levels.

Partners identified potential for "shared funding opportunities for integrated services" that would support delivery. One respondent emphasised the value of pooling resources and expertise to create more comprehensive support for families.

#### *Communications*

Interpersonal communication emerged as a significant strength, with partners rating their interactions with LGT staff extremely highly. However, stakeholders identified the need for more consistent, early and visible communications that highlights the local work and impact, as well as specific opportunities to share information and build relationships. Several respondents expressed interest in receiving regular newsletters, with suggestions



ranging from monthly updates to regular communications written in accessible, plain-English language.

There was notable enthusiasm for annual onsite events that would allow partners to meet the team face-to-face, recognising that personal connection strengthens working relationships. Additionally, partners highlighted the changing demographics within the community and emphasized the need for "more multilingual resources to reflect changing demographics," ensuring all families can access information about services regardless of language barriers.

### ***Funding and Resources***

Respondents described a desire for "more funding for parent engagement activities (coffee mornings, walking groups)." Respondents view these informal gatherings as valuable but under-resourced, recognising that relationship-building happens as much through casual social contact as through formal programmes. It was suggested these activities should be prioritised in future funding discussions despite their informal nature, with a preference for supportive, non-assessment-like engagement, with "meet-the-team" style visibility.

### ***Training and Upskilling***

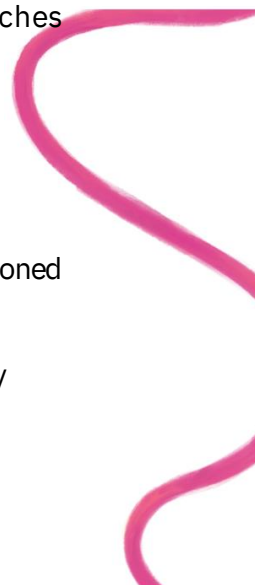
Training opportunities for community agencies and early years practitioners stand out as particularly appreciated offerings, with partners recognizing the value of LGT's work building capacity across the sector.

### ***Evidence & Impact***

Partners identified room for strengthening evidence-based reporting. While qualitative data clearly resonates with stakeholders, the need for more robust evidence "beyond pre/ post evaluation" to support funding applications and communicate outcomes to wider audiences was raised, recognising that different audiences require different types of information. Several respondents suggested exploring "creative ways to share impact stories" that go beyond traditional reporting methods, ensuring that the valuable work being done reaches funders and the broader community in compelling ways.

### ***Programme Strengths and Innovation***

Current programmes generate significant enthusiasm among partners, with specific initiatives such as Doodle Families, Doodle STEAM, Kidscope, and Home Visiting mentioned as highly valued and making tangible differences in children's lives. Stakeholders consistently praised LGT's "innovation and responsiveness in addressing community



needs," suggesting this adaptability represents a core organisational strength. The ability to identify emerging needs and develop appropriate responses was repeatedly highlighted as distinguishing LGT from more rigid service providers.

### *Reach and Inclusivity*

Many partners identified gaps in service reach. There was consensus around the need to expand reach with possible groups including vulnerable groups (e.g., homeless families, domestic violence centres, children in care). Multiple respondents independently identified these specific populations as underserved, suggesting a priority for future development from this group of stakeholders.

### *New Initiatives and Ideas*

Stakeholders offered several strategic ideas for future direction. The development of "transition programmes for parents of children moving to secondary school" addresses an identified gap in current provision, with one respondent noting that support currently drops away precisely when families face new challenges navigating secondary education systems.

Respondents suggested "exploring economic resilience strategies for families" that would help navigate financial challenges affecting child wellbeing. This reflects recognition that poverty and financial stress fundamentally shape parenting capacity and child outcomes. Several respondents encouraged manualising successful programmes to enable scalability and replication, potentially extending influence beyond the immediate geographical area.

Finally, there was recognition that "strengthening connections between education and health systems" could improve outcomes for children. Partners see LGT as ideally positioned to facilitate such integration given its cross-sectoral relationships and trusted position within the community. One respondent noted that families struggle to navigate fragmented systems, and LGT's bridging role addresses this fundamental challenge in service delivery. This came through as a key USP for the organisation and proposed as an opportunity to evidence LGT's role in avoiding duplication or confusion about who leads on particular aspects of family support.



## 2. Staff Survey

A total of 14 respondents participated in the survey, providing 159 qualitative entries for analysis. From these contributions, several recurring themes emerged. The most prominent was Training, Professional Development and Role Support, and was specific to this stakeholder group. This was followed by Programme Strengths, Internal Team Services, Funding and Resources, Evidence and Impact, Reach and Inclusivity and Communications.

### *Training, Professional Development and Role Support*

The most frequently raised theme across staff responses centred on training, continuing professional development, and role clarity. Staff consistently valued existing structures, with appreciation expressed for "good supervision structures, reflective practice supervision... opportunities to engage in local, national and international interagency networking and collaboration."

However, staff also identified gaps in support, particularly for those in lone worker positions. Concerns were raised about isolation and the absence of peer backup or cross-cover arrangements for roles that operate independently. The responses suggest that while supervision structures are strong, there is need for more systematic approaches to professional development planning and role clarity, particularly as posts evolve or expand in scope.

### *Programme Strengths*

Staff demonstrated strong consensus around which programmes deliver the greatest impact. Home Visiting emerged as consistently valued, with respondents emphasising its "relational approach" and ability to "provide a felt experience of what a good enough relationship is." The depth of relationship-building possible through home visiting was repeatedly highlighted as transformative for families.

Universal groups, particularly parent and toddler groups, Baby Massage, and Peep were similarly praised. These were described as "first point of contact... entices families to further engage," recognising their role as accessible entry points to deeper support. Kidscope and literacy initiatives, including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, also featured prominently in discussions of meaningful impact.

Despite this enthusiasm, staff expressed concern about protecting core programme capacity amid competing demands for outreach and training delivery. There was implicit

worry that spreading resources too thinly could dilute the intensive relational work that characterises LGT's most valued programmes.

Staff raised concerns about the Parents Plus programme, about both uptake and content alignment. Low attendance was repeatedly mentioned, but more fundamentally, staff questioned whether the programme's approach fits with the organisation's infant mental health framework. The consensus suggested this programme requires substantial redesign or replacement rather than minor adjustments.

### *Internal Team Processes*

While staff universally described the team culture as warm and supportive, physical separation across two buildings and reduced frequency of effective team meetings have created challenges for cohesion. Respondents observed that "there can be a disconnect between the two buildings."

References to alignment between different strands of work appeared throughout responses, suggesting that while collaboration happens organically in some areas, it requires more intentional structures to work consistently across the whole organisation. The desire for better coordination didn't reflect conflict but rather recognition that effective teamwork needs deliberate maintenance.

Strong enthusiasm emerged for implementing CRM systems and developing SOPs, reflecting the understanding that better systems will reduce administrative burden, manage waitlists more effectively, and decrease variation in practice. However, there was no sense that staff want rigidity; rather, they seek enough structure to work efficiently while preserving the flexibility that relational practice requires.

### *Funding and Resources*

Funding emerged as the dominant barrier to planning, growth, and responsive service delivery. Staff identified "limited long-term security of funding... impacts long term planning and stability" as a fundamental challenge affecting their ability to commit to families and develop programmes strategically. This anxiety about sustainability appeared repeatedly, suggesting it weighs heavily on staff thinking about LGT's future, despite core funding being secure.

Capacity constraints manifest most visibly in waitlist pressures. Concerns were expressed that "the home visiting waitlist is too long," echoed by colleagues who see

families waiting for support they urgently need. Staff recognize the gap between demand and current capacity but feel constrained by resource limitations beyond their control.

### *Evidence and Impact*

Concerns emerged around outcome measurement and evidence frameworks. This appeared alongside concerns about case noting burden and purpose. It was noted that "a review of case noting would be helpful - what, why and when are we capturing..." There was consensus that evaluation processes need redesigned to be more meaningful and better connected to demonstrating the impact of the relational work.

### *Reach and Inclusivity*

Staff identified prenatal work as significantly underperforming, with recruitment proving particularly challenging and "needs dedicated time and energy to gain momentum." Suggestions emerged for community hub approaches, such as pregnancy cafés, that would create welcoming, non-stigmatising spaces for expectant parents to connect. The emphasis on dedicated resources reflects a position that prenatal work cannot succeed as an add-on to existing roles but requires focused attention and strategic development.

Staff demonstrated deep awareness of the systemic challenges affecting the families they support. Housing instability, inadequate childcare and early years places, poverty, mental health needs, and extraordinarily long waits for Child Development and Neuro-diagnostic Teams, Primary Care, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services were all identified as significant barriers.

These observations reflect staff frustration with structural problems they cannot solve but must help families navigate daily. The consensus suggests staff see their role partly as providing stability and relationship amid chaos created by failing systems elsewhere. There was implicit recognition that programme outcomes are shaped as much by these external stressors as by the quality of support provided.

### *Communications*

Respondents expressed strong feelings about organisational branding and visibility, stating that the organisation "needs a major upgrade in branding and marketing... not many people know our name." This comment captured frustration about the gap between the quality of work being done and how LGT presents itself publicly.

Staff recognise that poor branding and unclear messaging affect both family engagement and partnership development. The desire for a "family-first" website redesign

and clearer communication about services reflects staff pride in their work alongside frustration that potential service users struggle to understand what's offered or how to access it.

### 3. Families and Caregivers Survey

A total of 21 families and caregivers responded to this survey, with 90% reporting they feel "very welcome" indicating a strong foundation of trust. Respondents were concentrated in Gurranabraher, Farranree, and Fairhill, with children primarily aged 0–4 years. Baby Massage was noted the most-used programme amongst this group (15 families), followed by Home Visiting, Peep, and Community Events.

Two priorities dominated in terms of what respondents want;

- Parent/caregiver baby & toddler groups (18 requests)
- Community events for families (17 requests)

From the responses, several recurring themes emerged.

#### *Access can be a barrier*

Families requested evening/weekend sessions, more frequent classes, accessible venues, and better advance notice. It was noted that current daytime-only scheduling excludes working parents.

#### *LGT's approach is its superpower*

Respondents consistently praise feeling welcomed, listened to, and supported. This is an important approach to be protected as LGT continues to grow and develop.

#### *Peer connection combats isolation*

Parents value opportunities to meet others, reduce loneliness, and build community - benefits that compound over time.

#### *Demand for practical guidance*

Requests included weaning tips, developmental reassurance checks, postnatal fitness, and mental health signposting.

## 4. Community and General Public Survey

In total 5 community members responded, all local residents with 100% awareness of Let's Grow Together. All rated supporting young children and families as "very important" - signalling strong community backing amongst this small group.

Three priorities dominated in terms of what the respondents want. Not all of these are in the power of LGT.

- Affordable childcare (4 respondents)
- Parenting support (2 respondents)
- Safe places to play (2 respondents)

From the survey contributions, several recurring themes emerged.

### *Physical infrastructure is missing*

Communities lack play spaces and dedicated community centres where families can gather. There's a call for consistent, safe gathering points.

### *Cost is a real barrier*

Emphasis on "affordable" or "free" sensory play, baby massage, story-time, and pregnancy yoga. Cost-of-living pressures are limiting participation.

### *Parenting support gaps exist*

Respondents want help resources, parent support groups, and guidance on early education readiness - embedded in accessible local settings.

### *Visibility needs improvement*

Suggestions to use posters and clarify "what ye do" indicate LGT's offer isn't reaching everyone who could benefit.

### *Community members want to help*

Although small numbers responded to this consultation, it is promising that all 5 respondents are willing to spread the word and 3 would attend events.

## Staff Workshop

Twelve staff from LGT participated in a one-day workshop. Through established frameworks, the sessions reviewed the current strategic position of the charity, effective communication of key messages, LGT values, the external operating environment, and strategic priorities. Several recurring themes emerged during the discussions.

### *Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement*

Collaboration emerged as the most frequently discussed theme throughout the workshop, with staff emphasizing its centrality to effective practice. The sentiment captured in "collaboration is key" and "to work strategically together as a team – all voices heard" reflects both aspiration and current experience. Staff recognised that "togetherness" strengthens the work, noting how collaboration has deepened over time.

Specific examples illustrated this collaborative approach in action. Staff highlighted how "Kidscope has more stakeholders involved now – community doctors, audiology, CDNT, Primary care connects," demonstrating expanding partnerships across health and community services. The "Parents Forum is very active – training, Board activity, community reps" was cited as evidence of meaningful engagement with families as partners rather than simply service recipients.

However, it was raised that partnerships may have evolved organically and now require more systematic mapping and intentional cultivation. There was consensus that community-led initiatives are valuable, with staff noting the growth in "schools' involvement" and appreciation for work that emerges from community need rather than imposed externally.

### *Values and Organisational Identity*

Staff demonstrated strong connection to values, with extensive discussion about what makes LGT's work distinctive and meaningful. The phrase "passion inspires passion" captured a belief that authentic commitment transmits to families and partners. Core values identified included being "passionate," having "community spirit," practicing "non-judgmental" approaches, maintaining "integrity," and holding "centrality of babies" as fundamental.

Particularly powerful was the articulation that LGT aims to "create a space where everyone is entitled to be seen and loved," reflecting a relational, dignity-centred approach to practice. Staff emphasised "holding community in positive regard," explicitly rejecting deficit narratives about the families and neighbourhoods they serve. The statement "urgency – babies can't wait" conveys both the developmental science underpinning the work and staff commitment to responsive service delivery. The phrase "responsive rather than reactive" distinguished LGT's approach from crisis-driven service models, emphasizing thoughtful, relationship-based work.

### *Capacity Building and Professional Development*

Training and professional development featured prominently in workshop discussions. The aspiration to "build professionals' knowledge" through "evidence-based training" reflects commitment to strengthening the wider system, not just delivering direct services.

Specific accomplishments were celebrated, including "early years follow up IMH training and mentoring research done," demonstrating that professional development activities are being evaluated. Staff expressed desire to "provide a core range of evidence-based training that are accessible and timely with ongoing support and mentoring".

The concept of "communities of learning" appeared in discussions, indicating interest in creating ongoing professional networks rather than one-off training events. Staff recognised that sustained learning requires relationship and infrastructure. There was also acknowledgment of opportunity to "upsell future programs," suggesting training could function as both capacity building and pathway to deeper engagement with LGT's approach.

### *Communication and Internal Culture*

Communication featured significantly. The takeaway "we have the information... what do we do with it?" suggests an acknowledgement that knowledge isn't always being translated into action or shared effectively. The discussions around "what is our objective" suggests uncertainty about priorities or how different work streams connect to overarching goals.

However, workshop discussions also conveyed energy and shared purpose. References to work being "thought-provoking" and the commitment to "work strategically together as a team" reflect genuine engagement with LGT's direction rather than passive compliance. Staff demonstrated strong capacity for critical reflection, acknowledging both strengths and gaps in current communication patterns.

### ***Reach and Inclusivity***

Staff discussed programme reach with a mixture of pride and concern. "Home visiting is valued by families and community" was stated definitively, reflecting consistent feedback affirming this core programme. Staff noted growth in programme offerings, including "extending and expanding the programs of suite of Peeps".

However, significant confusion emerged around programme eligibility and boundaries. Staff observed that "reach is programme dependent [which] causes confusion," with some services available beyond the immediate catchment while others remain geographically restricted. It was queried whether this is sustainable or creates equity issues with local families on waitlists.

Specific programme expansion was documented, including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library extending to new areas. Staff also highlighted "development of schools and EY roles," indicating evolving work in educational settings. These expansions were presented as achievements but also raised implicit questions about capacity to maintain quality while growing reach.

### ***Monitoring, Evaluation and Evidence***

A pattern emerged around data and evidence. Staff highlighted existing "qualitative feedback model" and the recent appointment of an Information and Reporting role strengthened evaluation capacity. However, it was also suggested that work to deliver purposeful data collection with a focus on its purpose, was needed.

Powerfully, staff stated, "we could have had longitudinal study by now but don't," expressing regret about a missed opportunity to document long-term impact. This reflects awareness that the organisation has served families long enough to conduct meaningful follow-up research but hasn't prioritised or resourced this work yet.

### ***Brand Awareness and Marketing***

Strong consensus emerged that the organisation's public profile doesn't reflect the quality of work being delivered. Staff expressed concern about "more work to be done engaging with the community and brand recognition."

The stated outcome "to increase brand awareness of LGT" reflects organisational priority, with specific suggestions including "mascot creation" as a family-friendly branding tool. Staff identified the need for "brand accessibility," ensuring that communication is tailored to different communities and contexts.

Critically, staff emphasised that marketing requires expertise, recognising that effective communication isn't something staff can add to existing roles but requires dedicated professional capacity.

### *Advocacy and Policy Influence*

Staff articulated clear vision for advocacy work, emphasising "advocating with baby at centre" and "amplifying voice" for families and communities. The aspiration to "spread and promote evidence-based knowledge and key messages" positions LGT as educator and influencer beyond direct service delivery.

Staff expressed desire to develop a "pledge or campaign" that could mobilise broader support for infant mental health principles. The staff see LGT as a potential megaphone for communities and perspectives often unheard in policy discussions. There was recognition that "collaboration within community" strengthens advocacy, with community partners lending credibility and broadening reach.

### *Organisational Context and External Environment*

Staff documented significant external environment frustrations in their PESTLE analysis. They noted "lack of investment in EY, tokenistic investment, piecemeal, reactive rather than responsible policy, changes in government brings uncertainty, housing crisis and implementation of recommendations from reports poor." This comprehensive critique of the policy landscape reveals sophisticated understanding of systemic barriers and suggests any advocacy work should address not just awareness but structural change.

Staff noted their learning journey, stating "we have learnt about including children's voices," highlighting evolving practice around participation.



## Stakeholder Interviews

Sixteen online and in-person semi-structured interviews conducted across stakeholder groups – six meetings with partners/ funders, four with senior management team members, five meetings with Board members, one with parent forum. Recurring themes analysed to show;

### *Identity*

A recurring theme across these interviews is the overarching need to clarify LGT's identity question. Many find it challenging to articulate what the service does, with questions arising about whether it is primarily a provider of a specific program - such as ABC - or a broader community organisation working in early years prevention. The current communications are perceived as formal and not accessible to the communities they serve. Terms like "Infant Mental Health," can evoke negative perceptions. Stakeholders emphasise that clarity and simplicity in messaging are vital; with a clear feeling that LGT must decide where to position itself.

### *Communications*

It was noted that linked to this 'identity' theme is a significant communications challenge. The lack of dedicated communication resource, results in inconsistent messaging and limited community outreach. Stakeholders highlight the need for a comprehensive communications strategy - utilising multiple channels such as social media, posters, GP offices, schools, and community venues - to improve visibility and engagement. Content must be consistent and simplified into accessible formats like short videos, infographics or posters in the community, making LGT's work more understandable to the public. Improving internal communication pathways and providing staff with tools to promote services actively, especially through a designated communications role and/ or outreach worker, are seen as urgent steps to enhance community awareness and foster trust.

### *Embedding in the local community*

A further opportunity lies in the physical premises. There was a strong feeling that the building spaces are underused, lacking the welcoming, accessible, and visible environment needed to foster community engagement. It was noted that the community members infrequently 'dropped in' contributing to a sense of institutional distance rather than warmth and inclusivity. Stakeholders advocate for approaching these spaces as vibrant

community assets - creating regular drop-in sessions, open-door policies, and low-barrier community engagement events to encourage local participation.

### *Partner relationships*

The relationship with statutory agencies and funders is complex and funding stability is fragile, heavily reliant on a substantial TUSLA contribution, and potentially subject to regulatory and political fluctuations. Building diverse income streams – through philanthropy, grants, training, and community support - is essential for resilience and growth. Formal agreements and positive relationships with partner agencies are vital for sustainability. Although recognised as a leader in infant mental health, it was felt that LGT's expertise and research capacity are underleveraged, and there are opportunities to further develop thought leadership through research collaborations, publications, and presenting at conferences. Formalising a franchise or consultant model could generate additional income, while positioning as a national expert would boost influence and sustainability.

### *Culture*

High staff turnover and unclear career progression were raised as potentially undermining service quality and organisational stability. Addressing these issues involves reviewing internal policies, promoting inclusion, and fostering a supportive, flexible work environment. Developing clear protocols for crisis management and succession planning will support staff retention and service consistency.

### *Governance*

It was recognised that core decision-making and governance structures have seen improvements but still require refinement. Implementing clearer policies, and regular strategic and operational reviews will ensure the board and team's effectiveness. Alongside this, defining LGT's fundamental purpose - whether to focus predominantly on early years or extend to school-aged children, or to deepen work in current area or expand to follow need - is critical for strategic alignment and resource planning.



# Consultation Recommendations

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## 1. Clarify Reach, Identity and Messaging

Clarify reach and scale of LGT's work over next four years. This will support development of a clear, accessible narrative about LGT's purpose and services, supported by a comprehensive communications strategy and updated branding.

## 2. Strengthen Communications Infrastructure

Appoint a dedicated communications/outreach role to implement multi-channel engagement (social media, posters, GP offices, schools) and produce simplified content (videos, infographics).

## 3. Enhance Community Engagement through Physical Spaces

Transform premises into welcoming community hubs with regular drop-in sessions, open-door policies, and low-barrier family events.

## 4. Diversify Funding Streams

Improve financial sustainability by pursuing grants, philanthropy, training income, and exploring consultancy/franchise models for sustainability.

## 5. Strengthen Partnerships

Create clear agreements with statutory agencies and partners to support programme development, avoid duplication, and strengthen collaborative delivery.

## 6. Invest in Research, Evidence and Impact Frameworks

Develop robust outcome measurement systems, including longitudinal studies and creative impact storytelling for funders and stakeholders.

## 7. Build Workforce Capacity and Culture

Implement structured professional development plans, succession planning, and protocols for lone worker support to reduce isolation and turnover.

## 8. Improve Internal Communication and Operational Systems

Introduce CRM systems, SOPs, and feedback channels to enhance team cohesion, reduce administrative burden, and ensure timely information flow.

## 9. Advance Advocacy Leadership

Position LGT as a national leader in infant mental health through research collaborations, publications, and policy campaigns amplifying family voices.

### Next Steps

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Following this consultation with stakeholders, the insights gathered will play a pivotal role in shaping LGT's strategic priorities for the next four years. While this consultation provides a strong foundation, further work is required to develop and complete the strategic plan, including external analysis of relevant documents, benchmarking, and alignment with sector best practices. This collaborative approach ensures that the final plan is informed by evidence and stakeholder perspectives while remaining adaptable to emerging needs.

Immediate next steps include convening a strategic planning workshop with senior leadership and board members to translate these findings into actionable priorities to strengthen organisational sustainability and maximise impact for beneficiaries. Key discussions will address resource allocation, programme development, and capacity-building initiatives, ensuring that the charity is well-positioned to deliver meaningful outcomes for children and families. The process will culminate in a comprehensive strategic plan that reflects shared vision, accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement.



## Appendix 3

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### Who We Heard From

| Stakeholder Group     | Method                                      | Responses / Sessions |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Families & Caregivers | Online Survey                               | 21 responses         |
| Partners & Funders    | Online Survey                               | 40 responses         |
| Staff                 | Online Survey                               | 14 responses         |
| Community Members     | Online Survey                               | 5 responses          |
| Staff Team            | Full-Day Workshop                           | 1 session            |
| Mixed Stakeholders    | Online/In-person semi-structured interviews | 16 meetings          |

## Appendix 4

### Organisations who responded to Partners, Funders and Collaborators survey.

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| Archways                             |
| UCC                                  |
| HSE                                  |
| Cork City Council                    |
| University College Cork              |
| Primary school - northside Cork City |
| Cork City Council                    |
| Scoil Íosagáin, Farranree            |
| Le Cheile                            |
| LCDC                                 |
| Paisti@n3 Childcare                  |
| Early start , Scoil Padre Pio        |

|                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|
| Carrigtwohill Family Resource                |
| HSE                                          |
| Foroige                                      |
| Cork City Partnership                        |
| Freelance                                    |
| Barnardos                                    |
| Independent Consultant                       |
| Niche Health Project                         |
| Playland Creche                              |
| Good Shepherd Cork                           |
| Cork Life Centre                             |
| Scoil Aiséirí Chríost, Girls Primary School, |
| Cork Education and Training Board            |
| ISPCC                                        |

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| MTU                         |
| Children's Rights Alliance  |
| Department of the Taoiseach |
| Childhood Matters           |
| TUSLA                       |





We would like to thank everyone who gave their time and energy to help shape this plan. Your input and commitment have made this possible.



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