

Power of Friends

AUTUMN / WINTER 2021

Meet Northern Ireland's first and only dedicated nurse for people with secondary breast cancer

Gemma Potter is the latest addition to our team of funded staff



Friends^{of the}
cancer centre



YEARS
of care and support

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Putting blood donation in the frame

Find out how blood and platelet donations are making a difference to cancer patients

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Our fantastic friends

A look at the incredible people across Northern Ireland who have been supporting us

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World leading research

How your support has been vital in helping improve survival for people with advanced prostate cancer



Thanks to your support, our funded staff are providing an additional

55,000

hours of care and support to patients and families when they need it most.

We would like to say a really big thank you to all of our funded staff, and all those who work throughout cancer services, for their hard work and dedication to caring for patients throughout the pandemic.

Their work is only made possible thanks to you.

To help us continue this work we need your help now, more than ever.

To donate please visit

www.friendsofthecancercentre.com



A warm welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, Power of Friends.

As we bring you our second newsletter of 2021, the charity is beginning to see light at the end of a really difficult time as a result of the pandemic. Whilst we will be dealing with the impact of COVID-19 for a long time to come, we are continuing to take positive steps forward and most importantly, we are still here for patients and families when they need it most.

One of those positive steps forward is the vital work the charity continues to do thanks to your support. In this edition, I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce the latest addition to our team of funded staff, Gemma Potter, who is Northern Ireland's first and only Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse. Gemma will be a vital source of support, providing a point of contact for patients throughout their diagnosis, treatment and beyond. Before now, this support has simply not been available for this patient group, and we are delighted that we can be part of this vital progress in patient care. You can read more about the incredible difference Gemma will make on pages 4 and 5.

At the heart of this progress, and every aspect of our work, is you. We continue to be amazed and humbled by the incredible ways people are raising money for the charity and we cannot thank you enough for your support. In recent weeks we have been able to reintroduce our physical events, which were cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions, and we have been delighted to see so many people taking part. We hope to bring you more events in 2022 and in the meantime, there are still lots of ways to get involved and support the charity in the coming months. Check out pages 15 and 16 to find out more.

Thank you for being a friend.

Colleen Shaw
Chief Executive

Our support so far this year



2 new funded specialist nurse posts – our Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse and our Advanced Nurse Practitioner for Haematology – bringing the total number of additional staff funded by the charity to 36.



284 people have received a financial grant since January this year. So far in 2021, the charity has provided £82,629 in financial support to help people through a difficult time



£184,163.09 invested in patient comfort by the charity since April this year to ensure patients are comfortable and supported throughout their treatment, including providing financial support.

Our new Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse

As a charity, we are committed to enhancing the care and support people receive through their diagnosis, treatment and beyond. In particular, we are incredibly proud of the charity's specialist nurses and we are delighted to introduce you to the latest addition to our nursing team, Gemma Potter.



Gemma is Friends of the Cancer Centre's Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse and she is the first and only nurse of her kind in Northern Ireland. Gemma, who came into post earlier this year, provides tailored care for people diagnosed and treated with secondary breast cancer.

Secondary breast cancer - also known as metastatic breast cancer - occurs when breast cancer cells spread to other parts of the body. Whilst secondary breast cancer can be treated, improving quality of life and helping people live longer, there is sadly no cure. The complex nature of this cancer means there are lots of intricate treatment options and specialist support is vital. As well as supporting those newly diagnosed with secondary breast cancer, Gemma will also be a source of on-going support for those who are living longer thanks to new and improved treatments for the disease.

Gemma joins Elaine Shaw, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Oncology Breast Cancer

Clinical Nurse Specialist, to provide support across the patient pathway. Gemma's new role will bridge the gap that existed in secondary breast cancer support, providing a significant improvement to the patient experience and the level of care provided for these patients.

In recent months Gemma has been settling into and developing this brand new role to provide the best care for her patients. She said:

"I am absolutely delighted to take on this role and I feel honoured that I will have the opportunity to support this very important patient group.

"Before coming into post, there was no dedicated support for people with secondary breast cancer. The breast care team at Belfast City Hospital went above and beyond to support patients and I am very lucky to be able to pick up from their fantastic work. I can now work alongside them to ensure that those with secondary breast cancer have the support they need, when they need it most. I can be

JUST £25 COULD PAY FOR AN HOUR OF SPECIALIST NURSING CARE

an accessible point of contact throughout diagnosis, treatment and beyond, and can provide a valuable link between the surgical breast cancer, oncology breast cancer and secondary breast cancer services. I will be on

hand for patients to provide specialist support in dealing with symptoms and side effects, and will co-ordinate treatment plans, as well as being a supportive shoulder to lean on."

Be your own Breast Bud

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and as well as highlighting the vital difference our nurses, Gemma and Elaine, make to people, we are also calling on you to be breast aware with the help of our Breast Bud Self-Check Hanger.

Our Breast Bud Self-Check Hanger is a really helpful tool, with a step-by-step guide on how to check your breasts and chest in just a few minutes. It's waterproof, so it can be placed in the shower, bathroom or anywhere at home to help remind you to take 5 minutes to carry out a self-check. By checking yourself regularly, you can get to know what is normal for you and spot any changes early. The hanger also highlights some of the things to look out for when carrying out your check and encourages you to contact your GP if you find anything you are worried about.

Since launching our Breast Bud campaign, we have distributed thousands of our self-check hangers across Northern Ireland. Families, friends, community groups, sports clubs and our amazing supporters in our fundraising groups have been vital in highlighting the importance of self checks. Our corporate partners, including

John Mulholland Motors, have also been vital in raising awareness, sharing our self-check tools with employees and customers to encourage them to become more cancer aware.



Shona Mulholland, Managing Director of John Mulholland Motors

If you would like to get involved in the campaign you can order your Breast Bud Self-Check Hanger:

 **Online via the shop section of our website**

 **Email info@friendsofthecancercentre.com**

 **If you would like larger quantities please get in touch by calling us on 028 9069 9393.**



FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN MAKE A **REGULAR MONTHLY DONATION** ON OUR WEBSITE

Meet the Board

Our board of trustees plays a vital role within the charity. Their role is not merely symbolic, as they oversee everything the charity does, from developing the strategic direction of the charity, to offering vital insight and expertise that helps guide the charity forward.

Most importantly, they play a vital role in deciding how we use your donations, ensuring every penny is put to the best possible use.

The Role of Our Board



Step 1

When you make a donation your money goes into a big pot.



Step 2

Staff in the Cancer Centre tell us what they need to help patients and submit an application for funding.



Step 3

Our expert board assess each application based on its potential benefit to patients and staff.



Step 4

Approved applications are funded using your money.



Step 5

These projects then directly benefit you, your family and friends affected by cancer.

Our board is made up of a diverse range of people from all sectors, ensuring that we have the expertise and knowledge at hand to make such important decisions. This includes senior doctors from the Cancer Centre and leading business figures from across Northern Ireland.

They volunteer their time to ensure that the charity is governed correctly and the money you raise is used to its maximum potential to help patients. We caught up with two of our newest board members to find out why they wanted to be part of the charity.



Caroline Keenan

Chartered Accountant with over 30 years of experience within the Accountancy and Taxation profession.

"I am absolutely delighted to join the board of Friends of the Cancer Centre and I am really looking forward to being part of the future direction of the charity in the coming years. It has been an extremely challenging year for everyone, but I feel the challenges faced by people with cancer and cancer services has been even more difficult. We are at a crucial time and I am proud to be part of an organisation that I know will make a positive difference to so many people and contribute to a better health service for the future. Having lost both my husband and mother to cancer, I am very motivated to assist others in support roles who find themselves in the same position as I and my family did."



Dr Seamus McAleer

Consultant Oncologist at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast.

"Friends of the Cancer Centre is a cause very close to my heart and I have been involved in its work for over 35 years. I have previously served on the board and I am delighted to once again be a trustee. Over the years I've seen first-hand the difference the charity's work makes to the lives of our patients, enhancing the quality of care they receive throughout their treatment. I believe it's important to support the charity as it gives so much to us and I am really proud to once again serve as a trustee. The past year has been incredibly difficult, and I hope that my knowledge and experience will contribute to the continued growth of the charity and ensure that its vital work continues."

Putting Blood Donations in the Frame

We are delighted to have teamed up with the NI Blood Transfusion Service, highlighting the important link between blood donations and cancer care.

We all know how vital blood can be in our hospitals and in emergency situations, but did you know that many people with cancer will also need life-saving blood and platelet transfusions? Different types of cancer, and cancer treatment itself, can affect the body's ability to produce blood cells which means that many patients will need a transfusion of red blood cells or platelets.



Colleen Shaw, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre joins Elaine Douglas and Buddy the Blood Drop from the NI Blood Transfusion Service.



The NI Blood Transfusion Service, located just a short walk from the NI Cancer Centre in Belfast, plays an integral role supplying hospitals and clinical units, including the Cancer Centre, with vital blood products.

Dr Damian Finnegan, Consultant Haematologist at the Cancer Centre in Belfast and trustee of the charity, explains how vital blood donations are to his patients. He said:

"Blood and platelet donations are vital to cancer care, particularly for those with a blood cancer such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma. Many of our patients will require transfusions as part of their treatment for many reasons, including the impact of the cancer itself or cancer treatment such as chemotherapy.

"Many patients will experience a decrease in their red blood cells, which is called anaemia. Without red blood cells, your body does not have enough haemoglobin - the protein in our blood which carries oxygen around the body - which results in tiredness and breathlessness. Some patients may also see their platelet levels fall, which can affect the body's ability to clot, which can lead to issues with bruising and bleeding. It's therefore really important that we give patients a helping hand with blood and platelet transfusions to ensure that they feel well and are in a strong position to continue with their main cancer treatment."

Did you know?

Platelets are tiny cells in your blood which help form clots to stop bleeding, and travel around the body in your bloodstream.

We will be working closely with the NI Blood Transfusion Service to give you a glimpse at how your generosity in donating blood, and in giving to the work of Friends of the Cancer Centre, impacts hundreds of cancer patients each year.

If you would like to make a blood or platelet donation, please visit www.nibts.hscni.net for more information.

Did you know?

The majority of platelet donations made at the NI Blood Transfusion Service will help someone during their cancer treatment.

Thank You to Our Fantastic Friends

A **BIG** thank you to all our wonderful friends who have been raising money for us, despite the challenges this year. We simply could not continue our vital work without your support.



Resurgam Trust



Ian Moore with his children



Rosie Colwell and friends



Armagh Ladies GAA



The late Ronnie Hanlon



Neil Meehan climbed Slieve Donard 30 days in June, raising £13,900.



Holy Trinity Primary School, Enniskillen



Geraldine Burns



Sparr Tandragee



David Hill and Maura Alexander



Paula O'Hare

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



Applegreen Northern Ireland have now raised over £155,000 since their partnership with the charity began in 2018, supporting over 6,200 hours of specialist nursing care for young people with cancer.



St. Kevin's College, Lisnaskea



Lee Glover and Eamon McNally



Ryan Hubbard



Gordon Best and Simon McDowell from MPANI



Olderfleet Rowing Club



The Crafty Gardener



Leo & Mia Hinds



Wesley Lewis



Erne Gaels in Belleek

If you are inspired to get involved and raise money for the charity, our fundraising team would love to hear from you.

Get in touch with Amy and Ana on 028 9069 9393 or email info@friendsofthecancercentre.com

TAKE PART IN A CHALLENGE OR JOIN A LOCAL FUNDRAISING GROUP

Supporting young people when they need it most

As a charity we are incredibly proud of all aspects of our work, which we are only able to fund thanks to your support. In particular, we are really proud of the vital work which supports teenagers and young adults with cancer.



The charity's TYA Social Worker Laurena Kane with our TYA Clinical Nurse Specialists Rachael Quinn and Renée Reid

A cancer diagnosis at any age can be devastating, but a cancer diagnosis when you're a teenager, or in your early 20s, can be life-changing. However, every year in Northern Ireland approximately 70 young people are newly diagnosed with cancer. To ensure that these young people, as well as their family circle, receive the care and support they need throughout their diagnosis, treatment and beyond, Friends of the Cancer Centre provides vital support to the team who are dedicated to caring for this very important group of patients.

For many years, Friends of the Cancer Centre has been committed to ensuring that the complex needs of young people are provided for through access to specialist, age appropriate care. In 2013 we proudly funded

Northern Ireland's first Clinical Nurse Specialist for Teenagers and Young Adults, Renée Reid, and since then our support has continued to grow. In 2017, we proudly supported the expansion of the Teenage and Young Adult (TYA) Service, working in collaboration with other local and national charities to provide enhanced support to young people across Northern Ireland. As part of that expansion, the charity was able to fund an additional nurse for our young patients, Rachael Quinn. Today, that support continues to grow and last year, despite the challenges of COVID-19, we welcomed our TYA Social Worker Laurena Kane to our team of funded staff. Renée, Rachael and Laurena are on hand to care for young patients and their families with a wide range of physical, emotional, social and financial support.

FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN MAKE A **REGULAR MONTHLY DONATION** ON OUR WEBSITE

We have recently expanded our support for the TYA team with a new resources project, providing funding for the team to:

- Offer simple support like a cup of coffee or a sandwich for young patients and their families whilst they wait for an appointment.
- Purchase additional resources and simple necessities, like batteries for games consoles, which can make time in hospital a little easier.
- Celebrate important milestones, including 18th and 21st birthdays, whilst patients receive treatment or are in hospital.
- Give Christmas gifts for all patients under the TYA team's care, many of whom may be in hospital on Christmas Day.

The last year has been particularly difficult for young people affected by cancer, with increased levels of anxiety and isolation due to the pandemic. We are also working closely with our Social Worker for Teenagers and Young Adults to develop a programme of online social events for young people and their families. Stay tuned to our website and social media for more updates.



Dara with our TYA Social Worker Laurena

The TYA team play a vital role in ensuring the complex and specialist needs of young people are provided for. Young people like 24 year old Dara McCann from Omagh, who was diagnosed just before Christmas 2020 with a Germinoma, a type of germ cell tumour which is commonly found in the brain. Shortly before starting his treatment, Dara met with Laurena, our TYA Social Worker, and has been supported by her ever since.

"Going through cancer treatment at the age of 24 was the scariest thing I've ever had to do, and this period has been the most difficult time of my life, but thankfully Laurena has been by my side throughout.

"Laurena's support was all encompassing - from medical support, financial support and through to things like how to deal with stress and anxiety around my treatment, Laurena had the knowledge on hand to help me cope with all of this. There was no such thing as a silly question - Laurena had the answers, or if she didn't, she knew exactly where to go to get them! The support that Laurena offered even extended to simple things like a cup of coffee, funded by Friends of the Cancer Centre, when I was up for treatment. Those little things can make such a difference, and are a welcome distraction, when waiting for appointments.

"I am passionate about sharing the great work of Friends of the Cancer Centre. Without their funding, Laurena's post wouldn't exist, and she couldn't have offered the vital support that she has for me. I am pleased that I have been able to fundraise for the charity, to help them help more people like me."

[READ MORE ABOUT HOW YOUR SUPPORT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO YOUNG LIVES ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

Stephen is Talking Balls to help others

In February 2020, 48 year old Stephen Clegg from Bangor was diagnosed with testicular cancer. After undergoing surgery, Stephen is doing well and he has joined forces with the charity's Talking Balls campaign, which is encouraging men across Northern Ireland to check their testicles regularly.



"Last year, my wife Helen and I were in Portugal and we have a tradition that on New Year's Day, we walk along a local beach. However, last year I got about half way along and had to stop. I was experiencing terrible backache and had to sit down. When I got back to Northern Ireland, I found that my right testicle was a bit swollen and made an appointment to see my GP. Initially, my doctor thought it could be a UTI and gave me antibiotics. However, after 2 weeks I didn't feel any improvement so I went back to my GP and he made a red flag referral to the hospital."

As a sales executive who travels a lot, Stephen chose to have a private consultation where he received an ultrasound scan. During the scan the consultant found a lump in his testicle that he was very concerned about and told Stephen that he needed surgery to remove his testicle. Tests later confirmed the lump was testicular cancer.

"When you first hear that you have cancer, it's a bit of a whirlwind. It was such a shock to everyone in the family.

"The care I've received from the team in the Cancer Centre and from Friends of the Cancer Centre has been excellent. Whilst I didn't receive any additional treatment after surgery, I am being monitored regularly by the team at the Cancer Centre, including Friends of the Cancer Centre's Testicular Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist who is on hand if I have any queries or concerns. In February 2021, a year after my surgery, I completed the 100K Your Way Challenge for Friends of the Cancer Centre as I wanted to give something back to this amazing charity.

"I used to be one of those men who didn't talk about my health, but now I would openly tell any man to check themselves regularly. If there is something wrong, the earlier you catch it, the sooner treatment can start and that can make a huge difference. "

You can read more of Stephen's story, and how a chance encounter with a neighbour encouraged him to share his experience, on our website.

ORDER YOUR TALKING BALLS SELF-CHECK CARD AND STRESS BALL ON OUR WEBSITE

Supporting haematology patients

The Apheresis Suite in Bridgewater at Belfast City Hospital plays a really important role in caring for people with haematological conditions such as lymphoma, myeloma and leukaemia in Northern Ireland.

Apheresis treatments are something most of us will be unfamiliar with, but it is vital in the treatment and care of a number of cancer types. Apheresis is a medical procedure that involves removing whole blood from a patient and separating the blood into individual components, so that one particular component can be removed. The remaining blood components then are re-introduced back into the bloodstream of the patient. The procedure can help alleviate some symptoms for people with cancer, such as skin irritation as a result of certain types of lymphoma.

The Bridgewater Suite at Belfast City Hospital carries out over 300 complex apheresis treatments each year. Due to the complexity of the procedure, patients can spend several hours in treatment at one time so it's really important that they are comfortable throughout. To help, Friends of the Cancer Centre was delighted to be able to fund the refurbishment of the Apheresis Suite earlier this year. The previous setup of the suite offered three beds, but the claustrophobic area meant there was a lack of adequate space for these specialist procedures. Crucially, this unfortunately also meant restrictions had to be placed on the number of relatives or carers who could accompany patients undergoing treatment at any one time.

The funding from the charity has made the suite a welcoming, comfortable and calming environment for both patients and staff. There are now appropriate storage areas for treatment kits, and equipment in the suite has



also been updated with more comfortable beds and treatment couches.

Most importantly, the extension has allowed the number of bed spaces to be increased from three to five. The redevelopment allows additional treatments to be started and managed simultaneously, which will help to streamline patient pathways and avoid long waiting times for treatment. This increased capacity is vital, with the number of complex procedures required to take place in the apheresis suite consistently growing.

Types of apheresis treatment

Treatments carried out in the Apheresis Suite include specialist haematological procedures including:

- The collection of stem cells from patients or donors who are preparing for stem cell transplantation.
- A procedure called Photophoresis, which is a therapeutic intervention often used to soothe skin issues for patients with lymphoma or graft v host disease.
- Therapeutic plasma exchange, which is used as part of treatment for some people affected by myeloma.

Improving outcomes through research

A world-first clinical trial led by Queen's University Belfast, with funding from Friends of the Cancer Centre, has shown how a new combination of radiotherapies has been successful in men with very advanced prostate cancer.

The ADRRAD trial was the first in the world to combine two existing forms of radiotherapy - Radium 223 which is an intravenous, bone-seeking radioactive drug and Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT), which is a very high-tech radiotherapy. This treatment approach has been proven to be safe and tolerable, whilst also slowing the progression of prostate cancer which has spread to the bones, potentially improving overall survival.

Research lead, Professor Joe O'Sullivan, Professor of Radiation Oncology from the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University, said:

"We have found that combining these two forms of radiotherapy is safe and we have seen some indications that the approach may prove more effective than existing hormone treatment in targeting prostate cancer cells at multiple sites. We will proceed to a large, randomized trial to test the treatment against the current gold standard.

"Conducting this trial has been a huge team effort involving research doctors, radiographers, nurses, physicists, and clinical trial professionals at the Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Centre. We are so grateful to the patients and their families for taking part in this trial."

Highlighting how your support has been vital in the trial, Dr Phil Turner, Consultant Oncologist and formerly the Clinical Research Fellow on the ADRRAD trial, added:

"Friends of the Cancer Centre very generously funded my PhD fellowship which facilitated my work as the junior investigator on the ADRRAD trial. It's tremendously rewarding to see how the support of a local charity allowed us to pioneer this world-first research in Northern Ireland."



David with his daughter Victoria, who took part in our Take on the Tower Abseil in 2018

Most importantly, this vital research is making a difference to people right now. David Livingstone, a patient who took part in the clinical trial, was diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer which had spread to his bones and lymph nodes in 2016.

"Five years on, with other medication which I take every day, I can now enjoy a pretty normal life. Without this breakthrough, I simply would not be here today. I have seen my two daughters get married and have been able to spend quality time with my grandchildren. To put my faith in the hands of Professor O'Sullivan and his team was the only way forward for me. There's no doubt that without this vital research, I wouldn't have had the extended life beyond what was originally diagnosed."

Festive Fun-raising

Celebrate with Friends of the Cancer Centre this Christmas by getting involved in our festive fundraising.

Whether it's purchasing the charity's Christmas cards, taking on a personal challenge like our Santa Skydive, getting your colleagues together for a Christmas jumper day or taking part in our annual Wish Upon A Star campaign, everything you do, will make a difference to local families.

Wish upon a Star



Christmas Cards



Santa Skydive



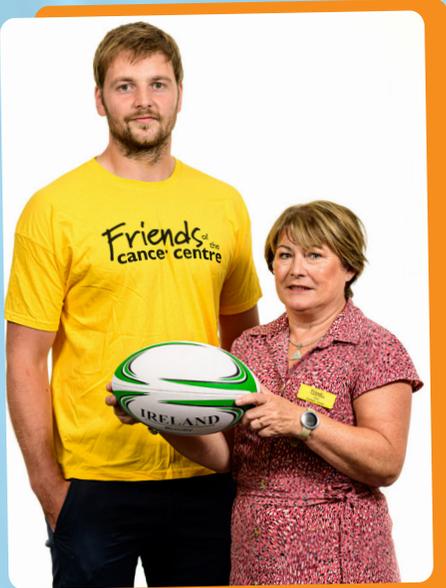
Friends of the Cancer Centre's Clinical Nurse Specialist - Laura Cross

Wear Something Festive



Get in touch with Amy and Ana on 028 9069 9393 or email info@friendsofthecancercentre.com to find out more.

KEEP AN EYE OUT ON OUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA OVER THE COMING MONTHS, TO SEE HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED.



Ulster and Ireland rugby star, and charity patron, Iain Henderson with Colleen Shaw, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre.

Christmas Raffle

1st PRIZE

Two tickets to a Six Nations Ireland Rugby match* in the Aviva Stadium, Dublin plus £100 spending money * Subject to Government restrictions in place at the time of the match.

2nd PRIZE

£100 Tesco vouchers

3rd PRIZE

Fortnum and Mason: The Tanner Hamper

4th PRIZE

Amazon Kindle Fire 7 tablet



Help us raise £10,000 to support local families.

Our exciting Christmas Raffle gives you the chance to **WIN** some fabulous prizes while supporting the charity's vital work. The prizes have been kindly donated so all of the money raised from the raffle will be used to make a difference to local families.



Tickets cost £1 each.

Please call us on (028) 9069 9393 if you require additional tickets or if you could help by selling them to your family and friends. Raffle draw takes place on Wednesday 15th December 2021.

Legal information:

Each raffle entry is £1. The raffle will be drawn on Wednesday 15th December 2021 at 4pm. You must be 16 years or over to purchase or sell a raffle ticket. Underage gambling is an offence. Licensed and regulated by Belfast City Council. Website: www.belfastcity.gov.uk. Promoter: Colleen Shaw. Full terms and conditions can be obtained from the Promoter at the charity address below

Friends of the Cancer Centre, NI Cancer Centre, Belfast City Hospital, Lisburn Road, BT9 7AB
T: 028 9069 9393 E: info@friendsofthecancercentre.com W: www.friendsofthecancercentre.com

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