

Enhancing care and support for local people  
Annual Review 2020 / 2021

Friends<sup>of</sup>  
the  
cancer centre

## Thank you for being a friend

Thanks to your wonderful friendship and support, we have been able to invest over £1.13 million into local cancer services in 2020/2021.

This annual review looks back at our 2020/2021 financial year, which was at the height of the pandemic when our income was most severely hit. However, despite the challenges faced by the charity during that time, people across Northern Ireland continued to be incredibly generous. In the most challenging year ever faced by the charity, our supporters helped raise almost £1.26 million.

Thanks to this generosity, Friends of the Cancer Centre's work was able to continue at a time when it was needed more than ever. The charity was able to continue in our funding of 35 additional members of staff, many of whom worked on the frontline to ensure patients and families had care and support throughout lockdown. Despite the financial challenges facing the charity, we continued in our commitment to funding staff, welcoming a Social Worker for Teenagers and Young Adults and Northern Ireland's first Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse to our team of funded staff.

We have always endeavoured to bring a sense of homely comfort into the hospital and last year we knew this would be even more important. We worked closely with staff on the wards to support small, but vitally important, projects that would make a big impact on patients. This included purchasing tablets that would allow patients to video call loved ones, who were unable to visit them in hospital due to restrictions.

We also moved many of the support services funded by the charity online, including our exercise and relaxation classes, so people could still benefit from them from the comfort of their own home.

Our work in supporting cancer research is continuing to have a direct impact on local people through the development of new and improved ways to treat many different types of cancer. Our investment into the people who carry out this vital work continues to grow and we proudly fund nine research staff who support patients through every aspect of a clinical trial, which could improve outcomes for them and others.

Whilst we will be dealing with the impact of COVID-19 for a long time, we are taking positive steps forward and most importantly, we are still here for patients and families when they need it most. 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.

On behalf of the charity, hospital staff and patients, thank you for being a valued friend.



*Geoff Hill*

**Geoff Hill**  
Chairman,  
Friends of the Cancer Centre



*Colleen Shaw*

**Colleen Shaw**  
Chief Executive,  
Friends of the Cancer Centre

## Our Year in Numbers

Your generous donations have a huge impact on local people affected by cancer. Despite the challenges faced by the charity, in the past year, your generous support has allowed us to:

Fund **2** new posts for our Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse and Social Worker for Teenagers and Young Adults.



Provide over **800** breast cancer and testicular cancer awareness tools to people across Northern Ireland.



Provide **441** financial grants to patients and their families when they needed it most.



Provide **16** pieces of equipment, including chairs and cushions, for the Occupational Therapy team to help patients get back on their feet and gain more independence



Move our exercise and relaxation resources online as face-to-face classes were unable to take place. To date, our videos have had **35,000** views.



Continue to fund **35** members of additional staff, who have remained on hand to care for their patients throughout the pandemic.



Purchase **10** tablets at the height of the pandemic so patients could keep in touch with loved ones who were unable to visit them in hospital.



## Patient care

We fund a range of additional staff posts and vital equipment as part of our commitment to ensuring that patients have access to specialised care when they need it most.



### Supporting excellence

Hundreds of people attend the Cancer Centre for treatment each day, and the dedicated staff throughout cancer services are on hand to provide vital care and support. The charity now proudly funds an additional 35 members of staff throughout cancer services, including specialist nurses, complementary therapists, a physical activity coach and social worker. Two key members of the funded staff team are Shelley Mooney and Alison Adams, our prostate and bladder cancer specialist nurses. They are a vital source of support for people affected by prostate and bladder cancer, providing care from diagnosis, through treatment and into survivorship. .

## Patient care highlights

Over  
**£462,000**  
invested in patient care,  
including funding for 10  
specialist nurses.

**1**  
new social worker,  
dedicated to  
supporting teenagers  
and young adults,  
and their loved ones,  
through treatment.

**1**  
new specialist nurse  
for people affected by  
secondary breast cancer,  
the first role of its kind in  
Northern Ireland.

**£6,000**  
in scholarships awarded  
to support professional  
development and patient  
impact for staff across  
cancer services.

## Meet Robbie

Robbie Holmes, 59, from Newry, was diagnosed with prostate cancer just over a year ago, and has been receiving support from our prostate cancer specialist nurses, Shelley and Alison, ever since.



Going through cancer treatment during lockdown, remote support via email or phone has been really important, and Shelley and Alison have provided just that for me. Often you forget all that you have been told on a visit to the hospital, so it's good to have a friendly point of contact that knows who you are, knows your medical condition, and can offer honest and practical advice.

I am so very appreciative of having a friendly professional who has experience in this field, who is understanding and able to answer my questions no matter how trivial or how serious. I have my doctors, nurses, consultants, and they are absolutely great but, in Shelley and Alison, I have other friends who I can ask a silly question, or a question I forgot, or a question I was a bit afraid to ask.

Living with cancer on life's journey is very difficult, but like all journeys it is made easier when you have a friend who will walk with you, a silent partner ready to help on those difficult days and it makes such a difference to know you have someone there ready to listen and able to help.



## Patient comfort

We understand how anxious and difficult undergoing cancer treatment can be, so we work to try and make both patients and their families as comfortable as possible.



### A helping hand for patients and carers

As part of our commitment to patient comfort, the charity very proudly funds four complementary therapists as part of the Belfast Trust Cancer Support Service at the Macmillan Support and Information Centre. Our therapists provide aromatherapy, massage and reflexology treatments for both inpatients and outpatients, as well as for carers. Unable to see patients face-to-face at times over the last year, our therapists have worked to provide online and telephone support instead. This has included a virtual appointments schedule and the provision of aromatherapy products for patients to use for self-care.

## Patient comfort highlights

16

pressure reducing cushions provided for the Occupational Therapy team, to help patients gain independence and return home from hospital during lockdown.

300

treatments carried out per year in the Apheresis Suite which has been refurbished by the charity.

441

financial grants provided to people across Northern Ireland to support them through treatment, including a limited COVID-19 emergency fund for additional cancer units at the Ulster, Craigavon Area, Antrim Area and Children's Hospitals.

140

gifts provided for patients spending Christmas in hospital.

## Meet Helen

Helen Baird, from Belfast, availed of the complementary therapy funded by Friends of the Cancer Centre at the Macmillan Support and Information Centre following her husband's prostate cancer diagnosis in 2020.



When my husband, Allister, was diagnosed with prostate cancer, it was a really difficult time for us as a family. However, we were really glad that we picked up on the early signs that something was wrong, as it meant that Allister was diagnosed at an early stage.

Obviously the greatest impact has been on Allister, but it has also been a tough time for me as it's really difficult to see a loved one face a cancer diagnosis. When I learned that the complementary therapy funded by Friends of the Cancer Centre is available to carers as well as patients, Allister encouraged me to book an appointment. I decided to try reflexology, but I wasn't sure what to expect from my first appointment. I was immediately put at ease by my therapist, Imelda, who made me feel so welcome and comfortable. I explained to her that I felt a little guilty availing of the reflexology treatment, as I was not the one who had cancer. However, she explained how important it was for me to take time for myself and find ways to reduce stress and anxiety. I needed to look after myself so that I could be there for Allister.

I could not recommend the complementary therapy enough. The treatment itself left me feeling relaxed and less anxious. I also found great benefit in being able to talk to someone in a safe and understanding environment, not just about the impact of cancer on our family, but about life in general.

I would like to say a really big thank you to everyone who supports Friends of the Cancer Centre as your generosity means that so many people can avail of this really valuable service.



## Research

As one of the leading charities supporting research in Northern Ireland, we know how vital it is in the fight against cancer.



### Our commitment to beating cancer

The charity proudly supports cancer research in Northern Ireland, in partnership with the NI Cancer Trials Network and the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University Belfast. The charity funds nine posts within the NI Cancer Trials Network, including Clinical Research Radiographer Lynn McCourt. Lynn is part of the team developing the ADDRAD clinical trial, which is improving outcomes for men with advanced prostate cancer. The trial, which is led by Professor Joe O'Sullivan, is the first in the world to combine two existing forms of radiotherapy - Radium 223 which is an intravenous radioactive drug and Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT), which is a very high-tech radiotherapy. Results from the trial have proven that the treatment approach is safe, whilst also slowing the progression of prostate cancer which has spread to the bones, potentially improving overall survival.

## Research highlights

Over **£434,000** invested in the key infrastructure needed to drive the progress being made in local research.

**9** research posts funded by the charity for the NI Cancer Trials Network including research radiographers, a data manager and research nurses.

**173** patients recruited to trials supported by the charity's funded research team during 20/21.

**6** trials for prostate cancer patients led by the charity's Professor & Consultant Oncologist are currently active.

## Meet David

David Livingstone, from Richhill in Armagh, was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer in 2016 and faced with a difficult diagnosis, David was recruited into the ADDRAD clinical trial, which is supported by the charity.



Friday 13th May 2016 was the day my life changed forever. I was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer and told that I might only have 6 months to live.

I was invited to join the research programme led by Professor Joe O'Sullivan. It involved 37 sessions of radiotherapy and six months of Radium injections. After the first few sessions I started to feel weak, and my energy levels dropped considerably. I have a hormone implant every twelve weeks, and a calcium infusion to help strengthen my bones. Over 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. I'm extremely grateful to Friends of the Cancer Centre as the investment it makes into local research supports so many people. There's no doubt that without this vital research, I wouldn't have had the extended life beyond what was originally diagnosed.



## How we do it

Almost **£1.26 million** raised in the last year by our amazing supporters.

Due to COVID-19, many of our events – and yours – were unfortunately cancelled or changed to virtual events this year. Despite these challenges, hundreds of amazing supporters still managed to do incredible things to support our vital work.

**91** couples, families and friends celebrated birthdays, weddings, retirements and anniversaries by donating in lieu of gifts and wedding favours raising over **£35,000**.

**124** collection cans were filled last year, raising over **£9,700**. On average, each collection can could pay for 3 patients to receive a complementary therapy session to help manage the side effects of treatment.

Whilst our volunteers and members of our fundraising groups in Fermanagh, Bangor & Ards, Dromore and Belfast, had their fundraising activities restricted by COVID-19, they all helped raise valuable awareness in their local communities.

Almost **£200,000** was raised by our wonderful supporters who hosted over **203** events in their local area.

Over **£150,000** was kindly donated in memory of beloved family members and friends who sadly passed away.

Over **400** people made monthly donations, totalling **£41,030.76**. This regular, ongoing support helps us plan for the future.

**17** schools held their own fundraising events – dressing up, dressing down, walking, running and exercising - raising over **£20,000**.

**49** businesses and their employees highlighted their support, by raising awareness and vital funds of almost **£187,000**.

## Our partners

2020 was a challenging year for corporate partnerships, with many staff working remotely or furloughed due to COVID-19.

However, our corporate supporters still found positive ways to be involved with the charity and for the team at Ulster Bank, this was by empowering their staff to be cancer aware.

Through the new partnership, Ulster Bank staff across Northern Ireland are being encouraged to check their breasts or chest and testicles regularly with the help of Friends of the Cancer Centre's Breast Bud Self-Check Hanger and the charity's Talking Balls Self-Check cards. Each self-check tool has a step-by-step guide on how to carry out a check at home, as well as what signs to look out for. By getting in the habit of checking regularly, people can get familiar with what is normal for them and spot any changes as early as possible.

Terry Robb, Head of Personal Banking at Ulster Bank, said:

"So many of our colleagues have been impacted in some way by cancer, either directly or through friends or family. It is incredibly important to be aware of the signs and to check for them. As a purpose led bank with the goal of helping families thrive, that's a message we really want to support Friends of the Cancer Centre to deliver."

Colleen Shaw, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre, said:

"We are delighted to work alongside Ulster Bank. As part of our health awareness work, the charity is determined to share as many of these vital tools as possible and encourage people across Northern Ireland to get into the habit of checking themselves regularly. Cancer treatment has come a long way and more people are surviving cancer, but early detection is vital and encouraging all of us to be more cancer aware is the first step in this. Carrying out a check takes five minutes, but those five minutes could save your life."



Terry Robb, Head of Personal Banking at Ulster Bank, joins Colleen Shaw, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre.

There are so many ways your company can work alongside Friends of the Cancer Centre to help make a difference. To find out how you can get involved, with fundraising and awareness raising partnerships, please contact Ana Wilkinson on 07775688291. Get your Talking Balls and Breast Bud self-check tools via our website.



Professor Gerry Hanna

## The hospital's view

Professor Gerry Hanna, Clinical Director at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast, can see first-hand the vital difference your support makes to the lives of local people with cancer across Northern Ireland.

I have long been a supporter of Friends of the Cancer Centre and for many years I have seen first-hand the incredible impact the charity's work has on our patients and our hospital. Even in its most challenging year, which saw the charity's income fall as a result of COVID-19, Friends of the Cancer Centre still invested £1.13 million into local cancer services.

The past 18 months have been extremely challenging for us all, particularly our patients who faced diagnosis and treatment in the most difficult of circumstances. However, despite facing its own challenges, Friends of the Cancer Centre has been by their side throughout. The charity continued to fund 35 additional staff, many of whom were on the front line of cancer care during the height of the pandemic and a vital source of support for patients. Not only that, but the charity looked at ways in which it could change how it worked, moving support services such as its complementary therapy and exercise classes online so patients could access them from home. Throughout it all, patients have been able to avail of the charity's vital support.

As well as caring for our patients, the charity also understands the significant benefit of supporting staff excellence. In particular, the charity's annual scholarship programme is of huge benefit as it offers funding of up to £2,000 for staff to undertake training which can go on to impact on all those across Northern Ireland affected by cancer. In 2009 I was fortunate to be awarded the Pearl Ewing Scholarship to

take part in an Observership at the MD Anderson Cancer Centre in Texas. The hospital is the largest Cancer Centre in the United States and the scholarship enabled me to get an invaluable insight into treatment techniques. I was then able to bring that learning back to Northern Ireland for the benefit of patients here. That experience subsequently led me to Australia, where in 2019 I took up the role of Director of Radiation Oncology at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne. I returned to Belfast earlier this year, once again bringing back knowledge and experience which we can use to enhance our offering to patients locally. Since launching in 2008, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Scholarships have supported over 40 members of staff, with each developing their skills, knowledge and expertise for the benefit of patient care here in Northern Ireland.

The charity's support is all-encompassing and only made possible thanks to the incredible support it receives from people across Northern Ireland. The impact of the pandemic on the charity will undoubtedly be felt for some time to come, but I know the generosity and goodwill that exists amongst its supporters will ensure that its vital work continues.

On behalf of the hospital management, our staff and patients, thank you so much to each and every person who supports Friends of the Cancer Centre. Everything you do is making a real difference to our patients and we hope that you will continue to support the charity in the years to come.

## Our Future

As a charity, we are determined to continue to grow our work to support more people across Northern Ireland affected by cancer.

The last eighteen months have been completely unprecedented for both the health and charitable sectors, but we know that our support is needed now, more than ever, for people across Northern Ireland. Our drive is to be there for people affected by cancer, and their loved ones, when they need it most and that will not change.

Our core work continued throughout lockdown and beyond, with our funded staff remaining on the front line of care, our financial grants supporting people at a really difficult time, and also funding some projects to support staff and patient wellbeing during this time. Thanks to your support, taking on a whole range of virtual fundraising events and raising money at home during the past year, we have been able to continue this work.

In the months, and possibly years ahead, our priority will be to bring our income back to pre COVID-19 levels. In recent months we have been able to re-start our fundraising events, and the hundreds of people who have already taken part will play a huge role in helping us with our future priorities. With a predicted increase in the number of people being diagnosed with cancer, the charity's work will be vital in the coming years. By increasing our income, we will in turn be able to invest more into cancer services for the benefit of patients.

### In the years ahead we are committed to:



#### Funding Additional Staff

Working alongside departments throughout the hospital, we are aiming to grow our funded staff team to support more patients at vital stages of diagnosis, treatment and beyond.



#### Supporting patients when they need it most

Through our patient grants programme, we hope to be able to expand our patient grants to include all cancer units across Northern Ireland on a permanent basis.



#### Supporting vital cancer research

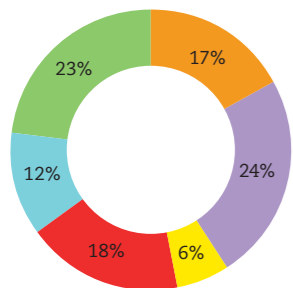
We will continue to invest in locally led research in partnership with the NI Cancer Trials Network and The Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research, giving more people the opportunity to take part and benefit from clinical trials.



#### Increasing cancer awareness

We will invest further in our Breast Bud and Talking Balls campaigns, working to more closely influence the target groups to be more aware of the key signs and symptoms to look out for.

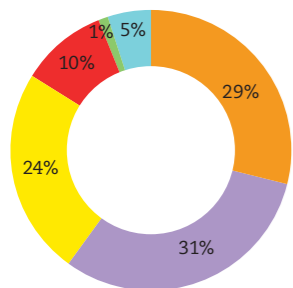
# How It All Adds Up



## Where our money comes from

### Income

- Community Fundraising
- Individual Donations & Legacies
- Special Events
- Corporate Fundraising
- In Lieu Of Flowers
- Other Income



## How we spend it

### Expenditure

- Research
- Clinical Care
- Patient Comfort
- Fundraising
- Campaigns
- Administration & Governance

### What it means

- Thanks to your support, we were able to raise £1,259,712.39
- Through our three key project areas, we put £1,134,795 back into cancer services
- The amount of money we spend on running costs and expenses is kept to an absolute minimum and 95p in every £1 donated is used to support patients and their families, and to invest in the future.

### Trustees

- Geoff Hill**  
Chairman
- Adrian Doran**  
Honorary Treasurer
- Brian Cave**  
Honorary Secretary
- Damian Heron  
Dr Maria Moloney  
Turlough Montague QC  
Dr Paula Scullin  
Dr Anne-Marie Telford  
Claire Aiken  
Dr Damian Finnegan  
Professor Suneil Jain  
Richard Donnan

### Management Team

- Colleen Shaw**  
Chief Executive
- Dawn Lyness**  
Finance and Admin Manager
- Nuala Bannon**  
Communications and Project Manager
- Ana Wilkinson**  
Head of Fundraising

# Thank you to our Forever Friends

Friends of the Cancer Centre is incredibly grateful to all of our donors and we would like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to those families whose loved ones left a gift in their Will to the charity this year.



Every year, gifts in Wills make an enormous difference to the charity's ability to fund future projects and this year was no exception, with £88,872 bequeathed.

As a charity, we know that when we receive a gift in a Will, it means that someone has lost a loved one. We hope it gives some small comfort to know that every gift makes a lasting difference to the lives of local people living with cancer.

We have developed a partnership with Will To Give and Bequeathed UK, to offer our supporters the opportunity to make a free, online Will. There is no obligation to leave a gift in your Will when using this service, but we are incredibly grateful to you for considering becoming our Forever Friend.

**If you would like to find out more, please visit our website or contact Ana Wilkinson on 07775688291.**

## Our Promise

All of this is made possible thanks to you.

We know that every penny you raise tells a story and represents something, or someone, very special. That is why we promise that every penny donated to Friends of the Cancer Centre will be put to the best possible use to support local cancer patients and their families.

**Thank you for being such an incredible friend to the charity.**



# Thank You



Find us on Facebook  
[facebook.com/friendsofthecancercentre](https://facebook.com/friendsofthecancercentre)



Follow us on Twitter  
[@FriendsCCNI](https://twitter.com/FriendsCCNI)



Follow us on Instagram  
[friends\\_of\\_the\\_cancer\\_centre](https://instagram/friends_of_the_cancer_centre)

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

Friends of the Cancer Centre is a registered company limited by guarantee in Northern Ireland. Company number NI616925. Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101345.

[www.friendsofthecancercentre.com](http://www.friendsofthecancercentre.com)

