



Enhancing care and support for local people
Annual Review 2021 / 2022

Friends^{of}
the
cancer centre

Thank you for being a friend

Thanks to your wonderful friendship and support, we have been able to invest over £1.19 million into local cancer services in 2021/2022.

Our financial year 2021/2022 was one of the most challenging for the charity, as we dealt with the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Despite this, people across Northern Ireland continued to be generous and helped raise over £1.65 million.

We are truly proud of everything the charity does, but we know that the vital staff we fund have a very special place in the hearts of the people we support. The charity is now proudly supporting an additional 44 members of staff, including new posts in nursing and radiotherapy at the North West Cancer Centre in Derry/Londonderry and Antrim Area Hospital. All of our staff play a vital role in patient care and our specialist nurses have each provided nearly 2,000 hours of care in the last year, which simply wouldn't be possible without you.

As a charity we often say small things make a big difference, as we truly believe little things and thoughtful touches can make a real impact on the patient experience and a person's time in hospital. Over the last year, we have continued to fund this area of our work, including refurbishing relatives rooms and purchasing comfortable chairs for patient day rooms. This area of our work also focuses on ensuring that people have support with the impact of their diagnosis on other aspects of their life, including their financial security. We are incredibly proud that in the last year, we have provided nearly £130,000 in financial grants to give people a helping hand through a very difficult time.



As well as working to support patients as they go through treatment, Friends of the Cancer Centre is also committed to finding new ways to treat cancer. Our work in local cancer research is allowing our partners at the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University Belfast and the Northern Ireland Clinical Trials Network to recruit research staff to carry out their vital work. The charity's investment funds nine additional research staff, who are working to develop new and improved ways to treat many different types of cancer and to offer more trials to more patients locally. Trials which give hope to so many.

Our health service is fantastic and staff go above and beyond to support their patients. However, the health service is facing challenges and financial uncertainty at a time when families are also under pressure as a result of the cost of living crisis. This means that the role of Friends of the Cancer Centre and the work that we do will become even more important in the months and years ahead.

The charity has become an integral part of cancer services in Northern Ireland and this is only made possible thanks to your continued support. On behalf of the charity, hospital staff and patients, thank you for being a valued friend.

Colleen Shaw
Chief Executive

Brian Cave
Chairman

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 provide:

16,662

patient consultations by our team of specialist nurses.



1,937

complementary therapy treatments provided by our complementary therapists.



445

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



636

head and neck cancer patients set to benefit from the charity's new Speech and Language Therapist



Over **2,500**

breast cancer and testicular cancer awareness tools provided to people across Northern Ireland.



20

pieces of equipment to support patient care and wellbeing, including exercise bikes, recliner day beds and televisions.



177

gifts for patients including young people celebrating birthdays and patients in hospital on Christmas day.



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

At the heart of the charity's work are the staff we fund and today, we proudly support 44 additional staff posts across cancer services in Northern Ireland. One of the first nurses funded by the charity in 2011 was Elaine Shaw, our Breast Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist. Since then, we have gone on to fund 17 nursing posts including Clinical Nurse Specialists and Research Nurses. Last year, 10 years after funding our first nurse, we were incredibly proud to fund Northern Ireland's first and only Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse, Gemma Potter. Both Elaine and Gemma are a vital source of support for people affected by breast cancer and in the last year alone, they have held over 2,300 patient consultations.

Patient care highlights

Over
£380,000
invested in patient care,
including funding for vital
nurses.

1
Speech and Language
Therapist to support
head and neck cancer
patients.

50
newly diagnosed young
people supported by our
Social Worker for Teenagers
and Young Adults.

702
patients attended exercise
classes held by our Physical
Activity Coach.

Meet Ann

Ann McBrien from Belfast, has lived with breast cancer for almost a decade. Breast cancer has had a major impact on Ann's life, but she remains positive and extremely thankful for the care and treatment she has received and continues to receive, including from the nurses who are funded and supported by Friends of the Cancer Centre.

“

I was diagnosed with primary breast cancer after my first mammogram in 2013. My treatment included surgery and radiotherapy, followed by hormone therapy for five years. Over those five years, I was under the care of a breast cancer team comprising of surgeons, oncologists, breast care nurses and Friends of the Cancer Centre's Breast Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Elaine Shaw. Over the five years of my care, Elaine performed my nurse-led reviews and was always at the end of the phone to help answer concerns and queries.

After five years of treatment, I was discharged from cancer services and assumed cured. However, just two months later I was diagnosed with secondary breast cancer. My breast cancer had spread to both my lungs and at this stage was now incurable. I am very grateful to have the support of Friends of the Cancer Centre's Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse, Gemma.

At present I liaise with her when I have practical queries. Looking back to when I was given my secondary diagnosis in 2019, I know Gemma's support would have made a real difference at that time. It was an extremely traumatic and uncertain time and having a secondary breast cancer nurse at my side would have really helped with the stress. I also know that my cancer treatments will eventually fail to work and knowing there is a specialist Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse there for support at that stage is very reassuring.

The support given to Friends of the Cancer Centre has a direct impact on the lives of so many people and helps the charity continue its vital work, including supporting Elaine and Gemma's posts.



Ann McBrien (centre) with Friends of the Cancer Centre's Breast Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, Elaine Shaw, and the charity's Secondary Breast Cancer Nurse, Gemma Potter.

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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

We know that the Cancer Centre can be a frightening place and that is why we endeavour to make it as comfortable and homely as we can by providing thoughtful and practical comforts throughout the hospital. In particular, making the inpatient wards as comfortable as possible is a key focus of the charity, as we know how difficult and distressing a hospital stay can be for patients and their loved ones. From purchasing comfortable recliner chairs and day beds, to refurbishing rooms for families to stay close to a loved one, this area of our work means a great deal to patients as it can help bring a little normality to a very abnormal situation.

Patient comfort highlights

£411,637

in funding to help make patients and their families more comfortable.

2

relatives rooms refurbished on wards 2A and 2B to give families a comfortable place to stay whilst their loved one is in hospital.

Nearly

£130,000

in financial grants provided to people across Northern Ireland to support them through treatment.

6

virtual Get Togethers for teenagers and young adult patients to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Meet Emma

In June 2020, at just 41 years old, Emma Cooper from Bangor was diagnosed with breast cancer. The diagnosis came as a shock, but Emma has been supported by the charity, including the comforts provided on the wards in the Cancer Centre.



Emma Cooper

“

My husband, Peter, told me that he felt a lump in my breast, but I didn't take much notice. Cancer hadn't even crossed my mind as I was a busy mum, working two jobs at the time. That was six months before my cancer diagnosis.

Peter mentioned the lump again and he thought it had grown quite significantly, so I agreed to get checked out. I went to my GP who wanted to refer me for further investigation. All of this was happening at the height of COVID-19, which meant that I had to attend the appointment on my own whilst Peter waited in the car. When they asked if I had anyone with me, I knew that the news would not be good.

My treatment included surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. At one stage, I was hospitalised in the Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital due to a mouth infection, which was a side effect of my chemotherapy treatment. It was at this time that I became more aware of Friends of the Cancer Centre and the impact its work has on patients. The ward had a lovely day room, which had been renovated and supported by the charity. It had comfortable chairs, as well as a beautiful garden, which made all the difference to me and other patients on the ward. It meant you had space away from your hospital bed where you could relax and as visitors were restricted due to the pandemic, it also gave you an opportunity to pass time with other patients.

Thank you so much to everyone who supports the charity as it's thanks to your donations and fundraising that the charity can help make the Cancer Centre a more comfortable space for patients.

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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

As well as helping patients through their diagnosis and treatment, Friends of the Cancer Centre is supporting local researchers to find new ways to treat and cure many types of cancer. Over the next 3 years, the charity will commit over £1 million to support the progress being made in cancer treatment locally through our partnership with the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University Belfast and the NI Cancer Trials Network. The investment made by the charity supports the recruitment and funding of additional staff who each carry out vital research into new and improved ways to treat different types of cancer. This means that patients here in Northern Ireland can benefit from the latest trials which could improve the outcomes for many.

Research highlights

Over

£360,000

invested in the key infrastructure needed to drive the progress being made in local research.

1

new Research Assistant for the radiotherapy department who will help develop new and improved ways to deliver treatment.

90

cancer clinical trials and research studies were available to both adult and paediatric cancer patients in Northern Ireland.

369

cancer patients were recruited to trials supported by the charity's funded research team during 21/22.

Meet Alastair

In 2017, Alastair Mackay from Lisburn was diagnosed with kidney cancer. After recovering from his initial diagnosis and treatment, two years ago Alastair learned that the cancer had spread. He is currently receiving treatment from the team at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre and doing well. For Alastair, one of his main incentives has been to stay fit and well so that he might be eligible for the next refinement in treatment, which is only made possible thanks to research.



Alastair and his wife Jill with daughters Caitlin, Erin and Megan

“

I was first diagnosed with kidney cancer over five years ago during an ultrasound scan for a gallstone investigation. I had no symptoms at that time and no clue that I had a large tumour growing on my left kidney. Within a matter of weeks I had the kidney removed and was back at work the following month. I remained in good health for three years, however I developed an annoying dull ache between my shoulder blades. I was called for a bone scan and a subsequent full body MRI revealed a significant metastasised tumour on my upper spine and a smaller one on my neck. I knew then that the cancer cells had escaped my kidney, had been silently roaming around in my system all that time and eventually decided to take up residence on my spine. I was referred immediately to the team at the Cancer Centre in Belfast and I rapidly received an intense course of radiotherapy and an oral chemotherapy related drug.

My tumours responded well to radiotherapy and alongside quite a large collection of other medication, I've been stable ever since. However, cancer treatment is constantly improving and I was recently informed that there are new combination therapies being licensed which were not available to me when I began treatment. So there's always hope.

Knowing that Friends of the Cancer Centre supports research and funds staff who are actively involved in clinical trials targeted at a wide range of cancer types is really important, as this investment is giving hope to people like me.

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How we do it

Almost **£1.66 million** raised in the last year by our amazing supporters.

100 couples, families and friends celebrated birthdays, weddings, retirements and anniversaries by donating in lieu of gifts and wedding favours raising over **£40,000**.

217 collection cans were filled last year, raising over £19,070. On average, each collection can could pay for 3 patients to receive a complementary therapy session to help manage the side effects of treatment.

Our volunteers and members of our fundraising groups in Fermanagh, Bangor & Ards and Dromore helped raise valuable awareness in their local communities as well as **over £10,000** to support our work.

Over **£275,000** was raised by our wonderful supporters who hosted over **190** events in their local area.

Throughout the year, **220** supporters made monthly donations totalling **£42,762**. This regular, ongoing support helps us plan for the future.

11 schools held their own fundraising events – dressing up, dressing down, walking, running and exercising - raising over **£13,000**.

96 businesses and their employees highlighted their support, by raising awareness and vital funds of over **£226,000**.

300 people took part in the charity's events such as our Slieve Donard Challenge, Take on the Tower Abseil and Cuppa with Friends, raising almost **£210,000**.

Our partners

ABL GROUP Insurance Brokers & Risk Advisors

Our corporate supporters work hard throughout the year to raise funds and awareness to support the charity's work.

Local insurance brokers and risk advisors, ABL Group, began working alongside Friends of the Cancer Centre in January 2020, following a staff vote. To combat the set backs in fundraising caused by restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the company has continued its support into 2022, raising over £16,000 to support the charity's work.

Through the partnership, ABL Group colleagues were encouraged to engage in the charity's cancer awareness campaigns, take part in our fundraising events and hold events of their own.

Lesley Browne, member of ABL Group Staff Council, explains:

“So many of our colleagues have been impacted in some way by cancer, either directly or through friends or family. Working with Friends of the Cancer Centre has enabled us to give something back, not just to the charity and the families it supports, but also to ABL families through the important cancer awareness messaging.

“As a company with over 125 employees, we have fully engaged with Friends of the Cancer Centre's events and activities. It has been wonderful to hear the feedback from colleagues after taking part in the Take On The Tower Superhero Abseil, climbing Slieve Donard, coffee mornings and raffles. As well as raising money, these all provide an opportunity for cross team communication and team building too.”

Ana Wilkinson, Head of Fundraising at Friends of the Cancer Centre, said:

“Working with ABL Group is a true reflection of a positive charity partnership. To support our health awareness work, the company has shared our cancer awareness tools with their colleagues, as well as promoting the importance of regular self-checks on their social media channels. Fundraising has been varied and fun, with every opportunity seized to make a difference. Mutually beneficial partnerships like this really are so vital to the charity's work and I would encourage any companies considering a new charity partner, to find out more about 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 on 07775688291.



Colleen Shaw
Chief Executive

Chief Executive's View

Friends of the Cancer Centre's Chief Executive Colleen Shaw is retiring after 16 years of leading the charity. Colleen has been the heart of Friends of the Cancer Centre since 2006 and in that time, has steered the organisation to become one of Northern Ireland's leading cancer charities. Ahead of her retirement next year, Colleen has reflected on her time with the charity and the impact its work has had on families across Northern Ireland.

As my time with Friends of the Cancer Centre comes to an end, I have been reflecting on how far the charity has come and the progress we have made in recent years.

When I first took up the role as Chief Executive, the charity was called Friends of Montgomery House and based at Belvoir Park Hospital. At the time, the charity was run by a team of dedicated volunteers and had an income of around £100,000, which was an incredible achievement. One of my first milestones was overseeing the charity move to the new Northern Ireland Cancer Centre at Belfast City Hospital in 2006 and rebranding the charity to Friends of the Cancer Centre. Since then, the charity has grown into a professional organisation investing over £1 million a year into local cancer services. Most importantly, I've witnessed the incredible difference the charity makes.

I feel honoured to be part of a charity that has truly made a difference to the lives of thousands of people. I am incredibly proud of every aspect of the charity's work, particularly the staff we fund as I have been able to witness first-hand the impact they have and the difference they make to the patient experience. When the charity funded its first Clinical Nurse Specialist in 2011, I could never have dreamt that today we

would now be supporting a team of 44 additional staff including nurses, social workers, radiographers and more.

The charity's work is powered by the generosity and kindness of the public. Throughout my time with Friends of the Cancer Centre I have always been humbled by the incredible ways in which people support the charity. At times when people are facing incredible challenges and often loss, they find the strength to think of others and give back.

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the charity over the years and to everyone who continues to fundraise and donate to support our work. Friends of the Cancer Centre will always be a cause very close to my heart and I am incredibly proud to have played a role in the charity's work. I know the charity will continue to go from strength to strength and continue to support families when they need it most. As I step down as Chief Executive I look forward to becoming a proud supporter and I hope that you too will continue to support the charity in the years ahead.

Thank you for being a friend.

The Future

While our annual review highlights how we have used your valued donations and the impact they have had on local people in our last financial year, it's also an opportunity to look to the future.

The charity has come a long way in recent years and with your continued friendship, we are determined to continue to grow our work to support more people across Northern Ireland affected by cancer.

Recent years have been the most challenging for the charity, with COVID-19 impacting on all aspects of our work. However, it did not derail us and throughout it all the charity was able to continue its vital work. The impact of the pandemic has now set in motion new challenges in the form of the lack of secure and recurrent funding for the health service and the cost of living crisis, which will undoubtedly bring more obstacles for the charity.

However, despite recent challenges we are looking to the future. We will remain committed to the areas of our work which we know make an incredible difference to people's lives. As the charity continues to grow, so too does the support we offer families impacted by cancer across Northern Ireland. A significant milestone for the charity has been extending our work to other hospitals including the North West Cancer Centre and Craigavon Area Hospital. We are incredibly proud to have recently agreed funding for more staff posts in the North West Cancer Centre and Antrim Area Hospital and hope to build on that in the years ahead.

Our future priorities include:



Funding additional staff

Working alongside departments across local cancer services, 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 to help patients through the cost of living crisis.



Supporting vital cancer research

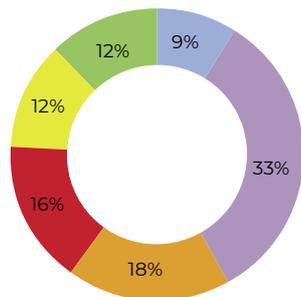
We will continue to invest in locally led research in partnership with the NI Cancer Trials Network and The Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research, giving more people the opportunity to take part and benefit from clinical trials.



Increasing cancer awareness

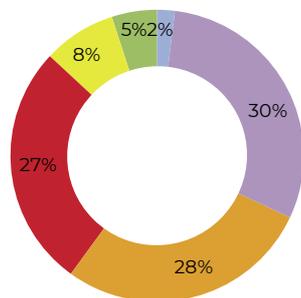
We will build on the success of our Breast Bud and Talking Balls campaigns, working to share more self-check tools and raise awareness across our key target groups.

How It All Adds Up



Where our money comes from **Income**

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



How we spend it **Expenditure**

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

What it means

- Thanks to your support, we were able to raise £1,658,625
- Through our four key project areas, we put £1,190,617 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

- Brian Cave
Chairman
- Richard Donnan
Honorary Treasurer
- Caroline Keenan
Honorary Secretary
- Turlough Montague
- Dr Paula Scullin
- Dr Seamus McAleer
- Dr Damian Finnegan
- Professor Suneil Jain
- Claire Aiken
- Professor Alastair
- Adair Joe Rice
- Phillip McMaw

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 £261,265 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



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facebook.com/friendsofthecancercentre



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Follow us on Instagram
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