



Enhancing care and support for local people
Annual Review 2022 / 2023

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 £1.14 million into local cancer services in 2022/2023.

Our financial year 2022/2023 continued to be challenging for the charity, as we dealt with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Despite this, people across Northern Ireland continued to be generous and helped raise over £1.67 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. We are incredibly proud to now fund 51 additional staff across cancer services and we have been determined to expand this area of our work to other cancer units in Northern Ireland. In the past year we have been able to realise this goal, with 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 together, have provided nearly 90,000 hours of care in the last year, which simply wouldn't be possible without you.

When times are tough it is often the small things that make a big difference and as a charity we 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 £150,675 in financial grants to give hundreds of families a helping hand through a very difficult time.

Our work in local 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 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 Cancer 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 cancer treatments and offer trials to more patients locally. As well as giving hope to people today, our investment will impact on the future of cancer care, as this vital work has the potential to change the way patients are treated in the future.

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.



Ana Wilkinson

Ana Wilkinson
Chief Executive



Brian Cave

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:

5

new specialist nursing posts including firsts for the charity in supporting those with leukaemia, gynaecological cancers and upper GI cancers.



1,321

reflexology, massage and aromatherapy treatments by our complementary therapists.



536

financial grants to support patients and their families when they need it most



33

pressure reducing cushions for those with rectal cancers, helping to improve their quality of life during and after their treatment



12,514

cancer awareness tools distributed across Northern Ireland, helping everyone be more breast and testicular cancer aware.



15

pieces of equipment to support patient care and comfort, including observation machines, an ECG machine and a bariatric chair.



6

activity packs and gifts for young patients having radiotherapy treatment at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre.



Patient Care

We are passionate about ensuring that those affected by cancer, and their families, can access specialist care when they need it most.

Expanding Our Support

We are delighted to have been able to extend our work, supporting more patients and their families than ever before. Our funded staff are at the heart of what we do and the team now includes 51 additional staff working throughout cancer services across Northern Ireland.



We have most recently funded two new members of staff at the North West Cancer Centre. Stacey Leonard, Research and Development and Clinical Trials Radiographer, will work closely with the multidisciplinary team in radiotherapy to ensure best practice and integrate new clinical trials into the department. Aisling McGarvey is the first nurse funded by the charity to support those with Upper GI cancers, including cancers of the oesophagus, stomach, duodenum, liver, pancreas, ampulla, gall bladder and bile duct. We look forward to seeing what Stacey and Aisling will achieve in providing a vital service to patients in the North West.

Over

£465,000

invested in patient care, including funding for 22 specialist nurses.

2

new posts funded at the North West Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin Hospital.

1

new specialist nurse for head and neck cancer funded at Antrim Area Hospital.

650

patients with oesophageal and pancreatic cancer cared for by the charity's clinical specialist dietitian.

Meet Richie

In 2018, Richie Sheerin from Derry/Londonderry was diagnosed with a rare blood cancer called myeloma when he was just 35 years old. Richie embarked on an intensive treatment programme and received treatment at the North West Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin and the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast. Richie knows first-hand the difference the charity's support at the North West Cancer Centre will make.

“When the doctor mentioned the word cancer I didn't feel sad or angry. I felt uncertain and it felt like the lights were turned off. At the time radiotherapy wasn't available at the North West Cancer Centre, so I travelled to the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast every day for five weeks. The treatment was intense, but after my first stem cell transplant in November 2019 I started to feel a lot better and in January 2020, I had a scan which couldn't detect cancer anywhere. However, I still needed a second transplant. We tested my four brothers to see if any of them would be a match and thankfully my brother, Damian, was and he has been my life-saver. In August 2020, I was admitted for the second transplant.

“The care I have received and continue to receive from the team at Altnagelvin and in Belfast is fantastic. Whilst I am looked after by two hospitals 70 miles apart, the thread that brings them together is Friends of the Cancer Centre. The charity supports vital work at both hospitals and as a patient, you can see the incredible difference it makes.

“I am delighted that the charity has extended its work to the North West Cancer Centre and through the funding of additional staff and support such as financial grants, people in the North West will now be able to avail of extra support when they need it most.”



Patient Comfort

The little things often make the biggest difference, and we are committed to ensuring that cancer treatment is as comfortable as possible.

A comfortable space on 10 North

We understand that undergoing cancer treatment can be an anxious and distressing experience. For some patients with blood cancers or other haematological disorders, they may have to spend a prolonged period of time on one of the haematology wards at Belfast City Hospital to receive the care they require.

To help bring a little normality, we have recently refurbished the dayroom on Ward 10 North, making it a comfortable and welcoming space for patients to spend some time with loved ones when they visit, away from the bustle of the busy ward area. Patients here can also avail of the complementary therapy service that the charity funds, or take part in sessions with our Physical Activity Coach, helping them to deal with some side effects of their treatment and make their stay more comfortable.



Almost

£395,000

dedicated to making cancer care more comfortable for patients, their families and carers.

Over

£150,000

provided in grants to patients across Northern Ireland, offering financial support when it is needed most.

1,346

patients supported by our Physical Activity Coach through group programmes and one-to-one exercise sessions.

175

Christmas gifts provided for young patients and those spending Christmas day in hospital.

Meet Peter

Peter Robertson is a Professor of Energy and Environmental Engineering at Queen's University in Belfast and in 2018 he was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome, a type of blood cancer.

"I probably had been afflicted with this quite a number of years ago. While I was living in Scotland for 20 years I'd been suffering quite a lot with infections. Following blood tests it turned out that I had low white blood cell and neutrophil counts, but they were quite borderline so they thought it was maybe just some idiopathic reason that I had this. However when I moved to Northern Ireland and I was referred to the haematology unit they were very, very proactive and engaged in a broad range of blood tests and in 2018 I was ultimately diagnosed, following a bone marrow biopsy, with myelodysplastic syndrome.

"Following my diagnosis I was put onto bi-weekly injections of G-CSF, which is basically a treatment which helps the bone marrow stimulate the growth of white blood cells. This has been quite transformational in terms of me living my life and has kept me out of hospital and reduced the number of infections that I've had. While there are some challenging side effects at times

in terms of discomfort, they are far outweighed by just how transformational this has been. I'm really lucky in the team that's looking after me here and whilst I've been hospitalised a couple of times on wards 2A, 2B and 6 North as a result of infections, I've been very well cared for. During my time in hospital, I was one of many people benefitting from the work of Friends of the Cancer Centre. The charity provides such thoughtful support, including day rooms which give a peaceful and comfortable space on the ward to watch TV or catch-up with loved ones. It might sound small, but this part of the charity's work is so significant for patients and really helps you through a difficult time.

"Friends of the Cancer Centre has been phenomenal and to give something back for the support I received, I've taken part in the charity's Take on the Tower Abseil. The charity has given me and many others great support in the hospitals in Northern Ireland and we're very lucky to have this this resource here."



Research

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

Our £4m investment in local cancer research

Cancer research is vital in finding new and improved ways both to treat cancer and to improve quality of life for those living with cancer. A decade on from Friends of the Cancer Centre's first investment in local cancer research, the charity continues to fund nine vital posts at the NI Cancer Trials Network, in partnership with the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University, Belfast.



Alongside this investment, we fund two Research and Development Radiographers, a Research Assistant in Medical Physics, and a Professor of Clinical Oncology/Senior Lecturer. Each of them are dedicated to ensuring that patients can benefit from the latest trials and treatments, improving outcomes for many across Northern Ireland.

£473,742

invested in cancer research, improving outcomes for local cancer patients.

88

cancer clinical trials available for patients through the NI Cancer Trials Network.

1

new Clinical Research Nurse at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

19

clinical trials with involvement from the charity's Research and Development Radiographer, ensuring continuous development in the department.

Meet John

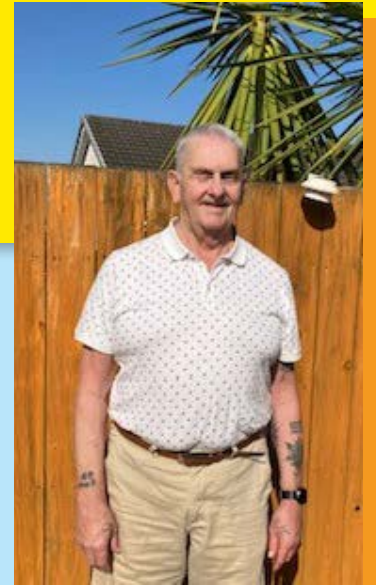
One of those benefitting from the charity's investment in research is John (Iain) Creswell from Coleraine, who was one of the participants in the SPORT Trial following his prostate cancer diagnosis in 2018. The SPORT Trial is led by Friends of the Cancer Centre's Professor of Clinical Oncology, Suneil Jain and has shown that men diagnosed with prostate cancer can benefit from radical radiotherapy that delivers advanced treatment called SABR (Stereotactic Ablative Body Radiotherapy) in just five hospital visits.

"When you are sitting in front of a specialist oncology nurse and she says 'you have cancer', it is a real sledgehammer moment. A million thoughts go through your mind, but I was actually quite calm about it. My intuition was, from day one, that I had cancer. Possibly my career in the Fire Service taught me to be pragmatic, to take it on the chin and deal with it.

"I started hormone treatment at Altnagelvin Hospital and my consultant told me that my treatment would also include 37 sessions of radiotherapy over five and a half weeks. I had been doing some research into treatments available, so I enquired about brachytherapy, which is an internal form of radiotherapy. The consultant advised me that Altnagelvin did not offer that treatment, but I could be referred to the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre in Belfast. It was during my consultation in Belfast that I first learned of the SPORT trial.

"I was really interested in the clinical trial as it would only involve five radiotherapy sessions over five days. One day per week would result in less travelling and I was also of the mind-set that without trials and research things are never going to progress. Fiducial markers (pieces of gold) were injected directly into the prostate and a gel spacer injected into the area between the bowel and prostate, which would protect the bowel from radiation. For me the trial was 100% successful and I had little adverse effects.

"I sincerely hope that the trial will influence how treatment will be carried out in the future. I'm incredibly grateful to all those involved in the trial and to Friends of the Cancer Centre, as their vital work and support is making a difference to so many."



Cancer Awareness

We are passionate about sharing the self-check message, and helping everyone across Northern Ireland be more cancer aware.

Empowering people to be more cancer aware

With 1 in 2 of us likely to be diagnosed with cancer in our lifetime, our cancer awareness campaigns are designed to help everyone be as cancer aware as possible. Knowing what is normal for you, and picking up quickly on any changes, is vital to ensure any potential diagnosis comes at an early stage and you can receive the treatment you need.

Our Breast Bud breast cancer awareness campaign and Talking Balls testicular cancer awareness campaign were developed with the support of our specialist nurses. Each campaign has also been funded by the Department of Health and Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.



Fermanagh GAA supporting our cancer awareness campaigns.

6,017

Talking Balls self-check cards distributed to help men be testicular cancer aware.

6,497

Breast Bud self-check hangers shared, helping everyone be more breast cancer aware.

101

outdoor advertisements placed, sharing the vital self-check message across Northern Ireland.

4

specialist nurses involved in the development and promotion of the cancer awareness campaigns.

Meet Sharon

Sharon Morrison, 55, from Belfast, was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer in July 2021. She has received care under Dr Mallon at the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre ever since. Sharon is sharing her experience in the hope that it will encourage everyone across Northern Ireland to be more cancer aware and to carry out regular breast checks.

“My eyes have been opened to a world where 1 in 2 people in the UK will be diagnosed with some form of cancer during their lifetime. When it comes to breast cancer, Friends of the Cancer Centre’s Breast Bud campaign tells you everything you need to know. I never had any lumps, my breast had been itchy for a long time on and off and I found it uncomfortable in some bras, but I thought it was all down to my age. Then my nipple inverted and that’s when I got it checked out.

“It is so important that everyone gets to know their body, and if anything changes, no matter how small that change is, please go and have it checked out. By picking up quickly on any concerns you can get the treatment that you need. Early detection is so important, as not everyone gets the chance to have the treatment I have.

“Thanks to the wonderful care I have received at the Cancer Centre, I have been able to return to the things I love – walking, kayaking, going to church, and taking my grandchildren on adventures. I have most recently been on a trip in a camper van in Italy, travelling with friends from Milan to Florence. It was definitely an adventure!

“Thank you to Friends of the Cancer Centre and thank you to the very large team of doctors, nurses and health care staff for their dedication, hard work, and care. You are amazing and worth your weight in gold.”



How we do it

Over
£1.67 million
raised in the last
year by our amazing
supporters.

94

couples, families and friends celebrated birthdays, weddings, retirements and anniversaries by donating in lieu of gifts and wedding favours raising almost **£32,000**.

139

collection cans were filled last year, raising almost **£22,000**. On average, each collection can could pay for **6** 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, Ards & North Down and Dromore helped raise valuable awareness in their local communities as well as over **£12,000** to support our work.

Throughout the year,
241 supporters made monthly donations totalling **£40,485**. This regular, ongoing support helps us plan for the future.

134

businesses, organisations and employees highlighted their support, by raising awareness and vital funds of almost **£277,971**.

Over **£360,000** was raised by our wonderful supporters who hosted **201** events in their local area.

Over **£131,000** was kindly donated in memory of beloved family members and friends who sadly passed away. An additional **£98,000** was bequeathed through gifts in Wills.

14 schools held their own fundraising events – dressing up, dressing down, walking, running and exercising - raising almost **£9,000**.

316 people took part in the charity's events such as our Slieve Donard Challenge, Take On The Tower Abseil, Cuppa with Friends raising over **£158,000**.

Our Partners

We are proud to work with companies across Northern Ireland to create partnerships with real impact. Through their generosity and the enthusiasm and commitment of their employees and customers, partner organisations raised £277,971 to support our work.

Warmflow Home Heating Solutions has been supporting Friends of the Cancer Centre since 2015 and during this time, the company has helped to raised hundreds of thousands of pounds. Engagement with the charity includes taking part in our events and holding their own, supporting cancer awareness campaigns, staff volunteering and much more. Since 2018 they have sponsored the charity's headline events which means that every penny raised from our Take On the Tower abseils and Slieve Donard Challenge, goes to support local families. This additional investment in advertising has also helped the charity reach new donors.

Brian Beattie, Director of GB Sales and Marketing at Warmflow said:

"Friends of the Cancer Centre is a charity that is very close to our hearts. As a responsible business, we are pleased to be able to support the charity to make a difference of the lives of thousands of families every year."



Brian Beattie, Director of GB Sales and Marketing at Warmflow joins Ciara Bainbridge, Friends of the Cancer Centre's Corporate and Events Fundraising Officer and Ana Wilkinson, Chief Executive of Friends of the Cancer Centre, to celebrate £162,000 raised by the charity's events in 2023, thanks to Warmflow's generous support.

If your business or employees would like to get involved or find out more about the tangible impact partnership can have when you work alongside Friends of the Cancer Centre, please contact Ciara Bainbridge, Corporate & Events Officer at ciara@friendsofthecancercentre.com.

How your support is making a difference

"Keep up the amazing, fantastic, wonderful, supportive work you do. You are all amazing."

"Gave us so much support when we needed it most, will be forever in her debt."

"When I was receiving radiotherapy, Friends of the Cancer Centre funded some of the nursing staff, the Physical Activity Coach, speech and language services and they couldn't do enough for me. Even when times got tough financially, they were able to offer me a grant. The charity also does a lot of work behind the scenes like supporting research and they are very far-reaching in their support."

"Thank you for everything you do day in and out for everyone affected by cancer in Northern Ireland."

"When I was in hospital, it was the staff who got me through some really tough times, with a well-timed cheerful word and with genuine kindness."

"The complementary therapy treatments are a godsend to hospital inpatients. Thank you to Friends of the Cancer Centre for supporting this vital service."

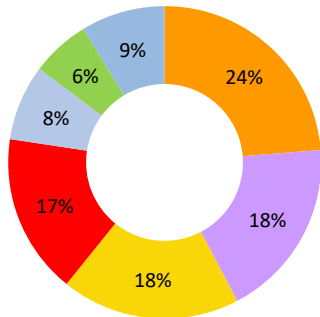
"Big shout out to Friends of the Cancer Centre for all you are doing for breast cancer patients."

"In addition to the excellent care I received, I also really valued the fact that staff took time to speak with me, to check I was emotionally well and always asked if there was anything I needed. Staff went above and beyond what me and my family would have expected and this, in many ways, reassured us all even more, especially when family were unable to visit at times due to COVID-19."

"The Oncology department at the Belfast City Hospital referred me to physical activity classes run by Joe and funded by Friends of the Cancer Centre. I did two forty-minute sessions a week for 12 weeks and during which I had my chemotherapy. My stamina has vastly improved, I have put on some weight and my overall fitness has improved. I feel more able to carry out chores and tasks at home and am getting out for good brisk walks."

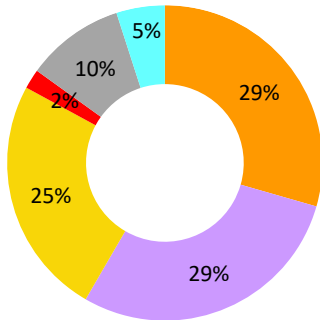
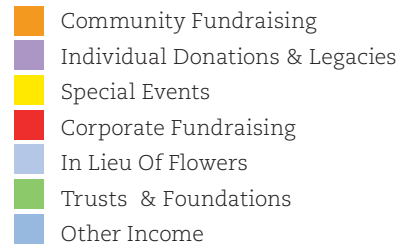
"Friends of the Cancer Centre have been phenomenal and provided great support to patients over many years. We're very lucky to have this resource here. They've given great support to me, patients and staff in the hospitals in Northern Ireland."

How It All Adds Up



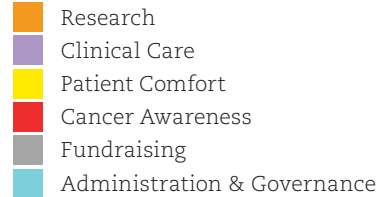
Where our money comes from

Income



How we spend it

Expenditure



What it means

- Thanks to your support, we were able to raise £1,675,428
- Through our four key project areas, we put £1,136,512 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

Dr Paula Scullin
Dr Seamus McAleer
Dr Damian Finnegan
Professor Suneil Jain
Claire Aiken
Professor Alastair Adair
Joe Rice
Phillip McMaw
Brian Fee
Professor Mark Durkin
John Cubitt

Management Team*

Ana Wilkinson
Chief Executive

Dawn Lyness
Finance and Admin Manager

Nuala Bannon
Communications and
Project Manager

Amy Cowan
Fundraising Manager

*Current trustees and management team



Thank You

