



cancer fund
for children

A Year Like No Other



20/21
IMPACT
REPORT

NO CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON SHOULD FACE CANCER ALONE



Note from our CEO

Cancer hasn't stopped,
and neither will we.

It was a tremendously challenging year for us all as we faced the ongoing difficulties and changes brought about by Covid-19. Families impacted by a cancer diagnosis, faced additional challenges around their treatment and increased isolation due to shielding. Throughout the global pandemic, our dedicated team of Cancer Support Specialists stepped up and found new ways to offer a wide range of support to children, young people and their families.



Phil Alexander, CEO

Supporters, local businesses, trusts and foundations alongside the Department of Health & Finance responded and collectively we raised £3.307m, enabling Cancer Fund for Children to continue to provide a package of tailored and responsive support to over 550 families in communities across Northern Ireland. Your generosity has helped vulnerable families during a year like no other.

Our team has put young people at the centre of our support, ensuring they have the time and space to rebuild their confidence so they can cope better with cancer. This impact report gives a brief insight into their work.

During the pandemic, everything changed, but we knew from the outset that cancer wouldn't stop. This became our drive, our focus and our motivation to do better. We feel privileged to work alongside and support so many incredible families. This year we felt that more than ever. The pandemic dealt a harsh blow to so many of the families we help. As we move forward, we will continue to listen to the needs of our service users and ensure the care and support we offer are provided with the right approach, in the right place, and at the right time.

Thank you for your ongoing support, generosity, and interest in Cancer Fund for Children.

Phil



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Photos

Front cover image: Oliwia during an individual support session

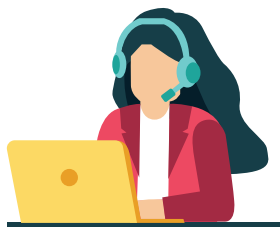
Back cover image: Hannah Burgoyne taking part in the 2.6 cycling challenge fundraiser

Year In Numbers 20/21

We connect, empower, and strengthen children, young people and families struggling to cope with the emotional impact of cancer.



954 individual support sessions delivered to children and young people



120 parents participated in online group support



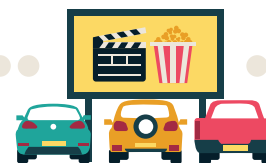
911 children and parents/carers benefited from short breaks at Daisy Lodge



428 children and young people participated in online group support



1,299 individuals took part in family workshops in Daisy Lodge



150 families attended our Drive in Cinema Christmas event



We supported over
1,200
children and young people and



1,000
parents/carers helping them to cope better with the emotional impact of cancer



Austin and his sister Ingrid

Austin's Story

Austin was diagnosed acute lymphoblastic leukaemia when he was 12 years old. Speaking about the support Austin received during the pandemic his mum Nicola says,

"Covid-19 came just as Austin was about to go on his second residential. We were called by Cancer Fund for Children's Specialist Joe, who told us that the trip was being postponed, but they would be in touch. To say Austin was devastated was an understatement. I was also very sad because I knew the transformative impact getting away would have on him.

I really wondered how Cancer Fund for Children could continue to offer support. Within days a Zoom meeting was set up. I was a little unsure how Austin would respond, but two hours later he emerged for his room beaming. I totally underestimated how important social contact of this kind was to Austin.

He has had a weekly Zoom chat with the charity's Cancer Support Specialists ever since. They just understand these kids. They listen and engage with them on a level that mums and dads cannot. As parents we worry about cancer treatments and side effects, about income and the impact of cancer on our other children. Sometimes we just don't have the mental capacity to deal with the other stuff.

Cancer Fund for Children let our children be children. They allow our kids to escape for a time and to be free from treatment and worry. It's a very special gift they give our children."



The Strutt Family

Lisa's Story

Lisa's husband John died from pancreatic cancer in 2020. The whole family including her three teenage children Rosie, James and Holly were supported by Cancer Fund for Children. Lisa says,

"From the first moment, I talked to our Cancer Fund for Children Specialist, Gareth, I felt such a sense of relief. He completely gets young people. He has such a depth of knowledge, resources and experience to draw upon and, on the flip side, he recognises the concerns parents have navigating these uncertain waters.

The support our children have received has been completely young person-centered. It has helped them find ways of living well with their reality and provided them with a safe environment to explore their feelings and fears. Importantly, individual support has provided our children with strategies and tools to help them make sense of their feelings and their world, especially at a time when their peers have been occupied with teenage life.

From my perspective as mum, having the Cancer Fund for Children's support at our disposal has allowed me to breathe, so that I can take care of myself and my whole family. Their support has enabled me to accept that I don't have to have all the answers and that's okay. It has given me the opportunity to talk to specialists who have trod this road before and who can guide me with supporting the children.

I've seen how my children have more tools in the toolbox to manage themselves and this gives me immense hope for their ability to cope with the terminal nature of John's cancer and life after his death."



Covid Response

Every week in Northern Ireland during the pandemic, three more children and young people were diagnosed with cancer and countless more children struggled to cope with their parent's cancer diagnosis. Families impacted by cancer faced additional worries such as fear of infection, concerns about delays to treatment plans and further separation due to isolation rules.

At a time when families needed our support, we had to pause our services. We immediately closed our therapeutic short break centre Daisy Lodge and our residential log cabin Narnia, and ceased delivering direct contact in families' homes in March 2020.

Cancer Hadn't Stopped

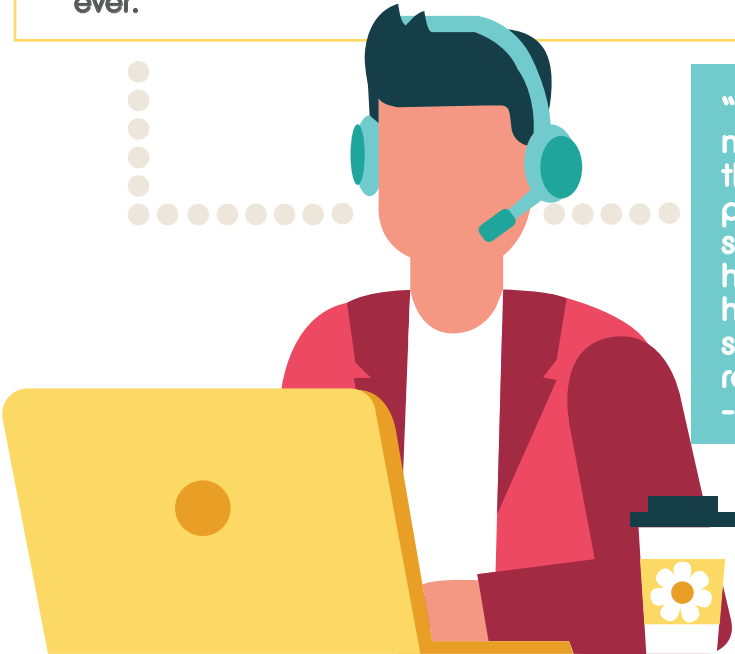
As we moved our services online the team quickly learnt what worked, what didn't and adapted accordingly.

We changed how we worked and it wasn't perfect. We knew cancer hadn't stopped during this crisis and inevitably there would be a long-term impact on cancer patients and those we support.

Moving Support Online

The children and young people we support were particularly vulnerable and we knew we had to change our working practices to ensure they were kept safe and continued to feel supported. **We moved our services online and our Cancer Support Specialists worked tirelessly to develop and deliver a robust programme of individual and group support, providing opportunities for young people and families to connect.** Weekly Zoom meetings became the highlight of a family's week and online videos and workshops on topics covering anxiety, gratitude and mindfulness were prepared and delivered.

We also continued to accept referrals because we knew that beyond this crisis children, young people and families would need us more than ever.



"Individual support helped my son talk about things that were troubling him privately. Knowing that someone was there for him and would not judge him, giving him advice and support without bias was really beneficial."
- parent



Daisy Lodge, Newcastle,
Co. Down

"At Daisy Lodge we had the opportunity as a family to reflect and talk about our experiences. In the busyness of treatment and Covid and only having one parent in the hospital, we were separated at the most stressful times of our child's treatment."
- parent

Cancer Support Specialist
Regina recommending home
visits in the community



Return to Direct Support

Following overwhelming feedback from families and the easing of lockdown restrictions, we were delighted that therapeutic short breaks in Daisy Lodge were able to recommence in July 2021.

New Covid-19 procedures were put in place including stringent hygiene and social distancing measures to ensure peace of mind, whilst continuing to deliver nurturing short breaks.

93% of families who took part in our recent consultation said that they need a short break now, more than ever and we were glad to be able to take this step to ensure that families did not have to face cancer alone.

As we weren't able to provide complementary therapies or therapeutic group support, our Cancer Support Specialists developed a programme of family workshops. These sessions covered topics including managing emotions, therapeutic art and crafts, self-care, and developing coping skills. Through 'Chill Skill' sessions children and parents were provided an opportunity to relax and reflect on the impact cancer and Covid-19 has had on their lives.

"Meeting my Specialist felt like I had something to look forward to and it made things seem better."
- young person

The Community Team also recommenced in-person support, initially outside in gardens and when restrictions eased this moved indoors.



A Second Lockdown

The strict lockdown after Christmas brought with it a new set of challenges for families living with cancer. We kept Daisy Lodge open but made the difficult decision to pause face-to-face support in the community once again, in response to the government guidance at the time. Our Cancer Support Specialists adapted the services we offer to ensure that the needs of this vulnerable group were met and facilitated a range of online programmes including:

- Group support for 8-11 year olds
- Group support for 12-17 year olds
- Duke of Edinburgh's & Gaisce Award programme for 14-17 year olds
- The Care Free Choir continued to meet regularly
- Ways of Wellbeing programme for parents covering topics including grief, stress, anxiety and talking to children about cancer

Bereavement Consultation

We undertook a bereavement consultation with parents. Their feedback will help shape the future of our bereavement support.



"I was given help and support to finally work through my grief and find out why I was feeling the way I was feeling. I was able to develop my confidence and become who I want to be. Granted I still have my bad days but there are a lot more good days than there was before. I can be happy without feeling guilty about it." - young person

Coping resources created during a group work session



"I would recommend any family take part in individual support. It helps children process what they are going through with someone who knows how to deal with difficult questions that panic and upset us as their parents." - parent

"Cancer Fund for Children's support helped me not worry about my dad. I'm really looking forward to joining the group work programme online, and to having fun and seeing other young people the same as me." - young person



Charity Partnerships

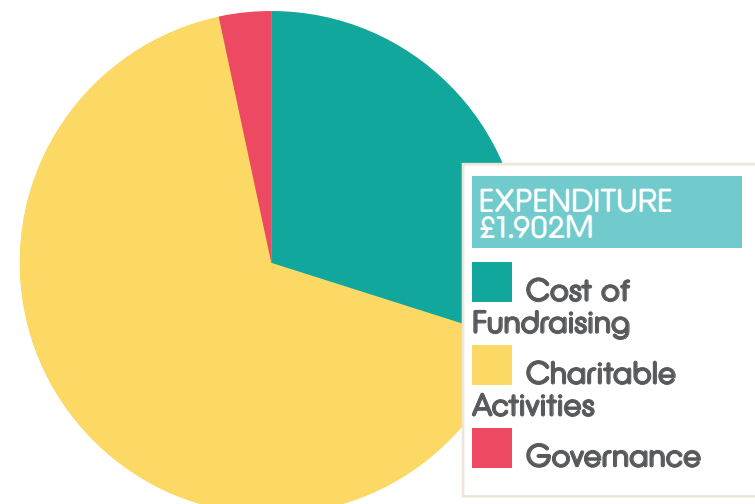
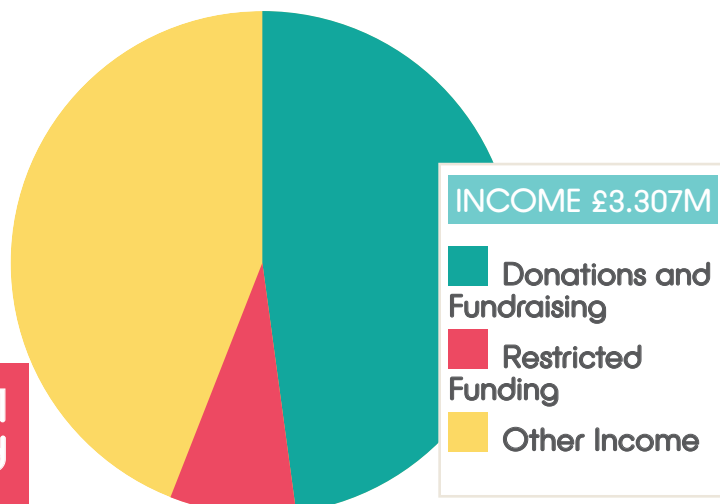
We worked in partnership with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to explore the impact of Covid-19 on teenagers and continue to work closely with Young Lives vs Cancer in the design and delivery of group support and interventions for teenagers and young people.



Finance Performance



In 2020/21
we raised
£3.307m



We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our stay-at-home fundraising heroes, our corporate partners and the local community for their compassion and generosity throughout the pandemic, as well as our wonderful funders who supported us during this time of uncertainty.

Our Funders:

- The Department of Finance
- The Department of Health
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Ulster Garden Village
- The Ireland Funds
- Children in Need
- The Co-op Foundation
- The George and Angela Moore Trust



Cancer Fund for Children is a company limited by guarantee (Company Number NI049930) and an Inland Revenue approved Charity (XR29768). Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC100532).

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Right Support, Right Time, Right Approach

During lockdown we launched our 2021-2026 strategic plan which focuses on the following key areas:



- Building our second therapeutic short break centre, Daisy Lodge in Cong, Mayo, allowing more families to access therapeutic short breaks regardless of where they live.



- Ensuring that all children impacted by cancer across Ireland have access to our services and they receive the right emotional and therapeutic support to help them cope better with cancer.

- Ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of our organisation and have an active voice in championing change across cancer services.
- Building a more sustainable and financially resilient organisation by diversifying our fundraising and developing and nurturing lasting relationships with our supporters so they are with us now and in the future.
- Growing and nurturing a positive and inclusive culture where our staff, supporters, and service users feel valued, supported, and listened to.
- Demonstrating the impact and value of our vital services, whilst raising awareness of Cancer Fund for Children.





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