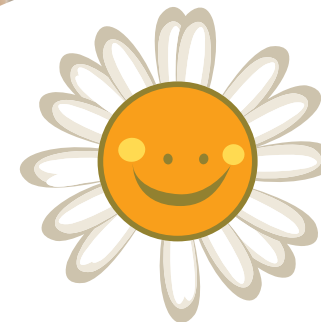


# Powerful Connections

## Bold Ambition



IMPACT  
REPORT  
2024/25



cancer fund  
for children

# OUR VISION

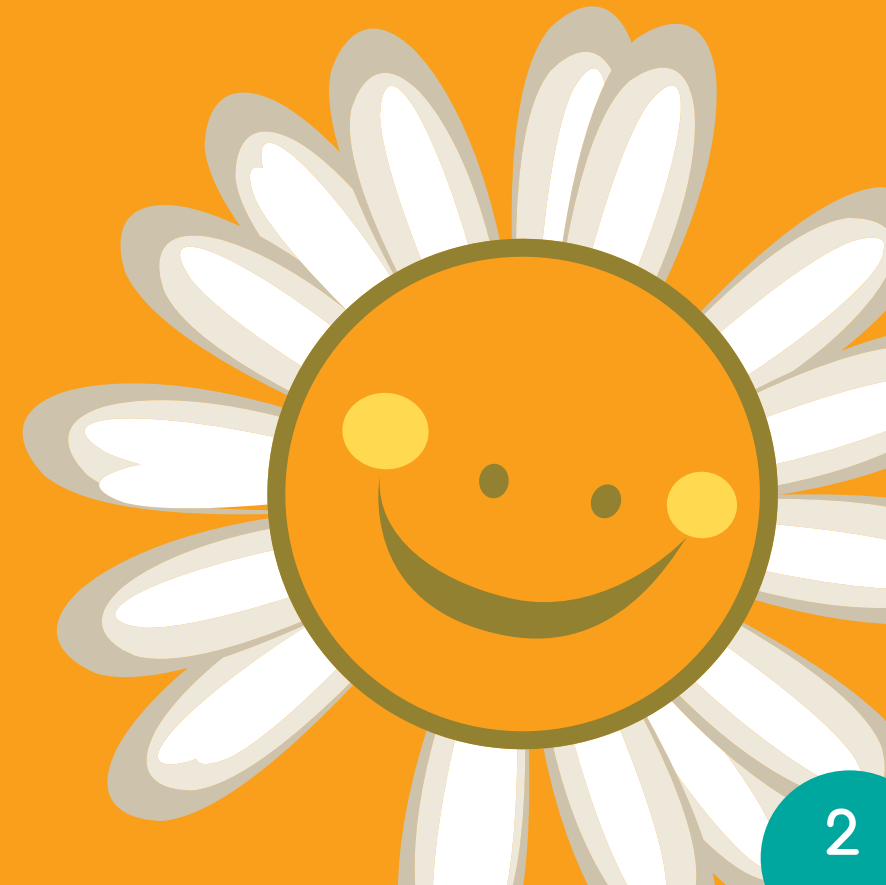
No child should face cancer alone

## OUR MISSION

To connect, empower, and strengthen children and families so they are better equipped to deal with the emotional impact of cancer:

- We connect children and their families with the right people, so they do not have to face cancer alone.
- We empower children and their families to identify and develop the resources they need to better cope with cancer.
- We strengthen children and their families by creating space and time for them to be together.

We do this by providing phone support, individual in-person support in the hospital and the community, by facilitating group work and providing therapeutic short breaks at Daisy Lodge.



# CHAIR'S WELCOME

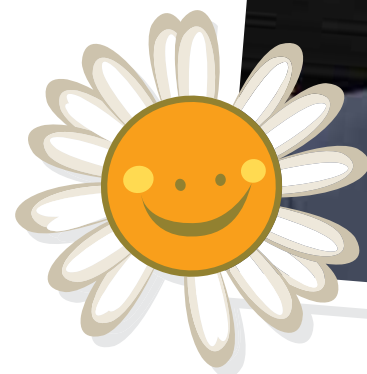
This has been a year of significant impact, growth and reflection as we continued to deliver on our vision that no child should face cancer alone.

Across the island, we supported more families than ever before. In Northern Ireland, 962 families received specialist support, including 521 who benefitted from short breaks at Daisy Lodge in Newcastle Co. Down. In Ireland, our services team supported 300 families through hospital-based and community care. Together, 65 families from Ireland also enjoyed therapeutic breaks at Daisy Lodge. Sadly, 99 children, young people and parents across the island died and we continue to walk alongside their families in their grief.

This year we strengthened and expanded our services, enhancing support for parents, our bereavement programmes, and specialist work with teenagers and young adults.

Young people continue to shape our services, with our Young Ambassadors playing an active role in decision-making and advocacy. We also launched our Informal Therapeutic Support model, providing a clear framework for the unique support Cancer Fund for Children provides.

A major milestone was the continued development of our second therapeutic short-break centre, Daisy Lodge in Cong, Co. Mayo. We were delighted to see construction commence this summer.



None of this progress would be possible without our incredible staff, volunteers, community and corporate partners, and the many people who fundraise and advocate on our behalf. Your commitment ensures we can continue to be there for children and families when they need us most.

Thank you.

*Peter O'Brien*

**Peter O'Brien**  
Cancer Fund for Children Chair

# OUR VALUES

At Cancer Fund for Children, our values are the foundation of everything we do. They shape our vision and drive our mission, guiding our decisions, actions, and relationships. Our values define who we are, how we behave and how we collaborate with others.



## Powerful Connections

Powerful connections are at the core of our organisation. We nurture impactful connections between the young people and families we support, with our communities and stakeholders, and across our all-island staff team.



## Bold Ambition

Our vision drives us to go further, to reach more young people with greater impact. We embrace bold aspiration and turn ambition into action. By aiming high and pushing boundaries, we make extraordinary things possible.



## Courage

We have the courage to lead and have difficult conversations. We embrace open communication and address sensitive topics, always with the intent of empowering those we support and those we work alongside.



## Compassion

Compassion guides our work to create safe spaces, offer genuine care, and approach others with kindness. We aim to ensure every person we interact with feels seen, heard, and supported.



## Integrity

We build trust through honesty and openness, upholding the highest standards of transparency and accountability, and ensuring our actions reflect our words and beliefs.



## Collective Responsibility

Each one of us plays a vital role in achieving our collective goals. We take personal ownership of our actions and support each other to ensure that as a team we reach our shared vision.



“

I am in awe of Ella's strength at such a young age. She dealt with everything so well. Taking the oral chemo that made her feel so sick, but she knew it would help get her cancer to go away. She pushed through the tough physiotherapy sessions, squealing with pain and frustration. Watching Ella go through so much has been one of the most difficult things our family has or will ever go through.

After treatment, Ella had individual therapeutic support sessions with Kathryn, her Cancer Support Specialist. Ella talked to her about what she went through and how it affected her. She loved to see Kathryn. Her whole face would light up.

Ella also took part in group sessions for 8-11-year-olds. They participated in various activities together and it gave her a space where she could share her feelings and build connections with other children who had gone through something similar. In that safe space, she didn't feel different, she could be herself.

- Nicola, Ella's mum

”



# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

Our support connects and strengthens children, young people and their families so they feel empowered to cope better with the emotional impact of cancer.



**481** new family referrals across the island of Ireland



**1,262** families supported

Northern Ireland



**102** children/young people diagnosed with cancer referred for support



**238** parents diagnosed with cancer referred for support



**811** individual support sessions delivered to young people at home or in the community



**370** support sessions delivered to parents



**20** coffee mornings held for parents to connect with other parents



**778** individual support sessions delivered to children/young people in hospital



**14** events held for adolescents & young adults



**456** families supported at our therapeutic short break centre, Daisy Lodge

## Ireland



**141**  
children/young  
people diagnosed  
with cancer  
referred for  
support



**180**  
support  
sessions  
delivered  
to parents



**63**  
young people  
attended  
group support



**456**  
individual support sessions  
delivered to young people at  
home or in the community



**926**  
individual support sessions  
delivered to children/young  
people and parents in  
hospital



**65**  
families supported at our  
therapeutic short break  
centre, Daisy Lodge

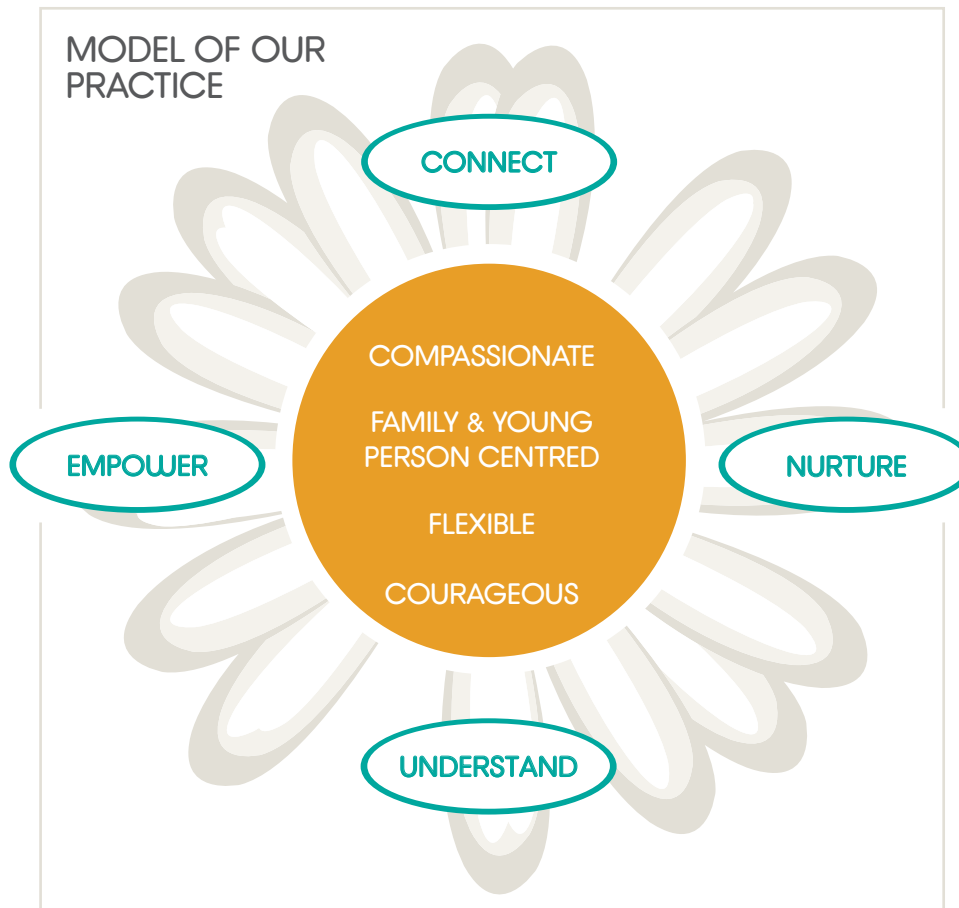
None of this would have been possible without the generosity  
and kindness of our partners, community supporters and funders.

Thank You.



# INFORMAL THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT MODEL

This year we launched our Informal Therapeutic Support model which outlines our approach to service delivery and its purpose. Our new model will guide the support we provide to young people now and in the future.



## CONNECT

- We connect with young people and their families so they can access specific Cancer Fund for Children support e.g. individual support, group activities, Daisy Lodge and opportunities to connect with others in similar situations
- We connect with young people so they feel heard, understood, less isolated and can access services that will support them
- We connect with families where they are, with compassion and flexibility

## NURTURE

We deliver support through the development of trusted relationships, nurtured through:

- Developing a clear understanding of support needs
- Working in ways that are best for each individual/family
- Being there in the reality of cancer day to day
- Helping families to work on relationships within the family unit
- Offering young people and families the opportunity to relate to others in similar situations
- Signposting to other organisations and support
- Providing access to services that seek to nurture family relations

## UNDERSTAND

We work with young people and families to help them understand:

- Their own feelings and emotions
- How other family members are feeling/coping
- Ways that might help them to better regulate their emotions
- How to use approaches that might help them to cope better
- How others in similar situations are feeling and coping

## EMPOWER

We work with young people and families so they may:

- Feel more relaxed
- Feel able to use practical ways of coping
- Have increased self awareness and confidence
- Feel more able to cope with current circumstances



# HOSPITAL-BASED SUPPORT



Across the island of Ireland, our hospital-based services continued to provide vital, age-appropriate support to children, young people and families navigating cancer treatment.

In Northern Ireland, our two Youth Support Workers now provide consistent support in every hospital where adolescents and young adults (AYAs) are treated, offering individual support, monthly groupwork sessions and opportunities to connect with peers through short breaks at Daisy Lodge. This work is delivered in close partnership with four other charities and all Health Trusts in NI, ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated service for young people diagnosed with cancer.

In Ireland, our ward-based Cancer Support Specialist remains an integral part of the multi-disciplinary team in the Haematology/Oncology Unit at St. John's Ward, CHI at Crumlin. They provide informal emotional and social support to parents, facilitate group opportunities and monthly coffee mornings for peer connection. They work alongside their hospital colleagues, and help families access wider support such as accommodation, transport and services offered by partner charities. Their work has also strengthened referral pathways into community support, reducing isolation and building emotional resilience for families during and after treatment.

We now also have a dedicated Youth Support Worker based in CHI at Crumlin, mirroring the service available across Northern Ireland. This role is focused on supporting young people aged 11+, offering tailored activities including an online book club, pizza evenings, games nights and an all-island young adult short break in Daisy Lodge. Their presence in hospital has been a crucial source of connection, comfort and continuity for young people throughout their treatment.



“

I loved having Lucy come to visit me on the ward; she really brightened up my day. We always played games. We are both very competitive, so that was lots of fun. But she also helped me talk about my feelings and that was really helpful for me. She also checks in on me and invites me along to outings where I can meet other young people who are diagnosed with cancer.

”

- Sophie, one of our Young Ambassadors

# CONNECTIONS TEAM



This year marked the first full operational year of our Connections Team, who now manage every aspect of our referral system and serve as the first point of contact for families across the island of Ireland. Their focus has been on embedding the service, strengthening systems and processes, and building meaningful relationships both within Cancer Fund for Children and across the wider sector.

Throughout the year, the team provided consistent, compassionate telephone support, helping families navigate the services available to them and connecting them with additional resources in their local communities. They also played an important role in raising awareness of our work by representing Cancer Fund for Children at events and conferences across Ireland.

Alongside this, the Connections Team led on the planning and delivery of family events for 500 family members, ensuring they had opportunities for peer connection, shared experiences, and moments of celebration during an incredibly challenging time.



438

initial  
assessments



1,126

texts sent



227

email  
communications



2,817

phone calls



“

During Eoin's treatment, Cancer Fund for Children's Connection Team reached out to us. They sent helpful information and invited me to an online webinar about supporting a child through and beyond cancer. That practical support made a big difference, especially at a time when everything felt new and uncertain.

”

- Catherine, Eoin's mum

# COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT



Across the island of Ireland, our community support offers children, young people, and parents a safe, therapeutic space when and where they need it most.

Support is provided individually, in homes, hospitals, and community settings, and is centred on each person's needs, interests, and learning style. This flexible, informal approach helps families build trusting relationships with their Cancer Support Specialist, allowing them to explore the emotional impact of cancer, and develop tools to cope with the challenges they face.

In Northern Ireland, our team delivered individual and group support to young people, recognising the importance of peer support and connection. We ran a range of programmes for parents and young people who have been bereaved through cancer. Monthly coffee mornings offered additional space for parents, both those with a child diagnosed with cancer and those living with cancer themselves, to find community. Our Care Free Choir continued to flourish, growing to around 55 regular members. They performed at St Anne's Cathedral and other special events.

In Ireland, our Cancer Support Specialists provided the same person-centred, therapeutic approach, meeting families wherever they needed support most. The team continued to develop engaging ways to connect with young people and parents and delivered group programmes that promoted peer connection and emotional resilience. Monthly coffee mornings offered further opportunities for families to share experiences, build relationships, and feel less alone.





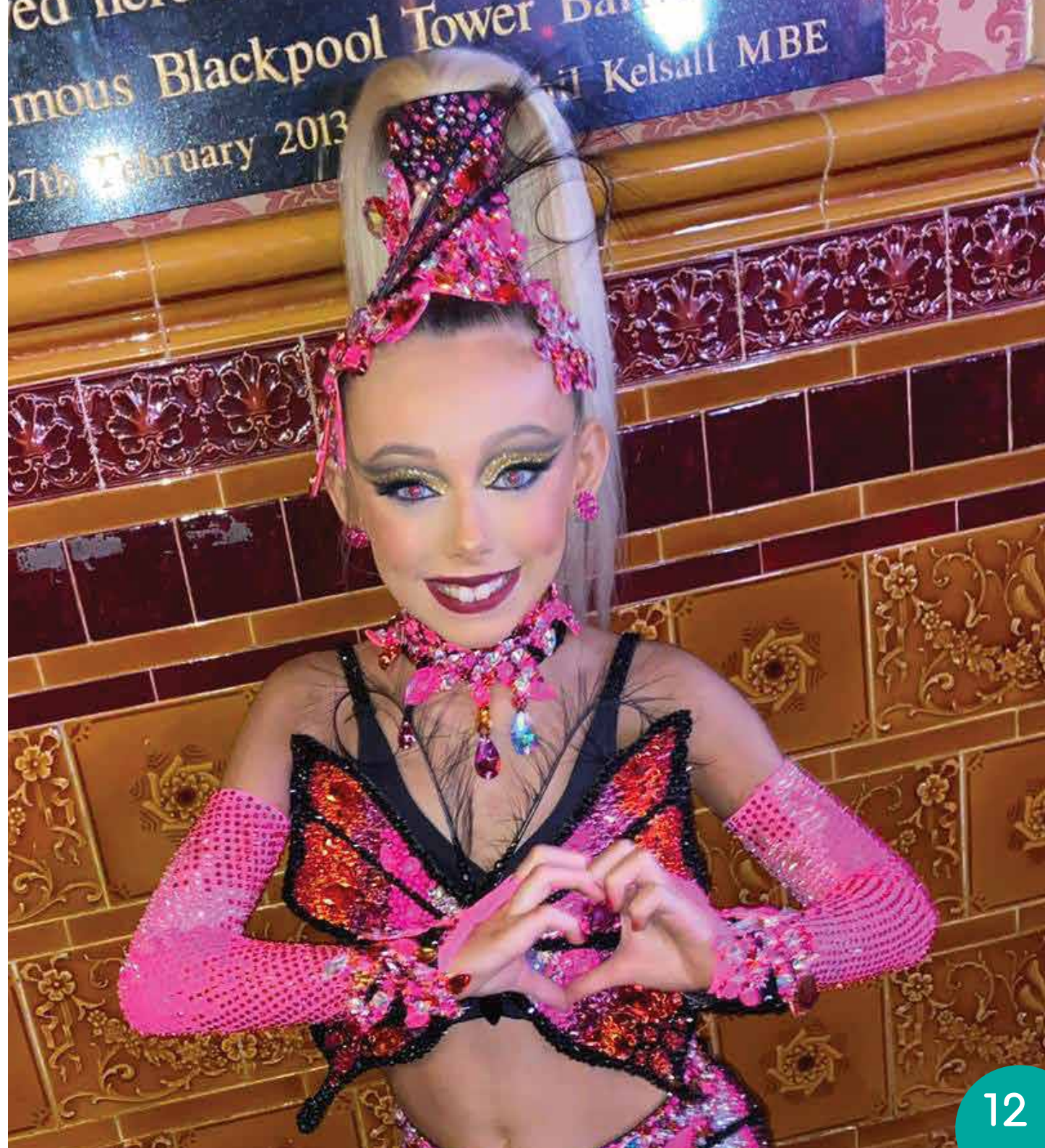
“

Cancer Fund for Children were there for us from the beginning. Arella had a Cancer Support Specialist, Claire, who came to the house when she got out of hospital, and it was a great support. In those early days, you think there's a right and wrong way to handle everything, but Claire validated our fears and showed us we weren't alone.

She was the first therapeutic professional Arella had ever talked to, and it gave Arella a really positive outlook on speaking to someone about her feelings. Arella has really struggled with anxiety and big feelings since being diagnosed. Imagine being nine years old and being diagnosed with cancer after having a classmate pass away from cancer a year before. It's unimaginable. I knew I needed to reach out for support not only for her physical health but her mental health.

- Emma, Arella's mum

”





# THERAPEUTIC SHORT BREAKS



Since opening Daisy Lodge in 2014 we have welcomed over 4,000 families for much-needed therapeutic short breaks during times of distress, upheaval, and uncertainty. Over the last decade we have continued to listen, learn, and evolve our service to ensure we respond sensitively to the changing needs of children, young people, and their families.

Families consistently tell us that time spent at Daisy Lodge is transformative. It offers a safe space to be supported and heard, to rest, and to reconnect as a family away from the pressures of treatment and everyday life. Many families also value the opportunity to meet others facing similar challenges, helping them feel understood and less alone.

The warmth and dedication of our staff, as well as the calm, restorative environment have been central to the therapeutic experience. Families often leave feeling more relaxed, more connected, and better equipped for whatever lies ahead.

Above all, therapeutic short breaks have given families precious time together in a supportive space, offering respite from the realities of cancer. They also provide, when needed, a place for difficult but important conversations about treatment, coping, and the future.





521

short breaks  
provided



1,876

family members  
supported



1,024

therapeutic  
workshops  
delivered



15,102

nutritious meals  
provided



1,005

complementary  
therapies/  
treatments enjoyed

### Family Feedback Post Short Break

90%

of families felt  
more hopeful  
about their future

95%

felt better able  
to manage their  
family situation

96%

of families said time  
together strengthened  
their relationship

“ Daisy Lodge has also been our little escape. It's amazing, and to meet other families who are going through something similar or who are at different stages of their journey has been a huge support to myself and Gillian. In the early days, talking to families really helped us see what was ahead for us, and now we're able to do the same for other families who've just been diagnosed. It does get easier, and the support is out there.

Aria has been lucky to celebrate two birthdays in Daisy Lodge. The first time we went, she had no hair, she had a nose tube in, and she couldn't eat solid food. During our most recent visit, she was a normal four-year-old. Newcastle, Co Down, will always have a special connection for our family. I think we'll go there every year now for the rest of our days.

- Gavin, Aria's dad

”





# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



One of our strategic pillars is our commitment to being a strong, active voice for young people. The Youth Engagement Team drives this ambition, ensuring that the perspectives of young people are central to our work, help influence policy and practice, and the way we support other young people impacted by cancer.

This year, our Young Ambassadors across Ireland have embraced numerous opportunities to lead and share their experiences, from speaking at Gala Balls, board meetings and radio interviews, to meeting government ministers. To support new ambassadors joining the team, we partnered with external providers to create a comprehensive set of bespoke training videos.

Young people have also collaborated across all areas of the charity, supporting fundraising initiatives, communications, and the design of our second Daisy Lodge. They have served on interview panels, contributed to services committees, and helped deliver engaging events for other young people.

Most importantly, they have designed and led their own projects to address the issues that matter to them. Highlights include producing a bespoke comic book to inform young people about our services. They also started work on a 'Create, Colour, Connect' project to support young people in hospitals, and a set of educational videos for schools to better equip teachers to support students impacted by cancer. Through volunteering, leadership, and creative initiatives, young people have been a powerful and active voice for Cancer Fund for Children, challenging us to think differently and shaping the way we provide support



“ Your support and kindness has meant more to me than I can put into words. It has allowed me to grow in confidence and encouraged me to speak out and make my voice heard. I always felt you had my back and looked out for me, and I'll never forget how much that meant to me.

Through Youth Engagement you just help and support me, you lifted me even when going through my tough cancer journey you made it feel lighter. I'll never forget that.

Graduating 12-17 Youth Engagement Group member

“ I'd really love to speak about how much I've loved being a Young Ambassador. It has been such a privilege, and I will miss it so much. I'm so thankful for you and everyone who has helped me build my confidence and it has been the most enjoyable year ever.

Young Ambassador





# INCOME GENERATION



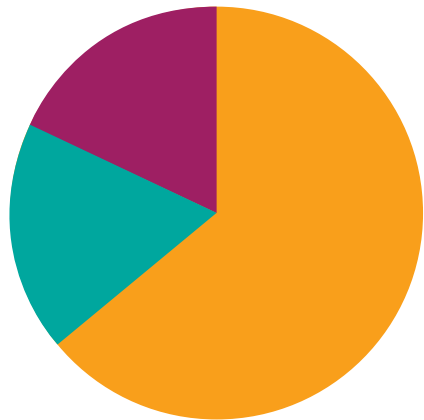
We would like to take this opportunity to say **THANK YOU** to our incredible fundraising stars, our corporate partners, schools and community groups, families, funders and committed givers for their generosity, kindness and continued support. **You help us ensure that across the island of Ireland no child or young person has to face cancer alone.**



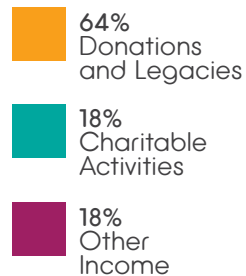
# FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



## Cancer Fund for Children

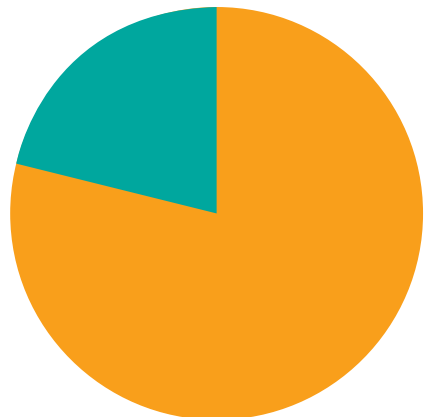


Total income £3,592,501



\*78p of every £1 raised went directly to delivering our charitable services

## Cancer Fund for Children Ireland



Total income €1,444,692



\*60 cents of every €1 raised went directly to delivering our charitable services

We would like to thank our funders for helping us ensure we can be here to support children, young people and families impacted by cancer.

### Cancer Fund for Children

Ardbarron Trust  
Department for Communities  
Eoin Henry Foundation  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust  
St James Place Foundation  
The McClay Foundation  
The National Lottery Community Fund  
The Rank Foundation

### Cancer Fund for Children Ireland

CDR Philanthropy  
Ciaran Mulligan  
Katie Nugent Foundation  
LF Buckley & Associates  
The Mannix Kane Appeal  
Smyths Toys  
The Alborada Trust  
The Bryan Guinness Charitable Trust

# COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS



Throughout 2024/2025, we prioritised raising awareness of the vital support we provide and the impact it has on children, young people, and families. Enhancing our brand visibility and engagement across the island was central to this.



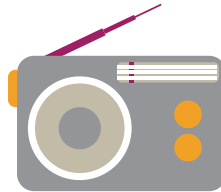
546

print articles  
19.6 million reach



679

online articles  
45.7 million reach



152

broadcast  
interviews



9

families  
shared their  
stories

## Awareness Highlights

In September, professional golfer and Cancer Fund for Children charity champion, Rory McIlroy appeared on the Late Late Show with Patrick Kielty, helping to amplify awareness during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

We were delighted to welcome former Irish National Hunt jockey Rachael Blackmore MBE as a charity ambassador. In March, she joined supporters for an 'Audience With' event at our Race Day.

We marked Daisy Lodge's 10th anniversary by holding a series of events to thank all the businesses, community groups and individuals who have helped make a decade of therapeutic support possible.

## Website



Users: **41K**  
Sessions: **132k**

## Social Media



Followers: **22.4K**  
Reach Rate: **3.2%**  
Engagement Rate: **9.5%**



Followers: **8K**  
Reach Rate: **2.7%**  
Engagement Rate: **18%**



Followers: **3.6K**  
Reach Rate: **13%**  
Engagement Rate: **13.5%**

\*Reach rate is the % of our followers who see our content organically. Engagement rate is the % of our followers who interact with our content. Our reach and engagement rates are well above the industry standard.



# VOLUNTEERING



At Cancer Fund for Children, we are incredibly fortunate to have a dedicated team of volunteers who generously give their time, energy, and skills to help us support children and families affected by cancer. Whether assisting at fundraising events, lending a hand with painting and gardening at Daisy Lodge, or helping to deliver complementary therapies and family workshops, our volunteers play a vital role in creating safe, welcoming, and uplifting spaces for the families we support.

Their commitment allows us to extend our reach, enhance our services, and ensure families feel cared for at every stage of their cancer journey. We are deeply grateful for the passion and kindness our volunteers bring to Cancer Fund for Children. They truly help make our work possible.



52

volunteers  
recruited



3,778

hours  
volunteered



20

volunteer days  
at Daisy Lodge

“Volunteering has been life changing for me. Ultimately, I feel proud to be part of something which has grown so much over the years, and the impact that it has had on so many families, to support them at the most difficult time. The people I have met along the way, and the friendships I have gained.”

- Andrew, volunteer





# SUSTAINABILITY



**This year, we've made strong progress in reducing our environmental impact and embedding sustainable practices across our organisation.**

In October 2024, we installed a photovoltaic solar energy system at Daisy Lodge, generously donated by Premier Electrical Group. By the end of March 2025, it had generated 2,816 kWh of clean energy, reducing our carbon emissions by 2.8 tonnes - the equivalent of saving over a tonne of coal.

We are also working closely with our long-standing supporters at Finnebrogue, whose sustainability team is helping us benchmark our practices and identify opportunities for improvement. To reduce travel emissions, we have embraced hybrid working, encouraged virtual meetings, and promoted carpooling and public transport when travel is required.

Across the charity, we are reducing paper use through digitised records, online communications, and digital fundraising, alongside active recycling in all our facilities.

Our herb garden at Daisy Lodge is another small but meaningful example of sustainability in action, providing organic produce for families and a space to learn about sustainable gardening.

Sustainability continues to guide our plans as we explore further investment in renewable energy and new ways to lower our environmental impact.



# PEOPLE AND CULTURE



Our People & Culture team plays a vital role in shaping the experience of everyone who works at Cancer Fund for Children. Our vision is to ensure we are a 'Values Driven', ambitious organisation, where our people feel seen and heard, and are supported and empowered to be their best.

This year, we developed a new People & Culture strategy with key priorities including:

- Empowering managers and leaders with clear guidance and resources
- Strengthening recruitment and onboarding processes
- Ensuring consistency in HR policies and practices across all departments
- Creating a culture where staff feel heard, valued, and able to thrive

Staff wellbeing remains a central focus. Our Health & Wellbeing Committee, now in its fifth year, brings together colleagues from across the organisation to deliver a year-round programme of events, activities, and information sessions that support physical and mental health.

All employees also benefit from an annual Health & Wellbeing Day at Daisy Lodge, where they can access therapeutic treatments, mindfulness sessions, health checks, and advice on healthcare plans from an external representative.

As we continue to grow, our People & Culture team will be instrumental in building an organisation that fosters excellence, wellbeing, and purpose, ensuring our staff feel supported as they work together to help ensure no child faces cancer alone.





# OUR FUTURE

Right Support, Right Time, Right Approach



As we conclude our current five-year strategy, we are proud of the progress made and ambitious about what lies ahead. Our focus is on expanding our reach, deepening our impact, and ensuring every child affected by cancer regardless of where they live across the island of Ireland receives the support they need. Guided by the voices of children, young people, and families, our next strategic plan will be bold, forward-thinking, and responsive to the evolving landscape of cancer support.

With a second Daisy Lodge in Cong on the horizon and a growing team across Ireland, we are poised to transform how informal therapeutic support is delivered, ensuring no child faces cancer alone.

In January 2025, with support from Deloitte, we began a strategic planning process to guide our vision through to 2035. Trustees and the Executive Leadership team will work together to develop a new 10-year strategy, exploring opportunities across the island and building on the strong foundations already in place.



## Strategic Plan 2021-2025

### 1. Services

We will ensure every child has access to Cancer Fund for Children's services.

### 2. Engagement

We will listen to children and young people and ensure their voices are at the heart of our organisation.

### 3. Supporting & Funding our Work

We will develop a dynamic and visionary funding strategy that builds diversified and sustainable levels of income from the public and strategic funding partners.

### 4. Awareness

We will ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families impacted by cancer are amplified across the island of Ireland.

### 5. People

We will foster a high-performing, well-resourced, inclusive and values driven culture that enables our team to thrive.

### 6. Governance & Infrastructure

We will ensure that our organisational infrastructure and governance are fit for purpose and aligned with our evolving needs and aspirations.

## Trustees

Cancer Fund for Children is governed by a Board of Trustees, who are all volunteers. The directors of Cancer Fund for Children are also directors of Cancer Fund for Children Ireland. The Board is responsible for governance, strategic direction, and upholding the charity's values, as well as ensuring proper financial controls and compliance with all relevant laws and regulations.

Dr. Cormac Owens  
Dr. Robert Johnston  
Robin McCormick  
Donal Hutchinson  
Alice Nugent  
Nuala Reid  
Dr. Caroline McGroary  
Caroline Feeney

**Chairperson**  
Peter O'Brien

**Treasurer**  
Pádraic Ó Giolláin

**Company Secretary**  
Jennifer Skeggs

**Chief Executive**  
Phil Alexander

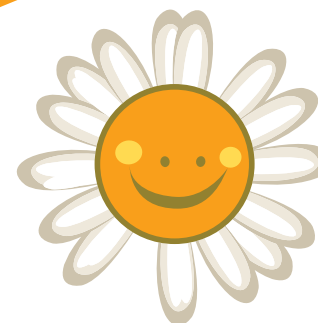
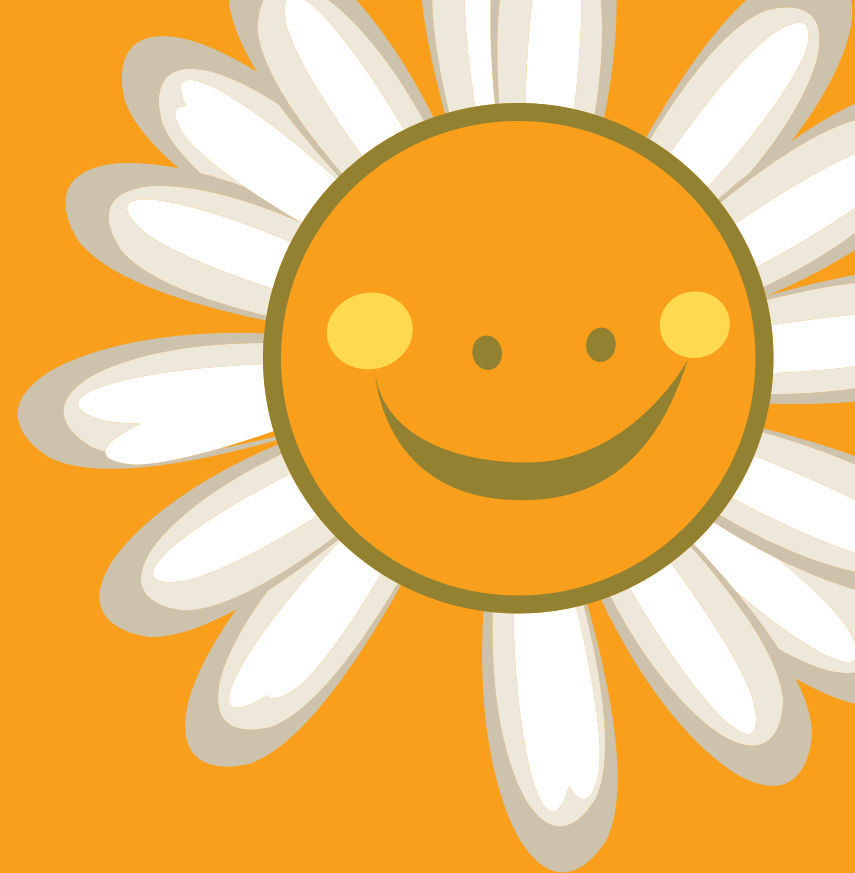
 @CancerFundChildren

 @cancerfundforchildren

 Cancer Fund for Children



Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC100532). Registered Charity in Ireland (20142681). CHY 21682.



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