



Supporting local people on their cancer journey

A 5 Year Strategy: 2023-2027









Cancer
Focus

NORTHERN IRELAND



Foreword

Every day in Northern Ireland, another 37 people are told “You have cancer”. This is one of the most devastating moments anyone can experience, either for themselves or for someone they love. However, it does not have to be a lonely journey.

I am delighted to lead, with the support of the charity’s passionate Board and staff, on an ambitious five-year strategy. Our aim is to embed Cancer Focus Northern Ireland’s services into communities across Northern Ireland as we seek to meet the needs of local cancer patients in the towns and cities where they live.

Mirroring the emphasis of the Northern Ireland Cancer Strategy, Cancer Focus Northern Ireland will reinvigorate its current patient-centred care approach by bringing together our existing specialist cancer support services operating in local communities under a series of fit-for-purpose regional centres. From these spaces, the charity will continue to deliver a series of health improvement services to better tackle existing health inequalities experienced throughout Northern Ireland.

As Northern Ireland’s first cancer charity, we believe that this future direction of cancer response is right, is possible, and furthermore, is the key to seeing more local people live their lives to the fullest. Something particularly pressing as our society’s population ages and we are likely to see more local people being diagnosed with the disease in the coming years.

Over the last few months, we have consulted with key stakeholders to plan for this possible future so that our cancer support services alongside our health improvement initiatives can respond to local need. Whilst we cannot affect where cancer treatments are offered, we can ensure that we are permanently rooted in communities so that people can receive the advice, support, and hope they need in the places where they live and work.

Cancer does not discriminate, and neither will we. Our new strategy will see us become a truly local cancer charity for people by establishing therapeutic support centres in communities across Northern Ireland. The first of its kind will launch in Enniskillen – a Trust area where hundreds of people living with cancer are on waiting lists for such support.

It is thanks to the endless support and generosity from our charity supporters that we are able to move forward with this new ambition. For over 50 years, our fantastic community and corporate supporters have helped us respond as a charity to the growing needs of people in Northern Ireland living with cancer. This new ambitious strategy will support local people living with cancer through a single mission of reducing the impact, risk, and outcomes of cancer but we know that we cannot do it alone. Our success will lie in the continued support from our dedicated Board, selfless supporters, political allies, sector partners, scientific experts, committed staff, and passionate volunteers.

I thank everyone who has played a part in our charity’s history and hope that you will join us once more as we ask you to partner and collaborate with us on this exciting new phase to help create a Northern Ireland where cancer isn’t a lonely journey.



Richard Spratt
Chief Executive



Denise's Story

“In January 2021, my ringing mobile woke me from a lovely dream. The person on the other end instructed me to go to see my gynaecologist that afternoon. I knew immediately that something was wrong.”

“Having originally visited my GP with what I thought was the start of menopause, it was a shock to be told that I had endometrial cancer. At South West Acute Hospital, I was given so much information about early diagnosis, Grade 1, and talk of a hysterectomy. I felt overwhelmed, as I never expected this to happen to me.

Thankfully, my treatment moved quickly, and I was looked after so well by the NHS. I tried to be positive during this time, for myself and my loved ones; I knew my family & friends would be concerned about my mental wellbeing.

I have always been a deep thinker and a born worrier. Living in rural Fermanagh, travelling miles for appointments, and not having a professional cancer support network around me when I was plagued with the ‘What’s wrong with me?’ question, did make things difficult.

Luckily, Cancer Focus Northern Ireland arrived in my life at the right time. The charity’s Enniskillen fundraising group had first told me about the counselling support provided by the charity. Thanks to Helen, the most wonderful counsellor, I began to develop the skills needed to control and understand my thoughts and feelings. While I was not depressed during this time, I knew that I had issues with anxiety. By talking to a neutral person, I could focus on keeping my mental health right, while I recovered from a devastating period in my life.

This is why I am delighted to learn that this and other services will soon be located at Cancer Focus NI’s first Support Centre opening in Enniskillen. To know that people living with cancer and their families will have

a sanctuary to visit during the worst time of their lives is simply wonderful. I believe that it will be particularly beneficial to those who cannot drive, don’t have a car, or are going through the cancer journey alone or in secret. Months after my surgery, I had things going on in my body but had nowhere to go to talk to an expert. This new facility would have made such a difference to my recovery.

My life is now where it should be. I’m working part-time, spending quality time with my family and friends, attending classes to learn new skills, and my health is good. I have lots of future plans and have recently become a volunteer for Cancer Focus NI. I want to give back to the charity that has done so much for me and my family. I cannot wait for this new Support Centre to open in my local community and would like to thank everyone who will support it and make it a success for years to come.”



Mission

Supporting local people on their cancer journey; we will work to reduce the risk, impact, and outcomes of all cancers.

Vision

We want people to live their most fulfilled lives with access to world-leading, equitable cancer support, treatment, diagnosis, prevention, and research.

Values

Our guiding principles will shape the future direction of our charity.

Innovative

We will develop a range of quality cancer support services and health improvement initiatives that are evidence-based and pioneering.

Compassionate

We will continue to provide free services to help support local people on their cancer journey.

Bold

We will not be afraid to make difficult decisions and take courageous actions in the interests of local people.

Connected

We will connect and collaborate with local communities and sector partners including the Department of Health, Public Health Agency, Health Trusts, and other charities to create a fairer and healthier society.

Honest

We will be transparent in our work, show respect for those we meet, and highlight our impact at all times.



Charity Behaviours

**At the core of our charity's work,
we will...**

Be community focused and people centric.

Tackle health inequality in all aspects
of our work.

Reach out to those on the margins in
'hard to reach' communities.

Work sustainably with environmental
consciousness in all that we do.

Ensure the patient voice is at the centre
of all that we do.

What is a Cancer Focus Northern Ireland Therapeutic Support Centre?

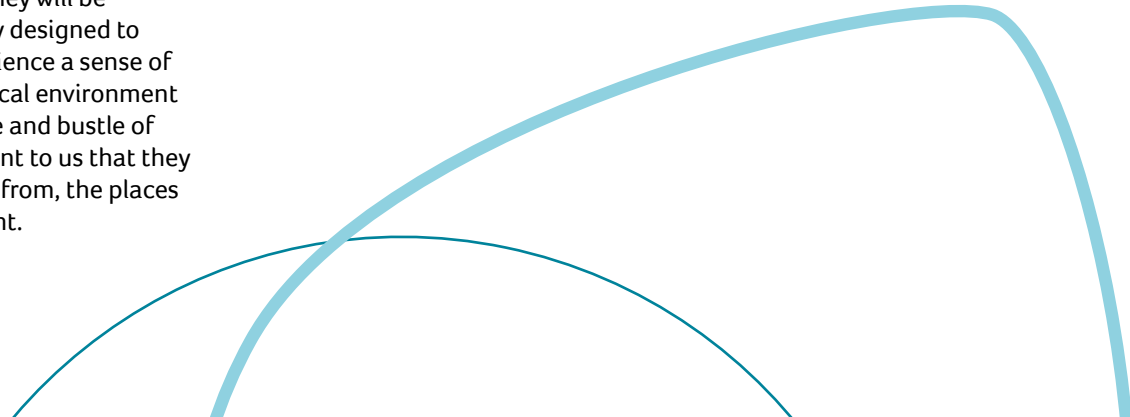
At its core, Cancer Focus Northern Ireland's future strategy is to create spaces and environments that radiate a sense of sanctuary and welcome.

We envisage places of community that those on a cancer journey feel drawn towards and are not intimidated by. Our Support Centres will be strategically placed across Northern Ireland. They will provide flexibility in how people engage, from being able to drop-in and have a coffee with a cancer specialist to availing of more tailored, structured individual or group therapeutic support. Most importantly, we want people to experience and have access to a place of social connection and to have the opportunity to participate in and be part of a community where they feel comfortable and understood.

The look and feel of our Centres will be crucial to how patients and service users will interact with them. They will be thoughtfully and carefully designed to ensure that visitors experience a sense of being apart from the clinical environment of a hospital, or the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It is important to us that they are close to, but separate from, the places of diagnosis and treatment.

The Centres will offer space and opportunity for relaxation, reflection and solace as well as providing emotional and practical support along with access to information and advice relevant to the needs of each person and their family.

Every visitor who will cross the doorstep of a Cancer Focus Northern Ireland Therapeutic Support Centre will have their own story, their own set of unique fears, hopes and aspirations. We will welcome everyone as they are and where they are, when they take the courageous step to come in. We will be rooted in communities and equipped to embrace and provide the support network required for every person who invites us to join them on their cancer journey.



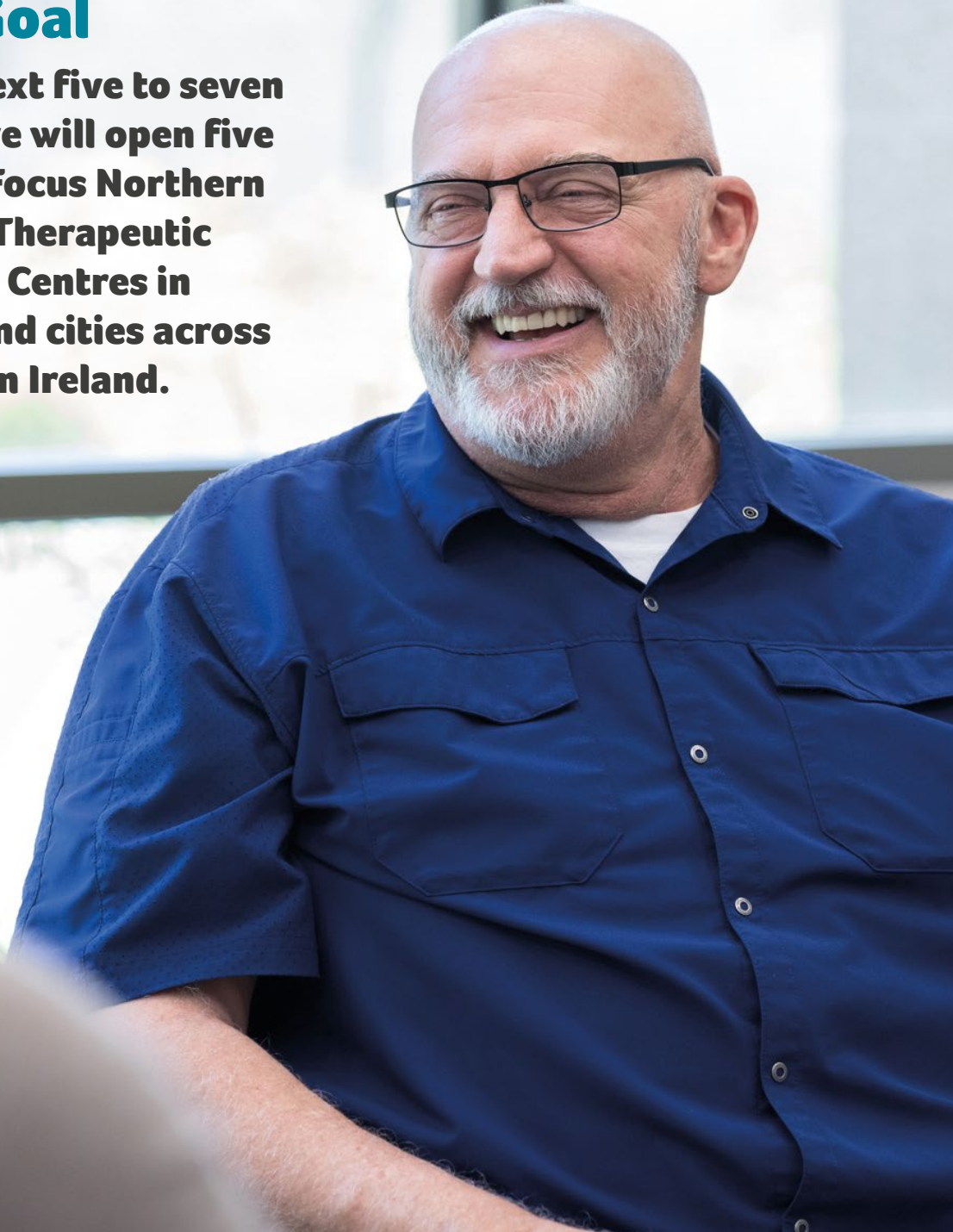


Services at a Therapeutic Support Centre may include:

- **Cancer Information Nurse**
- **Counselling**
- **Art Therapy**
- **Volunteer Driving**
- **Bra & Swimwear Fitting**
- **Health Improvement**
- **Family Support**
- **Policy and Fundraising**
- **Patient Engagement**
- **Group Therapy**

Our Goal

In the next five to seven years, we will open five Cancer Focus Northern Ireland Therapeutic Support Centres in towns and cities across Northern Ireland.



Our Strategic Objectives

To Be Your Local Cancer Voice

Be an effective advocate, operating in local communities and speaking up for all people with cancer in Northern Ireland.

By 2027 we will:

- Establish a network of bespoke, regional cancer support centres.
- Continue to deliver innovative and creative programmes to meet the needs of cancer survivors.
- Use local knowledge to shape campaign and lobbying efforts and influence effective public policy and practice.
- Be recognised as the local cancer voice in Northern Ireland through leading the All-Party Group for Cancer and participating in other forums.

The impact:

Local people living with cancer will input into the planning and decision making at all levels of Cancer Focus Northern Ireland and the external policy environment.



Our Strategic Objectives

To Prioritise Healthy Living

Increase public awareness of how to reduce the risk of cancer and promote healthier living.

By 2027 we will:

- Embed evidence-based educational and health promotional activities within our network of regional cancer support centres.
- Commit to prioritising our work in areas of higher social deprivation and intentionally tackling health inequality.
- Develop innovative ways of connecting with marginalised and minority groups with tailored health promotion and educational campaigns.
- Lobby government on actions and policy that can support health promotion initiatives specifically in relation to the prevention of cancer.

The impact:

Local people will be educated and empowered to make the lifestyle changes required to help reduce their likelihood of developing cancer while health policy will prioritise cancer support, prevention and treatment.



Our Strategic Objectives

To Champion Local Research

Fund world-class, innovative cancer research.

By 2027 we will:

- Invest in appropriate research to support the achievement of our mission.
- Fund research on cancers of unmet need.
- Support research into the personal and social outcomes of local people affected by and experiencing cancer.
- Influence the development and implementation of the Cancer Research Strategy in Northern Ireland and participate in All-Island cancer research initiatives.

The impact:

People across Northern Ireland will contribute to, and benefit from, the latest developments in cancer research and treatments.

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Our Strategic Objectives

To Sustain Our Impact

Grow local support for our work and services.

By 2027 we will:

- Grow a diverse funding portfolio to ensure the organisation has the financial base to meet its strategic aims.
- Create multi-purpose retail outlets to complement the cancer support centres.
- Develop and maintain our regional volunteer and supporter base.
- Attract and retain talent to continue to be an employer of choice.
- Communicate our story in compelling and imaginative ways to connect with those who rely on our services and our supporters.
- Ensure that Cancer Focus NI is legally compliant in all areas of its operations striving for best practice in governance at Board level and throughout the organisation.

The impact:

Local people will view Cancer Focus Northern Ireland as their cancer charity of choice, knowing that all funds raised are reinvested back into local services and communities.







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