

**Cancer Lifeline**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Financial Statements**  
**31 March 2024**

Finegan Gibson Ltd  
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor  
Causeway Tower  
9 James Street South  
Belfast  
BT2 8DN

# **Cancer Lifeline**

**Company Limited by Guarantee**

**Financial Statements**

**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2024

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The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

#### Reference and administrative details

**Registered charity name** Cancer Lifeline  
**Charity registration number** NIC1000002  
**Company registration number** NI055010  
**Principal office and registered office** 44 Alliance Avenue  
Belfast  
BT14 7PJ

#### The trustees

L McStravog (Secretary)  
T Blake  
G Harper (Appointed 18 September 2023)  
G Mathews  
R McGuigan  
B Montgomery  
B Petticrew

**Auditor** Finegan Gibson Ltd  
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor  
Causeway Tower  
9 James Street South  
Belfast  
BT2 8DN

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Structure, governance and management

##### ***Governing Document:***

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 14th April 2005. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

##### ***Appointment of Trustees:***

The Trustees of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Management Committee. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the members of the Management Committee are elected to serve for a period from one Annual General meeting to the next.

##### ***Trustee Induction and Training:***

New trustees are invited to an induction meeting to familiarise themselves with the charity and the context within which it operates. These are facilitated by Development Staff and Management Committee, they cover:

- The obligations of the Board of Trustees.
- The content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- The Committee and decision-making processes.
- Current financial position.
- Future plans and objectives.

Potential Trustees are encouraged to attend a series of business committee meetings as a trial period to familiarise themselves with the work before committing themselves to the role, if this is agreed as appropriate. Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate training events in-house and external, where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

##### ***Organisational Structure:***

Cancer Lifeline has a Board of Trustees not less than 3, who meet fortnightly and are responsible for the strategic direction and running of the charity. In delivering the objectives of the charity a Co-ordinator is appointed by the Trustees along with the Development Manager to manage the day-to-day operations of the charity and they are supported by other members of staff.

#### Objectives and activities

The Trustees have regard to the Northern Ireland Charity Commission's Public benefit requirements. The statutory guidance state the objects and principal activities of the charity are to:

- Foster an atmosphere of mutual support among people suffering from cancer and their families / carers and to encourage them to provide mutual support and encouragement to each other
- To provide support services for those living with cancer and their families / carers
- Benefitting the public through cancer prevention and health awareness programmes
- Striving for improved cancer services acting as a voice for user views

The main activities undertaken to further these aims are detailed in the "Achievements and performance" section of this report.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Strategic report

##### A warm welcome to our 2023/2024 Annual Report.

We are proud to announce that January 2024 marked the beginning of Cancer Lifeline's 25 Year Anniversary of delivering vital support services to cancer patients and their families/carers in the wider North Belfast community. We have come a long way from humble beginnings as a cancer support group established in 1999 to our current newly refurbished and redeveloped cancer support organisation based in Alliance Avenue. We look forward to celebrating this milestone achievement with you all later in the year.

2023/24 has continued to be a challenging year for the organisation. The sharp rise in the cost of living coupled with reduced funding opportunities has meant Cancer Lifeline, like many other community organisations continues to face financial pressures, exacerbated by the rapid growth in demand for support services. If the aspirations of the Northern Ireland Cancer Strategy are to be fully realised then the vital role of the cancer charity sector needs to be fully recognised and resourced.

Funding through the Department of Health's (DoH) Cancer Charities Support Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, People and Communities Programme, PHA, DFC, CFNI and BHSCT has been key to enabling Cancer Lifeline to develop key areas of support service delivery during the year. This included;

- Provision of psychological support / counselling.
- Services to support physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Improved access to information and support services.
- Enhanced provision of and access to practical support for people with cancer.
- Provision of targeted support to cancer carers.

Support services delivered throughout 2023-2024 have been critical to supporting individuals and families affected by cancer to address their physical and mental, health and wellbeing being needs. We have been providing services to carers/family members as well as the individuals living with cancer, recognising the very important role of the carer in the cancer journey of individuals. Cancer is a 'family illness'.

Demand for support services has more than doubled throughout the year. Access to community based wraparound support has been a lifeline to many. Showing significant improvements to their health and wellbeing. We hope this report gives you an overview of the work delivered throughout the year and its impact on the lives of some of the most vulnerable cancer patients and their families throughout North Belfast.

Our sincere thanks to all the volunteers, staff, funders, allied health professionals, community organisations who without their support we would not have been able to deliver our services to individuals and families in North affected by cancer. Many of whom have faced some of the most difficult times in their lives. Their strength, dignity and resilience, humble us each day. We look forward to working with you in the year ahead to ensure this vulnerable target group continue to be supported as we continue to put our best foot forward.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Achievements and performance

##### ***PROVIDING VITAL SUPPORT SERVICES IN CHALLENGING TIMES***

Cancer Lifeline is based at Alliance Avenue in North Belfast, targeting an area of significant deprivation, with extensive health inequalities aligned to deprivation. The area has significant need and high levels of cancer within the population, as demonstrated by the following key statistics.

- In 2023 there were 12,565 people on the cancer register within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area, 32% of these people were in North Belfast.
- A report by the Cancer Registry in November 2020 estimates that the number of cancer cases diagnosed is projected to double by 2040 (45% for males and 58% for females).

The need and demand for Cancer Lifeline's services in North Belfast is evident from the growing numbers of service users registering annually. There has been a 70% growth in registered service users since the Covid pandemic.

**During 2023-2024 a total of 6,747 ONE TO ONE SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS were facilitated. This included: -**

- 2219 sessions of counselling have been delivered to 306 beneficiaries.
- 165 pre-assessment counselling sessions delivered to 165 individuals
- 2104 sessions of Complementary Therapies have been delivered (1125 were delivered inhouse to 305 beneficiaries and 979 were delivered via outreach services to 465 individuals.)
- 1319 advocacy /support calls have been made to 525 individuals.
- 266 needs assessments were carried out with 266 individuals.
- 556 peer support sessions were delivered to 241 individuals.
- 1 individual received one to one Nutritional advice.
- 62 Welfare Benefits advice sessions have been facilitated on behalf of 53 individuals.
- 118 Foodbank referrals.

##### ***GROUP SUPPORT SERVICE PROVISION DURING 2023-20234***

1030 attendances by 163 individuals in a range of health and wellbeing workshops and courses. This included: -

- 408 attendances in Yoga and meditation workshops.
- 139 attendances in Walking Group sessions.
- 70 attendances in Vital Nutrition workshops.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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- 28 attendances in Relaxation skills workshops.
- 132 attendances in Stress Management health and wellbeing workshops.
- 41 attendances in Craft workshops.
- 17 attendances in Fatigue Management workshops.
- 41 attendances in Bereavement Support group sessions.
- 45 attendances in Female Support group sessions.
- 24 attendances in Male Support group sessions.
- 4 attendances in Carer Support group sessions
- 40 attendances in Female Feel-Good health and wellbeing days.
- 21 attendances in Male Feel-Good health and wellbeing days.
- 12 attendances in Carer Feel-Good health and wellbeing days.

87 referrals to additional sources of support were also facilitated for 74 individuals. This included referrals to a wide range of statutory allied health professionals, community organisations, other cancer charities etc.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Achievements and performance *(continued)*

##### **SERVICE IMPACT - WHAT OUR MEMBERS HAVE TOLD US**

Independent evaluations carried out in early 2024, of support services delivered as part of the DOH Cancer Charity Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund People and Communities Programme supporting cancer carers, highlight the positive significant impact of the work. The reports references;

Cancer Lifeline is an excellent model of a community based, user led service delivery organisation.

Service user and health professional consultation confirmed the high level of need and very positive work of Cancer Lifeline. Health professionals, who refer service users, report there is nothing else comparable in North Belfast, or across Belfast. They acknowledge that the availability of Cancer Lifeline's services in North Belfast is a huge asset which is invaluable as a resource for patients and their families who they are seeking to support. One Clinical Nurse Specialist commented "I am relieved if I see they live in North Belfast as I know patients and their family will get a great service not available in other parts of the city". She reported that physically, people will heal relatively quickly but emotionally this will take longer and this is where the support of Cancer Lifeline is critical.

Health professionals report that if Cancer Lifeline was not available to people from North Belfast the impact would be:

- Longer waiting times for counselling services in other parts of the city
- Increasing mental health issues amongst people living with cancer in North Belfast
- Increased numbers of people presenting to GPs and Social Workers for mental health support

As a result of counselling support, service users reporting their sense of stress, anxiety and fear as being extremely poor / poor was reduced from 84% to 16%. 94% of Support Group participants surveyed reported their attendance helped reduce their stress, anxiety and fear. Focus group discussions highlighted that counselling support and peer support has been critical for both those living with cancer and family and friends supporting cancer patients.

Support Group participants report the positive impact of engaging with others on a cancer journey and the positive impact this has on reducing their sense of isolation and loneliness.

There is a high level of demand for counselling across Belfast, with wait times reported to be up to 6 months. Health professionals unanimously praised the very professional approach of Cancer Lifeline in providing a much needed service in North Belfast. Counselling was the primary reason for referral for most to Cancer Lifeline and it was reported there is a sustained need to continue this service locally for people living with cancer and their family / carers.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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##### **Achievements and performance** *(continued)*

Cancer Lifeline offers a holistic service under one roof and their person centred approach ensures that service users are accessing a suite of complementary support interventions. The provision of a variety of services under one roof was highlighted by health professionals who advised that it is unlikely service users would access all of the supports they receive through Cancer Lifeline if they had to do so through different organisations. At the time of diagnosis people are overwhelmed and find it difficult to navigate supports available to them. Those going through treatment are often fatigued and do not want to be moving around between different organisations for support. For most it is difficult to reach out to a support organisation and therefore it was reported that the availability of services under one roof at Cancer Lifeline ensured that service users were accessing and benefiting from all the support they needed from a social, emotional and health and wellbeing perspective. This was reaffirmed by service users who reported they would not attend different organisations for counselling, complementary therapy, peer group support and classes / workshops. This would be too complicated and challenging.

The availability of a local cancer support service in North Belfast was consistently referenced at the focus groups as a much needed and valued resource. Service users welcome the 'drop in' ethos of Cancer Lifeline and the relaxed and homely style of the centre encourages service user participation in activities. Staff were also praised in terms of their communication with members, their interaction with all those visiting Alliance Avenue, their empathy with service user needs and the quality of the services provided. Cancer Lifeline also funds taxi transport to and from their premises for those in most need who, without this support would, not be able to avail of services. All of this encourages access to cancer support services in North Belfast, demonstrated by the growing number of people registering with Cancer Lifeline.

Health professionals referenced the high level of need in North Belfast, as an area of social deprivation and the importance of a local service, which people can access easily. For some, crossing town may not be financially feasible, for some their cancer diagnosis and health condition may make transport difficult and for some moving outside their home, let alone their community is an issue. Having access to a support service, located in North Belfast is a huge asset that encourages people to make use of services which they probably would not access if not local.

Cancer Lifeline's premises were also consistently reported by both service users and health professionals as making an important contribution to access and engagement by service users. The premises are a contrast to the clinical, medical environment service users are familiar with. The homely, comfortable surroundings of the premises in Alliance Avenue were described as welcoming, happy, calming and serene, with some comparing them to a hotel or private clinic. It was described as somewhere "not sad and full of laughter". One service user described the premises as "a haven of help and hope". People report to feeling instantly relaxed and at ease when they come through the door and the friendly atmosphere, other service users mingling about, reassures new members and instils them with confidence to engage in support services.

Social Work staff at the Cancer Centre emphasised the importance of service provision outside of a medical setting. The Cancer Centre, he reported, is a very busy place that lacks space for private, uninterrupted and relaxed chat with patients. Cancer Lifeline's premises provide the relaxed, quiet and private space that service users need and the availability of a suite of services under one roof maximises the access to and uptake of various support services by those living with cancer and their carers.

Consultation with the BHSCT Carers' Co-ordinator acknowledged the very high level of demand for counselling services, which exceeds the level of funding available through the Trust. The availability of bespoke support for people caring for someone with cancer was acknowledged as an excellent support resource and much needed in North Belfast. Health professionals stated holistic support for

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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##### **Achievements and performance** *(continued)*

the whole family unit is essential given that cancer is a family illness. Carers are critical to supporting people with cancer and face their own sense of psychological distress which requires support. A vitally important aspect of Cancer Lifeline the reports highlighted was the relationship building and level of understanding they have of their client's needs.

Monitoring data also confirmed the role of Cancer Lifeline in raising awareness of support services and thus health literacy of service users.

- Only 15% of service users engaging in counselling support reported their knowledge of cancer support services initially was excellent or very good. After counselling this figure had increased to 71% reporting their knowledge was excellent or very good.
- The corresponding figures for Support Group participants was 25% at the outset, with 94% reporting their participation in Support Groups had helped to increase their knowledge of cancer support services.
- 88% of workshop participants report that their engagement in events has helped to increase their knowledge of cancer support services.
- The newsletter is an important source of information on services available at Cancer Lifeline as well as other important supports such as the local hospitals, Cancer Centre, Public Health Agency, Breast Care Team, Chemo Helpline, Bridgewater Suite and other cancer support charities.

Monitoring data highlighted key beneficiary, health improvement outcomes.

Of 122 Counselling participants surveyed. Before taking part 84% rated their levels of stress, anxiety and fear as extremely poor or poor. After taking part in counselling this was reduced to 16%. Before taking part 56% rated their mental health and wellbeing as extremely poor or poor. After taking part in counselling this was reduced to 8%.

Of 195 Complementary Therapy participants surveyed. Before taking part 67% rated their levels of emotional resilience/coping skills as extremely poor or poor. After taking part in counselling this was reduced to 4%. Before taking part 46% rated their self-care as extremely poor or poor. After taking part in counselling this was reduced to 4%.

Of a sample of 36 Psychological Support Group participants surveyed, 94% reported reduced isolation levels. 89% reported improved mental health and wellbeing and 82% reported enhanced coping skills.

Of 581 Health and Wellbeing workshop participants surveyed. 96% reported improved self-care practices. 93% reported improved quality of life and 98% reported improved connections with others.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Achievements and performance *(continued)*

The beneficiary quotes below help bring to life the above data.

***"The counsellor has been my saviour and given me tools to live each day"***

***"Before coming to Cancer Lifeline, I couldn't see a way through, I felt hopeless, lost, deflated and invisible. Because of the counselling support I now feel strong and mentally healthy, and I am now making better lifestyle choices and decisions."***

***"I now know I am not alone and that a problem shared is truly a problem halved. I now know looking after myself is as important as being the emotional support for the person who is unwell. I didn't believe counselling would be for me but I can't stress how wrong I was. I feel strong, healthy and in an amazing place mentally. Cancer Lifeline has been the listening ear, compassionate, non-judging organisation I needed. I wouldn't be where I am today without them. What I have achieved in weeks is remarkable. I have taken up the complementary therapies as well. I am looking after myself. I have energy. I'm sleeping and exercising and can be the strength for my family at this tough time. I want to say a massive thank you to all the staff in Cancer Lifeline - you have changed my life."***

***"When I came six weeks ago, I couldn't see a way out. My world was turned upside down when a close family member was diagnosed with cancer. Cancer Lifeline has given me hope. I have experienced love, compassion and it has been the listening ear I needed. My worries are still there but I have the tools and coping skills to deal with them."***

***"When I came to Cancer Lifeline I could hardly speak for crying. I was also so afraid to ask anyone for help and felt very lonely and sad. The more we talked the more I felt better. Cancer Lifeline contacted my GP and told him I was trapped in my home without any help. My GP then contacted lots of services and apologised for letting me down. I now have carers coming out twice daily, physiotherapy in my own home and someone to look after my feet. I have an Occupational Therapist who is helping me to become more mobile and organising for my kitchen and bathroom to be adapted to my needs. I lost my husband to cancer and then had cancer myself. Because of my cancer I lost the power of my legs and I am wheelchair bound but no one seemed to care but Cancer Lifeline did. I used to go on holiday at least twice a year and never thought this would be possible again, but I am now planning for my mum and I to go on holiday. Cancer Lifeline has given me my life back."***

***"I had terrible pain in my feet and joints and the reflexology helped ease the pain"***

***"It was a relief to talk to others who understood what I was going through and to learn how they coped. I was able to talk openly and honestly."***

***"Being able to talk with other men in a similar situation means I don't feel so alone."***

***"I am more compassionate and less hard on myself. I allow myself to feel happiness now, something I found very hard to do before. I am going to the gym. I have returned to work. I was able to do this because counselling helped me to feel less overwhelmed by grief. It helped me so much to be able to talk about my dad."***

***"The treatments really help both physically and mentally."***

***"Complementary therapy helps me to reset and removes the stress."***

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# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Achievements and performance *(continued)*

*"I have reduced my anti-depressant medication."*

*"What I have learned has given me the tools to look after myself."*

*"I have gone back to work full time. I could not have done this without the support of Cancer Lifeline."*

*"When you walk in it's like a blanket is wrapped around you."*

*"It was very powerful and reassuring knowing that I don't have to be tough all the time"*

#### Financial review

The total income for the year 31st March 2024 was £530,404 of this, £386,195 was restricted and the total expenditure for the year was £572,744, of this £405,974 was restricted. Due to the difficult times, we are facing we have to highlight the importance of maintaining our fundraising activities, and the continuance of voluntary donations, to enable our charity to do its work. It is very important that you continue to support our Friends of Cancer Lifeline fundraising group at their community fundraising events. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Friends of Cancer Lifeline fundraising group. Also supporting our charity shop through donations of clothes or furniture you may have is vital. We would also like to thank the shop staff and volunteers for the great work they do.

Many thanks for all your support and we look forward to your support in the future.

#### **Reserves Policy /Risk Management**

The management committee has examined the charity's requirements for reserves considering the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds, not committed or restricted by the provider (restricted funds) should be separated between general funds and designated funds, the latter ideally representing 8 months of the expenditure. The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Management Committee are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding until alternative funding resources are found. The present level of designated reserves therefore falls short of the target level. The strategy is to continue to build reserves through operating surpluses.

# **Cancer Lifeline**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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#### **Plans for future periods**

In response to user needs, Cancer Lifeline will endeavour to continue to further develop support services for carers of cancer patients alongside those who are living with cancer. Cancer is a family illness and carers often struggle to cope with complex needs and neglect their own wellbeing.

Cancer Lifeline aims to facilitate a targeted male-led programme of support, in conjunction with vulnerable, isolated males affected by cancer in North Belfast, who are finding it difficult to access support. They have told us how they are struggling with their wellbeing and finding it difficult to take up support. We have been supporting them to explore in more detail the difficulties they face daily trying to cope with their diagnosis and sometimes aggressive treatment regimes, or difficulties supporting their loved one through cancer. We have been finding out what matters to them and what type of support services would help them to improve their lives. We want to support them to take the lead in improving their health and wellbeing and quality of life. Also, to ensure the support being proposed is appropriate, fit for purpose, realistic, recognised as being designed by them for them. After many open and honest conversations, we have supported them to put together a proposed Men's Den project which we are currently seeking funding for.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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##### Plans for future periods *(continued)*

##### **STRATEGIC CONTEXT/ RELATED PARTIES**

There are many health related strategies and initiatives which the work of Cancer Lifeline is aligned to in terms of contributing to the attainment of the vision and aspirations in respect to health and wellbeing, addressing health inequalities and tackling deprivation at a local level. Specifically, the following strategies, plans and initiatives are important:

- NI Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework
- Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together
- Cancer Strategy for Northern Ireland 2021 - 2031
- Cancer Recovery Plan Building Back Rebuilding Better (2021-2024)
- Caring Together BHSCT Draft Strategy (2023-2028)

##### **NI PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT DRAFT OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK**

In 2021 the NI Executive consulted on a proposed strategic framework of nine outcomes for a new Programme for Government (PfG), presenting a picture of NI having "an inclusive society in which people of all ages and backgrounds are respected and supported. A society which has no barriers to people living prosperous and fulfilling lives". The consultation document references an Outcomes-based PfG in which government, partnering with civic society will respond to the needs of people and communities everywhere to ensure an inclusive society where outcomes of individual and collective wellbeing are the drivers for the government agenda. Two of the nine outcomes are particularly relevant to the work of Cancer Lifeline.

We all enjoy long, active, healthy lives) - This Outcome is about enabling and supporting people to maintain their health and lead healthy, active lives, addressing the factors which impact on mental and physical health. The Executive is committed to ensuring everyone has access to high quality care when they need it throughout their lives. Priorities include:

- Inclusion and tackling disadvantage
- Mental Health and wellbeing
- Older people

(We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives) - It is important that society cares for those who need support. This Outcome is about enabling everyone to live their life in a fulfilling way as valued members of an inclusive society and acknowledges a need to tackle the issues that lead to disadvantage and provide the services and support people need, when they need it.

Priorities include:

- Inclusion and tackling disadvantage
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Older people

Cancer Lifeline is an important service provider in North Belfast for people living with cancer. North Belfast is an area with some of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and an area experiencing significant health inequalities. Cancer Lifeline has been responding to the health inequalities in the area through a community based response and the work of the organisation is clearly aligned to the priorities and intended outcomes of the NI Programme for Government.

##### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING 2026: DELIVERING TOGETHER**

The Department of Health's Delivering Together report presents the out workings of an expert panel led by the internationally recognised expert, Professor Rafael Bengoa on tackling the challenges in

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# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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##### **Plans for future periods** *(continued)*

Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care system. The report outlines challenges and the opportunities facing the sector and puts people at the forefront, with a focus on enabling people to stay well for longer and where care or support is needed, it will be wherever possible, provided in the community setting. Of particular relevance to Cancer Lifeline and its work in the community is the identified opportunity to "promote a new way of working with the community and voluntary sectors through the innovative use of social procurement clauses, and commissioning services based on social value rather than simply on the basis of lowest cost". The report outlines an ambition for a future in which:

- people are supported to keep well in the first place with the information, education and support to make informed choices and take control of their own health and wellbeing;
- when they need care, people have access to safe, high quality care and are treated with dignity, respect and compassion.
- staff are empowered and supported to do what they do best; and
- our services are efficient and sustainable for the future.

The report refers to a new model of person-centred care focussed on prevention, early intervention, supporting independence and wellbeing and towards a model underpinned by a more holistic approach to health and social care.

One of the explicit changes needed outlined in the report is the need to build capacity in communities. The report states "We will work with communities to support them to develop their strengths and use their assets to tackle the determinants of health and social wellbeing. We will support the development of thriving and inclusive communities. In particular, the HSC will become better at tapping into the innovative ideas and energies in communities themselves, and in the community and voluntary sectors. We will invest in HSC community development resources to work alongside all communities to enable social inclusion and tackle health inequalities and the underlying contributory factors including poverty, housing, education and crime. It will take time to realign and grow the community development resource, and as a first step we will review existing capacity and then invest to meet any gaps, including a programme of training".

Cancer Lifeline is an important community resource, which puts people living with cancer and their families at the forefront of their service delivery. The availability of easily accessible services in North Belfast, an area of health inequality, is extremely important to ensuring that the high level of need and demand is met. There is evidence that the services provided enable beneficiaries to keep well, providing them with information, education and support to make informed choices and take control of their own health and wellbeing and their model of working collaboratively with others is an excellent example of 'delivering together'.

##### **CANCER STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2021 - 2031**

The publication of a 10 year Cancer Strategy was identified as an immediate priority of the Northern Ireland Executive in New Decade, New Approach and in August 2021 the Department of Health (DoH) published the draft strategy for public consultation. The aims of the strategy are threefold;

- to reduce the number of people diagnosed with preventable cancers,
- to improve survival and
- to improve the experience of people diagnosed with cancer

Cancer Lifeline has a role to play with respect to the aim of improving the experience of people diagnosed with cancer and their carers.

# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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##### **Plans for future periods *(continued)***

Support for carers is unique to Cancer Lifeline and the strategy references "Support and care provided by families and informal carers is vital to the wellbeing of patients given their assistance in managing medications, treatment regimes, symptom management, personal care, social and psychological support. However, providing informal care is challenging for many and can have a negative impact on both physical and mental health. Evidence has shown that there is a need to deliver improved services for informal carers of patients with cancer in Northern Ireland."

The strategy also references the importance of access to bereavement support, an important service offering at Cancer Lifeline - "Most bereavement services in Northern Ireland are provided by the community and voluntary sector. Capacity is an issue, long waiting lists in many areas. Capacity issues are also preventing Trust social work teams from offering greater levels of bereavement support, including follow-up services with carers and loved ones."

"Access to pre-bereavement and bereavement support is crucial to meeting the holistic needs of carers and loved ones. It is vital that we adopt a wider approach and ensure that those important to the person living with cancer, including children, are not forgotten. This type of early intervention and support can be helpful in preventing mental health issues connected to early/traumatic loss and complex grief reactions."

"Overall, the services of Cancer Lifeline have an important role to play in supporting the mental health of people living with cancer and their carers. The Cancer Strategy recognises that mental ill health cross cuts the entire cancer pathway and identifies that some services are offered by the voluntary sector but outside of this provision, formalised pathways do not exist for cancer patients. This reinforces the importance of Cancer Lifeline services. The strategy states "preventing mental health conditions from developing amongst those living with cancer, as well as ensuring adequate management of conditions should they occur are important in the provision of holistic cancer care. The numbers of people needing help with their mental health is likely to grow as more people are living longer following a cancer diagnosis. There are significant gains to be realised both in patient quality of life and savings in health care costs."

Lastly the Cancer Strategy references the need to improve health literacy with respect to addressing health inequality. "Low levels of health literacy are associated with poorer access to health services, poorer communication with health-care professionals, lower adherence to treatment and poorer self-management of health conditions. Better health literacy could therefore contribute to reducing health inequalities, strengthen health and improve health-care efficiency." Cancer Lifeline services are strongly focused upon increasing the health literacy of users, ensuring they are connecting to other support services and have improved self management skills with respect to their cancer diagnosis.

##### ***CANCER RECOVERY PLAN, BUILDING BACK; REBUILDING BETTER***

A Cancer Recovery Plan, Building Back; Rebuilding Better has been developed to address the immediate issues in adult cancer services with the aim of getting to a place where services are stronger than before, providing a solid foundation for the world class service envisaged in the strategy. In June 2021 the Minister for Health published a three-year blueprint for rebuilding cancer care in Northern Ireland - The Cancer Recovery Plan. Objectives detailed in the Cancer Recovery Plan which Cancer Lifeline are contributing to include:

- Ensuring all patients living with cancer feel supported across their pathway and have access to a Clinical Nurse Specialist, appropriate psychological support, information and signposting to other services.
  - Creating smoother and more efficient patient pathways from initial referral, through diagnosis and treatment encompassing the appropriate care and support during and after treatment with the aim of improving cancer waiting time and patient outcomes and patient experience.
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# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

#### Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Plans for future periods *(continued)*

#### **CARING TOGETHER IN BELFAST 2023 ONWARDS, BHSCT DRAFT STRATEGY 2023-2028**

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust values the support that carers provide, which often prevents, reduces and delays the need for more formal services. The new strategy acknowledges that each year carers save the NI Executive £4.6bn. The strategy has four key priorities:

- Reach all carers
- Navigate carer support
- Support carer health and wellbeing
- Connect and involve carers

Cancer Lifeline's services make an important contribution to BHSCT's vision and priorities. Cancer Lifeline is an important community and voluntary sector partner who can help to:

- Identify carers
- Raise awareness of support services available
- Better understand their needs
- Deliver responsive activities to support carers' emotional, physical and social health and wellbeing

#### **Acknowledgements**

Cancer Lifeline would like to acknowledge all the Funders, Committee, Staff, Complementary Therapists, Counsellors, Steering Group members, Statutory, Community and Voluntary agencies, Friends of Cancer Lifeline, Shop staff, Volunteers, Individuals and Families, the Business Community and Political Representatives for their support during 2023 / 2024.



Belfast  
City Council



The *elle*  
Community  
Foundation

Via  
Department of Health Cancer  
Charity Fund and Carer Fund.  
Comic Relief Empowering  
Change Core Programme.



# Cancer Lifeline

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2024

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#### Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

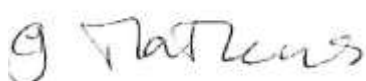
The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

#### Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees' annual report and the strategic report were approved on 25 November 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



G Mathews  
Trustee



B Montgomery  
Trustee