

# the force report

An update for our supporters on how we are making a difference to the lives of local people affected by cancer *with your help*



# Our support is crucial

Work on a new strategic vision for FORCE is underway and should be completed early in the New Year. The number of cancer patients with complex emotional needs is growing post pandemic and we are committed to providing the support that so many people in our community will need.

Our priorities include:

**RE-ESTABLISHING** a range of face-to-face group programmes to complement our one-to-one services.

**DEVELOPING** a strategy for improving how we consult service users, gather feedback and collect and use data to continue developing services to meet their needs and expectations.

**STRENGTHENING** partnership working with other local organisations and the oncology team at the RDUH.

**COMPLETING** the relaunch of our outreach programme, offering support services in Ottery St Mary, Okehampton and Mid Devon.

**RECRUITING** and training experienced and skilled professionals into role specific volunteer posts to work alongside our support services teams.

## RESEARCH

FORCE has been investing in local cancer research since 1987. Today, we focus on supporting new, smaller research projects that often struggle to secure funding. This pump priming can provide the basis for important work to attract funding from large, grant-making institutions. Applications for research funding are beginning to come through again after the pandemic and we will provide support to those that meet our criteria.

## INNOVATION

We have broadened the scope of our support for innovation to improve diagnosis, treatment and care for local cancer patients. We still aim to fund state-of-the-art equipment and have had several enquiries after a relatively quiet period due to the pandemic.

As clinical services recover, demand is likely to increase again. We are also open to requests for funding from all departments offering cancer services. That would include projects and education that promote innovation and improvement in patient care across a broad spectrum of cancers.

“All cancer waiting time targets have once again been missed in England despite the best efforts of NHS staff. Behind these figures are people waiting anxiously for a cancer diagnosis, and patients left uncertain about when they’ll get the treatment they urgently need.”

CRUK – OCTOBER 2023

FORCE is committed to developing services that will reach and support as many people affected by cancer as possible because the post-COVID picture is still critical.

The support we offer – free of charge – is vital to patients who continue to face more complex challenges due to the longer term impact of the pandemic.

The picture for England, according to the latest figures from Cancer Research UK for August 2023, paint a stark picture and underline why the emotional, practical and psychological support we provide in Exeter and across Devon is so crucial.

## CRUK STATISTICS



**Urgent Suspected Cancer Referrals Standard: Target Missed**

74.8% of people were seen by a specialist within 2 weeks of an urgent suspected cancer referral in August 2023. The target is 93% and was last met in May 2020.



**The Faster Diagnosis Standard: Target Missed**

71.6% of people were diagnosed, or had cancer ruled out, within 28 days of an urgent referral in August 2023. The target is 75% and has never been met since its introduction in October 2021.



**The 62-day Standard: Target Missed**

62.8% of people in England received their diagnosis and started their first treatment within 2 months (or 62 days) of an urgent referral in August 2023. The target of 85% has not been met since 2015.



**The 31-day Standard: Target Missed**

91% of people started treatment within 31 days of doctors deciding a treatment plan in August 2023. The target is 96%.

**FORCE IS REBUILDING TO MEET A GROWING DEMAND**, ensuring that the people who need us feel safe and secure at our centres and going the extra mile to make sure we have a presence where we are needed most. Here’s the picture from our last financial year.



Visitor numbers to our Exeter Support Centre up **8%**



New registrations grew by almost **20%**



Oncology Support sessions on Yeo Ward at the RDUH up to 100 hours, a **50%** increase



RDUH staff attending reflective practice sessions at FORCE up **25%** at **355**



Individual counselling sessions at FORCE: **2,589**



People seen in counselling and support groups: **585**

**80**

Hours of advice and support delivered on RDUH wards by our Information Team: **80**



Appointments with our Information Team: **1,340**



Physio sessions: **1,665**, up **31%**



Individual gym sessions: **453**, up from 107



Complementary therapy sessions: **1,191**, up **5%**



People supported with benefits advice: **342**

# LET'S FACE CANCER TOGETHER

## FORCE Cancer Charity is launching a campaign to increase support for people living with incurable cancer.

**Let's Face Cancer Together** aims to raise awareness of the unique way FORCE is reaching a patient group for whom there is very little dedicated support available.

We run a regular support and education group – Living with Non-Curable Cancer - and have also staged a pioneering retreat day.

More than 20 people living with cancers that cannot be cured came together at Buckfast Abbey to share their experiences and hear from experts in cancer care.

That pilot was so successful that FORCE would like to embed regular retreat days as part of our core services for anyone locally affected by cancer.

**To do that, we need to raise £25,000.**

### FORCE Oncology Support Specialist Emma Ellis:

"We're launching the Let's Face Cancer Together campaign to let more people know about how FORCE can help those coming to terms with a diagnosis of incurable cancer. Giving them the opportunity to be with others who understand what they're going through is really powerful. That was made so clear at our first special retreat day. It was overwhelmingly powerful and we really want to offer more days like that."



### Prostate cancer patient Paul Tucker:

"It's so important for people who are suffering from incurable cancer to be able to get together, to share our feelings. It's a real lifeline. It was a wonderful experience the day I went on in Buckfastleigh and I hope the campaign could enable us to be able to fund some more of those days. It would be fantastic."



### Denise Sparkes was diagnosed with stage four intestinal cancer in 2022.

"It was hard on my family because they were just watching me go downhill. FORCE were there to help me pick up the pieces because when I did have that diagnosis it was my life changing from one day to the next. They were able to help me on so many different levels and nobody else could do that."



### Adrian Codling discovered he had lung and thyroid cancer after suffering a stroke.

"Friends, family, people you meet just feel sorry for you but they don't know what you're going through so all of a sudden I was talking to people who knew what I'd been through and what they were going through and I could help them and they could help me. There's so many of us out here that need your help and every little penny will get us looking forward instead of backwards. Please support us. Thankyou."



### Consultant oncologist Anne McCormack attended the retreat day.

"One of the most fearful things is knowing that your time is limited and trying to make the most of that time and not be overwhelmed by the feelings that you have about those that you leave behind or how you might die or what do I have to do in preparation. So many of those worries can be alleviated by attending something like this day. I haven't found anything else like it. This was a unique opportunity for patients."



### Nicky Godfrey, Lead Nurse for Enhanced Supportive Care team in the RDUH Cancer Services department.

"The FORCE Cancer retreat day was a fantastic opportunity to allow patients to come together, to meet others who are going through similar experiences and to enable them to have a safe space where they could ask questions, talk about their fears and talk about their uncertainty."



## PLEASE SUPPORT OUR CAMPAIGN

**To donate** to the FORCE Let's Face Cancer Together campaign, go to <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/letsfacecancertogether>



**There is more information** on how FORCE supports people living with non-curable cancer on the charity's website - <https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/supporting-you/living-with-non-curable-cancer/>

# A necessity, not a luxury

FORCE resumed its programme of support for cancer patients and their families in West Devon in September when we relaunched our outreach service at Okehampton Hospital every Wednesday.



Emma Barker, Okehampton volunteer Robin Richardson and Sally Houlton

## FORCE oncology support specialist Sally Houlton endorses the importance of our community-based programme.

"I feel incredibly pleased to be able to offer counselling sessions at Okehampton. I had the privilege to work in both Tiverton and Honiton outreach centres, and I know the outreach facilities offered by FORCE are exceptionally well received by patients and their families. Some of the reasons I have heard from patients in Okehampton already as to why they benefit so much from outreach at this time has included easier parking, friendly and supportive faces whether waiting for booked sessions or as a drop-in and knowing that they didn't have to travel as far as Exeter. In terms of

counselling sessions, we are able to offer a confidential and non-clinical space in which patients can process and clarify things a little.

"Okehampton offers lovely space with a welcome area close to the main reception. The volunteers are fantastic - always willing to help set up rooms, keen to listen and provide cups of tea or coffee.

"Several patients I have seen in Okehampton, who live in or near Okehampton have said they would not have been able to get into Exeter for sessions otherwise."

We are providing counselling, physiotherapy and exercise advice, complementary therapies and group support programmes, all available by appointment. We are also working with Citizens Advice and Macmillan to host a benefits service.

FORCE had to withdraw from Okehampton and other community hubs when COVID struck in 2020. We worked closely with the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to find space that would enable us to get back into more outreach locations post-pandemic.

FORCE Chief Executive Meriel Fishwick said: "We are delighted to be back in Okehampton. We understand the value of going out to meet people in their communities, making access to the free services we provide as easy as possible. The variety of support available through FORCE is not a luxury, it's a necessity."

FORCE's mission to get back out into the community after the restrictions imposed by COVID have been boosted by a grant from The National Lottery Community Fund.

Lottery money is helping us rebuild our programme of more face-to-face support, closer to where people live.

Backed by our wonderful volunteers, we are also offering a regular services to clients and clinicians at the Ottery St Mary cancer treatment hub.

And the big news is that we hope to be back in Tiverton in Spring 2024.

## The first group support introduced at Okehampton is the highly acclaimed Moving Forward programme.

Course designer Emma Ellis led the group, which was held at the Ockment Centre in the town. "People attending say it would not have been possible for them to access this important support service if it hadn't been held in Okehampton," she said.

## Volunteer Tamsen Leslie reports:

"The general response I have received from patients has been very positive. Most people I have spoken to talk about the real difficulties in getting to the Exeter site (using public transport) from Okehampton. They talk about how nice it is to be utilising their local community hospital and how much easier it is to get to. As a volunteer, I've absolutely loved my afternoon shifts so far. Everyone is so welcoming, there feels a genuine positive atmosphere to be back and excitement for the growing services on offer in the future. Well done FORCE!"



# Building to meet demand

FORCE has strengthened its team of oncology support specialists to offer more cancer patients and their families the chance of one-on-one counselling and group support. Marissa Acton and Maria Leitch bring a broad range of experience to our charity and the people we support.

I joined FORCE in September as a Support Specialist in the Oncology Support Team. I will be offering counselling support as well as visiting the wards, supporting hospital staff and co-facilitating our FORCE Moving Forward groups by the New Year. I come from a Macmillan Support Centre with Plymouth NHS Trust where I had been an oncology counsellor since 2019. Prior to this I worked as a counsellor in private practice and for the charity Relate.

My specialist area of counselling is working with relationships – I love the dynamic challenges of this work and believe healthy and supportive relationships provide the foundation stone from which we can face many of life's trials. Further back I have come from a mental health nursing background, which I last practiced in Dorset, before moving to Devon eight years ago.

It is an absolute privilege to have been given the opportunity to join the FORCE team, having known for some time of the fabulous reputation within our psycho-oncology field, and since joining I have not been disappointed! It really is a unique charity, offering a wonderful array of essential support to local people. I am full of pride to be part this very special organisation!

**Marissa Acton**



Marissa Acton



Maria Leitch

In July this year I had the privilege of becoming a counsellor in the Oncology Support Team and I feel honoured by this opportunity and experience.

I came to this role after working in the RDUHT for more than 20 years, predominately as a trained nurse within Cancer Services and as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Palliative Care, with additional experience in Community Services. I have a strong affinity with the hospital and the local area, having raised and cared for my family throughout that time. My previous experience afforded me the opportunity to witness the transformative supportive work that FORCE offers to people affected by cancer. In addition, I have seen the support FORCE offers staff working for cancer services, characterised by a nurturing environment, emotional support and reflection.

My work in oncology showed the essential nature of psycho-oncology care and hence I embarked upon my Emotional Therapeutic Counselling training. It is this, and many years of working in this field, which enables me in being part of this tremendous team. If I were to describe the spirit of FORCE, it would be to say that it is a redoubt, where people diagnosed with cancer can find empowering professional compassion, provided by a committed team giving the responsive care which is so needed. It is a profoundly inspirational and special place to work. I am both enthralled and thankful to be part of it.

**Maria Leitch**



OUR GET ACTIVE WITH FORCE PROGRAMME continues to go from strength to strength under the expert guidance of specialist oncology physiotherapists Louise Ballagher and Becky Bailey.

We expanded the programme this year to include classes in Pilates - a form of low-impact exercise that focuses on balance, posture, strength and flexibility.

It is good for developing core strength and is particularly useful for building strength and stability in patients after surgery.

A pilot course at the FORCE Centre with experienced instructor Caroline Dodd proved so successful that we have decided to run the programme through the winter of 2023 and the spring of 2024.

The programme is being pump-primed by money from a legacy left by much-missed local physiotherapist Anne Hansell, who died last year.

Anne supported the FORCE physio team and their patients with assessment, advice and treatment for musculoskeletal problems that might hamper their recovery.

Here's what some of the people who attended the Pilates pilot found helpful...

*"Being with a supportive group with a supportive instructor. Feeling so much better emotionally and physically at the end of a session. The hour flew by and so much concentration is needed throughout the session, it was impossible to think about the cancer and its consequences."*

*"Caroline was fantastic - the classes were ideal for me gentle relaxing with some challenge, being with other cancer patients."*

*"I really felt the difference in both flexibility/ movement generally, plus after 4 hrs sitting in (a) chair having chemo my back is generally clunky. For the first time I had no clunkiness after treatment! So thank you!"*

*"A mix of gentle effective physical activity, and the socialising aspect with others who understand my situation even though different to theirs."*

*"Caroline is the perfect teacher for this situation... knowledgeable, compassionate and fun."*



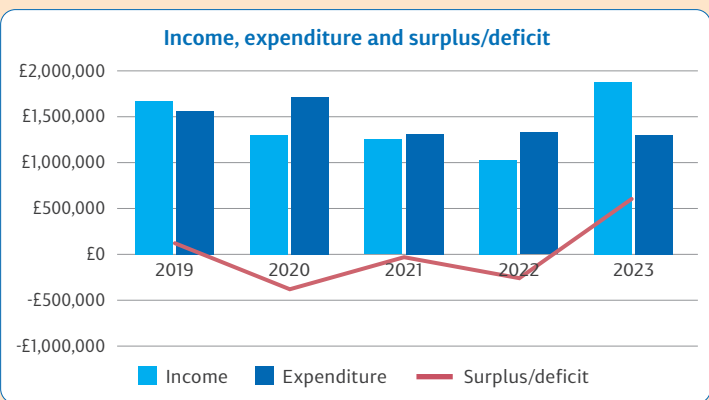
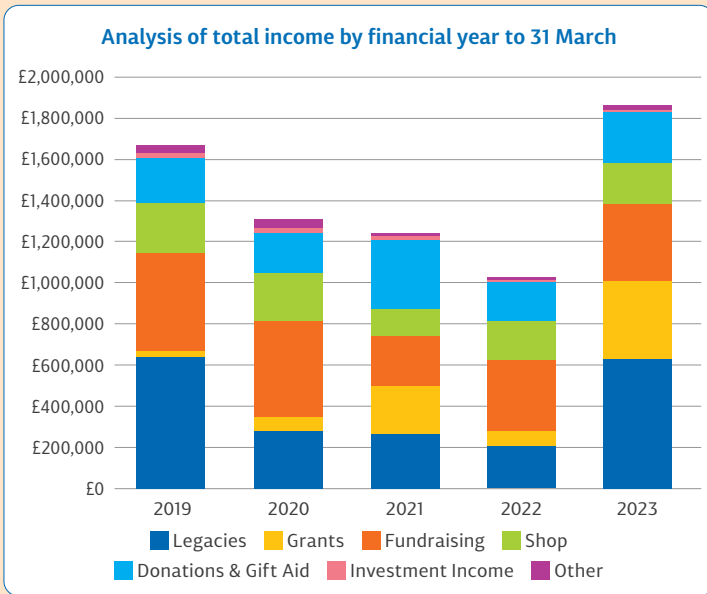
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CAMPAIGN

# Making steady progress

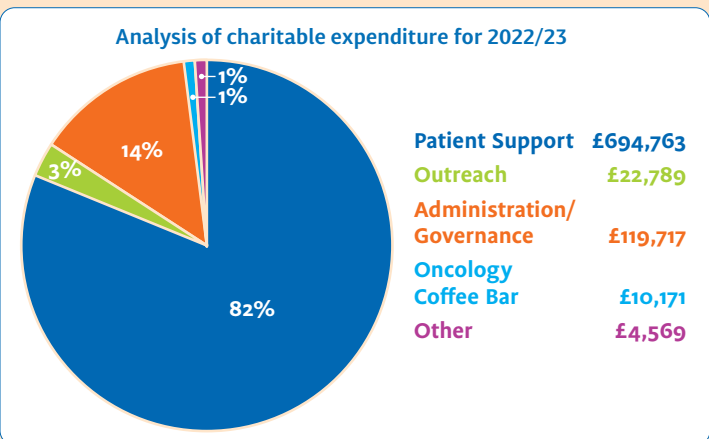
As we set the budgets for 2022/23, we still faced an uncertain world due to the cost of living crisis. Gauging how our traditional income streams would recover post pandemic was a challenge. We set a prudent income budget of just over £1.9m but thankfully we almost doubled our expectation at just under £1.9m! While this is cause for celebration, the chart below shows how this is primarily due to significant fluctuations in legacy and grant income. At £1.01m, income from these two sources alone is only £22k less than the total income reported for 2021/22. Grant income includes £290k from the National Lottery Community Fund. We had received only £50k of the total. The outstanding amount is to meet future Outreach and Role Specific Volunteer project costs.

rebuilt our Income Generation Team. With YOUR HELP, they will be driving growth so that we can re-establish services to pre-pandemic levels and ensure a sustainable future.

We have continued to keep a tight grip on costs and delayed recruitment plans have resulted in a surplus of almost £600k for the year. This unprecedented figure is a tremendous boost and puts us in a strong position to meet the challenges of increasing demand for our services. It has helped us replenish the reserves we used during the last three years to support local people dealing with a cancer diagnosis. However, we have to remember that we have yet to receive all of the lottery grant, which is already ringfenced.



The chart also demonstrates the impact of COVID on traditional income streams and how these more sustainable sources have yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels. A key focus of our recovery plan is to develop an income generation strategy, recognising opportunities identified in a review carried out during 2022. We're making progress in adapting plans to suit the challenging environment, but staffing pressures have affected the speed with which these plans can realistically be implemented. During the summer of 2023, we have



**MARCUS WORTHINGTON** is the newest member of our board of trustees. He is a partner at accountancy firm Thompson Jenner LLP, joining them after graduating from the University of Birmingham with a degree in mathematics and studying with the firm to become a chartered accountant in 2017 and a chartered tax advisor in 2018. Based out of the firm's Exeter office, Marcus acts primarily for owner managed businesses and advises on any manner of accountancy and tax matters. Marcus enthusiastically agreed to become a trustee of FORCE having taken part in numerous cycling events over the years and is pleased to put his skillset to use at such a good cause.



**MORLEY SAGE, RUTH BOOBIER AND FELIX MEDLAND** have retired as trustees and become Vice Patrons of FORCE. Between them have given 70 years of service to the board of trustees and countless hours of their time, steering our charity successfully to the strong and well-respected position we enjoy today. We thank them for their extraordinary service.



# Laura celebrates to say thanks

People find amazing ways to support FORCE, many of them as a thank you for the help our charity has been able to offer.

Young mum Laura Salt chose to “give something back” for the support she received from our charity after getting a breast cancer diagnosis in March 2022 at the age of just 34.

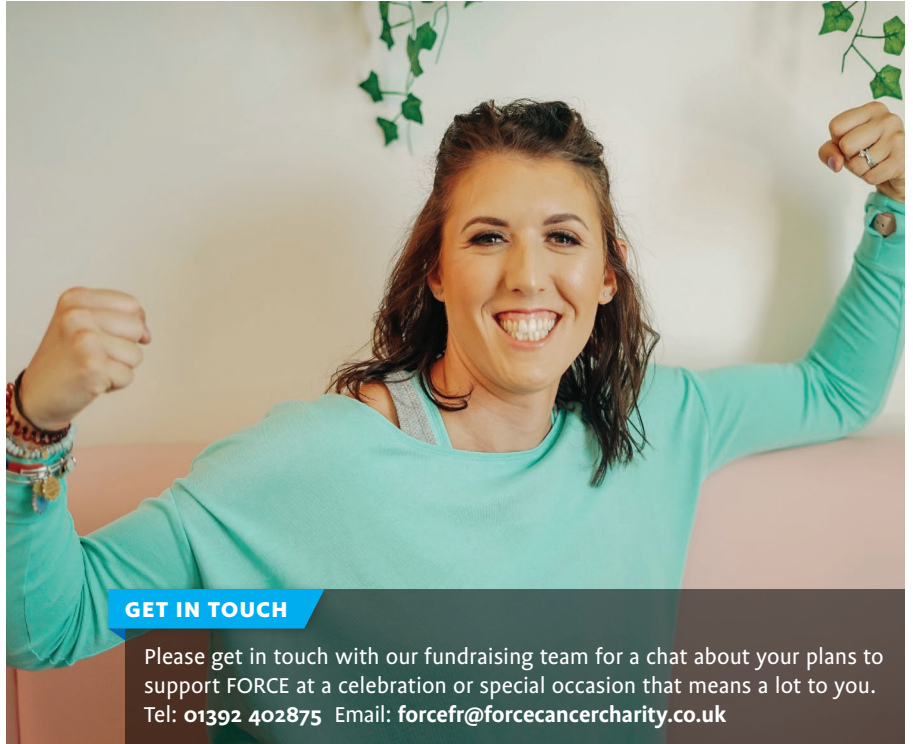
Laura, who is married with a three-year-old daughter, threw a **35 And Still Alive** party last year following a successful course of treatment.

The black tie event was such a triumph that she held another one in September and already has plans for a third in 2024.

Laura, a health and wellbeing coach, has raised thousands for FORCE from her fantastic events.

“FORCE is amazing. I don’t know any other cancer charity like it. The Support Centre is just heaven. It’s my little haven. I’ve had so much support without ever having to put my hand in my pocket so I wanted to give something back,” she said.

We are so grateful to everyone who thinks of FORCE when they are celebrating their own special event like a birthday, anniversary or wedding day.



## GET IN TOUCH

Please get in touch with our fundraising team for a chat about your plans to support FORCE at a celebration or special occasion that means a lot to you. Tel: **01392 402875** Email: [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk)

**WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY RECRUITED INTO OUR FUNDRAISING TEAM**, rebuilding from two members to four with additional support from consultants. There are now some exciting opportunities to grow our income generation with a staged approach to investing in fundraising and marketing. We have identified steps to improve existing income streams and explore new ones, looked at how we collate and use data, promote giving and

engage patients and families in an appropriate and sensitive way.

Acting head of income generation Olly Watts said: “We are working hard to get back out into the community when it comes to fundraising and a priority for us to look at ways to encourage supporters to join our Friends of FORCE teams across our catchment areas to help grow awareness and increase support.”

## New faces



### CHARLOTTE NICHOLLS

I’m a mum, wife and runner! I moved to Devon from London in 2014, when my mum was diagnosed with breast cancer and I wanted to be nearer her while she went through treatment and recovery. With a background in global charities and development, I worked for two local charities in Devon in a fundraising and marketing capacity before I started working as a marketing consultant. I’ve supported several local and national charities on projects such as rebrands, campaigns and fundraising and I’m delighted to be part of the fantastic team at FORCE.

I have loved getting to know the charity and their brilliant events. Seeing the direct impact of the money raised is both humbling and inspiring. I ran the Great West Run this May for FORCE and I was delighted to raise more than £500. It’s a fantastic charity that supports so many in our community and I am proud to be working with them.



### CERI BASTYAN

I have taken on the role of Community Fundraiser and look after the Friends of FORCE groups and events that are run in the community. This is a massive step out of my comfort zone, coming from an NHS secretarial background. I am looking forward to getting involved with all of the incredible supporters of FORCE, helping them get the best out of their events and encouraging them to spread the word of FORCE far and wide. FORCE is a charity close to my heart, so it is my time to give something back.



### KAREN DART

I started in the role as Fundraising Support Officer in August and am responsible for all aspects of support for the fundraising team. My most recent experience was within an alumni officer role involving events and fundraising. I have also worked within the NHS as a project officer and enjoyed a busy and varied role. As with so many others, I have been affected by family cancer and I am so pleased to be involved in such an amazing charity.



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR  
**LET’S FACE CANCER TOGETHER**  
CAMPAIGN

# Consider becoming a regular giver and help make a difference to more people like Ruth



**EAST DEVON MUM RUTH BAGWELL** began her association with FORCE in 2009 when she took part in her first Nello cycle ride. She went on to become a FORCE volunteer at our Support Centre, at the hospital snack bar, in our charity shop in Heavitree, with a prostate cancer support group and with a Walk, Run, Talk exercise programme. Her fundraising efforts also continued and she briefly joined our staff as an admin assistant.

Ruth describes her relationship with FORCE as rewarding and one which was strengthened by a twist of fate in 2022.

"Turning 50 actually saved my life. I was offered a routine mammogram by the NHS and shortly afterwards I became a statistic - the one in two given a cancer diagnosis. I had never been healthier in my life but unknown to me, a tumour that I never felt was growing in my breast and needed treating.

"My years of experience volunteering at FORCE has been the best training to deal with this unexpected adventure. Friends I had made during that time came to my rescue and scooped me up in my hour of need. I will be forever grateful for their kindness, time and knowledge. I knew exactly where to turn after receiving the diagnosis and I can't tell you how odd it felt accessing the service as a patient.

"Luckily for me, I already knew that FORCE would be there for me, my family and any friends that were going to be experiencing my diagnosis with me."

FORCE has been with Ruth every step of the way through chemotherapy, surgery, radiotherapy and ongoing treatment to keep her cancer free.

"FORCE has reinforced my strength to keep going during some of the more bleak moments on the road to wellness and I look forward to accessing their services and to continue raising funds for the charity."

"I am sharing my story to help us encourage more people to become regular givers."

By making a monthly donation to FORCE, you'll be helping to support more people come to terms with a cancer diagnosis. Your monthly donation will help with our ongoing work and enable us plan for the future so that we can be here for more people like Ruth.

£5



**£5 a month**  
could help someone meet others in a similar situation to reduce isolation.

£10



**£10 a month**  
could help fund an information nurse, who can support patients in distress.

£20



**£20 a month**  
could help a patient or loved one access one-to-one counselling.

£50



**£50 a month**  
could help fund complementary therapies for a cancer patient or their carer.

**Please support FORCE on a regular basis if you can, monthly, quarterly or annually. It's easy to do and you can cancel at any time.**

## HERE'S HOW YOU CAN DO IT

### Option 1

Set up a **STANDING ORDER** online with your bank

The details you need:

**Account name:** FORCE Cancer Charity

**Account number:** 60796568

**Sort code:** 30-80-37

**IMPORTANT:** Please email [donations@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:donations@forcecancercharity.co.uk) to let us know that you have set up a standing order. We'd love to thank you and confirm whether we can claim Gift Aid in your donation.

### Option 2

Set up a **REGULAR DONATION** through our website via JustGiving. Go to [forcecancercharity.co.uk](http://forcecancercharity.co.uk) and click DONATE. Please be aware that this is subject to JustGiving processing fees.

**Have a query?**

Please email [donations@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:donations@forcecancercharity.co.uk) or call us on 01392 406166.

**Thank you**

FORCEcancercharity @forcecancer charityforcecancer

01392 402875 (Fundraising) / 01392 406151 (Patient Support)

Charity registration no. 1140676 Company registration no. 7529991

