

A photograph of two women sitting on a red sofa. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing glasses and a black jacket with a floral pattern. The woman on the right is bald, wearing glasses and a black hoodie. Both are smiling warmly. The background shows a wooden door and a glass panel.

This place saved me

FORCE strategy and vision 2024-2027

***Building cancer support
around you***





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Foreword

Welcome to our strategy for 2024–2027, working towards the vision that everyone facing cancer should have the personalised care and support they need.

We look ahead with the benefit of lessons drawn from working through a pandemic and with gratitude for the Charity’s solid foundations, which has helped us navigate unparalleled financial and operational ordeals. Four years on, FORCE can plan its future work with more confidence and incorporate some new, more flexible ways of working to improve vital support services for local cancer patients and their families.

Work towards our 2019-2022 strategy was well underway when the world was derailed by the pandemic. In 2022 we agreed some objectives as an interim measure while we started to work on this strategy. These priorities have largely been met or are ongoing and included in our plans.

The backdrop to post pandemic recovery is the biggest cost of living crisis in recent times, recruitment problems and rising staff costs. As a healthcare charity we are directly impacted by the significant difficulties faced by the NHS and in particular, cancer services. The challenges include unacceptable waiting times for some patients, a growing and ageing population, as well as nationwide problems with recruiting staff. This makes the role of support organisations like FORCE more crucial than ever.

One in two people will be given a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime and more and more people are experiencing longer life expectancy, some with cancers that are treatable but not curable. We see our role as doing whatever we can to improve



Dr Jenny Forrest
Chair of Trustees



Meriel Fishwick
Chief Executive Officer

the quality of life for people in our community who may face fear, uncertainty and isolation. We are realistic about this challenge and have some innovative plans to manage the predicted surge in demand as more of us live with multiple, more complex health issues.

Supporting innovation remains a key part of our work and where possible, FORCE helps with the purchase of equipment to improve cancer treatment as well as pump priming research and helping with additional oncology staff training.

In our strategy we will look at the environment in which we will be delivering this plan, how we aim to build a sustainable future for our services as well as paying attention to some of the challenges we need to overcome.

While this strategy sets out our proposed approach, we know that our plans will evolve and, where necessary, change to fulfil our mission and make the best possible use of available resources. Therefore, we must remain agile, responsive and focus on removing any barriers that may exist to being fully inclusive in our work.

To make our strategy meaningful, we must continue to listen to and work with our stakeholders, our patients and their families, staff, volunteers, supporters and fundraisers.

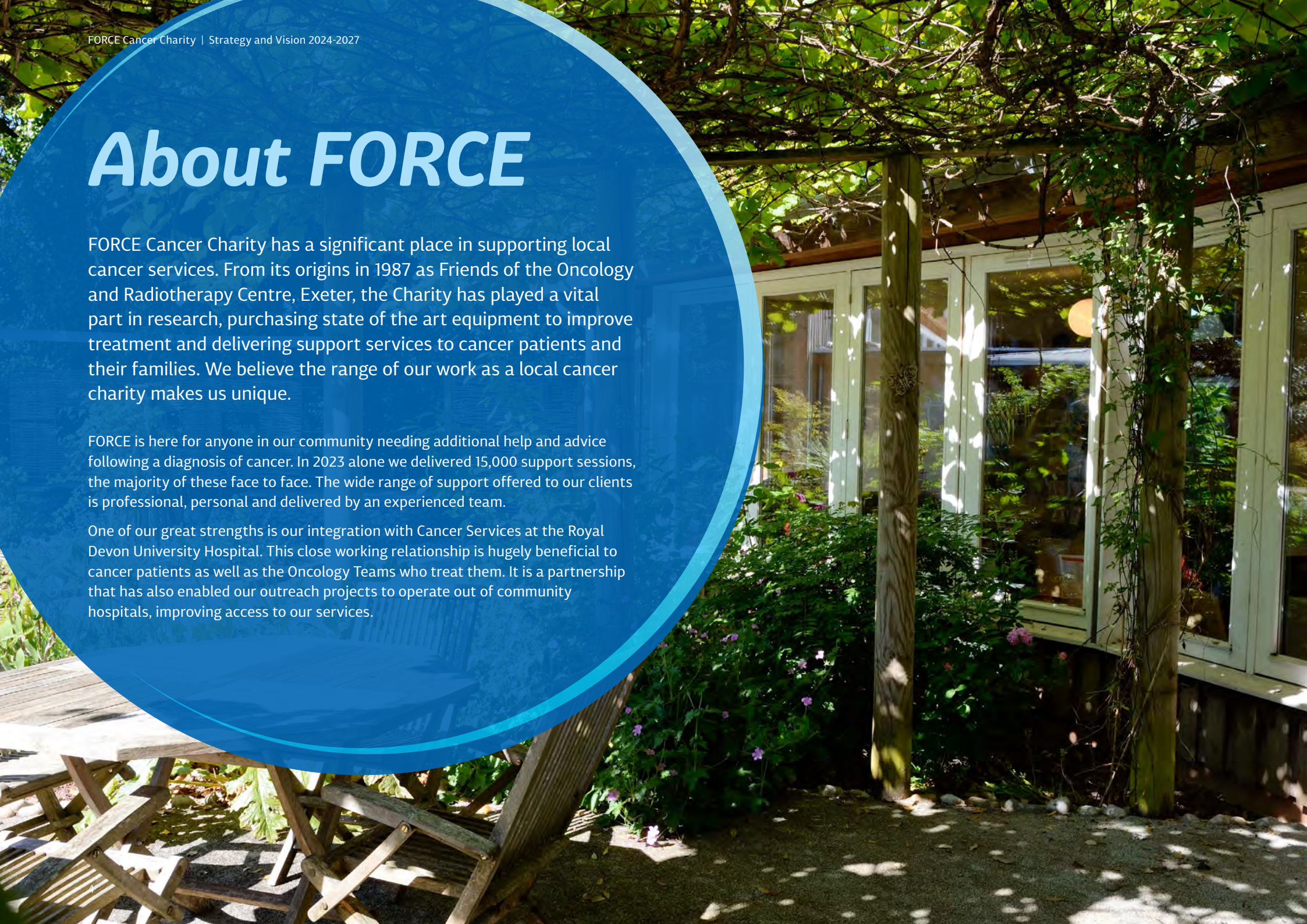
Above all, this strategy is for all the cancer patients and their families needing additional help and support in Devon.

About *FORCE*

FORCE Cancer Charity has a significant place in supporting local cancer services. From its origins in 1987 as Friends of the Oncology and Radiotherapy Centre, Exeter, the Charity has played a vital part in research, purchasing state of the art equipment to improve treatment and delivering support services to cancer patients and their families. We believe the range of our work as a local cancer charity makes us unique.

FORCE is here for anyone in our community needing additional help and advice following a diagnosis of cancer. In 2023 alone we delivered 15,000 support sessions, the majority of these face to face. The wide range of support offered to our clients is professional, personal and delivered by an experienced team.

One of our great strengths is our integration with Cancer Services at the Royal Devon University Hospital. This close working relationship is hugely beneficial to cancer patients as well as the Oncology Teams who treat them. It is a partnership that has also enabled our outreach projects to operate out of community hospitals, improving access to our services.

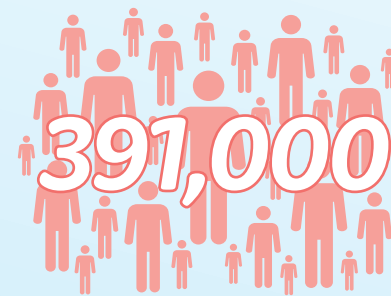


Cancer: the growing pressure

Cancer incidence in the UK has risen by 39% since 2002 and by 19% in the last decade. This is probably due to a growing and ageing population that is at higher risk of developing cancer, as well as improvements in diagnosis initiatives and public awareness. (Macmillan)

SURVIVAL FOLLOWING CANCER AND ITS TREATMENT

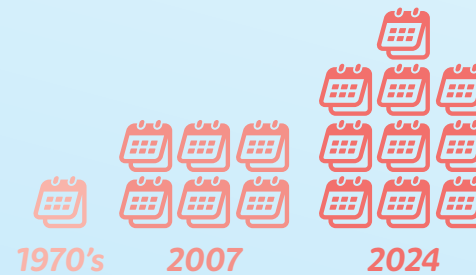
Based on the latest data for average cancer survival in the UK, survival is now estimated to be more than 10 years from diagnosis. This is up from the average survival rate of one year in the 1970s and six years in 2007. There are estimated to be more than three million people living with cancer in the UK today and this is set to rise to four million by 2030.



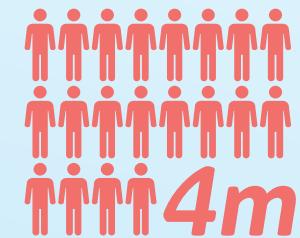
new cancer patients in the UK in 2022



39% rise in cancer incidence in the UK since 2002



Average survival survival in the UK



estimated people living with cancer in the UK by 2030

The local picture

FORCE has been pivotal in shaping non-clinical cancer support services in Devon over four decades.

While Devon is generally less deprived overall relative to the whole of England, a third of the county is classified as rural, which can present challenges around access to services and isolation contributing to poorer health.

The Devon population is older than the England average and that means we are facing the associated challenges around 15 years before some other parts of the country.

The Five-year Integrated Care Strategy for Devon identifies that:

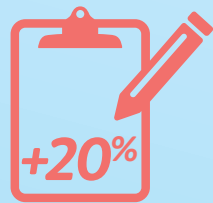
- People want more community based, collaborative and joined-up care
- People see real value in local voluntary services and want more coordinated work with them

Cancer treatment services in the Eastern region of Devon covered by the RDUH have seen an 18% growth in patients on their 2022/23 new patient waiting list compared with 2021/22.

FORCE new client registration figures of 1,600 for the same financial year were around 20% up on the previous year. It is anticipated that this trend will continue setting the picture for cancer services and FORCE support services.

1/3

of Devon classified as rural



New client registrations up 20% on previous year



Why **FORCE** matters

The range of support people may need following a cancer diagnosis is ever-changing but there are some aspects of support that remain unchanged. More than 80% of people using FORCE services choose to do so face to face or in a group setting.

We know from decades of experience that receiving support tailored to a person's needs can help enormously with their cancer experience and quality of life. Support can include helping people to access emotional, psychological and social support, information and education as well as financial advice.

Our aim is to help people with the right support and the right information so that their focus is not just on living with cancer, but on living well.

“

I have just completed five years of treatment for breast cancer and I am so grateful for all the support FORCE has given me over these years. It definitely helped me in my emotional recovery.

I found that when I visited the Centre I was met with understanding and calm at a very traumatic time in my life. I was also able to access the relaxation classes, the yoga classes, the art classes and have massages. The nurse I saw supported me throughout my diagnosis and recovery and was amazing :) I really couldn't have asked for more from this oasis in the hospital grounds. ”



How **FORCE** helps

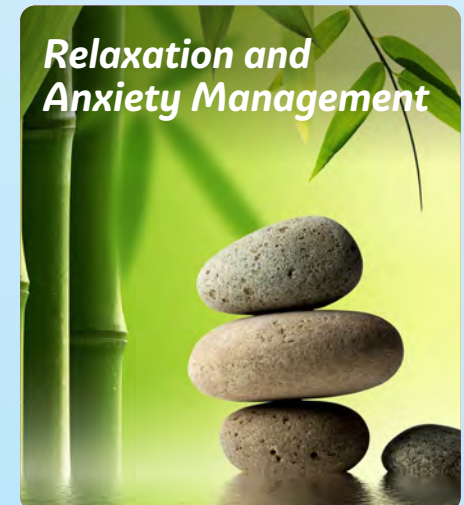
We offer a warm welcome and our free services are open to anyone whose life is affected by cancer. People can visit our purpose-built Centre in the grounds of the Royal Devon University Hospital and we also have weekly outreach projects in three community hospitals, Tiverton, Okehampton and Ottery St Mary.

As well as our in-person services, people can access support by phone, video call or email.



Just wanted to say thank you to you all for making our visit to your Centre so welcoming and supportive when we visited yesterday. My husband's massage has been so beneficial for him and having the opportunity to share an issue with your nurse has helped immensely. The whole atmosphere of the Centre is like walking into a haven of tranquillity and care - thank you to you all.

Our services include:



Complementary therapies and acupuncture



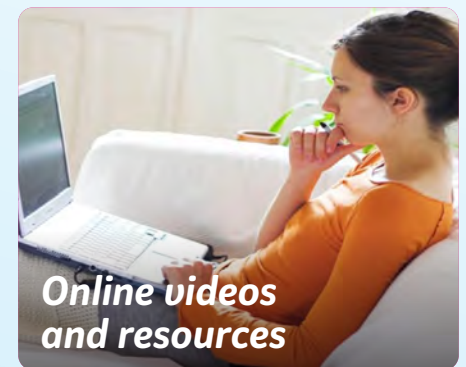
“Your complementary therapist at Ottery St Mary Hospital was absolutely brilliant. She gave me the warmest welcome and smile and listened carefully when she asked me how I was progressing. She also gave me a lovely massage which was very relaxing and continued to listen to an issue that was bothering me. I can’t praise her enough.”

Paul Easton: ‘I had a four-week acupuncture session with Cath and found the whole experience, as always with FORCE, so encouraging. Cath is a very calming and reassuring person (professional too) and if you believe in acupuncture or are sceptical, just being with her classes and mixing with others who have their own stories and battles is so beneficial for everyone. I strongly believe that the FORCE Centre shows all of us we are not alone and there are special people like Cath (and all the team) out there to offer help in many different ways. I for one feel fortunate to have this care here in Exeter.’

Look Good Feel Better workshops – for women, teens and men



Wigs and coping with hair loss



Online videos and resources



Reflective practice and education sessions for hospital staff




Moving Forward after Treatment programmes

"For me, the FORCE Moving Forward course helped me to think about and process these ripple effects, to accept that these parts of my life were not going to look exactly as they were before (and that's ok) and also to be a bit more at ease with what has happened. I think Moving Forward is exactly the right title for the programme and captures perfectly the purpose for those taking part. My view is that anyone who has is at the end of cancer treatment (and potentially some time after the treatment) would find this a really valuable part of the recovery process." Karen



Physio assessments, exercise groups and keeping active

"I really felt the difference in both flexibility/ movement generally, plus after four hours sitting in a chair having chemo, my back is generally clunky. For the first time I had no clunkiness after treatment! So thank you!" Pilates group member



Support groups and retreat days for those living with non-curable cancer

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."

What we stand for



Our strategic ambitions 2024 - 2027

One in two of us will receive a cancer diagnosis. Words often used to describe the experience include overwhelming, isolating, uncertain and scary. People are now living for longer with a diagnosis, which can mean that some have to manage several health conditions at the same time. Changes in treatments for cancer, particularly around immunotherapy, are offering hope to many while also creating increased uncertainty about the future.

Making sure our support for people living with non-curative cancer is relevant, meaningful and sustainable is a key part of our strategy. Listening to clients taking part in our new retreat days and support groups will help us tailor our services and create opportunities for people to share their experiences.



“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.”

*Consultant Oncologist Anne McCormack
FORCE retreat day*

“It was a wonderful day and I came away feeling so comfortable having attended the day, after I had worried how it would make me feel and how I would cope. It made me realise I’m not alone and sharing with others what they have experienced and their coping strategies, was a real help to me.”

“I learnt a lot during the day, elevating my confidence to take on new challenges, I can push myself to achieve more within the restrictions my illness allows.”



Strategic ambitions

Support and Wellbeing

Provide a range of flexible and personalised support services to meet the needs of those affected by cancer in Devon and improve their wellbeing.

TO DO THIS WE WILL

- **Develop a more holistic approach** to assessing people's needs to connect them with FORCE services and support from other organisations.
- **Build support** for people who are currently poorly served, such as families and those bereaved by cancer.
- **Recruit volunteers** who have professional expertise (role-specific volunteers) to help us to expand our support services in a sustainable way.
- **Work closely with partners** across Devon and beyond to widen our understanding of local and national innovation.
- **Maximise the use of our resources**, share expertise and extend our reach to as many people who need our services as possible.

INCLUSION

- **Identify inequality** and improve access to FORCE services.
- **Review and improve** the use of our systems and data to help identify who may be experiencing barriers to accessing our services.
- **Build relationships** with partners in local communities to understand any barriers and explore how we can overcome them.
- **Develop service user groups** to inform the types of services we offer; how, where and when we deliver them; our communications; and our staff and volunteer recruitment.

COLLABORATION

- **Share knowledge and best practice** as the call on charity services increases substantially.
- **Improve efficiency** by understanding how the work of other organisations complements the work of FORCE.
- **Reduce expenditure** to benefit from economies of scale by pooling financial resources with other organisation where possible. Any savings realised can be redirected towards our beneficiaries.

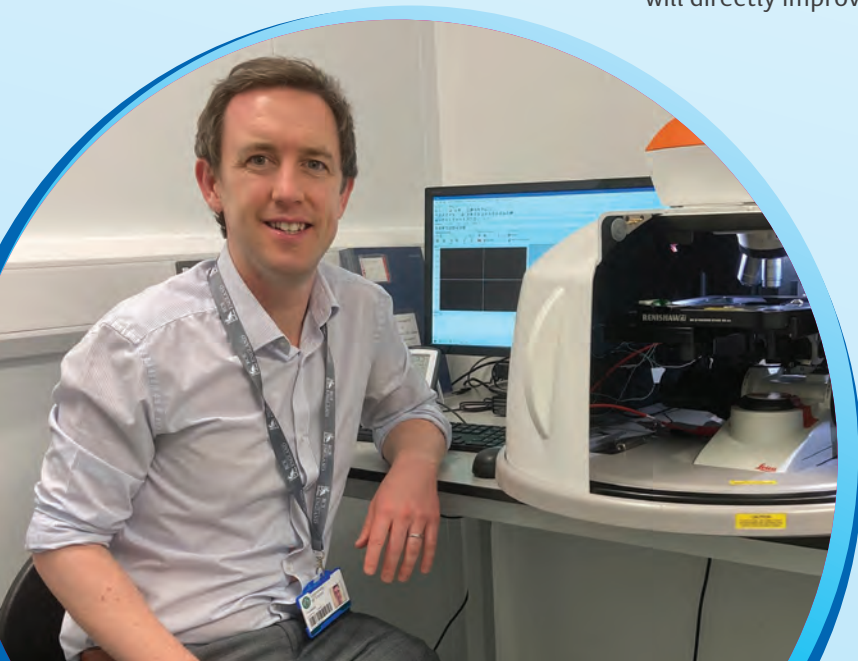


Innovation

Fund research and innovation to improve cancer treatment and care.

TO DO THIS WE WILL

- **Be flexible** and support projects which promote innovation.
- **Consider requests** covering all types of cancer.
- **Purchase equipment** to help initiate new treatments locally.
- **Be clear** about the value of our investment in locally funded research.
- **Support professionals** with training and education which will directly improve patient care.



People

Invest in our people to retain a motivated and engaged workforce with the skills and capacity to deliver our plan.

TO DO THIS WE WILL

- **Create** a sought-after place to work/volunteer.
- **Acknowledge and value** the important contribution of all our people.
- **Empower** people to bring their best to the Charity.
- **Ensure** effective and inclusive recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- **Expand** our volunteering opportunities.
- **Support** the wellbeing and ongoing training of our staff and volunteers.
- **Maintain** a Board of Trustees with clarity of purpose and commitment to the vision of the Charity.

Sustainability

Develop income generation, digital transformation, ensure strong financial management and governance.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Set realistic budgets** and manage deficits while acknowledging the challenges of income generation and rising costs.
- **Improve reporting** and monitoring of performance.
- **Use careful cost management** to mitigate inflationary pressures.
- **Work with the Income Generation Team** to explore opportunities for the shop, grant, legacy and other income streams.

INCOME GENERATION

- **Increase income** to £1.8 million by 2027.
- **Focus on encouraging** key supporters to organise fundraising initiatives.
- **Build on and develop** long term support and partnerships.
- **Develop and invest** in our Income Generation Team.
- **Review and update** our supporter database.
- **Maximise income** from trust and grant applications.
- **Increase awareness** of the importance of gifts in wills.
- **Develop new opportunities** / fundraising initiatives based on trends, feedback and resources.



Sustainability

GOVERNANCE

- **Continue to develop** a strong and effective governance structure.
- **Maintain robust but proportionate systems** to improve efficiency and minimise security and compliance risks.

DIGITAL

- **Create a digital strategy** with support through the recruitment of a digital trustee/ specialist advisor.
- **Improve data capture**, analysis and reporting to inform financial management, income generation, service development and impact reporting.
- **Identify, plan and implement** system and process upgrades to support the strategic ambitions and improve efficiency.

CLIMATE ACTION

- **Create an environmental action plan** to help embed low-carbon behaviours across our work.



We will measure our success in Spring 2027 by

- ✓ **Income in excess of £1.8 million** and a balanced budget.
- ✓ **Full uptake of services** running in three outreach locations.
- ✓ **Evidence of a more inclusive approach.**
- ✓ **Reaching a further 200 people** with our support and education groups and retreat days.
- ✓ **Increasing peer support** and group work to reach more people.
- ✓ **Being a recognised hub** to assess the individual needs of cancer patients and signpost to other services when appropriate.
- ✓ **Evidence of involvement in successful research** and projects supporting innovation.
- ✓ **Evidence of appropriate and equitable collaborations** to reduce costs/duplication of services.
- ✓ **A Board of Trustees** with a clarity of purpose offering leadership and strategic direction.
- ✓ **Professional, engaged, and supported staff.**
- ✓ **Maintaining our reputation** as a respected and effective local charity.
- ✓ **100 more valued and motivated volunteers** helping deliver services.
- ✓ **Modernised systems and processes** to support finance and income generation and better reporting on services and our impact.



Summary

There is a real sense of optimism and energy in our vision for future services. FORCE is in a good position to complete the reintroduction of our outreach projects thanks to funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. We have sound plans to maximise income generation opportunities over the coming months, which will be vital to our sustainability. We have taken time to look and listen and to thank all those who helped in the preparation of our vision and ambitions. Underpinned by careful management of our finances and better systems and processes, our focus will be on support and innovation.

Success will be more people in Devon getting the right cancer support for them at the right time and in the right place.

*“You tied it all together for me
and humanised cancer”*

*working locally to support anyone
affected by cancer ~ face to face*

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