

# *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*



**THANK YOU FOR HELPING FORCE  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

*We're building cancer support together*

# Significant rise in demand for support

We know that cancer diagnoses are forecast to increase significantly over the next decade. People are also living longer with more than one health condition and rates among younger people are rising too.

Preparing to meet a corresponding increase in demand for our services is a priority for FORCE. We are already seeing significantly higher levels of activity across the board. One potential trend we are investigating is whether patients and their families are accessing more of the range of our services than we are used to.

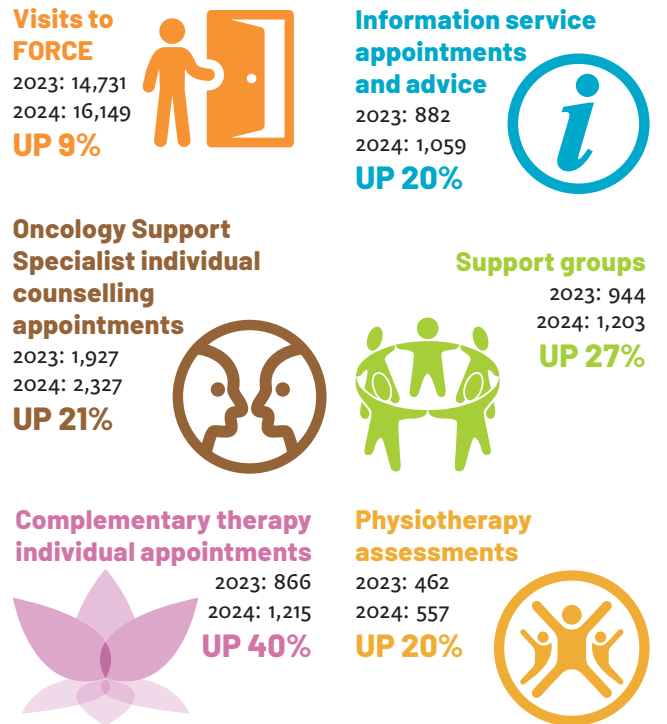
What we do understand is that the unique support FORCE offers is as vital now as it has ever been, if not more so. Offering local people dealing with a cancer diagnosis the psychological, emotional, physical and practical help they need is essential to the wellbeing of thousands of Devon residents touched by this dreadful disease.

Evidence suggests that even greater partnership work with staff at the RDUH Trust has contributed to substantial rises in requests for complementary therapies, physiotherapy and exercise advice and counselling as we have successfully raised awareness of our services among healthcare professionals to new levels.

Given the level of demand, it is reassuring that our waiting lists are at moderate levels but we are at full capacity. A priority for this next year will be to review our service model, including a range of alternative models of assessing and delivering support, so that we can:

- understand the **priorities** of the people we support
- develop a greater **understanding** of the patient voice
- maximise our **service delivery** time.
- Make the best use of our greatest resource: the **knowledge, skills, values** and **time** of our team of professionals and volunteers.

Here is a snapshot to illustrate the scale and increase in recent demand.



## Why FORCE matters

According to the latest figures from CRUK, the number of people diagnosed with cancer this year is projected to rise to 420,000 – that’s one person diagnosed at least every 90 seconds – and the disease remains the country’s leading cause of death.

In Devon roughly 14,000 people every year hear those shocking words: You have cancer.

Age is the biggest risk factor for developing cancer (World Cancer Research Fund) and this is reflected in higher incidence rates and total number of cancer diagnoses in older people – 90% of all new cancer cases in the UK are in people aged 50 and over. An ageing population means we will continue to see a rise in the number of people diagnosed with cancer.

This is particularly relevant for Devon. Apart from Exeter, which has a large university population, Devon has on average 12% more people aged 50+ than the national average and the number of people in this age range has increased faster over the past decade than the national average (ONS, Census 2021).

This age bracket is when most new cancer cases are diagnosed, so it is unsurprising that Devon has a higher incidence rate of cancer

compared to the national average – 647 v 540 cases per 100,000 (Department for Health & Social Care).

The better news is that survival rates for all cancers combined has doubled nationally since the early 1970s.

Average survival is now estimated to be more than 10 years from diagnosis, up from the median of one year in the 1970s and six years in 2007.

Macmillan research shows that the number of people living with cancer in the UK is expected to reach 3.5million this year, 4 million by 2030 and 5.3 million by 2040.

However, a recent survey suggests that two in three people currently having treatment in the UK are worried about general pressures on the NHS affecting their chance of survival.

That is where we come in. FORCE is all about helping people live as well as they can with a cancer diagnosis, from hearing the initial diagnosis to finding ways of coping with whatever comes next.

The challenge facing our charity is how we expand capacity and adapt support to be relevant to this new landscape in a large rural county with rising running costs.

1/3

of Devon classified as rural

420,000

projected new cancer patients in the UK in 2025

1970's 2007 2024

Average survival in the UK

4m

estimated people living with cancer in the UK by 2030

# Our role is more crucial than ever

Post-pandemic recovery for FORCE is set against a number of significant challenges – the biggest cost of living crisis in recent times, problems with recruitment 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. That includes unacceptable waiting times for some patients, a growing and ageing population and nationwide issues with staff recruitment. This makes the role of support organisations like FORCE more crucial than ever.

One in two people will receive 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 do to improve the quality of life for people in our community who may face fear, uncertainty, and isolation.

Our new strategic plan for 2024-2027 has the following key aims:

- To ensure a range of **PERSONALISED SUPPORT** is available for anyone affected by cancer in Devon.
- To **REACH** more people needing support and advice.
- To invest in local clinical and scientific **RESEARCH** at respected institutions including the University of Exeter Medical School and the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- To **SUPPORT INNOVATION** by improving local cancer services.
- To **INFLUENCE** and **COLLABORATE** with other organisations to benefit people affected by cancer
- To develop a **STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE** to ensure a sustainable future for FORCE services.
- To raise the funds needed to continue to provide our services



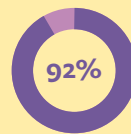
There is more detail on our website – <https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/about-us/strategy/>

# Outreach makes a massive difference

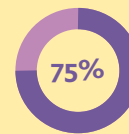
FORCE began taking services into the wider community in 2014 with a pioneering outreach programme. We did it, with the help of an extremely generous legacy, because we understood how important it is for people to be able to access support close to where they live.

We began in Tiverton, added Okehampton and then set up in Honiton, before switching to Ottery St Mary. After a COVID-enforced break, we are back in all three locations and recent feedback underlines the value of our outreach services and why we need to work hard to find the money to keep them going.

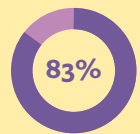
We asked: Does the location of the service make a difference to you?  
YES: 92%



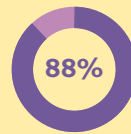
feel that they are able to manage their anxiety better



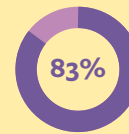
have changed the way that they manage their life and cancer



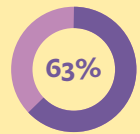
are thinking more positively or constructively about the future



have developed better skills to be able to manage their situation



have an improved sense of mental health and wellbeing



feel they are less reliant on social and healthcare services

“It means that I can access services whereas I would probably not if I had to drive and park in Exeter. It makes it more convenient and less stressful.”

## Spotlight on inclusion

**FORCE IS COMMITTED** to supporting anyone affected by cancer and doing all we can to ensure that there are no barriers to accessing that support.

That is why we are partnering with the University of Exeter in an inclusion project in 2025.

The project will be offering a series of workshops and events to develop contacts, build relationships and gain understanding of the cancer experience for people from a diverse range of cultures including Black African, Muslim, Filipino, Chinese, Afghan and Bangladeshi communities in Exeter.

It is being funded by the University of Exeter as part of its Engaged & Participatory Research Funding Scheme.

Kayleigh Brown will be the FORCE lead on the project.

“It’s an exciting exploration for us. It’s about listening, understanding and helping to break down barriers, whether that may be issues of pride, religion or any number of other issues that might prevent people from accessing our services,” she said.



University of Exeter

## New funding for vital equipment

**FORCE HAS FUNDED** a £30,000 piece of equipment that will spare Devon women a trip of up to 200 miles for lifesaving surgery.

Our charity has already spent more than £1million on technology to improve patient care in the city. We have now purchased a Thompson Retractor, which will be used to perform complex abdominal surgery on women diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Up until now, patients have had to travel to London for treatment that cannot be done with keyhole surgery. The new equipment will initially help around 20 women a year but could be used more widely in future.

# A partnership that reaps amazing benefits

Living with cancer can have a significant impact on your finances so FORCE and our partners at Citizens Advice offer free guidance on claiming benefits.

It's a partnership that continues to reap stunning rewards for cancer patients and carers.

In the past year Benefits Advisor Mike Watson has seen 159 clients face to face at the FORCE Support Centre and assisted a further 164 people over the phone.

He has helped them access more than £2.5m at an average of £8,108 per person.

Financial support is available from Government and charitable sources when you may be earning less because your work pattern is affected, face increased costs from being at home more or extra outlay from the need to access treatment.

For advice on benefits, call FORCE on 01392 406151.

citizens  
advice

## Better back-up for mums and dads

FORCE IS ALWAYS EXPLORING new ways of reaching more people in the most effective way possible.

Support and information days have proved successful in offering help and advice to specific groups.

They are also a great way of bringing people together to experience the power of peer support.

Our pioneering retreat days for people living with non-curable cancer and sessions for those dealing with a bereavement from cancer provide a useful template.

We hear just how important it is for families to receive support when one of the parents receives a cancer diagnosis. We are running focus group sessions to explore what parents want and need with the possibility of enhanced resources for them and the idea of peer support groups. We are also looking at support options for families that could be provided by partners in the FORCE Centre.

## Group support so important

The power of group support – meeting people who understand what you're going through – should never be underestimated.

FORCE runs a number of groups, including:

- **Moving Forward**
- **Living with Non-Curable Cancer**
- **Art Group**
- **Mindfulness**
- **Relaxation and Anxiety Management**

We are always looking to improve the services we provide but the latest feedback suggests we are doing plenty right already.

“Knowing there's FORCE to turn to when I'm feeling overwhelmed helps.”

We asked people who had attended our groups whether they had been helped by connecting with others going through a similar experience. A WHOPPING 97% SAID YES.

91%

feel that they are able to manage their anxiety better

94%

have changed the way that they manage their life and cancer

97%

are thinking more positively or constructively about the future

84%

have developed better skills to be able to manage their situation

94%

have an improved sense of mental health and wellbeing

75%

feel they are less reliant on social and healthcare services

“I've realised the importance of slowing down, being in the moment and how I'm not alone in this process.”

“I am much more aware of the need to look after my own physical and mental health”

“I feel that I live with my cancer and am not dying from it.”

# A success story worth sharing

Our pre-loved wigs service has been a stand-out success since it was launched in May 2024.

Since then, 46 women have visited our Centre for appointments with a specially trained fitter and we have provided them with 69 wigs, donated by patients who no longer need them. We have a wide selection available without the high price tag of a new one – the suggested minimum donation is £30 for each wig.

Angela Lucas was diagnosed with breast cancer in July 2024. “There is never a good time to get a diagnosis and I was two weeks away from my 60th birthday, retirement and taking a party of students on a four-week Costa Rica trip with Camps International – I did go! The breast cancer nurses recommended FORCE at one of my early appointments and my husband and I headed straight over for a cup of tea. We have visited a lot since and always find it a calm and welcoming place.”

Angela had weekly chemotherapy and tried a cold cap to save some of her hair. “I suppose I wanted to control something when everything else seemed like chaos! There are no guarantees and I thought I might need a wig at some point. I didn’t know anything about wigs at all so I was relieved when I saw FORCE’s website advertising pre-loved wigs.



I selected six I wanted to try and booked an appointment.

“The moment I walked into FORCE, I was welcomed by the team. Sally, one of the trained wig-fitters, escorted me into a comfortable, light room with a table and mirror. We started trying on the wigs and Sally answered my questions, showing me how to put on and adjust the wigs. I loved the very first one I put on. I looked like me and the wig looked so natural. Sally suggested another one – not on my list – and I liked that too. I decided to take both and donated to FORCE.

“I really enjoyed the trying-on session; it was relaxed and fun, rather like shopping for a new dress or visiting a make-up counter. I can really recommend

it. There is no pressure and everyone is kind and welcoming. The Centre itself is a sanctuary and my husband often has a cuppa while I go to various appointments. It’s a haven for him away from the hubbub of the hospital. I can recommend the services at FORCE and hope you will feel confident enough to visit them soon.”

[Find out more at forcecancercharity.co.uk/force-pre-loved-wig-service/](https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/force-pre-loved-wig-service/)

## Education day for healthcare professionals

FORCE is hosting an education study day at our Support and Information Centre in the Spring.

It will bring together up to 40 healthcare professionals for an insight into various aspects of cancer care.

There will be talks on innovations in surgery, radiotherapy and immunotherapy from consultants and clinical nurse specialists at the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

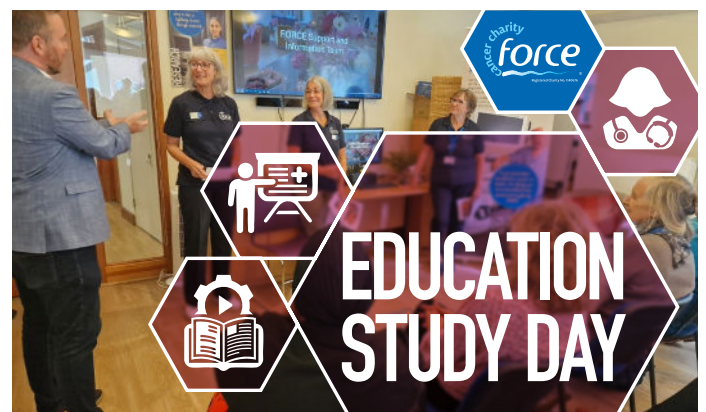
Surgeon Steve Mansfield will deliver a session on how it feels to become an oncology patient and his experience of being on the other side of the fence after years in the operating theatre dealing with cancer cases.

FORCE oncology support specialists will offer guidance on breaking bad news and the importance of self-care and our oncology physiotherapist Louise Ballagher will conduct a short exercise session for everyone.

The all-day programme on March 4 is free and open to staff from the RD&E, community health centres, Hospiscare and any other local healthcare providers with a special interest in cancer.

It is the first time FORCE has hosted an event designed to bring together people from across the cancer spectrum and if it is well received, there may be an opportunity to run sessions more regularly.

FORCE already offers support to staff at the RD&E with reflective



practice group sessions and one-to-one emotional support from our counselling team plus complementary therapies.

Hospital staff also value FORCE support for their patients.

**Flora, Occupational Therapist, Yeo Ward:** “Every time I contact FORCE to request services or support for my patients, including complementary therapies, they are always helpful and deliver.”

**Hannah, Ward Sister, Yeo Ward:** “CTs from FORCE allow our patients to relax in such a busy ward environment. It’s such a valuable service to be able to offer our patients.”

# Donations vital as we face financial challenges

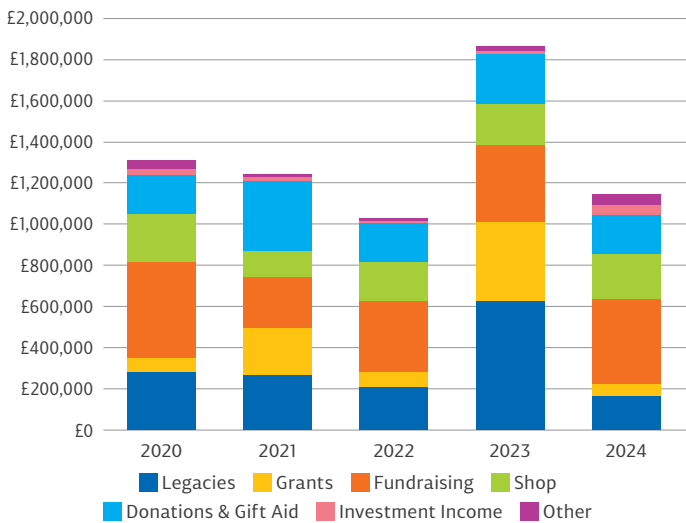
After a record year in 2022-23 with grants and legacies alone of just over £1m, the chart below demonstrates how income fell back in 2023-24 to £1.15m in total. While our Income Generation and Shop teams worked incredibly hard to raise an additional 10% and 8.5% respectively last year and investment income trebled, it wasn't enough to mitigate the huge fluctuation in legacy and grant income.

Although grant revenue in 2022/23 included £290k from the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) this was actually receivable over a three-year period to meet some of the costs of Outreach and Role Specific Volunteer project costs.

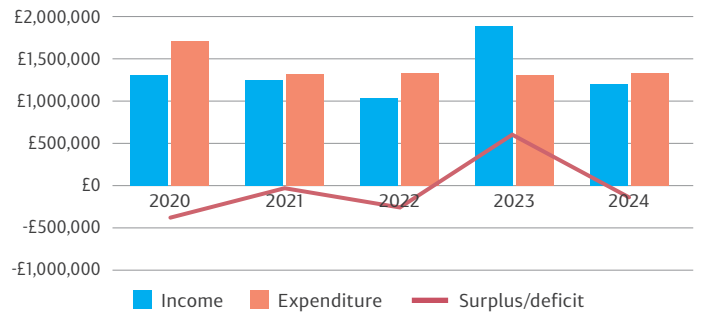
The fluctuations in grant and legacy income make budgeting a challenge and despite tight cost control and innovations in how we deliver our services, we continue to operate with a planned deficit budget. The NLCF grant runs to September 2025 and we are seeking alternative funding to ensure that these services, which have received overwhelmingly positive feedback, can continue.

We returned to a deficit position in 2023/24 with costs of £1.48m.

Analysis of total income by financial year to 31 March



Income, expenditure and surplus/deficit



Demand for services continues to rise and the costs of staffing have increased. These pressures mean that we are likely to remain in a deficit position unless we can raise more funds to avoid having to make cuts in services. Our teams are working incredibly hard in a very competitive environment. To raise more, we need more resources and there is a difficult balance to strike, knowing that there will be a time lag before we can reap the rewards.

Your support is vital in helping us to raise an additional £300k each year to ensure that we can continue to provide services for local people affected by cancer. Thank you.

**Julia Pitts, FORCE Chief Finance Officer**

## Stags proud to support FORCE

2024 marked the 150th anniversary of Stags, one of the largest and most respected firms of chartered surveyors and auctioneers in the South West.

To celebrate, the firm fundraised for four charities across the region, one from each county they cover with FORCE representing Devon.

Stags has 200 staff in 22 regional offices across the South West. The business was originally based on livestock markets and valuations but has expanded the focus of its business to encompass property sales, lettings,

farm agency, professional services, estate management, planning and commercial services.

Alex Rew, Stags Managing Partner, explained their commitment to raise money for FORCE in their milestone year.

“So many people, in one way or another, have been impacted by cancer and as a firm we wanted to raise money for local charities who have a real impact in the South West. We hope that by taking this opportunity to raise money for FORCE, we can help and support people to overcome difficult times.

“Our amazing Stags teams have hosted quizzes and cake sales and pledged some incredible, personal challenges, such as running, swimming and biking including a team cycle of over 400 miles to all 22 Stags offices, a charity auction, corporate rounders tournament, golf day, beach cleans, and more!”

“We are pleased to be able to say that we have already raised over £16,750 this year for each of our four charities. The work that FORCE does is incredibly important to so many and everyone at Stags is extremely proud to support such a wonderful charity.”



# Bags of care for cancer patients

**There are many ways of supporting the work FORCE does to look after local people dealing with cancer. Vapormatic showed their commitment to the cause by providing care bags for cancer patients.**

Staff at the Exeter-based company, which supplies one of the largest ranges of replacement tractor parts and accessories worldwide, teamed up with FORCE to pack 100 bags of thoughtfully chosen gifts.

Items included socks, lemon and ginger tea,



ginger biscuits, a crossword book, lip balm, a water bottle and an energy bar. The team also wrote notes to go inside each of the bags.

The company has already received heart-warming feedback, as Amanda Severs from Vapormatic UK Ltd explained. “We did get one lady call in to say she has received a package. She was going in for an operation the week she received it and was really thrilled. It really cheered her up,” she said.

The company recently introduced a Living with Cancer policy with training workshops to help employees and family members affected by cancer.

“So we were really happy to support such a great cause,” Amanda added.

Staff who took part in the Vapormatic Day of Caring found it a positive experience.

“I wanted to participate because it is a fantastic charity and it is always good to spend time doing something that will hopefully make things a little easier for someone else.”

United Way UK, a charity that works alongside Vapormatic each year to support them and their chosen charity, provided all the items and the care bags.

Vapormatic also raised a magnificent £7,000 for FORCE as their Charity of the Year for 2024 from various events including a 75-mile bike ride.



If your company could consider making FORCE its charity of the year, please contact us on 01392 402875 or email [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk)

## Regular giver Ruth achieves goal thanks to FORCE support

**“It’s cancer” – the unexpected and shocking news I received in October 2022. Little did I know that it would take until November 2024, after much invasive treatment and two major surgeries, to regain some confidence in my body. FORCE has been with me every step of the way, supporting me physically and emotionally as my new body has evolved post diagnosis.**

The whole cancer process has left an indelible mark and as a keen cyclist, runner and yogi, a big part of me has been on the back burner. But the courses and sessions offered at FORCE have provided the space to regain my confidence and adjust my practices to suit the new physical version of me.

Emotionally, and I’m not going to lie, it’s still a challenge to observe the limitations and changes (weight gain, sore joints, reduced heart function etc) but I’m working on it! Wendy’s yoga course gave me the confidence to start moving my body again. It looks different to my old practice but she is excellent at using props and offering variations. Best of all, she is a lovely human who instils confidence and joy at each session.

Louise’s Breast Recovery Group and

subsequent referral to my local gym have given me the platform to launch myself back into sustainable exercise. The exercises learned at these sessions post breast surgery are with me for life and I met lovely people along the way too. I met Cheryl at LED Exmouth on the Pulse scheme and as a specialist Personal Trainer. She assessed my needs and constructed an exercise programme for me to use twice a week for 12 weeks.

They have given me structure and a sense of safety as I push this new version of me back to fitness. As a result, I set myself a challenge to return to a Park Run while on holiday in New Zealand after a two-year hiatus. With the extra support of my friends Lucy and Sam, I started Couch to 5k and I’m pleased to say that I completed the Moana Point Reserve Park Run on November 9. It wasn’t fast, it wasn’t pretty but I did it!

Huge thanks to everyone who supports FORCE in whatever form that may take. As a direct result, FORCE can offer many sessions to aid the physical recovery process. You have undoubtedly enabled me and so many others in my position to look forward with hope and renewed strength.



Ruth Bagwell is sharing her story to help us encourage more people to become regular givers like her. 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.



Scan this QR code to find out how you can make regular donations to FORCE.

# Thanks for all you do

FORCE is able to offer free help and advice to cancer patients and their families because of donations and support from the communities we serve.

Whether it's:

- regular givers, one-off donors and anyone who pops pennies or pounds into a collection can
- \* supporters taking part in FORCE fundraisers
- donations in memory and gifts in wills
- donations to the FORCE shop and its customers
- \* volunteering your precious time
- local businesses demonstrating their corporate social responsibility

- people who join Team FORCE for events like the Great West Run
  - our amazing Friends of FORCE groups
  - food fans gobbling up a Great Devon Breakfast or a Cream Tea for Cancer
  - grant funders and trusts
  - anyone who can and does tick the Gift Aid box
  - 1,001 community events and challenges from craft stalls to concerts, Atlantic rows to zooming down a zipwire
- ...you all do your bit to help us reach our target of raising £1.5million a year to maintain and grow our services and we thank you all on behalf of everyone who benefits from the life-changing support FORCE provides.



**JIM NYE** spent Christmas Day mid Atlantic on a 38-foot row boat as part of his commitment to raise money for FORCE. He and his nine fellow crew members faced 20-foot waves, sea sickness, blisters and even a slap in the face from a flying fish as part of their near 3,000-mile, seven-week journey from Tenerife to Antigua. The former Assistant Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall is a long-term FORCE supporter and his latest challenge was particularly poignant and personal. "FORCE is an amazing local charity providing support to cancer sufferers and their families, including my own, as my mother had terminal cancer." Jim (pictured here in red) set himself a target of £5,000 and smashed it well before he crossed the finish line, when he learnt that his mum had sadly died. You can still sponsor him at his [justgiving.com/page/james-nye-1714406286223](https://www.justgiving.com/page/james-nye-1714406286223).

## Consider leaving FORCE a gift in your will

BY LEAVING A GIFT to FORCE in your will, you'll be giving local people dealing with a cancer diagnosis the best possible support and care.

Every penny we receive is spent locally and we are committed to putting your gift to good use where it matters most.

We can't predict exactly what the future holds but with your help we can be ready to tackle whatever it brings.

### Did you know...?

FORCE IS WORKING WITH Tozers Solicitors in Exeter, Newton Abbot and Teignmouth. They will waive their fee for preparing a simple will in return for a donation to FORCE.

Find out more by visiting <https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/get-involved/leave-a-gift-in-your-will/> or scan the QR code.

TOZERS



£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.