



# force matters

Spring/Summer 2026

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# Sharing stories of bravery, hope and comfort



Kate Few-Singh  
FORCE CEO

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to our Spring 2026 edition of FORCE Matters.

You will read the most remarkable, inspirational and brave stories from a range of people who have been supported by FORCE. My thanks to everyone who has shown courage to share your personal journey and I hope it brings some hope and comfort to others.

In this edition you will also read about improvements we have made such as our new counselling assessment and evaluation scheme, extending retreat day to carers and family members, our new partnership with Fruitfly Collective to support parents and a new outreach offer in Cullompton. We are proud of these developments and it is part of a wider commitment of continue to listen and learn what our patients and their families most need so we can continue to improve.

In a time of increasing world and economic uncertainty, we know it is a challenging time for many. FORCE is not immune to feeling the impact of these uncertain times too. As a local charity, we receive no Government or NHS funding and are reliant on your donations to fund our work. As numbers of people being diagnosed and living with cancer grow, we are seeing a 10% increase in demand for our services each year. The need for our support has never been greater, yet with increasing costs and slightly less legacy income over the past year we have had to do things differently. This has meant innovating to keep costs low, collaborating to share resources and continuing to focus on our funding opportunities. That is why your support matters more than ever. Whether you give your time, energy, support or donations, you enable us to keep our doors open and keep supporting more than 16,000 visitors a year. Thank you!

I would like to thank Trina Lake, who has been putting our magazines together since 2013. This is her last edition as she steps down from her role as PR coordinator for FORCE. Trina has sensitively gathered many people's stories over the years and been an incredible support with all our external communications. We are also saying a very fond farewell to Emma Ellis and Jayne Fahy. Lots of you will know Emma from her time as a volunteer, counsellor and/or lead and developer of many of our groups over the last 22 years. As well her knowledge from long service in the NHS and various roles within FORCE, we will miss Jayne's mischievous, fun-loving and inquisitive nature and the beautiful flowers she brings in from her garden. Thank you Emma and Jayne for the enormous contribution you have made to FORCE and the people we have supported over many years. You will be very much missed.

Finally, thank you to everyone who donated in response to receiving the FORCE Impact Report last year. These donations have been so important in ensuring FORCE can continue to be here for people needing our support.

*Kate*



**Force Matters** is the newsletter of FORCE Cancer Charity. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy at the time of going to print, please accept our sincere apologies for any errors or omissions.

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# Always adapting to need and demand

I would firstly like to thank all the staff and volunteers at FORCE, who continue to do amazing work. We are seeing an increasing number of patients and family coming through the door, benefiting from the services provided. This is due to the increasing numbers of new patients diagnosed with cancer but also the success of cancer treatments, such that more people are living with cancer but also remaining on treatment for longer. The services are always adapting to changes in requirement and demand and that is the advantage of a local service. We are a charity funded by you, for you and as trustees we are here to make sure that money raised is used in the best way possible to maximise service delivery. The income generation and fundraising teams are always looking for ways to increase income to meet demand, so your ideas are welcome.

There have been some changes among the trustees. John Renninson has stepped down from the board after more than 25 years of involvement along with Sally Tapp. We are pleased to welcome Dr Kate Scatchard, who is a medical oncologist working both in Exeter

and Barnstaple and currently the clinical director for oncology and haematology. In addition, we welcome Nicky Godfrey, a clinical nurse specialist with huge experience who is working in the RD&E enhanced supportive care team and has already been involved in helping with some of our retreat days.

In September I will be stepping down as chair of trustees and as a trustee after nearly 15 years of involvement with FORCE. Dr Sally Kidner will be taking over as chair. I have the chance to work in New Zealand and am taking the opportunity for a change. It has been very rewarding being involved with FORCE and I will stay in contact and continue to support the charity from afar.

**Dr Jenny Forrest**

FORCE Chair of Trustees



## Trustee trio going the extra mile

Our trustees support FORCE as volunteers, freely giving their time and expertise. And sometimes they literally go the extra mile.

In 2026, three members of the board – Amy Hancock, Jenny Forrest and Jim Nye – will cover 1,113 miles between them to raise money for FORCE.

Amy took part in the Bath half marathon in March with husband Dave, raising more than £1,300 for FORCE.

“Sadly, we lost our amazing friend Rosey to cancer and we wanted to do something to honour her memory, taking on a challenge just like she did throughout her life! She was a true inspiration,” said Amy, a Therapeutic Radiographer and Director of Medical Imaging at the University of Exeter.

“Dave is the runner of the couple. I would rather hide away in the gym. Dave has run several marathons already, but for me, the most my little legs and poor feet had ever run was 6 miles! So, 13.1 miles was an extremely difficult challenge.

“FORCE is an amazing charity which supports those affected by a diagnosis of cancer. They were there for Rosey when she needed them and we wanted to give something back so they can continue to provide their amazing support in helping others.”

Jenny regularly takes part in the Long Distance Walking Association’s annual 100-mile challenge to raise funds for FORCE.

This year it’s the Hunnypot Hundred, marking the 100th anniversary of the

publication of Winnie the Pooh.

The event takes place from Saturday May 23 to Monday May 25 with participants given 48 hours to complete the route around Kent and Sussex.

Jenny, a consultant oncologist at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, has set a £1,000 target and you can sponsor her at [www.justgiving.com/page/jenny-forrest-5](http://www.justgiving.com/page/jenny-forrest-5)

In July, Jim and his friend Ian Tyers will be racing 1,000 miles down the remote Yukon River in a double kayak.

The Yukon 1000 is the longest kayak race in the world. It is totally unsupported. You take all your kit – tent, food, water and bear spray! – with you.

The race starts at Whitehorse in Canada and finishes where the Dalton Highway crosses the river in Alaska, inside the Arctic circle.

“This event is the end of our trilogy,” said Jim, former assistant chief constable within Devon and Cornwall Police.

“In 2009 Ian and I completed the UK’s longest canoe race (Devizes to Westminster -125 miles) and last year we rowed 3,000 miles across Atlantic Ocean together. The Yukon 1000 completes our list. We have raised money for FORCE each time.”

They hope to raise £1 for each mile paddled and you can support their epic adventure at [www.justgiving.com/page/james-nye-2](http://www.justgiving.com/page/james-nye-2)



University of Exeter neuroscience student Gemma Moon is the eighth recipient of the Dr Christopher Giles Rowland Bursary, a funding scheme set up in the name of FORCE's co-founder to support young cancer researchers.

# Gemma putting bursary to good use

The £2,000 grant is awarded annually to a second-year student opting to take a Professional Training Year linked to oncology. Gemma is completing her placement year in the oncology and haematology franchise of Japanese speciality pharmaceutical company Kyowa Kirin, which focuses their development on rare disease.

“The bursary has supported travel costs for shadowing our patient journey managers in various hospitals. I have been able to meet healthcare professionals and understand how we work with them to improve access to our medicine for patients with cutaneous T-cell lymphoma,” said Gemma.

“The commercial aspect of industry has intrigued me because I think it’s important to work proactively with patient and healthcare professionals to ensure best possible access to life-changing treatments,” she added.

Gemma has also attended specialist training days, lectures and a NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) Committee technology appraisal of a new treatment for mantle cell lymphoma.

She has gained valuable insights, which helped reinforce her commitment to putting patient perspectives at the centre of innovation.

Gemma is keen to establish a career in the oncology pharmaceutical industry when her studies are complete.

“The opportunity to contribute to oncology appealed to me because I was aware of the outstanding unmet medical support for patients suffering with rare cancers.”

“Additionally, I’m aware of the widespread impact of cancer because so many individuals have an extended family member dealing with cancer nowadays.

“My placement with Kyowa Kirin was uniquely appealing because the company specialises exclusively in rare disease within its oncology franchise.

“The global position of the role also supported my personal interest in understanding the geographical differences in treatment approaches and access to medicines, by connecting me with colleagues in Japan, North America and Europe.”

She chose the University of Exeter because she was impressed by the reputation of the medical school and was excited at the prospect of studying neuroscience in facilities purpose built for medical students.

An exceptional lacrosse club was also a major draw.

“The balance of both strong academia and sport has always been central to my life. I love spending my weekends playing lacrosse or



running with friends. Staying active has always been my favourite hobby, although not conventionally relaxing!”

Gemma’s focus on a patient’s perspective dovetails perfectly with the ethos of our charity.

“I like that FORCE tackles the realities of living with cancer, importantly focusing on patient desire to improve quality of life. This is reflected by Dr Rowland’s dedication to pioneering at-home therapies. I’m also impressed that FORCE generously extends its support beyond the patient to caregivers. In my oncology role, I have learned that the disease burden can spill over to the caregiver, significantly impacting their lives.

“I am immensely grateful for the support the bursary has and will continue to provide in furthering my education and career path. I look forward to keeping in contact over the remaining period of my placement year and beyond as I graduate into industry.”

If you would be interested in funding future innovations and research please get in touch on **01392 402875** or email [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk)

When Alison Jackson was first diagnosed with breast cancer in May 2024, she thought she would “crack on and be back to normal in a few of months” but it quickly became clear that that wouldn’t be the case. This is Alison’s story.

# I have felt enveloped in kindness, support, understanding and care

**M**y diagnosis came completely out of the blue. I knew that there could be the options of chemotherapy, surgery and radiotherapy and thought I could handle one of those but when I was told it would be all three, I realised that it would be a much longer, tougher journey than I had first thought.

I had six rounds of chemo, surgery, radiotherapy and then another 14 rounds of a different chemo. I also found out I had the BRCA gene, which was an added complication. I was officially told I was in remission in January 2026 but I will be on treatment for another five years.

At first it was a tremendous shock. Information comes at you thick and fast with leaflets, podcasts and the like. It’s all very confusing and you don’t really get a chance to process it all. I went to a couple of support groups but I felt somehow out of place. You have to find what nurtures you. Then somebody mentioned FORCE and I thought, “in for a penny in for a pound”.

The first time I came, I was very nervous. I had no idea what FORCE was or how they could help. But from the very first visit I have felt enveloped in such kindness, support, understanding and care. It was a wonderful feeling and an enormous relief to find such a special place.

The building itself and the ambience that you have achieved is also very special. You don’t have to explain yourself to anyone. Everyone knows why you’re there so you can relax and be yourself. And the volunteers are just lovely.

The first time I came, I just had a chat with one of the nurses and over the last two years I’ve had reflexology with Kayleigh and counselling with Nicolette. They were both wonderfully kind and helpful...and quickly became a key part of my wellbeing along the way. I also tried acupuncture and saw the physio after surgery.

In the beginning, I would arrive on time for my appointment and leave straight afterwards but after a while I would get there an hour early because I loved to sit with a cup of tea and just be quiet. I felt so cared for and at peace.

We live in Exmouth. I love living by the seaside and being able to walk along the front every day is just marvellous. My husband would bring me in for appointments a lot of the time. In the dark days he would come in and wait, then take me home. Everyone was very kind to him too but he just wanted to sit with his cup of coffee and read the paper!

It’s been wonderful to be part of FORCE and it was really emotional and poignant to stop coming. FORCE has been such a massive cornerstone of my recovery. It felt really hard to stop but I knew there were people who needed FORCE more than me and I needed to move on.

I felt quite strongly about making a contribution every time we came. I know everything FORCE provides is free but we wanted to do our bit with money in the donation pot, buying FORCE Christmas cards and my husband and I have altered our wills although there has never been any hint of pressure to do anything.

“I will be forever grateful for everything that FORCE has done for both of us.”

**You can find out more about how to support our work so that more people like Alison can receive help and guidance in the future in the second half of this magazine .**



# Outreach programme extends to Cullompton

**FORCE IS COMMITTED** to taking support into the wider community with established outreach hubs at community hospitals in Okehampton, Ottery St Mary and Tiverton.

We have spent £1,384,795 on taking our services to more parts of Devon since the programme was launched in 2014, thanks initially to a legacy gift. That service has been extended to Cullompton, where we now provide complementary therapies and physio clinics.

FORCE Complementary Therapies Coordinator Kayleigh Brown began offering massage and reflexology at the Culm Valley Integrated Centre for Health in October. After a successful three-month pilot, Sarah Zanetti took over as the FORCE therapist in January.

“Our Mid Devon clients love the fact that they can access treatments closer to home at a GP surgery with NHS clinics also happening there. And there’s free parking! People are really enjoying it so far,” said Kayleigh.



## FORCE is a place where people understand you

**W**endy and Nick Robinson from Willand were the first to use the Cullompton service.

Nick has been diagnosed with cancer three times in six years, the first in his tonsil just before COVID hit.

He had surgery to remove “the good one” but the other was too badly affected to be taken out. Radiotherapy and two rounds of chemo followed before it was discovered that he was allergic to the treatment.

A year later, tests revealed cancer in his tongue, jaw and lymph nodes. He had two years of immunotherapy but gradually found it more and more difficult to eat and it was discovered that there was food on his lungs.

He was rushed to Derriford Hospital in Plymouth and Wendy recalls: “We almost lost him.”

He was there for a month and was fitted with a RIG – radiologically inserted gastrostomy – feeding tube that he will use for the rest of his life. A year later Nick was diagnosed with prostate cancer, which meant more radiotherapy and hormone treatment.

“We’re staying positive through all of this and it doesn’t stop us doing anything. We live life to the full and we’re travelling the world when we can,” said Wendy.

“You’ve just got to get on with it. It was tough during COVID when it was just the two of us and I couldn’t even go into the hospital with him. It was hard, just sitting in the car outside and waiting for him. But I’m a pretty strong character. I don’t think about what might be. I’m practical and just get on

with it. Recently we lost Nick’s dad to throat cancer, which was tough for him after getting the same diagnosis himself but the family pulled together as a strong unit.”

Wendy had known about FORCE for decades. After losing her sister-in-law to cancer in her early 30s, she spent a year fundraising for our charity and Cancer Research UK. She and Nick came to our Exeter Support and Information Centre after each new diagnosis.

“The third time we came in, a lovely lady took us into a side room and had a lovely long chat. She explained what was available and we booked to have complementary therapies in Exeter but they rang and asked how we would feel about going to Cullompton instead. It’s five minutes away so it’s ideal for us.

“We run two businesses (Nick runs an engraving company and Wendy sells sustainable cork handbags) so life can be quite chaotic. Going to Cullompton saved us a lot of time and Kayleigh was amazing. We can’t praise her enough. We had reflexology and massage. I could just feel the knots in my back disappearing. She listened to all our moans and groans and the treatments made us feel like we were walking on air. It did both of us the world of good. We would recommend anyone to give Cullompton a go. The last six years we have spent so much time at the hospital, we were glad to be away from it,” said Wendy.

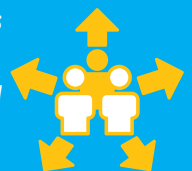
Nick has also had a gym referral from our oncology physio team. “I feel for anyone on this journey. It’s a hard thing for me and



Nick for different reasons. We both said from the start that we were not going to have a bad day at the same time. We pull each other back up. That’s how we’ve got through it, making sure we stay positive,” Wendy explained.

She used to work in the charity sector and knows how hard it is to raise money. “FORCE has done an amazing job to survive and we need them. Everybody needs somebody at some time in their life and people know that FORCE is a place you can go where people understand you.”

**Could you help us spread the word about supporting our outreach programme?**



If you live in or around Okehampton, Tiverton, Ottery St Mary or Cullompton and would like to get involved in vital fundraising to ensure these important services can continue, please contact our team on **01392 402875** or email [fundraising@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:fundraising@forcecancercharity.co.uk)

## Pre-loved wig service continues to flourish

**M**aking access to wigs easier and more affordable for people at a vulnerable time on their cancer journey has turned from an ambitious idea to a hugely successful reality.

Shelley Boulton, FORCE's Support Services Administrator, saw the opportunity to add to the remarkable range of support FORCE already offered.

Losing your hair during treatment for cancer can be distressing so she launched a pre-loved wigs service in May 2024 and it has been a striking success.

Shelley and her team process a wide selection of donated wigs, available without the high price tag of a new one. The suggested minimum donation is £30 for each wig.

*"Shelley was great. She quickly worked out the wig which would suit me and took time to find others that I hadn't identified. Such an amazing service offered when really needed and affordable when funds are very tight. Thank you so much!"*

The project proved popular from the start – 45 women were fitted with pre-loved wigs in 2024 and a further 63 in 2025.

The unexpected bonus for FORCE is that more than £5,600 has been raised from the 156 wigs sold up to the end of February this year.

We are grateful for the 400 wigs that have been donated to FORCE so far, including from Agnes Voyn, who said: "I've now finished my



hospital-based treatments and have donated my wigs to FORCE. I think it's wonderful what you do in offering more affordable wigs."

Shelley has gathered a committed team of volunteers, consisting of:

- Wig washers Marsha Harding and Janice Price
- Photographer Karen Taylor
- Wig fitters Sally Gallagher, Fran Packer and Linda Orpin

**The feedback has been hugely positive.**

*"It was a real pleasure to receive guidance and support throughout. I truly appreciated being offered different options – including some that I might not have chosen myself – as they turned out to suit me very well. She was incredibly helpful in suggesting a style that felt comfortable and right for me, and also recommended an alternative that matched my strengths and preferences even more. Thanks to her support, I was able to make my choice confidently and in the right direction. It was a very positive and encouraging experience, and I'm grateful for the thoughtful help I received."*

*"Very friendly and reassuring session with the ladies. Job well done."*

*"So helpful, fun caring and positive."*



For more information about the FORCE pre-loved wigs service, go to [forcecancercharity.co.uk/force-pre-loved-wig-service/](https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/force-pre-loved-wig-service/) or scan the QR code.



# Innovation to improve support

**F**ORCE has introduced new and innovative ways to ensure that people needing our services get support as quickly as possible and tailored to their individual requirements.

We have introduced a new counselling assessment scheme in a bid to cut waiting times, which often stand at eight to ten weeks. People can book an initial one-hour assessment session, which will take place face to face, online or on the phone.

Their needs and challenges are explored and priorities evaluated as our experts talk them through what might be possible. They are sent a link to book an appointment

online or given information about how to arrange one if they are not able to complete an online form.

“We want to respond within two weeks to help people get the right support for them, whether that is going on to a waiting list for an appointment with our oncology support specialists or to appropriate services elsewhere,” said FORCE Support Services Manager Alex Moseley.

“It offers more of a safety net with a better response time after the first contact, rather than waiting eight weeks for a session.”

The Oncology Support Specialist team is also piloting a system to gather

more information on the impact of our counselling service. MYCaW – Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing – is an individualised questionnaire with a person-centred approach.

At the start of their counselling, clients are asked to identify their top two priorities and rate their importance from 1-6. After six sessions there will be a follow-up to determine what difference our support has made.

“It will give us a better understanding of what we are doing right or wrong and also provide useful information for grant applications,” said Alex.

## RESEARCH AND EQUIPMENT STILL A FIRM FOCUS

**T**here are stories throughout this magazine about how support from FORCE has changed the lives of cancer patients in Devon and the people they care about. But did you know that the money raised and donated by all our amazing supporters also funds equipment and local cancer research?

FORCE was established with a clear mission to advance cancer care in Exeter and beyond. Since our charity was formed in 1987, we have spent a staggering combined total of £3,504,557 on innovation. In fact, in the first 10 years our primary focus was

on research and buying equipment for the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital.

We're proud to say that anyone treated for cancer in Exeter has probably benefitted from £1,206,058 worth of equipment bought by FORCE. That includes big ticket items to improve diagnosis and treatment but the list also features contributions towards things like reclining chairs for the comfort of patients across the oncology department.

Supporting local research is one of FORCE's key objectives. Much of the £2,298,499 that FORCE has spent on

research was directed at the training of young scientists at the University of Exeter Medical School. We also back local projects like monitoring mums for signs of ovarian or bowel cancer during pregnancy. And we have pumped others that have gone on to receive funding from larger research organisations.

With support from FORCE, Exeter has become firmly established on the national and international cancer research map. It's all thanks to you – so take a bow and know that however you choose to support FORCE, you are making a real difference.

## GROUPS@FORCE

### MOVING FORWARD

This programme is designed to help patients who have finished active treatment. The five-week course is designed to help people adjust to life after treatment. A time when fewer appointments and less regular contact with the hospital can feel like a safety net has been removed.



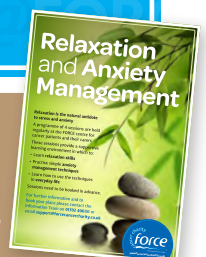
### LIVING WITH A NON-CURABLE CANCER

FORCE offers a retreat day for patients and carers and a monthly support group for patients. They offer an avenue for people to connect with others going through similar experiences in a safe and supported environment; an opportunity to meet people experiencing living with the diagnosis, to share and support each other, hopefully helping to reduce a sense of isolation.



### RELAXATION & ANXIETY MANAGEMENT AND MINDFULNESS

Classes in relaxation and anxiety management or mindfulness techniques can help you cope with cancer. The four-week R&M and five-week mindfulness courses run throughout the year. The programmes are open to cancer patients and carers.



For further details or to secure a place, please contact the FORCE Information Team on **01392 406151** or [support@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:support@forcecancercharity.co.uk)

# Shining example of collaboration

**F**ORCE hosted a support day for adults under 50 as part of our strategy to collaborate with other organisations working to help local people with cancer.

Shine Cancer Support is a national charity that shares FORCE's vision that nobody dealing with a life-changing diagnosis should feel alone.

As part of their support programme, they stage a Shine Shake Up! at locations all over the country. It's a way for people aged 20-49 to connect in person, chat about important topics and feel less isolated when dealing with cancer.

The day-long sessions are open to anyone in treatment, in remission, living with cancer or who had a diagnosis ages ago. They are designed to help navigate challenges like work, dating and finances with discussions on how it feels through diagnosis and treatment, managing fears and anxieties and coping with misinformation.

Experienced facilitators El Woods and Emma Willis, Shine founder and CEO, were joined by three volunteers and 17 patients for the first Shine Shake Up! at the FORCE Support Centre.

They all shared the common bond of a cancer diagnosis.

Emma said: "We are super grateful to the team at FORCE for welcoming us and



allowing us to host a Shine event, using their amazing space. We were able to bring together people who have been diagnosed with cancer in their 20s, 30s or 40s and talk about the unique challenges that this brings."

For more information about Shine and the support they can provide, go to [shinecancersupport.org](https://www.shinecancersupport.org) or scan the QR code.



## THE FEEDBACK WAS HUGE POSITIVE.

*"I really enjoyed the day and laughed a lot."*

*"Everyone was friendly and so positive! I was anxious about going at first, glad I went."*

*"Immediately before this type of thing I don't want to go! But good grief it's good for me when I do! Laughed so much today and met fantastic people. Early onset cancer can be really isolating and being with a gang of others who get it, even though you've all had such different experiences of treatment, is amazing. If you get the chance to go, I'd recommend it."*



# Partnership support for parents and children



**ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS** to benefit the communities we serve has always been important to FORCE.

We recently teamed up with the Fruitfly Collective, which helps families talk about cancer, death and grief.

It supports parents on active treatment, post treatment or in palliative care and co-parents without a diagnosis, offering help and advice on a variety of topics.

An initial collaboration between FORCE and Fruitfly involved 20 parents, who came together to share experiences, receive coaching and gain practical tools and strategies to support their children and one another.

Following its overwhelming success, there will be a training session for FORCE professionals so they can deliver Parent Toolshed days themselves.

Dr Caroline Leek from Fruitfly said: "Working with charities like FORCE is essential to ensure families impacted by cancer receive timely, effective support

during one of the most challenging times of their lives. The Fruitfly Collective team are so grateful that we can partner together, share resources and expertise to deliver the support needed."

Fruitfly's experts – all living with cancer, providing cancer care or parenting support – help with:

- **Telling children about cancer**
- **Explaining cancer and its treatments**
- **Emotional support**
- **Practical support**
- **Parenting strategies**
- **Ways to connect as a family**

Fruitfly also offers a range of online resources for parents and children. To find out more, go to [www.fruitflycollective.com](https://www.fruitflycollective.com) or scan the QR code.



# Farewell to Emma and Jayne

This Spring we say farewell to two of our support team's longest serving members. Emma Ellis and Jayne Fahy have nearly 50 years of connection to our charity between them. Emma combined work as a counsellor with leading on support and education programmes and Jayne is part of our Information Team.

**EMMA: "I can hardly believe it's been more than 22 years since I first walked through the doors of the FORCE Centre. I can honestly say they have been some of the most meaningful and rewarding years of my life."**



I will always feel proud of being among the first 70 volunteers, alongside those whose dedication laid the foundations before the Centre was even there. When the doors first opened,

I remember thinking the space felt too big. Before long, demand grew so much that by 2012 we were raising funds to extend it. That, in itself, says so much about what FORCE has become.

FORCE is a truly special place. It cares deeply for everyone who walks through its doors, those seeking support and those who work and volunteer there. I have often heard it described as a sanctuary or a haven. I looked up the meaning of sanctuary: a place of safety, refuge, and protection. That is exactly what FORCE has always strived to be.

It is a space without expectation, where people can simply be themselves. A place where fears, hopes and feelings can be shared openly, without the need to protect others, as so many feel they must do with loved ones.

I have taken great pride in how FORCE has continued to grow and adapt to meet people's needs. My own journey there has mirrored that evolution. The changing nature of cancer and its treatments means that more people now live with cancer as a long-term condition. It's been a privilege to witness this shift first-hand and to walk alongside people living with cancer for many years. In 2004, this was something we rarely saw.

But with that progress comes increasing demand. Today, FORCE is facing challenging times: a world where resources are stretched, yet the need for support has never been greater.

FORCE will always hold a very special place in my heart. I have learnt something from every person I have met. Each interaction has stayed with me in its own way, shaping my work and who I am today. To say I feel lucky hardly does justice to what those experiences have meant to me.

## **So, what makes FORCE... FORCE?**

For me, it's the people – those who come through the doors seeking understanding at one of the most difficult times in their lives; staff, volunteers and supporters who give so generously of their time and compassion; the hospital teams we work alongside. Each part is vital and without any one of them, FORCE would not be what it is.

Together they create that haven, a place that truly cares.

I would also like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Meriel Fishwick, Sarah Delfont and Gerry Gillespie, whose encouragement, support and belief in me has been constant throughout my time here. They have been a bedrock not only for me, but for the way FORCE has grown and flourished. And finally, to my mum, who first opened the door to FORCE for me – thank you.

One thing that has stayed with me is the incredible generosity of the people who support us. It's never been only about donations, though they are so important, but about the time people give, the energy they share, the connections they make and the way they help spread the word about what we do. I've seen first-hand how every act of kindness, no matter how small it may seem, helps us continue to be there for those who need us most. It truly means more than words can say."

**JAYNE: "My link to FORCE goes back nearly 25 years. I started by providing complementary therapies as part of a small FORCE team that worked for a few hours on Thursday afternoons and early evenings at the Cherrybrook chemotherapy unit."**



I continued to work as a lymphoedema nurse at the hospital throughout this time but took a break from FORCE when my Mum died in 2016.

Two years later, FORCE advertised for a nurse to join the information team alongside Annie Kerr, Nicky Peterson and Jayne Lynds and I got the job.

It's a privilege to be allowed into someone's life when they are going through a difficult time. FORCE is invaluable. We can offer clarity, advice and a safe space for cancer patients and the people close to them. We can give them time. When you're working at the hospital, you don't always have the capacity to do that.

I have enjoyed working with colleagues in the information team, the wider FORCE family and the oncology teams in the hospital. There is a great team ethos at FORCE and that includes the volunteers.

I'll miss being a nurse. It was all I ever wanted to do since I was a child. I even used to dress up as one when I was little. I will miss being part of the team and all the laughter, despite the seriousness of what we deal with every day.

But I'm looking forward to seeing what opportunities come my way. I aim to pick up complementary therapies again in Tiverton, develop my interest in painting under the tutelage of Belinda Reynell, grow more dahlias, spend more time with my grandchildren and get fitter.

I may even be on the start line again for The Nello in future!"

# Living with non-curable cancer support extended

**F**ORCE has extended its support for people living with incurable cancer to include those who care for them.

Over the last three years, FORCE has run a series of successful retreat days at Buckfast Abbey, offering help and advice to dozens of local people diagnosed with a cancer that can be treated but not cured.

The need to widen that support became increasingly clear so at the retreat day at Buckfast in April there were parallel sessions for patients and carers.

**As a carer or loved one you do not need to be connect to someone attending the patients sessions that day.**

“We want to convey the message that these days are for carers but not restrict it to that word,” explained Emma Ellis, who established the programme for FORCE.

“We offer a place for a significant loved one, partner, family member, friend or carer who is walking alongside someone living with an incurable cancer to meet others in a similar situation.

“It gives them time to pause and breathe, to reflect in a safe, supportive environment and connect with others who understand, hopefully making them feel less isolated and not so alone.”

Anyone interested in being part of future retreat days should call **01392 406168/9** or email [oss@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:oss@forcecancercharity.co.uk) for more information and to reserve a place.

The new programme is tailored to a carer’s perspective and includes a talk from Clinical Nurse Specialist Nicky Godfrey, the Enhanced Supportive Care Team Lead CNS, plus relaxation and anxiety management sessions and time to talk with each other.

“We know that the ripple effects of cancer do not just affect the person with cancer but those close to them,” said Emma.

“You do not have to be living under the same roof to be significantly impacted both emotionally and practically. We also know, it is a profound and deeply common reality that loved ones caring for someone with a non-curable cancer often suppress, minimise or fail to fully acknowledge the significant impact caregiving has on their own lives.

“In their devotion, their focus can become entirely centred on the person who is ill with appointments, treatments, symptoms and emotional support while their own needs quietly recede into the background.

“This pattern is frequently shaped by a powerful sense of duty, love and responsibility. It can also be influenced by guilt, feeling that it is wrong to struggle when the person living with cancer is facing so much. Or the belief that their own exhaustion, fear, and grief are somehow less important. Over time, this self-silencing can lead to emotional strain, physical fatigue, and isolation, even as carers continue to show remarkable strength and commitment.

“We hope to address all of these things and help the people attending to make the most of living,” she added.



# Andrew finds a safe haven at FORCE

It's common to hear about breast cancer in women but rarely in men. Less than 1% of breast cancer cases in the UK are male. There are around 390 men diagnosed each year in the UK compared to around 56,400 women.

It can be difficult to cope with, as Exeter grandfather Andrew Dalton revealed in a brutally honest interview with FORCE Matters.

"I found it difficult to say that I had breast cancer. I felt dirty, a freak. I was embarrassed in the early stages but not now. FORCE has been a fantastic experience, a real eye-opener. As a man with breast cancer, I felt out of place, odd. But you go there and you don't feel alone. The back-up and care has been outstanding. I couldn't have coped without it."

Andrew was diagnosed last February – he got the results on his birthday. It was a shock. He thought he had an ingrowing hair but an ultrasound and biopsy confirmed the news none wants to hear. Further tests showed the disease in his lymph nodes too. Had a mastectomy and 33 lymph nodes removed but thankfully only two were cancerous.

He is also being treated for pulmonary fibrosis – a disease that occurs when lung tissue becomes damaged and scarred, making it harder for them to work properly. As a result, Andrew had limited radiotherapy treatment and is under review for further drug therapy.

"Although the risk of the cancer recurring is higher than it might be while I'm not having any chemo, I reckon the lung disease will probably kill me before the cancer does."

He had noticed our Centre in the grounds of the RD&E, hoping he'd never need to use it. But after his diagnosis, the breast care nurses looking after him suggested he visit FORCE.

He has had counselling and complementary therapies plus physio that enabled him to have vital treatment.

"After surgery I was struggling. I had to have carers to help get me out of bed and dressed. I needed to be able to raise my arm so that I could have radiotherapy and physio helped me achieve that. I wouldn't have been so far ahead with my recovery without it."

Andrew was also referred to the RD&E at Heavitree for further physio and takes part in the FORCE exercise class at the Isca Centre.



"I do the exercises seated because I get fatigued but they are adapted for me. Louise (FORCE oncology physio) demonstrates them sitting down and offers so much encouragement to continue them at home, so I have them pinned up on the lounge door. The Thursday sessions are for people with all sorts of cancers and the great thing is, nobody has ever asked me what cancer I've had.

"FORCE made me feel at ease, even though I was a man with breast cancer. It's an anchor point to moor up and take a breath, feel reassured that there's a whole team looking out for you."

Andrew is grateful that there is support for wife Kehren, their two daughters, son and four grandchildren, who live close by.

Kehren had counselling, reflexology and massage therapy. She told us: "It was a shock in a good way to know that FORCE offered something for the partner and family. At the time you feel guilty. You don't think you need support but suddenly you realise you do.

"When it hits you, you think, thank goodness FORCE is there. They make you realise you are not on your own and you don't have to cope alone. And if it supports me, it supports Andrew because I'm his carer.

"The volunteers at the Centre are great – they don't bombard you and there's no judgement. It's a safe place when everything else around you feels out of control. When you hear the diagnosis you feel like the walls are closing in. You think you have a future but suddenly you're not sure you do.

"FORCE is very good at letting you explore what's possible and explaining what's available. Support from FORCE was very important, being able to speak to people who have been through it. Men need to know that they can get breast cancer. To be able to tell men that they need to get checked is important. It needs to be on their radar.

"And the Isca group is a bit of a lifesaver. It's part of the continuity of care that helped Andrew regain his strength.

"I also love the fact that fundraising is never forced on you. You want to be able to donate and to help so that FORCE is there for other people but it's not in your face. You don't feel obliged - you can give without making a fuss."



# Maureen marks a milestone

One of the reasons our shop is such a success is the personal, friendly service provided by the staff and volunteers. We have a loyal band of helpers, people like Maureen, who has been volunteering since February 2001.

Her specialist area has always been the children's toys and books section and she has seen a lot of change during that time.

In recognition of her 25 years as a FORCE volunteer, she was presented with an engraved gift and bottle of fizz to help her celebrate!

Thank you Maureen – you are a true FORCE legend!

**Do you enjoy meeting new people, giving great customer service and making a real difference in your community?** We are looking for friendly, enthusiastic volunteers to support our shop volunteer team and help create a warm, welcoming shopping experience.

What you'll be doing:

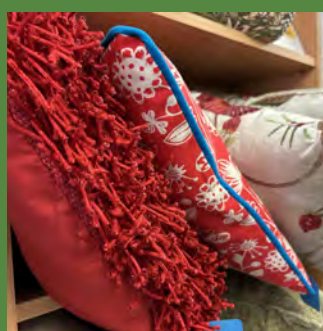
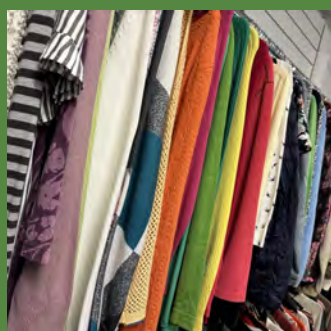
- Customer service – Be a friendly face on the shop floor, greeting customers and ensuring they have a positive visit.
- Helping with queries – Assist shoppers with questions, offer guidance and help them find exactly what they're looking for.
- Shop floor support – Keep the shop tidy and inviting by returning clothing to hangers, organising displays and maintaining a clean environment.
- All-round help – Be on hand wherever needed, supporting the daily running of the shop and working as part of a caring, dedicated team.
- Sharing the FORCE story – Chat to customers about the work FORCE does and help spread awareness of our services. Volunteering with us is a rewarding way to give back, gain experience, meet new people and contribute to vital cancer support services in our community.



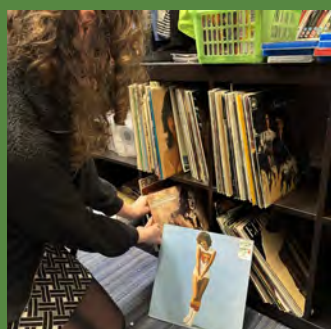
If you're friendly, reliable, and keen to help, we'd love to hear from you!

To join the team or get more information, call into the Shop for a chat with manager Anna Heard or email [shop@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:shop@forcecancercharity.co.uk).

For other volunteering opportunities with FORCE, contact our Voluntary Service Coordinator Heather Taylor on **01392 406154** or email [heather.taylor@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:heather.taylor@forcecancercharity.co.uk)



*The FORCE charity shop in Heavitree is brimful of the kind of treasures that you'd be hard pushed to find under the same roof anywhere else.*



We may be a bit biased, but we think it offers a great shopping experience, whether you're looking for bargains in pre-loved clothes or jewellery, books or collectable vinyl, fabrics or toys.

It's an Aladdin's Cave that even has magical lamps from time to time. The amazing array is all made possible by the generosity of so many individuals, families and businesses who donate to FORCE, knowing that they are making a difference to local people dealing with a cancer diagnosis.

You can drop off donations at the shop – 73 Fore St, Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 2RN – between 10:30am and 11:30am, Monday to Saturday. If you can't make those times, give us a call on **01392 271652** or email [shop@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:shop@forcecancercharity.co.uk) and we'll see what we can do. And if you're a UK taxpayer, let us know because we can claim an extra 25p for every £1 we sell your precious donation for.

Our shop has made nearly £2.5 million in profit since it first opened in 1995, a massive contribution towards our funding for local support, equipment and research.

THANK YOU to everyone who donates and shops with us.

# ‘Spreading awareness of FORCE is something positive I can do’

Tim and Lucy Deasy from Okehampton met in 2002, married in 2004 and built a good life made great by the arrival their precious son, James. Tim was an all-round nice guy – hard-working, good fun, a family man who loved travel, cooking, gardening and sport. And he was devoted to James. They were best buddies.

Then at the start of last year he started to get very tired, which was not like him, and there was a change in his personality. At the end of February, he was diagnosed with an incurable and inoperable glioblastoma, a fast-growing type of malignant brain tumour.

“Our little world was instantly turned upside down,” said Lucy.

He had radiotherapy and chemotherapy but sadly, Tim died at the age of 51 in September, on Lucy’s birthday.

The family turned to our charity and Lucy explained: “From Tim’s diagnosis, FORCE has been really brilliant. They gave us support every step of the way. They told us about the transport available for treatment, about the benefits that we might be entitled to and supported us in lots of ways, the sorts of things you don’t get from the medical teams.”

“I had counselling in Okehampton with Roseanna and Tim spoke to Gerry. We really found you so helpful with any question we had. Counselling and advice took the pressure off us and it’s so welcoming and peaceful at Okehampton. The people are just lovely. FORCE helped by just being able to cut through the jargon for us – you were at the crux of making sense of the information we were getting.”

Tim was a sales team leader at Safetykleen on Marsh Barton, the respect of colleagues evident when around 20 of them from all over the country – some who had only ever spoken to him on the phone – attended his funeral, when there was a collection for FORCE.

Friends have rallied to support the family and raise money for FORCE. Best friend Jane Woodman will be in a FORCE vest again at the Great West Run in May after raising more than £2,500 last year and is also part of a team of nine with husband Trevor and son Oliver taking part in a Snowdon at Night trek in August in Tim’s memory.



As part of the fundraising campaign, team member Kathryn Burrell’s daughter Clara held a bake sale at school that made £61 in support of her parents’ Snowdon challenge.

The team has also organised a quiz and a golf day.

Lucy and seven-year-old James will be in charge of refreshments for the Snowdon team when they complete their trek. She admitted: “It’s been so hard, grieving for my husband and maintaining our aim to give our boy the best we could. But we’ve got to go on.

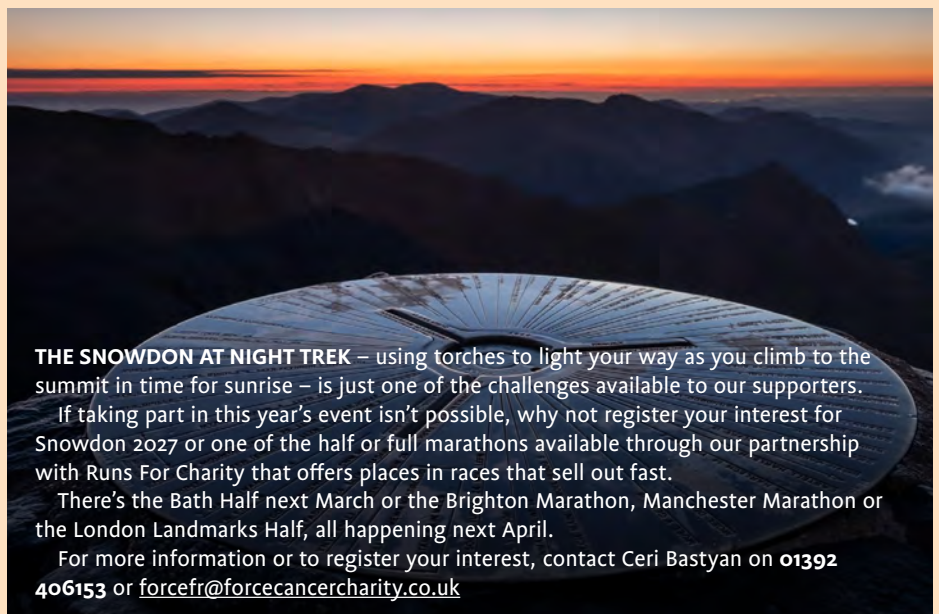
“We are going to do as much as we can to raise as much as we can. I recently found the courage to take Tim’s clothes to the FORCE shop in Heavitree. It felt like the right day to do it.

“Spreading awareness of FORCE is something positive I can do while dealing with something so awful. I can’t think of a better way of giving something back that can help other people needing FORCE. It makes me sad to think there are people who don’t know about FORCE and all the fabulous things you do.”

## TIM DEASY’S FAMILY GENEROUSLY CHOOSE TO SUPPORT FORCE BY ASKING FOR DONATIONS IN HIS MEMORY AT HIS FUNERAL.

Supporting FORCE in memory of a loved one is a special way to celebrate their life and create a lasting legacy that helps local people access support, advice and reassurance when they need it most. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated, raised funds or give a regular gift in memory of a loved one.

If you would like to know more, please speak to your funeral director or get in touch with us on **01392 402875** or [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk)



**THE SNOWDON AT NIGHT TREK** – using torches to light your way as you climb to the summit in time for sunrise – is just one of the challenges available to our supporters.

If taking part in this year’s event isn’t possible, why not register your interest for Snowdon 2027 or one of the half or full marathons available through our partnership with Runs For Charity that offers places in races that sell out fast.

There’s the Bath Half next March or the Brighton Marathon, Manchester Marathon or the London Landmarks Half, all happening next April.

For more information or to register your interest, contact Ceri Bastyan on **01392 406153** or [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk)

# Jane's a fantastic fundraising force

Jane Spree and her family have been supporting FORCE for nearly 30 years with everything from a big bicycle bonanza to baking cakes.

“There’s a bit of me that always wants to give and FORCE is my channel for it because it’s a bloody good charity,” said Jane with her characteristic charm.

Jane first became involved with FORCE when the idea for Ride for Life, which preceded The Nello, was born on New Year’s Eve 1996 as Marc Millon announced he wanted to cycle to Venice.

“We went to Nello’s restaurant just after midnight and told everyone they were going to Italy on their bikes to raise money for FORCE. Someone gave us £50 and that’s how it started.”

Marc designated Jane as fundraising co-ordinator and the Ride for Life raised an incredible £25,000. “It was an amazing year, making connections and talking to people. We held all sorts of things like swimathons, foodie events, tennis – there was such a huge sense of community,” said Jane, who effortlessly combines elegance and enthusiasm.

She was also a key part of the logistics team that ensured Marc and Nello could make their epic trip go as smoothly as possible.

When their support vehicle was withdrawn at the last minute, a call to Martin’s Caravans – the company run by the family of Coldplay’s Chris Martin – saved the day. And as an interesting aside, Nello only ever made one wedding cake... for a member of the Martin family!

Nello and Marc completed their 1,123-mile ride from Topsham to St Mark’s Square in Venice with Jane and John part of the welcome party. Cancer claimed Nello’s life in 1999, and Marc pledged to organise a ride for FORCE in his great friend’s honour with the first Century Cycle Challenge in 2000.

The Spree family remained an integral part of an event that went on to become FORCE’s flagship fundraiser. In the early days husband John made all the medals for the ride from spaghetti, daughter Catherine, then 16, abseiled down Exeter College to raise money, Jane cycled it and was involved in starting Nello’s Longest Table, which benefits FORCE.

“It made me believe that anything was possible. The sense of community was fabulous,” said Jane, who still makes cakes for our annual ride.



Grandson Jed has also done The Nello and in a wonderful link to our charity, he has earned a PhD in physics at the University of Exeter, part funded by FORCE. He now works in the radiotherapy department at the RD&E.

Beyond The Nello, Jane is on the Classics Galore! committee, sells FORCE Christmas cards, was involved with the Exmouth Friends of FORCE group, did our Santa Cycle with her family, volunteered at the Jurassic 10k and at Cream Teas for Cancer among many other events – always supported by John. They were both involved in breaking ground for the FORCE Support Centre.

And when FORCE wanted to set up an outreach service, former CEO Meriel Fishwick turned to Jane, who found suitable locations and went on to volunteer there too.



As well as supporting FORCE, Jane helped set up and run the tearoom at the historic Cadhay House and Gardens near Ottery St Mary. That connection has helped FORCE with owner Rupert Thistlethwayte generously allowing our charity to hold fundraising and volunteer thank you events there. Cadhay hosted

Catherine’s marriage and a golden wedding party for John and Jane.

“I was nursing when I first met John. I’d had a particularly bad shift at work – three deaths – and went for a drink at a folk club at the Jolly Porter in Exeter and there he was, singing. That was the start of my life with John Spree!”

The couple decided they didn’t want gifts for their anniversary party, attended by 90 people, and asked for donations to FORCE instead. The party plus donations for John’s 90th birthday raised £2,079.

“The generosity of some people was phenomenal. They were amazing. All I wanted to do was dance and I managed it. We danced to That’s Amore – it was very emotional.”



**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.

If you would like to support our charity on your big day, please call the fundraising team on **01392 402875** or email [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk)



# Kate and Chris find special motivation



**K**ate Ralston and Chris Harris will be lining up together on the 10k start line at the Great West Run with special motivation to raise at least £500 for FORCE.

Kate explained: “Both Chris and I recently lost our mums to cancer. During the most painful time of our lives, FORCE was there for us – offering compassion, guidance and answers when we needed them most. We truly don’t know how we would have coped without their support.

“In the midst of our grief, we both found comfort in running. It became a way to clear our minds, process our emotions, and keep moving forward during the hardest time of our lives. By taking part in this run, we want to honour our mums, raise awareness about cancer and highlight the vital support that exists for families facing this devastating journey.

“This is our way of saying thank you – for being there when we felt lost and for standing beside us when everything felt overwhelming. Chris will be running in full army gear, carrying a weighted daysack, with me alongside him so we can support each other every step of the way – just as we’ve had support along ours.”

Kate is a business manager with a Devon development company and Chris is a contracts manager with a local construction firm. The couple live in Exeter with Chris’s 18-year-old daughter, Brooke, and four-legged running mate, Sonnie. Chris is an avid gym goer, Kate not so much. But after her mum died, she and her sister caught the running bug after doing a Couch to 5K programme.

“Seeing mum go through such a horrendous thing makes you realise the importance of your health,” said Kate.

Chris was inspired by Kate, who is a regular at Park Runs and did her first 10k last year. He used to be a keen runner when he was a corporal in the Royal Tank Regiment but suffered multiple injuries in two blasts during his service in Afghanistan. Every run means pushing through pain and physical challenges.

“He hasn’t yet run 10k, making the Great West Run a huge personal challenge but one we believe he can absolutely achieve,” said Kate. Their resolve to do their utmost for FORCE is unshakeable.

Kate’s mum, Chrissy, began treatment for ovarian cancer in 2020 and died after a long and courageous battle in August 2024. Chris’s mum, Jane, was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive cancer in December 2024. She died in April 2025.

Kate was based in Torquay when her mum was diagnosed shortly after the first COVID lockdown and didn’t have an opportunity to access FORCE services. She was still grieving when Chris’s mum became ill and knew the support his family would need and found FORCE.

“During Jane’s illness, our family accessed FORCE because we simply didn’t know where to turn or how best to support her. Jane was desperate to be at home and disliked being in hospital. FORCE were incredible, guiding us on who to contact, where to go, and how to advocate for Jane properly. They put us in touch with the hospice, and without them, we would have been completely lost.

“They also reassured us that we could take our puppy, Sonnie, to visit Jane, something that meant the world to her and lifted her spirits enormously during an incredibly difficult time.

“When the family walked through the door at FORCE and explained that Chris’s mum needed end-of-life support, they were amazing with help and advice. The door is open when you need it. When you walk out of the hospital, everyone’s life is going on as normal. You walk into FORCE and they understand and know how to be, there’s an aura of calm and it’s OK to feel however you want to feel.

**“It was incredibly difficult to accept that we needed support – we felt overwhelmed and unsure of what to do. From the moment we walked through the door, FORCE completely reassured us. We went in feeling lost and frightened, and we left feeling lighter, supported, and confident that we were doing the right thing for Jane’s care.**

“The biggest benefit was the reassurance that we were doing the right thing for our loved one when they needed us to be their advocate. FORCE plays a vital role alongside clinical care by helping families understand medical terminology used by doctors and consultants, breaking it down in a clear and compassionate way. This understanding empowers families to communicate effectively, make informed decisions, and access the right support at the right time.

“Knowing that we could walk through the door at FORCE without an appointment and always find someone willing to listen made such a difference. It was also incredibly comforting to know that the support doesn’t stop after your loved one has passed. FORCE continues to be there for families during grief, when you need them most.

“We truly believe FORCE is incredible and offers a priceless service to people experiencing the very worst moments of their lives. When you are trying to be strong for your loved one while your whole world feels like it is falling apart, FORCE provides a safe place to go, a place where you can be vulnerable, ask questions, and talk honestly about how you are really feeling. We often come back to the word reassurance, because that is exactly what FORCE provides. They help people move forward when they feel completely lost, and we cannot thank them enough for everything they have done for our family.”

As part of their fundraising, Kate and Chris also organised a sell-out quiz night at the Royal Oak in St Thomas, with some great raffle prizes thanks to support from generous local businesses. It raised £2,445!

You can support Kate and Chris via their online sponsorship page – visit [www.justgiving.com/team/kateandchris10k](http://www.justgiving.com/team/kateandchris10k) or scan the QR code.

*“Any support or donation, no matter how small, means more than we can put into words. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for helping us give something back.”*





Lauren Pezzani

# Lauren inspired to take on Great West Run by amazing friend



Emma Bullous

new role as a student midwife in September but for now, her focus is on training for her first half marathon around the streets of her home city on May 24.

“I have never run more than a 3k before so this is quite a big step in my running journey,” she admitted.

FORCE support for Emma and her family was limited due to COVID lockdown restrictions, but Lauren recognises the value of the organisation's support for local people affected by cancer.

“FORCE is a charity that means a great deal to me and has a huge impact on many people's lives,” said Lauren.

Emma died peacefully after a short but extremely courageous battle with a malignant brain tumour called a glioblastoma. This tumour had begun in her brainstem six months before she died and was about to

take her sight, hearing, speech and ability to move – and, if that wasn't enough, cause her such pain as it relentlessly progressed despite chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Emma was a very fit, active and bubbly young woman with a passion for geology and had great plans for her future, which were sadly taken away from her suddenly.

“If you're reading this and would like to donate, your support helps FORCE fund vital research, provide essential equipment and offer continuous support to those who need it most,” said Lauren.

“And if you're reading this and struggling right now, I hope this gives you a little inspiration to tackle the things in life that may feel scary – we've got this, together.

“See you at the finish line!”

Lauren Pezzani is taking part in the Great West Run this year to raise money for FORCE and honour the memory of an inspirational friend described as bubbly, passionate and amazingly strong.

Emma Bullous was just 23 when she died from brain stem cancer in January 2021.

“Emma was an amazingly strong and inspiring person who brought so many smiles and laughs into everyone's lives, which included a very good impression of my extremely bad high ponytail in Year 7,” said 20-year-old Lauren with a smile. “She had a lasting impact on everyone she met.”

Lauren, from Exeter, will begin an exciting

Sponsor Lauren at [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/br-S7S93UEBYFZL-2026-bishop-fleming-great-west-run](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/br-S7S93UEBYFZL-2026-bishop-fleming-great-west-run) or scan the QR code.



## JOIN TEAM FORCE AT THE 2027 GREAT WEST RUN AND MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF LOCAL PEOPLE DEALING WITH A CANCER DIAGNOSIS.



FORCE OFFERS FREE SUPPORT to cancer patients and their families at our main centre in the grounds of the RD&E Wonford and at community hospitals in Ottery St Mary, Okehampton and Tiverton and in Cullompton.

Our charity receives no Government or NHS funding and that's where you come in. Runners taking part in the Great West Run (GWR) have raised £300,000 over the last two years, allowing FORCE to offer unparalleled support to thousands of local people affected by cancer.

That has inspired thousands of runners – experienced athletes,

first-timers and everyone in between – to lace up their trainers and do their bit and improve the lives of people in their community. They've run to ensure FORCE is here for their family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues at some of the most difficult times they may ever face,” said FORCE Events Fundraiser Chloe Richardson.

“The atmosphere on Great West Run day is like nothing else and we'd love it if as many people as possible could join us on May 16 2027 to be a part of something truly special.”

To register your interest for next year's Great West Run, email us on [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk) or scan the QR code above.



Julia Thould will be riding her first Nello this year. She'll tackle the 60-mile route on her electric bike, little over two years after a diagnosis for breast cancer. Julia tells the story.

## Pedal power is Julia's way of giving back

“In May of 2024 I discovered a lump in my breast, which was confirmed as cancer, and my journey began. I had initial surgery, followed by a further re-excision, chemotherapy, a completion mastectomy and finally radiotherapy as active treatment. I am now on adjuvant therapy and will be for many years.

“As a medical secretary who worked in the RDUH for many years and in general practice currently, I have known about FORCE and the wonderful work it does for a long time.

“When I went to Cherrybrook for my first chemotherapy session, terrified and very alone, I had no idea that the lovely ladies from FORCE would become part of my day there and how much I would look forward to them coming around with their basket of goodies, cups of tea and cheerful smiles.

“It is a very long day when you are having chemo and anything to break it up is so very welcome. I remember on my first day taking my own supplies in as I had no idea what to expect, but soon realised that wasn't going to be necessary as the ladies keep us well supplied with nourishment! I so looked forward to my 'smelly egg' sandwiches!

“Although I chose to cold-cap, I still lost my hair and FORCE was there again to help me. I had already purchased a wig privately before I started chemo as I wanted to be ready but, when it came to it, I didn't like it that much and felt it wasn't very me. So, I was able to take advantage of the wonderful pre-loved wig service that FORCE offers and I ended up with a wig that was much more me and which I wore regularly. I am glad to say that my hair returned beautifully and I have since donated both my wigs to FORCE for another lady to hopefully benefit from.

“Coming into the FORCE Centre is like being enveloped in a warm hug. It gives you time to breathe, to just be, when your life has been turned upside down. It's what FORCE does beyond measure.

“Until you need it you don't realise how valuable it can be and what a wealth of knowledge is available to help make sense of everything. It gives you space to process everything when you're presented with so much information.

“Throughout my cancer journey, just knowing that the wonderful FORCE Centre with its calm and relaxing atmosphere was there if I, or my lovely husband, needed it was such a comfort. I describe the Centre as an oasis of calm in the maelstrom of treatment.”

Julia and husband Colin live in Tiverton with her son, daughter and three grandchildren nearby. Colin is a keen cyclist and rode The Nello last year to raise money for FORCE.

“My family and I were there to welcome him back in and we had a fabulous afternoon. It was a no-brainer for me to sign up this year. I was referred to my local gym for exercise rehabilitation by FORCE and took advantage of reduced gym membership and specialist care there and it encouraged me to carry on with my fitness journey.

“Having the goal of taking part in The Nello is such a huge motivator for me. Being fit, healthy and maintaining a sensible weight can reduce the risk of recurrence and that's something I can take control of.

“I'll be doing The Nello on an e-bike as economically as I can. I hate it when people say that's cheating because it really isn't. When I've cycled 40 miles on it, I'm a sweaty mess! They're heavy – the weight of a small car – and you still have to pedal!

“Raising money for FORCE is the least I can do. The wonderful work the charity does is beyond measure to patients and their loved ones navigating their way through the maze that is cancer, its treatment and everything that goes with it. I am happy and proud to be taking part in The Nello this year and I cannot wait!”



To sponsor Julia, go to [www.justgiving.com/page/julia-thould-1](http://www.justgiving.com/page/julia-thould-1) or scan the QR code





The Nello 2026 will take place on Sunday June 28. Since the first Nello Century Cycle Challenge in 2000, the ride has raised around £1.5m for FORCE Cancer Charity to help us support local people affected by cancer.

More and more people are being diagnosed with cancer every year and that means a growing demand for support from FORCE.

Could you help us meet the need for the sort of care only FORCE can offer here in Devon? We expect to see 150 more people in 2026. It costs us an average of £850 to

support each person on their cancer journey.

FORCE provides a wide range of free services including specialist information and advice, counselling, complementary therapies, advice on keeping active, support with hair loss, benefits advice, relaxation and mindfulness courses, an art group and programmes to help people move on after treatment or cope with cancers that can't be cured.

To care for 150 more people, we need to raise an extra £127,500.

And we believe our Nello cyclists are the

very people we can rely on to rise to that challenge.

We want to thank you for your support of this unique event and hope you'll play your part in helping us reach our target.

Sign up to the Nello here: <https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/nello/>



**MORE THAN 1,000 CYCLISTS** are due to line up for The Nello at Topsham Rugby Club, ready to tackle 60 or 100 miles.

It's the biggest fundraising event we organise and Bike Shed will again be providing the support that enables us to stage it, putting out signage, helping cyclists before, during and after the ride and providing invaluable expertise to the FORCE team. We couldn't do it without them.

We'll be serving early morning refreshments to set cyclists up for the day and ReBalance injury clinic are providing post ride massages.

The event village will have a festival feel to celebrate the tremendous achievements of the cyclists with food stalls – pizza, pasta, a barbecue and ice cream – and the club bars will be open.



# Well done Emily!

**C**ongratulations to Emily, who cycled more than 100 kilometres in October and raised £1,102 for FORCE. Mum Sarah turned to our charity for support when she was diagnosed with a treatable cancer in 2024. Seeing the difference that help made, Emily was determined to give something back.

So, when it came to choosing a challenge for Year 6 pupils at Exminster Community Primary School as part of the Torbay and Devon Civic Award scheme, there was only one option.

“It was her first choice because FORCE has been such a big part of our lives,” said Sarah. “Emily wanted to raise some money and pay it forward so that other people could get the support they need in future. She did amazingly. I feel immensely proud of her. It’s difficult to put into words just how grateful I am. I’m so, so proud.”

Emily aimed to raise £500 but the generosity of friends, family and acquaintances who heard about Sarah’s story saw that total soar to £1,102. She also exceeded her original distance target, covering an impressive 118.68 kilometres around her home village and cycle paths around Exeter, Woodbury and down to Exmouth, riding with various members of her family.

“I enjoyed it and it was quite exciting. My teacher, Mrs Nowell, was impressed and she put it in the school newsletter,” said Emily, who used three different bikes to complete her challenge, completing it on a new one after a growth spurt!

Sarah’s nursing team pointed her towards FORCE when she needed help in talking to Emily and her two brothers about her cancer diagnosis.



“FORCE helped me with that and I then found out about all the other wonderful things you can access. Once you get through the door you get to know about all the possibilities of help and support. I had no idea there was so much going on there. You can do as much or as little as you want,” said Sarah.



She borrowed books from the FORCE library and accessed a lot of services for physical health and wellbeing including physio, Pilates and yoga as she worked hard at trying to get regain strength and fitness.

Sarah told us: “FORCE gave me an opportunity to try to relax and take time out. The Centre is a really lovely place to be, so bright and welcoming. The team of staff are incredibly talented with a wealth of knowledge and experience and they are so kind and friendly.”

## Trusts and grants update

**WE ARE SO GRATEFUL** to the following charitable trusts for supporting FORCE in 2025-26:

Pink Ribbon Foundation, Gennets Charitable Trust, Gawthorn Charitable Trust, Adrian Swire Charitable Trust, Holford Charitable Trust, Exeter Dispensary Charity, Norman Family Trust, Hospital Saturday Fund, Heathcoat Trust, Exeter Chiefs Foundation, Openwork Foundation and Foot Anstey Charitable Foundation

Some of the many ways their support made a difference included funding:

- seven courses of FORCE’s Breast Cancer Recovery Programme
- a new sofa for the library in the FORCE Support and Information Centre, enabling people to sit together comfortably during some of the most challenging moments they face
- our retreat day for people with non-curable cancer in April 2026
- two screens for the RD&E to provide information about the support available from FORCE to people affected by cancer.

The Hospital Saturday Fund, with their patron Lesley Garrett (far left) who recently gave £4,000 to support FORCE’s Breast Cancer Recovery Programme



We’d love to hear from any supporters with connections to grant-making trusts or foundations that may be able to support FORCE’s work. Call us on **01392 406150** or email [rachael.bryett@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:rachael.bryett@forcecancercharity.co.uk)

# Friends are jewels in the FORCE crown

True friends are often compared to diamonds – precious, lasting and unmatched in their strength. And that perfectly sums up our Friends of FORCE groups, whose enduring support is so valuable in raising funds and awareness of all the things our charity can offer to local people affected by cancer.

Our groups in CREDITON, KENTON, Honiton, Exeter and the AXE VALLEY continue to give their time and inspiration to promoting FORCE.

Here are just a few examples of what they've achieved recently.



**CREDITON** – bingo in memory of Di Pring and the Mariners Away concert this year were massive successes, with the concert raising £2,310

**KENTON** – Shirley Beer held her final cream tea for FORCE in the summer, involving the whole group, and their Great Devon Breakfast was a big hit, raising £1,135

**AXE VALLEY** – Ann Hobson opened her gardens for a summer party with lots of great raffle prizes and she raised £800

**EXETER** – Jane and Gary Martin and their friends held Spring and Winter Fayres, raising more than £5,500



Axe Valley

**HONITON** – a successful Christmas Craft Market and support for FORCE at Honiton Charter Day and Honiton Show raised £666.

“We thank our Friends of FORCE groups for the time, energy and care they give so generously. Their commitment to volunteering and organising events makes a real difference,” said Ceri Bastyan from the FORCE fundraising team.



Kenton



Exeter

“From bake sales and bingo to garden parties and plant sales – all of these events keep spreading the word about why it is so important to fundraise for us.

“Their efforts are appreciated by all of us here at FORCE and, of course, all the patients and their families who benefit from what they do. Their kindness and dedication help ensure we can keep running our services.”



Honiton

**FAREWELL AND THANK YOU** to Honiton Friends of FORCE. We would like to express our gratitude to all the members of the Honiton group for their remarkable dedication since 2018. Your energy, generosity and commitment have made a lasting difference to local people affected by cancer. From bucket collections and Great Devon Breakfasts to Charter Day and the Honiton Show, your fundraising efforts have been extraordinary.



**A BIG SHOUT-OUT** to Lyndsey Trimmer, a one-woman Friend of FORCE phenomenon! She runs the monthly community market at Ottery St Mary, an annual cream tea at Cadhay and is always coming up with new ideas to promote our charity.

# Corporate connections are so important

**W**e are so grateful for the incredible support of many local businesses. Company owners, directors and staff unite in doing their bit to change the lives of local people affected by cancer.

Their generosity, compassion and belief in what FORCE can achieve with their backing is key to our future. Our corporate connections play an important part in raising awareness and vital funds.

Accountancy firm **Bishop Fleming** have been fantastic supporters of FORCE, finding all sorts of ways to raise money with events from gentle baking to extreme physical challenges and a variety of things in between.

Fleur Lewis, Audit Partner and Exeter Lead for Bishop Fleming, said: "We have been supporting FORCE as our Charity of the Year for a second year running.

"We chose to continue our support because so many of us, our colleagues, families and friends, have been touched by cancer and FORCE's mission really resonates with us. It's been inspiring to see our Exeter and Torquay teams throw themselves into fundraising – from the Great West Run and sporting tournaments to pottery and cake sales, walking challenges and volunteering their time.

"Thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of our people, we've raised more than £31,000. We are proud to be part of FORCE's journey and excited to keep building on this support."

Exeter-based recruitment agency **Konker** have also raised funds for FORCE by organising a charity tournament at City Padel Exeter. The event brought together 12 businesses. Thanks to the generosity of everyone involved, the tournament raised £900.



Konker padel event



'Thank you' event, Christmas 2025

Maddie Cadman from Konker said: "We're so proud to have brought together 12 local businesses from across the South West for such a brilliant day. The atmosphere was fantastic and knowing that the event was helping FORCE continue their vital work makes it even more meaningful."

**Thank you to all our local business partners.**

If your company could consider supporting FORCE, please email Ceri on [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk) or call **01392 406153** or **07307 199077**.

## Guidance from Tozers on the importance of your will

**P**utting a will in place is one of the best steps you can take to plan for the future, wherever you are on life's journey. A carefully drafted will is an important tool which allows you to:

- Decide who should inherit your money, any property and personal possessions
- Appoint guardians for any minor children
- Benefit charities through legacies
- Potentially to reduce Inheritance Tax on your estate

More than half the UK population does not have a will in place.

It's a common misconception that a will is something you need to consider only later in life. That's not true – a will remains vital for everyone to consider, regardless of their age or diagnosis.

A will can give you peace of mind, knowing that you have protected your family. If you don't leave a will, when you die the law steps in to dictate who receives what. Unmarried

partners are not automatically included so, if you don't have a will, your partner may not receive anything from you after you're gone.

Having a will also allows you to benefit charities, helping them to carry on their good work. Many charities, including FORCE, rely on legacies.

If you have already written a will, it's always worth reviewing the arrangements you have in place at various intervals in your life. Circumstances can and do change, so big events, such as getting married or your family growing, can be a useful reminder to reconsider your options.

Julia Pitts, FORCE's Chief Finance Officer says, 'Gifts in Wills have been incredibly important to FORCE. They have enabled the charity to continue to develop our supportive services and invest in the latest research and equipment. Our sincerest thanks to all those who think to include FORCE in their wills. We are forever grateful.'



### TOZERS OFFERS A YEAR-ROUND WILL-MAKING SCHEME FOR FORCE SUPPORTERS.

At Tozers, we know the vital work that FORCE does in the community and wish to support both the charity and those who want to put wills in place. Our offices in Exeter, Newton Abbot and Teignmouth are delighted to assist both in FORCE's annual Wills Week and the year-round scheme for supporters of the charity.

To find out more about supporting FORCE while putting your will in place, please get in touch with our team on **01392 207020**. We're here to guide you through the process.

**TOZERS**  
SOLICITORS

# CLASSIC DOUBLE SUPPORT FROM VICTORIA CLASSICS GALORE!



**CLASSICS GALORE! IS BACK** for 2026 at the University of Exeter Great Hall on Saturday, November 14. It'll be the tenth time Exeter's very own Last Night of the Proms is held in aid of FORCE.

Classics Galore! was established in 2007 by the late Dick Passmore and his wife, Posy, and has since raised more than £150,000 for our charity.

Tickets go on sale in July for a show that promises to be another blockbuster with its popular mix of recognisable classical music, film and TV themes, songs from musicals and a Proms style finale.

We welcome back our Classics Galore! orchestra, Ottery St Mary Choral Society, St David's Players and the Lymptone Band as well as stunning soprano soloist Cheryl Enever.

Victoria Graham will again be our compère in a second significant show of support for FORCE this year. In May the BBC Spotlight presenter is taking part in this year's Great West Run 10km with husband, Jon, as part of Team FORCE.

Supporting FORCE is extremely personal for Victoria. Two of her three sisters have been diagnosed with cancer and they lost their father to the disease. "All I have now are memories," said Victoria. "Most of us have lost someone we love, someone we miss very much, but it's important to look forward. My dad loved people and he loved to help. In his memory, 10 years after he died from cancer I'm aiming to help too. I'd like to raise as much money as possible to help other people dealing with a cancer diagnosis.

"Cancer has been an unwelcome visitor to our family many times, so I know what it's like for those dealing with it and the people supporting them, who also need help. In the past, me and my sisters have raised money for bowel cancer research, but this year I'm raising

money for a local charity. What I like is, you can literally see where the money you raise is going.

"FORCE offers people support, hope, care and love, whoever you are, whatever you are dealing with. I'm a big supporter of local people and local charities and if you could spare just a pound, I'd be so grateful."

Be the first to hear about tickets for Classics Galore! on our website at <https://forcecancercharity.co.uk/classicsgalore/>



You can support Victoria at [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/br-8Y57DCQW23H-2026-bishop-fleming-great-west-run](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/br-8Y57DCQW23H-2026-bishop-fleming-great-west-run) or scan the QR code



## VICE PATRONS SHOW GREAT DEDICATION



Ruth Boobier



Mervyn Hayes



Anne Hong



Felix Medland



Morley Sage



David Cattle

**WE ARE SO GRATEFUL** to our dedicated group of vice patrons, former trustees who continue to support and promote FORCE at every opportunity.

Ruth Boobier, Mervyn Hayes, Anne Hong, Felix Medland and Morley Sage give their time by organising events, supporting our fundraising team, volunteering at the FORCE Support Centre or offering advice on IT strategy and property. They are also powerful advocates for our charity, a hugely important part of their honorary roles.

David Cattle became involved with FORCE in 1988 and he and his devoted wife, Jean, along with other family members have supported us for more than 35 years.

They are stepping back from their active role, which has included distributing and picking up collection tins around Honiton and distributing FORCE magazines and literature.

Ruth Boobier's famous garden parties have contributed valuable

funds over many years, the latest raising more than £6,000.

Our patron, Nigel Acheson, is still an active trustee. A strong and respected voice within the medical community, he also represents FORCE at events and takes on fundraising challenges of his own. Earlier this year he ran to raise £230 from FORCE's Race at Your Pace event, involving 31 days of activity in January.

And daughter Hannah shares the running gene. She entered the Manchester Marathon for FORCE with a fundraising target of £500 and told us: "I'm proud to be raising funds for FORCE because they are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of individuals and families across the region who are facing one of the toughest challenges imaginable."



Nigel Acheson

# FORCE calendar of events 2026-27

Our latest calendar of events is more varied than ever, offering something for everyone. Each event raises vital funds to support local people affected by cancer in our community, making NOW the perfect time to get involved.



## GREAT DEVON BREAKFAST

THROUGHOUT 2026


Organise a fundraising breakfast with your family, friends or colleagues at a time that suits you, all in aid of FORCE.



## GREAT WEST RUN

HALF MARATHON OR 10K  
MAY 16 2027

Join Exeter's biggest running event and be part of Team FORCE. Save the date and look forward to something amazing.



## THE NELLO

FORCE'S FAMOUS CYCLE CHALLENGE  
JUNE 28

Choose the 60-mile or 100-mile routes, starting and finishing at Topsham Rugby Club. With stunning scenery, friendly company and great food, it's an unforgettable day. Registration is £50.

## SNOWDON AT NIGHT TREK

AUGUST 1-2

Take on this exciting challenge for FORCE, trekking through the night by torchlight and reaching the summit at sunrise. Registration is £45 with minimum sponsorship of £320.



## CLASSICS GALORE!

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER GREAT HALL  
NOVEMBER 14

Exeter's very own Last Night of the Proms, offering an evening of popular classical music. Tickets on sale in July.

## RUN FOR FORCE IN 2026

We are pleased to be working with Run for Charity to offer places in some of the most exciting half and full marathons. Register your interest for the following races:

- CHELTENHAM HALF MARATHON  
SEPTEMBER 20
- AMSTERDAM MARATHON  
OCTOBER 18
- CARDIFF HALF MARATHON  
OCTOBER 4

Registration fees and minimum sponsorship amounts vary for running events and challenges. Please get in touch for details.

## LOOKING AHEAD

# FORCE is 40 in 2027!



In 2027, FORCE celebrates 40 years of delivering cancer support across Devon. We would love your support in our special celebration year.

Why not:

- Make FORCE your club, organisation or company **Charity of the Year**
- Host a **40 for FORCE** fundraising activity or event
- Donate your unwanted, good condition items to the **FORCE shop**
- Set up a regular, monthly **donation** for FORCE for the year



## EXCITING NEWS!

FORCE's first overseas challenge is now live!



As part of our anniversary celebrations, we are delighted to launch FORCE's first overseas challenge –

### WALK THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

OCTOBER 9, 2027

For more details on any of these events, please contact us at [forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk](mailto:forcefr@forcecancercharity.co.uk) or call 01392 402875.

 FORCEcancercharity  @forcecancer  charityforcecancer

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

Charity registration no. 1140676 Company registration no. 7529991

