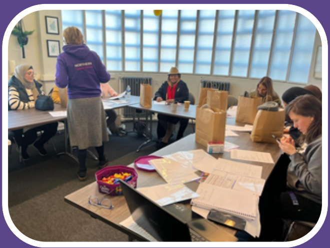
NORTHERN CANCER VOICES

Rooted in community. Driven by experience

Annual Report

2025 to 2026

Northern Cancer Voices occupies a unique space between communities and systems. We do not simply deliver support, collect feedback, or sit on committees in isolation. We connect people's real, lived experiences of cancer with the organisations that design, fund and deliver services ensuring insight leads to action, not just conversations. NCV's uniqueness is not what we do, it is where we sit and how we move between worlds.



CEO Foreword

Tori Bradison

CEO & Founder

This year has been one of extraordinary reputational growth, courage, and connection for Northern Cancer Voices. What began as a small group of people determined to make a difference has evolved into a recognised, trusted force for change across the North East and North Cumbria. And still, at its heart, our work remains beautifully simple: we listen, we stand beside people when they need it most, and we make sure their voices shape the services they rely on.

Throughout 2025–26, people shared their experiences with us in community centres, support groups, workplaces, prisons, GP surgeries, and online. Every conversation mattered. Each one helped us understand more deeply what it feels like to move through the cancer pathway, where people feel supported, and where they feel invisible.

This year, those voices didn't just stay in the room. They travelled into NHS Trusts, steering groups, national programmes, research teams, and policy discussions. They influenced the National Cancer Plan. They reshaped pathways, improved information, strengthened emotional support, and helped professionals see things through the eyes of the people they serve.

We also saw the powerful impact of community. Our peer support groups grew. We gifted groups to trusted partners so they can continue thriving. We stood with families facing impossible financial choices through Treat, Heat or Eat. We built new partnerships across sectors from local charities to national research teams, businesses, councils, and community leaders who open doors we could never reach alone.

What I am most proud of is that we did all of this without losing who we are. We stayed present, compassionate, and grounded. We showed that meaningful change is built on relationships not reports, not headlines, but people. As we look ahead, our commitment remains clear:

to make sure every voice is heard, every story is valued, and every person affected by cancer can access the support, clarity, and compassion they deserve.

To everyone who shared their experience with us this year thank you. Your voice is powerful. Your courage drives everything we do. To our partners, volunteers, supporters, and community leaders thank you for standing with us. And to our brilliant team, past, present, staff and volunteers, thank you for bringing heart, integrity, and hope to every single conversation.

We are proud of what we've achieved together. And we are just getting started.

Northern Cancer Voices is not a replacement for NHS services, nor a short-term engagement provider. Our role is to strengthen the system by bringing real community insight, trust and connection into spaces where decisions are made.

Our Trustees

Jane Dennison | Mike Walker | Thomas Monaghan | Liam Davidson | Claire McLean | Raj Mair | Claire Hawkes

Chair Foreword

Claire McLean
Chair

I am proud to introduce this Impact Report, which reflects the growing reach, credibility and influence of Northern Cancer Voices. Grounded in lived experience and delivered through trusted community relationships, Northern Cancer Voices continues to ensure that the voices of people affected by cancer are heard where decisions are made.

This year's impact demonstrates not only the scale of engagement achieved, but the real difference that patient-led insight can make in shaping more equitable, person-centred cancer care. As Chair, I am confident that Northern Cancer Voice's strong governance, partnerships and values provide a solid foundation for continued growth and influence in the years ahead.

Director Foreword

Lorna Joisce
Operations & Engagement Director

Photo Credit
Michael Gibson Creative Photography

This report reflects a collective effort, shaped by trust, partnership and courage. Thank you for believing in the power of voices, for standing with us, and for helping build a system that experiences cancer through the lens of those who live it.

Every individual, organisation and partner who has walked alongside us this year, whether you shared your time, your insight, your lived experience, or opened doors, your involvement has made a real and meaningful difference. Because of you, we have been able to reach communities whose voices too often go unheard, and ensure they are amplified where decisions are made.

Northern Cancer Voices exists to make systems listen, truly listen, to the people they serve. I remain deeply committed to continuing to develop how we work, expanding our reach, and strengthening our practice so that we reflect what people actually need across their cancer pathway: before diagnosis, during treatment, and long after treatment ends.

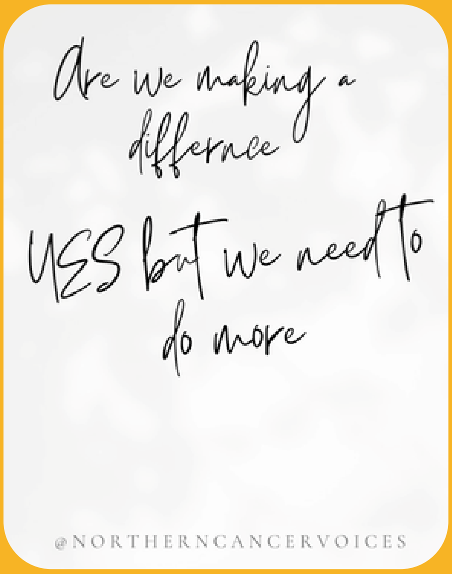
This year has been one of both challenge and inspiration. I have been trusted with some devestating stories, stories shared with honesty, vulnerability and trust by people who opened their hearts and bared everything. These moments are humbling and they carry a responsibility: to honour those experiences by using them to drive change.

Alongside these difficult stories, I have also heard countless affirmations of dedication, compassion and resilience, particularly for our frontline nursing teams. Their commitment, skill and humanity shine through repeatedly, and yet we know how desperately more support and investment in this workforce is needed. Their voices, too, must be heard and valued.

Looking ahead, my focus is clear. I am determined that we continue to:

- Improve access to supportive and lifestyle oncology
- Improve access to mental wellbeing support
- Reduce stigma, fear and silence around the "C" word - CANCER!!!

By naming it, talking about it, and listening to lived experience, we help remove fear and empower people to seek support, ask questions, and feel less alone.



Are we making a differnce

YES but we need to do more

@NORTHERNCANCERVOICES

Our Mission

To amplify lived experience, reduce inequalities, and shape cancer services through trusted relationships, community-rooted engagement, insight, and partnership working.

Rooted in community. Driven by experience.

Our Values

Northern Cancer Voices always focuses on what matters most to people affected by cancer. Everything we do is guided by three clear promises, which shape the support we offer and the changes we help bring about across cancer services.

Cancer Connect: Emotional & Practical Support

What it means: Cancer can feel overwhelming, and no one should feel alone. Cancer Connect is our promise to listen, guide, and support people through every part of their cancer journey.

How we do this:

- We give people a safe space to talk and share their story.
- We help them find the information, services, and support they need.
- We connect people with others who understand what they are going through.

Why it matters: When people feel heard and supported, they are more confident, better informed, and less anxious. This leads to better experiences and better outcomes.

Access to Care: Cancer Navigation and Reducing Inequalities

What it means: Everyone deserves fair and easy access to cancer care. Access to Care is our promise to make sure no one is left behind, especially people who face barriers because of their postcode, background, income, or personal situation.

How we do this:

- We help people understand their appointments, treatment plans, and choices.
- We support people who find it hard to reach services or get the help they need.
- We work with communities where cancer outcomes are poorer to make services fairer.

Why it matters: Better navigation and fair access mean earlier diagnosis, smoother treatment, and less stress during a difficult time.

Lived experience to impact: Lived Experience in System Change

What it means: People with lived experience know what works and what doesn’t. Lived Experience to Impact is our promise to make sure their voices shape how cancer services are planned, improved, and delivered.

How we do this:

- We gather real stories and feedback from people affected by cancer.
- We bring their voices into meetings, programmes, and decision-making groups.
- We help turn feedback into real changes that improve care for everyone.

Why it matters: When lived experience guides decisions, services become kinder, clearer, and more responsive, because they are built on what real people need.

Awards & Recognition

Best Peer Support Programme

Mental Health Care Awards
Business Awards UK
Second year running - National WINNERS

2026 Most Influential CEO Awards

"Recognised as the UK's Best Patient Led Cancer Support Organisation 2026, Northern Cancer Voices is a cancer advocacy charity striving to amplify the voices of anyone impacted by a cancer diagnosis."

CEO MONTHLY / JANUARY 2026 10

Tori Bradison: Championing Change in Cancer Care

Since 2023, Northern Cancer Voices has operated with one clear purpose: to make sure that every person affected by cancer feels heard, supported, and empowered. This mission is headed by Founder and CEO Tori Bradison, whose visionary leadership has positioned Northern Cancer Voices as a trusted advocate for patients across the North East and the North Cumbria. We spoke with Tori below for more, as she is named in the 2026 Most Influential CEO Awards.

NORTHERN
Cancer Voices

Contact: Tori Bradison
Company: Northern Cancer Voices
Web Address: www.northerncancervoices.co.uk

Recognised as the UK's Best Patient-Led Cancer Support Organisation 2026, Northern Cancer Voices is a cancer advocacy charity striving to amplify the voices of anyone impacted by a cancer diagnosis. The organisation is driven by a group of volunteers, patients, carers, and health professionals, all united by a shared passion for ensuring the best possible quality of care and support for cancer patients, their families, and their friends.

The story of Northern Cancer Voices' inception is deeply personal, shaped significantly by the life-changing experiences of Founder Tori Bradison. In 2019, Tori's mother was diagnosed with lung cancer and sadly passed away just four weeks later.

Unfortunately, Tori's mother was not the only person in her life to be impacted by cancer. Her best friend, a strong rugby player from South Africa, was diagnosed with lung cancer at just 48 years old and was placed on research medication. Another close friend faced bowel cancer at age 50, and her cousin was diagnosed with bowel cancer at 74. These repeated encounters within her close circle deepened Tori's resolve to ensuring that no one faces cancer alone.

"These experiences gave me a unique perspective on the gaps in support and the emotional toll cancer takes across different ages and circumstances," she told us. "My work today is driven by those stories, and those my team hear every day, plus the belief that empathy and action can change lives. This is why I am so passionate about creating a platform where lived experience drives change."

Initially, Tori worked as a volunteer patient partner at her local hospital, driven by her own experiences to make a positive change. She gradually began to connect with likeminded people across the region, forming a strong network of individuals passionate about cancer care and services. Tori leveraged her extensive business skills to build a model of success and, fast-forward to 2023, Northern Cancer Voices was born – a charity built by people who have lived this reality, on a mission to ensure every voice is heard.

Since establishing Northern Cancer Voices, Tori and the team have seen a number of transformative opportunities. "Speaking at NHS cancer improvement events and working with strategic partners has allowed us to amplify patient voices where decisions are made," she shared. "Awards and recognition also open doors, giving us credibility and helping us build partnerships with councils and businesses. These opportunities have pushed me to think bigger – moving from local advocacy to shaping systemic change."

Of course, the charity has also encountered its fair share of adversity. Ongoing funding pressure and uncertainty has made long-term planning difficult, but the team has tackled this head-on by diversifying income streams and building strong partnerships across the industry. Tori's corporate background and Six Sigma training helps Northern Cancer Voices to cut through the bureaucracy and stay efficient, ensuring that every pound and hour spent is an investment in patient-led support and community-based cancer care.

Named the UK's Most Influential Non-Profit CEO 2026 in the field of Cancer Advocacy, Tori aspires to continue building Northern Cancer Voices into a sustainable, influential force for change. The charity is looking to the future with stabilisation as a key priority, aiming to generate more funds to ensure it can continue shaping the sector. Current funding runs until March 2026, with bids in progress, though confirmation is not expected until February.

"Collaboration and innovation will be key to navigating the future," Tori concluded. "We want to reach more communities and launch a corporate sponsorship offer to build sustainable partnerships. We need more investment in patient-led support and are actively seeking strategic partners who share our vision for equitable, community-based care, because collaboration is the key to lasting change."

To learn more about this remarkable mission – and discover how you can get directly involved in shaping change – visit Northern Cancer Voices' website today.

#Love Cramlington Awards
Charity of the Year
Sponsored and chosen by Turners Funfairs

"An extraodinary charity providing a lifeline for people in Cramlington affected by cancer. They offer compassion, understanding and a safe space to find strength together.

Beyond emotional support and practical advice, they amplify patient voice in healthcare discussions and organise peer support sessions to transform fear into hope and loneliness into friendship."

CRAMLINGTON
Town Council

TURNERS FUNFAIRS

Durham High Sherriff Citation

"Outstanding collective contribution to cancer voice work across Teesside"

Every Day Impact

Not all change came from big programmes. A lot of it happened in the small, everyday things we did. We spent time listening to people, supporting local groups, working with community leaders, sharing patient voices, and building strong partnerships across our region.
This part of our work showed how daily actions made a real difference, helping people, strengthening communities, and keeping lived experience at the heart of cancer care.
All stats are April 2025 to March 2026 unless otherwise stated.

Community Engagement

We believe that strong communities are the best source of ideas, knowledge, and support. Our community engagement model is based on the principles of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). This means we focus on strengths, not problems, and we build change with communities, not for them. Our approach brings together three simple but powerful ways of working:
-being embedded in local communities,
-working through trusted leaders,
-building lasting partnerships.

Embedded in Local Communities

We spend time in the places where people live, meet, and feel comfortable. This helps us build real relationships and understand what matters most to each community.

What this looks like:
- Being present at local events, groups, and community hubs
- Listening to people in their own spaces
- Building trust through regular contact, not one-off visits

Why it works: People open up more when they feel safe, respected, and genuinely heard.

Working Through Trusted Community Leaders

We partner with people who already have strong relationships in their community, such as faith leaders, local organisers, grassroots groups, and volunteers.

What this looks like:
- Asking local leaders how we can work together
- Using their knowledge to reach people who are often missed
- Supporting them to share information about cancer, screening, support, and services

Why it works: People listen to people they trust. This helps us reach groups who may not connect with traditional health services.

249 Events Attended

3451 People spoken to about cancer

1404 People spoken to were affected by cancer

Strategic Partnership Development

We build long-term partnerships with organisations that share our goals, including local charities, VCSE groups, health teams, neighbourhood programmes, businesses, and universities.

What this looks like:

- Working together to host events and support groups
- Sharing insights from lived experience to shape decisions
- Creating pathways that make care fairer and easier to access
- Strengthening local systems by connecting people and organisations

Why it works: When organisations work together, communities get clearer, kinder, and more connected support.

What This Means for People Affected by Cancer

Our engagement model ensures that:

- People feel seen, heard, and valued. Those who are often overlooked are included.
- Support and information are easy to find
- Communities help shape cancer services. Lived experience drives real change

This approach helps us tackle inequalities, build trust, and make sure every voice matters. This is not just an engagement model, it is a relationship model. We build trust, share power, and work alongside communities to create change that lasts.

98% **Of the people we spoke to told us they felt better after chatting with us**

"You're the first person I have spoken to who sounds like they know what they're talking about"

Speaking to a gentleman at a partner peer support group about prostate cancer, and holistic support options.

Peer Support Groups

Cancer can feel deeply lonely, even when you are surrounded by people who care. Many tell us they only truly felt understood when they spoke with someone who had walked the same path. That is why our peer support work is so important. Not only do we run our own groups, but we also offer a full support programme for anyone who wants to set up a group in their own community. We help people get started, find a safe space to meet, build confidence, and create sustainable support that lasts. Through our volunteers, group leaders, and peer networks, we bring people together, reduce isolation, and make sure no one has to face cancer alone.

Current Groups

Late Effects in Pelvic Radiotherapy Group
Community Room at Tesco Kingston Park.
2nd Monday of every month
17:30 – 19:30

Cramlington Coffee, Cancer and Chat Group
Cramlington Town Council Offices
Last Thursday of every month
10:30 – 12:30

Druridge Bay Connecting Through Cancer
Visitor Centre, Druridge Bay
3rd Saturday of every month
11:00 - 13:00

Prostate Cancer Support with Age UK & Tackle Prostate
Roundhouse, Ashington

We are proud that we have gifted our highly successful Teesside peer support groups to Hope Cancer Support. This means the groups have now moved operationally to Hope Cancer Support and we are confident they are in the safest of hands, led by people with real lived experience. Ann Hope brings deep understanding, compassion, and expertise, and we are excited to see these groups thrive as part of the strong and trusted community offer.

147 Support Groups Hosted

1761 People attended **7** people on average

100% People asked, told us they felt better after attending a group

Sign-Posting and Link Working

Trusted places. Clear guidance. Real confidence

Listen → Reflect → Explore → Recommend → Empower → Support

Our link working goes far beyond handing out leaflets. We offer clear, personal, and meaningful guidance so people know who can help, why they are the right choice, and how to make contact. By empowering people to be their own advocate for their health and wellbeing, we help them feel more in control, better informed, and more able to get the support they need.

When people share their experiences with us, we listen carefully, and we make sure we have properly understood what they need. We repeat back what we have heard so nothing is missed, and then we work together to find the right next steps. Our aim is not to do things for people, but to give them the confidence, knowledge, and tools to do it for themselves.

We only signpost to trusted partners, groups and services we have visited ourselves or that are fully vetted through the Cancer Care Map. This means we have real confidence that we are sending people to safe, reliable, and supportive places.

936 **People supported with sign posting and referrals**

15 **Community Cancer Champions Trained**

Current Groups

North Cumbria
North of Tyne & Gateshead
South Tyneside & Sunderland

Patient, Carer & Public Collaboratives

Across the North East and North Cumbria, we bring patients, carers, public members, NHS teams, and VCSE partners together in regular online meetings. These sessions create a trusted space where people with lived experience of cancer can share what matters most to them, and where services can listen, learn, and act. Providers tell us these conversations are vital because they hear directly from the public, take real stories back to their teams, and champion changes that improve the cancer pathway for everyone. Together, we look at current themes, explore ideas, and work side by side to make cancer care kinder, clearer, and better for all.

Readers Panel

We are proud to host the Readers' Panel on behalf of the Northern Cancer Alliance. This volunteer group plays an important role in helping NHS teams communicate clearly and kindly. The panel brings together people with lived experience who review letters, leaflets, and other patient information, and give honest, practical feedback on how to make it easier to understand. Their insight helps teams improve the information they share, making it more accessible, more human, and more helpful for people affected by cancer. Managed by our dedicated volunteer, Patrick, the panel offers a trusted, independent voice, and teams across the region tell us how valuable it is to hear directly from the people they serve.

EXAMPLES:
| Prehab guides | Lung Health Check Invitation | National Bowel Screening | Thoracic Surgery Leaflet | Radiotherapy Patient Booklet

northern cancer alliance

12

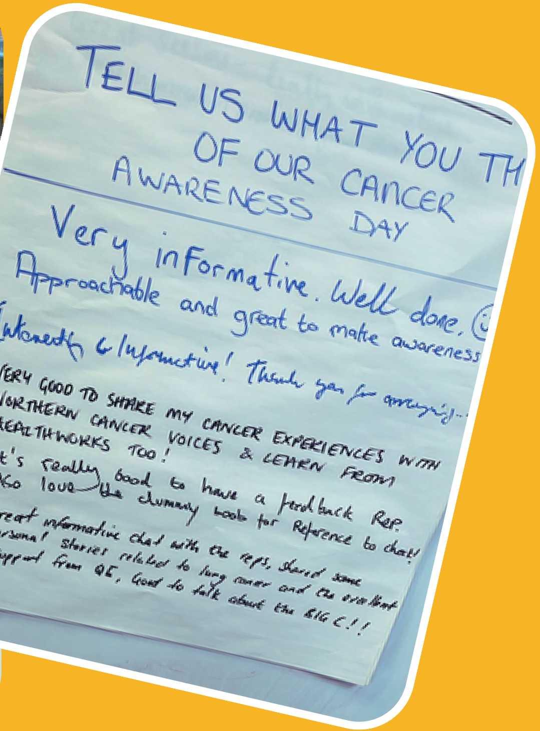
Projects delivered reviewing literature for people affected by cancer

Corporate and workplace

Many people face cancer while balancing work and home life, so we partner with companies and organisations to help them better support their staff and communities. Our corporate offer helps businesses strengthen wellbeing, improve their Better Health at Work activities, and understand what people affected by cancer might need. Through strong relationships with networks like the North East Chamber of Commerce and Do Business Network, we bring lived experience into workplaces and help organisations create safer, kinder, and better-informed environments.

The 'Do Business' Network

NORTH EAST
Chamber of Commerce



TELL US WHAT YOU TH
OF OUR CANCER
AWARENESS DAY

Very informative. Well done. ☺

Approachable and great to make awareness

Interesting & Informative! Thank you for arranging...

VERY GOOD TO SHARE MY CANCER EXPERIENCES WITH NORTHERN CANCER VOICES & LEARN FROM HEALTHWORKS TOO!

It's really good to have a feedback Rep.

Also love the dummy book for Reference to check!

Great informative chat with the reps, shared some personal stories related to lung cancer and the excellent support from QE, Good to talk about the BIG C!!

Steering Group and Forum Membership

We attend and are members of multiple steering groups and forums to provide the link between public voice and system improvements.

-Northern Cancer Alliance Quality of Life and Patient Experience Steering Group and Forum (Quol)
-Northumberland CVA Mind the Gap Project Steering Group
-North Tees & Hartlepool Gynae Awareness & Prevention Task & Finish Group
-Cancer Community Awareness Workers
-North Tyneside Cancer Prevention Network
-North Northumberland Locality Network
-Mind the Gap Northumberland CVA Health & Wellbeing Network
-Newcastle Digital Inclusion Steering Group
-Palliative End of Life HNA Community Engagement Sub Group
-Northumberland Screening & Health Inequalities
-Northern Cancer Alliance Improving Mental Wellbeing in Cancer Network (Multiple trusts)
-Older People's Network for North Tyneside
-Collingwood Surgery Patient Group
-NENC North Tyneside Place Patient Forum
-North East and Yorkshire Genomics Patient and Community Forum
-VCSE Living and Ageing Well Network
-ARC NENC Impact and Implementation Special Interest Group
-Health Inequalities In Cancer NIHR Research
-National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme
-Catalyst Stockton H&W
-VONNE North East and North Cumbria VCSE Partnership Forum

Fundraising

£7,856

Raised through our community fundraising activities & donations THANK YOU!

2025 Survey Results

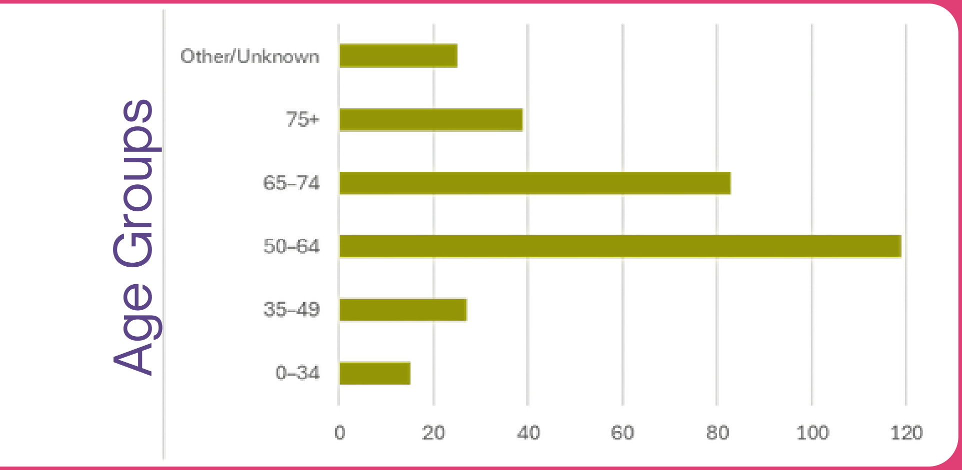
91 (29.5%)	Breast
43 (14%)	Lung
28 (9.1%)	Bowel/Colorectal
25 (8.1%)	Prostate
11 (3.6%)	Melaoma
10 (3.2%)	Unknown/Unspecified
9 (2.9%)	Lymphoma
8 (2.6%)	Blood (Unspecified)
8 (2.6%)	Liver
7 (2.3%)	Cervical

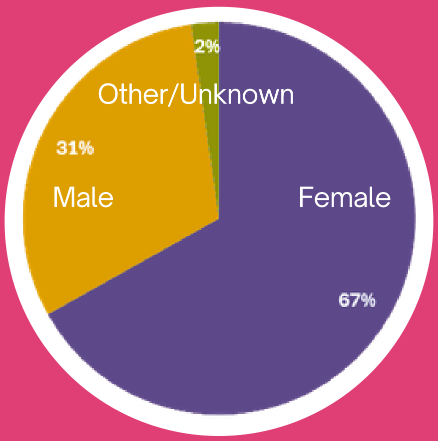
Breast:
References to the screening/treatment programme, ongoing/post-treatment support, and the Whitehaven service location.

Lung:
Buddying/peer support mentioned positively; concerns about medical jargon leading to confusion for families; hints of travel/drive burden and references to Berwick area.

Bowel/Colorectal:
Family involvement when a patient refuses treatment, requests for social/psychological support for families, and signposting/advice (often via GP/hospital references).

Prostate:
Procedure-specific issues (e.g., enema preparation), mentions tied to Armed Forces/veterans navigation, and concerns about consistency of clinical advice.





<34: No real themes
35 to 49: Information clarity for family/children, and planning around employment.
50 to 64: Practicalities of treatment and work/life logistics; signposting for support.
65 to 74: Coordination/communication across services and post-treatment follow-up.
75>: Transport/mobility and clearer instructions around procedures; more references to carers.

Female
Ongoing/support navigation and breast-pathway specific references; family/caring roles crop up more.

Male
Procedure-specific mentions (e.g., prep/instructions), a touch more around clarity/consistency of advice.

Other/Unknown
No clear themes

NIHR Skills Exchange Partnership

Throughout 2024–2026, we worked in close partnership with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) through a skills-exchange arrangement that strengthened both community engagement and the quality of our internal research processes.

As part of this collaboration, NIHR's Public Partnerships Manager, Greta Brunskill, worked with us to improve community access to research opportunities across our region. We provided NIHR with a direct and trusted route into our peer support groups, helping connect researchers with people affected by cancer and enabling research conversations to take place within real community settings. This improved equity of access to research and ensured that communities who are often underrepresented had the opportunity to be involved.

In return, NIHR supported us by enabling two of their research methodologists, Jana Suklan and Aisling Ponzo, to volunteer their expertise. They undertook a full review of our survey design, purpose and methodology, strengthening the robustness of our approach and ensuring our tools met recognised research standards. They also advised us on how to analyse our data more effectively and ethically.

Following this support, NIHR officially endorsed our survey, providing assurance that our approach is sound, credible and aligned with best practice.

This partnership has not only enhanced the quality of our insight work but also demonstrated the value of cross-sector collaboration, where community organisations and national research teams can share skills, improve practice, and widen participation in research for everyone.

> *We have been working in partnership with Northern Cancer Voices over the last 12 months to support the involvement of the public in health research. Our HealthTech Research Centre in Diagnostic and Technology Evaluation (HRC DTE) is funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) and focuses on the development of new and improved diagnostic tests and technologies for the benefit of patients and our NHS. Through working with Northern Cancer Voices and their Peer Support Groups we have been able to connect and build relationships with people with lived experiences of cancer and begin involving them in shaping and advising research. Embedding patient and public views throughout the research process is a crucial aspect of our work, and working with NCV is incredibly valuable in enabling us to reach and engage with a wide range of people. It has been fantastic to work with the great Northern Cancer Voices team and the communities they have such strong and positive relationships with to support this.*
>
> Greta Brunskill, Public Partnerships Manager, NIHR

What Works Well...

246 **Total individual responses recorded**

101 **Clinical expertise and quality of care**
Patients praised skilled clinicians and effective treatment, often highlighting specialist nurses; confidence in clinical decisions and thorough care were frequently mentioned.

36 **Staff kindness, compassion, professionalism**
Patients frequently praised compassionate, professional staff who made them feel safe and respected; specialist nurses and supportive teams were often highlighted.

15 **Speed and timeliness of diagnosis/treatment**
Quick referral and prompt treatment were valued; shorter time from symptoms to diagnosis reduced anxiety and improved confidence in the pathway.

10 **Information and communication**
Clear explanations, timely updates and accessible information were valued; patients appreciated being kept informed about results, appointments and next steps.

8 **Diagnostics and tests (scans, bloods)**
Patients highlighted timely access to scans, tests and results; quicker reporting and clearer explanations reduced anxiety and helped decision-making.

> *“The treatment pathway is amazing. The skill and knowledge of Surgeons and oncologists and the nursing staff was very comforting. When feeling lost it brilliant to be able to rely on their confident approach’s and experience.”* Female, Ovarian, treatment in progress, Queen Elizabeth Hospital

> *“The speed of treatment there’s a clear track of next steps. I cannot praise my Breast Cancer nurses more highly, their support is incredible, they are always available and meet you with the support you need when you need it.”* Female, Breast, North Cumbria IC NHS FT, treatment within the last 12 months

> *“The quick diagnosis and plan of treatment also after my treatment has finished I can contact the breast cancers team at Wansbeck and go in to get any concerns I have checked.”*Female, Breast Cancer, treatment in the last 3 years, Northumbria NHS FT

> *“For me, I feel that I had a clear path through my treatment, right from the start. I knew what was going to happen, and when it was going to happen. This was really important for me and my mental health.”*
> Female, Breast Cancer, treatment in progress, Royal Victoria Infimary

> *“Absolutely amazing people on ward 33, from the nurses to the consultants,everyone knows what's going on”* Male, Blood, James Cook Hospital, treatment within the last 12 months

> *“My skin cancer specialist nurse was amazing and made herself available to see me at anytime to check lesions and to talk through one mental impact.”* Male, Melanoma, treatment within the last 3 years, County Durham & Darlington NHS FT

What could be improved...

280 Total individual responses recorded

84 **Communication, empathy, being listened to**
Patients wanted kinder, clearer communication and to feel heard; bad news delivery, explanations, and opportunities to ask questions needed improvement.

40 **Waiting times, delays, speed of pathway**
Delays in referrals, tests, results and treatment caused distress; patients wanted faster pathways, clearer timelines and regular updates while waiting.

25 **Emotional/psychological support and signposting**
Many struggled with anxiety and distress; they wanted counselling or psychological support and better signposting to trusted help during and after treatment.

11 **Symptom management and aftercare**
After treatment, patients needed better management of side effects, pain and fatigue; clearer aftercare plans and access to rehab and support services mattered.

9 **Coordination and admin (errors, handoffs, results)**
Admin errors and poor handoffs caused missed appointments and delayed results; patients wanted accurate letters, timely updates and a single point of contact.

Other Themes

7 **Support for carers and family**

4 **Access issues**
Rurality, transport, parking

4 **Facilities and environment**
Wards, food and privacy

4 **Primary Care**
Delays in access and referrals, more aftercare support

2 **Accessibility and inclusion**
Reasonable adjustments including accessible information and additional support for disabilities or diversity of needs

> *“Communication - after having completed treatment, I was contacted via phone and told I was no longer able to have children. No support on dealing with this has ever been offered, the phonecall came at a time when I was in a public place. Should have been delivered with more compassion and follow up arranged. Information like this would feel better in person rather than on the phone.”*
> Female, Cervical, Northumberland Resident, treatment in last 12 months

> *“More careful medication management and review--the patient is on many meds being prescribed by different doctors but there's a concern consideration is not being given to how these interact with one another.”*
> Newcastle Resident, currently in treatment, Lung

> *“More attentive nurses who have time for patients rather than rushing and missing things. Patient had to adjust drip themselves”*
> Male, Oesophageal, Newcastle Resident, treatment in progress

What people would like to see...

242 Total individual responses recorded

30 **Ongoing follow-up and continuity of care**
Patients wanted consistent follow-up after treatment, including monitoring, rapid advice for new symptoms, and continuity with the same clinical team.

27 **Clearer information and accessible materials**
People asked for clearer, jargon-free information in accessible formats, with someone available to explain letters, results and next steps.

25 **Better coordination/communication between professionals**
Patients wanted joined up working between GP, hospital, community and support services so information, results and plans flow smoothly without repeating their story.

21 **Better signposting and awareness of support**
Many didn't know what help exists; they wanted clear, early signposting to local charities, welfare advice, groups and services at diagnosis and beyond.

21 **More emotional/psychological support (counselling/therapy/bereavement)**
Patients asked for counselling, psychological therapy and bereavement support, including quicker access and options for families and carers.

> *"Better process of detection for patients with pre-existing health conditions, including ensuring symptoms of other conditions are distinguished from signs of cancer. Linked up care for both pre-existing condition and cancer care, need for care plans to be developed in a timely fashion."* Male, Sunderland Resident, Unclear primary cancer

Other Themes

10 **Person Centred Care**
More time & compassion

7 **Peer support and community based groups**

6 **Local or more accessible services**
Especially in rural areas

6 **More screening & diagnosis focus**

1 **Holistic Rehab**
Diet, exercise and physio

We cant do everything - but we can do what matters most!

@northerncancervoices

> *"The professionals actually talking to each other."* Female, Blood, South Tees resident, treatment in last 3 years

> *"Better communication between clinicians. Patients voices should be better heard."* Female, Lung, Newcastle resident, treatment in progress

Stories of change

Every project we deliver starts with real people and real experiences. In this section, we share the work that made a difference this year, from small improvements that made someone's day easier, to bigger changes that helped whole communities. Each story shows what can happen when we listen, act, and work together. These are the moments where voices became action, and action became change.

Full summaries of every project are available on our website, and printed versions are included alongside this report for anyone who wants to explore the work in more detail.

The National Cancer Plan

We made sure local voices shaped the new National Cancer Plan by gathering and submitting lived-experience insight from diverse communities. Our work helped strengthen the plan's focus on equity, access, and real-world patient experience.

Department of Health & Social Care

NHS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The National Cancer Plan for England: delivering world class cancer care

Published February 2026

CP 1500

> *"Northern Cancer Voices has already played an active role in cancer patient groups and service improvement at STSFT, bringing real authenticity to how we listen, learn, and act on lived experience. Their peer-led model perfectly complements the aims of the STSFT Cancer Improvement Collaborative by embedding the patient voice in every stage of transformation. By connecting communities, tackling isolation, and co-designing solutions alongside professionals, they help ensure that cancer care improvement remains both compassionate and meaningful, driven by the people it matters to most."*
>
> Caroline Tweedie, Macmillan Lead Cancer Nurse,
> South Tyneside & Sunderland NHS FT

Mental Wellbeing in Cancer & Palliative Care

We gathered lived-experience insights to understand how people access emotional and psychological support during cancer and palliative care. This work highlighted major inequalities and informed local action plans, service improvements, and future pathway design across multiple trusts.

NHS Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

NHS North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

NHS County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

NHS South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

TREAT, HEAT or EAT

We supported people affected by cancer who were struggling with the rising cost of living, helping them stay warm, safe, fed, and able to attend treatment. Through community outreach we connected people with practical support, registered them on the Priority Services Register, shared CO safety advice, and provided essential items like heat packs and CO monitors.

Northern Gas Networks

HEAT

SimPal
Keeping you connected

2310	Leaflets and conversations about Carbon Monoxide and Rriority Services Register
249	Referrals to Partners for support relating to energy and cost of living
93	Carbon Monoxide monitors gifted to people who did not have one
26	Heat packs gifted to people in need

Digital Voices

We worked with a digital storytelling specialist to help people turn their lived experiences of cancer into powerful digital stories. These stories now raise awareness, challenge stigma, and support education across communities and services.

Special thanks to Lesley Goodman, Kenny Macdonald and Ken Dawes

Kenny McDonald Northern Cancer Voices Air Breath Hope and a future - Part 2

Lesley Goodburn

NORTHERN
Cancer Voices

Hope
Air
Breath
and a Future

This story can be shared anywhere including online

By Kenny McDonald

08:34

CIC 7 – Acute Oncology Pathway

We helped Northumbria NHS Trust understand patient and staff experience of out-of-hours acute oncology care. Early insight revealed delays, confusion, and inequalities, guiding the project towards the right patient group and strengthening the co-design phase now underway.

NHS
Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Key Insights from Community Conversations

ivergence from Care Pathways
Many individuals bypassed acute oncology routes, opting to contact 111 or heir GP instead, showing gaps in urgent cancer support awareness.

motional Barriers to Care
eluctance to 'be a bother' reflects cultural and emotional barriers that d
mely health-seeking behavior among community memb

hallenges in Symptom
ome comm

THERN
r Voices

The Value of Human-centered Insights

eyond Clinical Data
uman-centered insights reveal emotional and behavioral factors shaping atient decisions beyond clinical outcomes.

ommunity Engagement Benefits
ngaging communities uncovers fears and obstacles that affect how people eek help and access care.

mall Interactions Matter
imple actions like clarifying symptoms and validating concerns boost patient afety and confidence.

ncouraging Curiosity in Care
rontline staff's attentive listening and asking extra questions improves esponsiveness and compassionate care.

NORTHERN
Cancer Voices

"Lorna, has been an asset to the project. I welcome her challenge and her commitment to this work. She demonstrates excellent partnership working skills and works in a dynamic and respectful manner. Thank you Lorna!" Joanne Macintosh, Chief Experience Officer, Northumbria Healthcare NHS FT

Cancer Hub Website Redesign & Support Services Consultation

We gathered public insight to understand how people use and view the Macmillan Information and Support Service. Our findings revealed key barriers and misconceptions, directly informing a full redesign of the Cancer Information Hub and strengthening future outreach and communication.

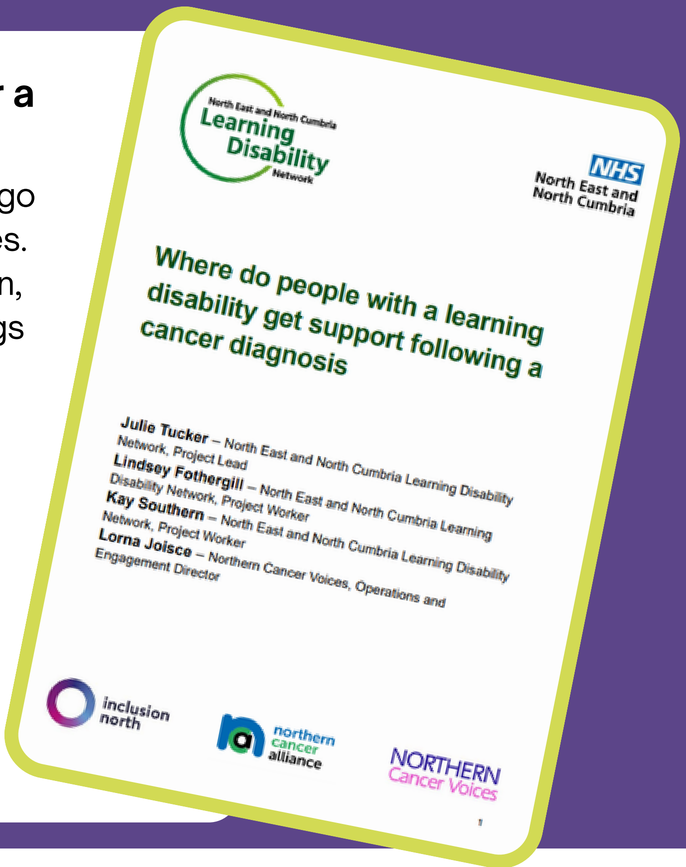
NHS
South Tyneside
and Sunderland
NHS Foundation Trust

Treatable but Not Curable (TbnC) Patient Passport

We supported South Tyneside and Sunderland in co-designing a TbnC Patient Passport shaped by lived experience. The passport now offers clearer, more compassionate information for patients at diagnosis and lays the groundwork for future supportive resources.

Learning Disability: Accessing Support After a Cancer Diagnosis

We explored where people with a learning disability go for support when cancer affects them or their families. Insights showed major gaps in accessible information, emotional support, and coordinated care. The findings now guide future pathways, training, and service improvements across the region.



Where do people with a learning disability get support following a cancer diagnosis

Julie Tucker – North East and North Cumbria Learning Disability Network, Project Lead
Lindsey Fothergill – North East and North Cumbria Learning Disability Network, Project Worker
Kay Southern – North East and North Cumbria Learning Disability Network, Project Worker
Lorna Joisce – Northern Cancer Voices, Operations and Engagement Director

Boys Need Bins

We expanded the Boys Need Bins campaign across the region, using lived experience and strong partnerships to push for inclusive facilities and reduce stigma. New resources, digital storytelling, and community engagement strengthened the campaign's reach and momentum.

Special thanks to Cllr. Ken Dawes

Cancer Care Coordinator Team Review

We worked with the South Tyneside Health Collaboration to run community engagement sessions for their annual service review. Local voices shaped improvement plans and strengthened relationships between services and community organisations

Breast Cancer Awareness for First Time Screeners

We gathered insight to understand why many women miss their first breast screening. Through interviews, surveys, and a focus group, we captured honest experiences that will inform regional improvements and may shape future national recommendations.

Your Voice Matters

Help make local breast screening services better

Scan to register - Scan to register -

Are you a woman aged 47-53?

What?
A relaxed group chat about breast screening. Share as much or as little as you like.

When?
6 - 7pm, Wednesday 11th February

Where?
Online. Click on the link in the caption or scan the QR code above to register for the event.

Together, we can make breast screening work better for everyone

Cramlington Cancer Roadshow

We partnered with Cramlington Town Council to deliver a community cancer awareness event that connected nearly 200 people with local services. The roadshow increased understanding of screening, treatment, and support—and provided real-time, compassionate help to individuals on the day.

CRAMLINGTON
Town Council

> *"Getting input from patients and the public on our work is vital, so it was wonderful to visit such an engaged group. Ann and Claire were so welcoming and helpful. We had really great discussions that will help shape the final version of the document and will inform our work in the future."*
> Kia Thomas , Assistant Editor, Health Literacy Team for NENC ICS

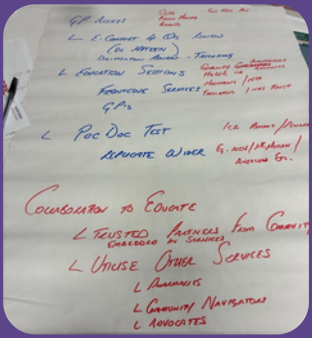
Health Literacy Team – Lung & Bowel Pathways

We helped the Health Literacy Team gather real community feedback on lung surgery information and national bowel screening materials. Public insight led to clearer, more accessible documents and strengthened the case for early, meaningful co-design in future health resources.

Call for Action – Stronger Together

We worked with the Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre to revive earlier community insight, hold two major events, and reconnect professionals with community needs. The work renewed focus on long-standing recommendations and set clear next steps for improving access and culturally sensitive support.

SBIC
SUNDERLAND
BANGLADESH
INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE



GP ACCESS

∟ E-CONSULT

EDUCATION SESSIONS

FRONTLINE SERVICES

GP's

∟ POC DOC TEST

ADVOCATE WIDER

COLLABORATION TO EDUCATE

∟ TRUSTED PARTNERS FROM COMMUNITY

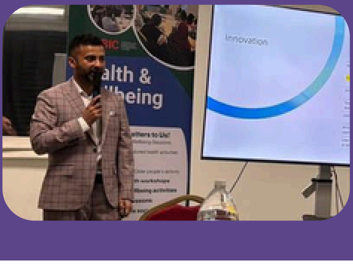
EMBEDDED IN SERVICES

∟ UTILISE OTHER SERVICES

∟ PHARMACIES

∟ COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS

∟ ADVOCATES



Palliative & End of Life Holistic Needs (HNA) Engagement

We supported engagement with seldom-heard communities to explore end-of-life needs and test the national Holistic Needs Assessment. The work uncovered emotional, cultural, and practical barriers and shaped a more compassionate, culturally safe approach for future implementation.

What matters to you

For people receiving care because their illness cannot be cured and the focus is on comfort and quality of life

Survey QR Code

NORTHERN Cancer Voices
Make Change Happen
Amplify Voices
Shape Care
Transform Lives

NHS
North East and North Cumbria

NHS
North East and
North Cumbria

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Looking Ahead

Person-Centred Delivery and Operational Model

We will ensure every individual we support receives tailored, holistic help. Our approach will focus on connected, collaborative working so that each person’s specific needs are understood and met.

Strengthening Patient and Public Voice Involvement

We will enhance and simplify the routes for people to share their experiences, ensuring clarity on how to tell their story and how they can remain involved beyond initial engagement.

Strategic Partnership Model

We will deepen relationships with community leaders and partners, so our work is embedded locally. This will make it easier for professionals to confidently signpost their service users to us and understand the value and impact of doing so.

Enhanced Communications and Impact Framework

Building on the strengthened social media presence achieved in 2024–25, we will continue to amplify our visibility and impact. This includes launching our new website and exploring additional channels to clearly communicate what we do, why it matters, and the difference it makes.

Expanding and Strengthening Volunteer Involvement

We will broaden our volunteer programme to create diverse, meaningful ways for people to get involved. This includes strengthening our delivery roles and growing our brand ambassador program, so volunteers feel equipped, valued, and confident in representing our work within their communities.

Change happens when voices are heard, and acted upon. As we look ahead, we are committed to continuing this work with courage, collaboration and community at its heart. But we cannot do it alone. We need people who are willing to speak up, listen deeply, and stand alongside those affected by cancer.

If you want to be part of a growing movement that puts lived experience at the centre of cancer systems, we invite you to join us.

In partnership with...

A HUGE Thank you to our dedicated and supportive partners for your continued dedication and focus. We are stronger together!

Northern Gas Networks

LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER
NHS England
MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT
Healthworks the community health charity
together we are the network

northern cancer alliance
NHS North East and North Cumbria
ELM TREE MEDICAL CENTRE
SimPal
NORTH EAST Chamber of Commerce

cancer care map.org Cancer Care Map
Northumberland County Council
NHS Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Cumbria CVS
NHS North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

VONNE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS' NETWORK NORTH EAST
age UK Love later life
Leica BIOSYSTEMS
Live Well with Cancer
SOUTH TYNESIDE HEALTH COLLABORATION
Community Foundation
NHS North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

Middlesbrough moving forward
Cancer connections Stronger together
FCN THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK
North Tyneside Council
SBIC SUNDERLAND BANGLADESH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

CRAMLINGTON Town Council
Wates CONSTRUCTION
NHS South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Hope Cancer Support
NHS Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust
ncva Northumberland Community & Voluntary Action In the community for the community

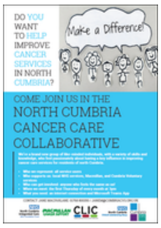
NHS County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
HEAT
inclusion north
Newcastle University
NIHR National Institute for Health Research
THE ALBERT HUNT TRUST

The bread and butter thing.
Alice House Hospice
St Oswald's Hospice
THRIVING TOGETHER
NHS The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

tackle prostate cancer
Koast RADIO
North East and North Cumbria Learning Disability Network
RURALUS
PROSTATE CANCER UK
NHS South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
NORTHUMBERLAND VOLUNTARY FORUM
TURNERS FUNFAIRS

GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL CHARITY
Eden Valley Hospice

healthwatch
Willow Burn DERWENTSIDE HOSPICE CARE FOUNDATION
bright red
TESCO
The 'Do Business' Network


DO YOU WANT TO HELP IMPROVE CANCER SERVICES IN NORTH CUMBRIA?

COME JOIN US IN THE NORTH CUMBRIA CANCER CARE COLLABORATIVE

karbon homes
silver friends
The Joicey Trust The Joicey Trust is a registered charity 244679
ASDA
Northumberland Recovery College
MAGGIE'S
Parkdean Resorts
CAJA

THE ANGELOU CENTRE
Connect360
iCan Wellbeing Group CIO
3 PEAKS CHALLENGES ORANGE JOHN MOUNTAIN GUIDE
APNA GHAR

Find Out more
Get Involved or Donate

NORTHERN CANCER VOICES

info@northerncancervoices.co.uk
northerncancervoices.org