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A message of thanks from our Chief Executive, Karen McIntyre



Thank you for your ongoing commitment to supporting people in Ayrshire who are affected by cancer; you've helped us deliver crucial services throughout 2026, and you've been an important part of the positive impact that those services have made.

This year I have heard many people talk about their positive experiences of our services; from the woman describing the stability and peace of mind that our patient transport service provided her family while her husband received treatment, to the young Mum explaining how much her children benefitted from our specialist support for Children & Young People. From the widower who told me that slowly he'd been able to rebuild his life following the loss of his wife, to the man living with prostate cancer who attended our 6-week course and how empowered he felt as a result.

In 2026 our staff and volunteer teams have worked hard to ensure that our services are of the highest standards, and that our values of kindness, care and compassion are woven through everything we do. Ayrshire Cancer Support benefits from over 200 volunteers who do all sorts; they sit behind steering wheels getting patients to where they need to be, they make coffee while listening to someone telling their story, they assist in our shop and support fundraising events, they paint pictures with the Children & Young People's group, and they maintain our outdoor areas. These are local volunteers who give up their time and energy week in and week out - they are much valued and we simply couldn't deliver services without them.

I'm continually impressed by how communities across Ayrshire support one another. We do not receive any statutory funding, and we are therefore indebted to the many, many individuals and businesses who have donated to us in 2026 – thank you for every single penny. Your compassion and kindness is making a difference to people, and families, across Ayrshire. Thank you for being part of that.

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Supporting Families When It Matters Most

One of the most significant developments for Ayrshire Cancer Support this year has been the expansion of our support for children and young people (CYP) affected by cancer, through The Rainbow Project.

Cancer affects far more than the person receiving a diagnosis. Families face uncertainty, worry and emotional challenges when cancer enters their lives. As demand for our services increases, ensuring that families can access the right support at the right time has become more important than ever.

Thanks to 3 years' funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, we have been able to strengthen and expand our CYP Support Service, creating new opportunities for families across Ayrshire to access specialist support.

This generous funding means we have two new members of staff; Rachel, our Family Support Practitioner, who is providing compassionate one-to-one support to CYP and families affected by or bereaved through cancer. And Jacqueline, our Cancer Support Specialist and an experienced specialist nurse, who is enhancing services by providing a higher level of specialist support through our drop-in centres. We now offer specialist face-to-face support at both of our centres in Kilmarnock and Ayr, Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm, in person, without an appointment.

The Rainbow Project is about more than expanding services. It is about ensuring that every child, young person and family knows they do not have to face cancer alone. Whether through emotional support, practical guidance, specialist interventions or opportunities to connect with others who understand their experiences, the project is helping to build resilience, confidence and hope for local families at often the most difficult times in their lives.

We are incredibly grateful to The National Lottery Community Fund for making The Rainbow Project possible and helping us reach more children, young people and families than ever before. While this funding supports a vital part of our CYP Service, many of our other core services still depend on donations and community support. You can help us to continue making an impact in communities across Ayrshire by supporting us, please see page 8 for more information on how to donate.

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Living Life to the Full: Alan's Story

My name is Alan. I am 49 years old, a teacher at Girvan Academy, husband to Louise, and dad to three wonderful children, aged 16, 7 and 6.



In July 2025, I was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer which had already spread to my liver, where multiple tumours were found. As you can imagine, receiving that diagnosis hit me like a tonne of bricks. Thankfully, I was told that my cancer was a neuroendocrine tumour (NET), which is generally less aggressive than many other forms of pancreatic cancer, and has a life expectancy of years, rather than months. I never asked how many years. For me, that wasn't the most important question. I feel there are things I can control, such as the way I live my life, what I put into my body, and how I look after my physical fitness.

One of the most challenging aspects of my diagnosis was my treatment plan, and the lack of options; it was hard to process because physically I felt completely fine. In fact, I had always felt fine. My cancer was discovered almost by accident when my GP was investigating a low blood count. I had no symptoms whatsoever.

My wife Louise and I were determined to explore every possible option. After a lot of research, particularly through online NET support forums, we requested a referral to the Royal Free Hospital in London, which has one of Europe's leading specialist NET centres. For the first time since diagnosis, we had something that felt invaluable: a plan. The proposed treatment involved three stages. First, PRRT treatment (a type of targeted internal radiotherapy) to shrink the pancreatic tumour, followed by surgery to remove it, and then, if everything went well, the possibility of a liver transplant.

On 3rd June this year, I underwent major surgery to remove the tumour. Two-thirds of my pancreas were removed, along with my spleen and gallbladder. What was expected to be a six to seven-hour operation became a thirteen-hour surgery. It was an incredibly stressful day for my wife, family and friends, but thankfully everything went well. All the staff were outstanding. Today, I am back at work full-time and enjoying being a husband, dad and teacher once again. I am now looking ahead to my next MRI scan in January and hoping that my liver tumours remain stable to allow me to join the liver transplant waiting list.

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Throughout this experience, Ayrshire Cancer Support has been there for me. I already knew Gill (the charity's CYP Service Lead), which probably made walking through the door for the first time a little easier. I must say that all the staff are amazing - from the volunteers who meet and greet you for a cuppa and a blether, right up to the director. I attended one of the support groups and if I'm honest, I was quite anxious beforehand, but it did feel like a weight being lifted by being able to speak about my diagnosis with people who are in the same boat as me. I have also benefited from complementary therapy sessions - reiki with Elaine and massage with Dawn. Those sessions gave me a chance to fully switch off from everything that was going on around me and completely de-stress. Craig (Director of Care Services) was also very helpful when I was trying to navigate the issues surrounding funding for my PRRT treatment – I would have been lost without the guidance.

If I could offer one piece of advice to anyone facing a cancer diagnosis, it would be to be open and honest about how you are feeling with everyone. Connect with Ayrshire Cancer Support. The team can help with practical questions, emotional support and guidance at a time when life can feel overwhelming. Research your diagnosis and treatment from reliable sources, and if appropriate, look into available trials.

The most important thing for me is to have a positive attitude. As much as I am only 49, I have been blessed with an amazing life and family. Since diagnosis I no longer get stressed with the small things in life. "In the grand scheme of things" has become a regular saying in the house when dealing with small day to day life issues.

My goal is to raise funds for both Ayrshire Cancer Support and the Royal Free Hospital. If I successfully receive a liver transplant and recover well, I hope to take part in Sir Chris Hoy's Tour de 4 cycling event and undertake a trek to Everest Base Camp with my eldest son, raising money for causes that have made such a difference in my life.

Ayrshire Cancer Support receives no statutory funding and relies entirely on donations, fundraising and community support. With one in every two people likely to get a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime, the service they provide could be one that you rely on in the future, so if you can do anything to support them, please do. Whether it's donating items to the charity shop, attending an event, organising a fundraiser, taking part in a sponsored challenge or making a financial contribution - your donation will benefit so many people.

If you would like to access support from ACS, please drop in, click "Get Support" on our website, call 01563 538008, or email admin@ayrshirecs.org

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Ready, Set, Splash: Our Big Boxing Day Dip is back!

When Ayrshire folk come together, amazing things happen. By supporting a local charity like Ayrshire Cancer Support, you can help make a real difference in the lives of people facing cancer across our communities. Join us as the Big Boxing Day Dip returns for 2026 and help us make a big splash.

Last year over £40,000 was raised, funding vital services such as counselling for local families and transport for patients receiving treatment. Thanks to supporters like you, we've achieved so much together and this year, we're determined to go even further and make an even bigger difference.

Visit ayrshirecs.org/fundraising to see all upcoming events and activities.



The more, the merrier.

Whether you're starting a new family tradition, gathering your friends for a festive reset, or just up for the challenge - we want to see you there. It's all happening at 11am on Boxing Day (not too early!) at Ayr Beach.

How to get involved:

1. Register via the link here.
2. Set up and get started on your fundraising.
3. Take part on Boxing Day.

BIG BOXING DAY DIP

Saturday 26th December 2026

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This Christmas, Give the Gift of Sapphire.

Looking for a Christmas gift that sparkles a little brighter this year? Treat your loved ones (or yourself!) to a night of elegance and entertainment at our Sapphire Ball – the highlight of our fundraising calendar. Join us on Saturday 20th February 2027 at Ayr Racecourse for an unforgettable evening helping us celebrate 45 years of Ayrshire Cancer Support at our Sapphire Ball, a night of indulgence where glamour meets purpose.



As we honour four and a half decades of caring for people affected by cancer across Ayrshire, your support will help us continue providing holistic and comprehensive services for people in communities throughout the region.

By buying a table or ticket this Christmas, you're not just giving the gift of a magical night out- you're helping us raise essential funds to continue to deliver our services throughout the year.

Dress to impress and make this Christmas gift one to remember. To book, email fundraising@ayrshirecs.org

£90 Per Ticket **£900 Per Table of 10**

Give the Gift That Lasts Beyond Christmas

This Christmas choose a gift that changes lives by setting up a monthly Direct Debit today to help us continue our vital work throughout the year.

Set up your Monthly Donation here

This Christmas, make your generosity go even further by setting up a monthly Direct Debit to support our vital services and help us plan ahead, ensuring we can continue to deliver essential support during challenging times, all year round.

By setting up a monthly gift you'll be:

- **Creating lasting impact** - your regular support helps us provide consistent care and essential services.
- **Spreading the spirit of giving** - a meaningful gift that keeps helping others long after the festivities end.
- **Making it easy** - one simple sign up means your donation goes out automatically each month, making a difference without you having to lift a finger.

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A summary April 2025 - March 2026

32,499
Total patient/client contacts

Patient transport journeys **16,522**

15,977
Care services contacts

2,513
Drop-in attendances across our Kilmarnock & Ayr Centres

99 In-patient hospital complementary therapy hours

2,866
Sessions with counsellors therapists & CYP Service Lead

Contacts at the Kyle Chemotherapy Unit Tea & Information service **6,975**

2,041
Attendances at support groups, courses & workshops

Support sessions delivered by cancer support specialists **1,483**

Impact Report

These incredible numbers are only possible with the support of our **214 wonderful volunteers**. To find out more about the impact we make, have a look at our Impact Report 2025 - 2026 **available at www.ayrshirecs.org**

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Christmas Wish



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Our Christmas wish at Ayrshire Cancer Support is to ensure that no one in our community has to face cancer alone. Every pound you give will help us make this happen.

Your donation powers free hospital transport and our professional and individualised support services that local families rely on.

Please, give a gift of hope this Christmas.



Support us Today

Online

Visit www.ayrshirecs.org/donate and select single, monthly or legacy donation.

By Post

Send a cheque (payable to Ayrshire Cancer Support) to: 5 Dundonald Road, Kilmarnock, KA1 1EQ.

Phone or Bank Transfer

Call 01563 538008 to make a payment by card over the phone or to confirm our bank details and make a payment direct to bank.

Festive Opening Times

Our centres in Kilmarnock and Ayr will close at 2pm on Christmas Eve. We are open 10am-4pm on December 29 and 30, and 10am-2pm on December 31. Normal drop-in hours of 10am-4pm begin again on Tuesday 5 January 2027.

Final Thank You & Christmas Wishes

As 2026 draws to a close, we extend our well wishes to you and your loved ones for the festive period and wish you all the best for the year ahead with our sincerest thanks and gratitude.