

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2027



CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

20 years since the first South East Cancer Foundation opened in Lismore Park, 10 years after we moved into the Solas Centre at Williamstown, 6 years after we opened a West Waterford Service in Dungarvan and in the midst of a global pandemic, it seemed like a good time to reevaluate what we do and what our aspirations should be going forward. Accordingly, in February 2022, our Board of Trustees approved the undertaking of a Strategic Plan for the next five years. This is the result.

The process was a very thorough one and we are indebted to Rethink Ireland who funded an external professional Strategic Consultant, Vanessa Bancroft. I'd also like to thank the Strategic Planning subcommittee of our Board including Marian Keane, Jenny Beresford, Sinead Ahearne and Tracy McDaid who were tasked with developing a Strategy for discussion and approval by the main Board of Trustees, and to the Client Services and Development Committee for their input.

The "building blocks" for the Strategy came from several detailed "One to One" interviews with clients, a fundraiser, a corporate patron, the National Cancer Control Programme Patient Engagement Manager and aligned health care professionals as well as an online survey with 50 Therapists, Counsellors and Volunteer colleagues. All of this was real feedback from people who are actively engaged with the service in Waterford City and Dungarvan and who wanted to make suggestions for the future. We thank you all.

The HSE has in recent years sought to support the Community Cancer Support Centres through the establishment of the NCCP (National Cancer Care Programme) Alliance. We were pleased to be involved in the drafting of their Best Practice Guidelines and be a pilot site for their peer review process. In developing this Strategy, we looked

at our relationship with the NCCP, the Irish Cancer Society, local aligned services as well as population and cancer statistics.

The number of people affected by a cancer diagnosis has been increasing year on year. Fortunately, the numbers dealing with favourable outcomes is growing at a higher rate due to advances of medical therapies and knowledge of the importance of earlier diagnosis. As such, the demand for our services is projected to grow every year and it is critical for us to continually seek to become better, to improve and innovate our services. As such INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP is one of our three core strategic pillars of the Strategic Plan for the next five years.

In recognising the work of other regional Cancer Support Centres, that were not in existence 20 years ago, we felt it was important to clarify our geographical remit at this time. As such, we aim to support people from "Waterford and the surrounding areas". This is purposely vague as we will not turn anyone away because of their postal address. At the same time, we recognise that there are excellent community Cancer Support Centres in Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary and Wexford. We do not aspire to cover the full Southeast as was our initial remit by the South Eastern Cancer Foundation founding fathers twenty years ago.

A cancer diagnosis is traumatic for all people who receive one. So too for their family and friends.

Our clear simple message is that "No one will deal with cancer alone". We are here for everyone. And as cancer doesn't discriminate between different genders, different religions, different ethnic backgrounds, different ages, different postcodes or different nationalities, we do mean "no-one". Accordingly, another one of our three core strategic pillars going forward is "GROWTH AND DIVERSITY"


The overriding principle of Solas support has always been that we provide a range of bespoke support services to our clients free of charge. All our service providers are professional, contracted counsellors and therapists as it is critical for our clients that any support they receive is confidential, emphatic and professional. We continuously seek to reach out to more and more people and persuade them that "yes, they deserve or are entitled to benefit from our support as well". Ironically the better we are at reaching out to people to contact us for support, the bigger our funding requirement becomes as we remain largely dependent on voluntary donations. Therefore, our final core strategic pillar is around "FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY" so that we have the resources to deliver on our promises.

This Strategic Plan for the Solas Cancer Support Centre for the period 2023- 2027 was approved by the Board of Trustees on July 14th 2022 and we hope that you may look on it as YOUR PLAN and thus help us to deliver on it over the next five years.

Barry Monaghan

Chair



A large crowd of people, mostly wearing orange t-shirts, is gathered on a city street for a charity run. The street is lined with buildings, including a pub named 'DOOLAN' and a 'SUBWAY' restaurant. The crowd is dense, filling the street from the foreground into the distance. A green circular graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

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THE SOUTH EASTERN CANCER
FOUNDATION CAN AND DOES
PROVIDE LIGHT. APPROPRIATELY,
THEIR FRIENDSHIP IS TERMED
"SOLAS" - THE IRISH FOR LIGHT."**

Fiachra

BACKGROUND

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Solas Cancer Support Centre is a charity that provides free support services to those affected by cancer, their families and carers in Waterford and the surrounding areas.

We offer a range of supports and services that include provision of information, counselling services, complementary therapies, yoga and relaxation classes as well as support groups and survivorship programmes. Services are delivered by a team of 30 contracted professional counsellors, therapists and facilitators. The charity is supported by over 70 volunteers, 6 members of a Community Employment scheme and 5 staff members.

The charity was started in 1999 by a team of healthcare professionals in University Hospital Waterford who recognised the need for and benefits of non-medical support for those affected by cancer in the South East.

Following a large fundraising campaign, which included support from medical professionals, public representatives and the local community, a new purpose built centre was opened in 2011 in Waterford city.

We are recognised by key policy stakeholders as a leader within the Cancer Support Services sector for our professional, innovative and accessible services to support people affected by cancer.

OUR VISION

That no one will deal with cancer alone.

OUR MISSION

To support people affected by cancer, their families and carers in Waterford and surrounding areas.

OUR CORE VALUES

These Core Values underpin all aspects of our work within the Solas Cancer Support Centre


- **Here for all**
- **Excellence**
- **Empowerment**
- **Trustworthiness**
- **Community**





WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT US?

- Open to everyone/accessible/free
- Community Focus
- Wrap around supports available in which clients decide which services they engage with
- A recognised high quality professional services
- Established track record
- Level of innovation/best practice in sector: Bereavement Programme for schools developed and delivered by Solas has been selected to be part of the Growing Up in Ireland evaluation and evaluated for a Social Return on Investment programme, conducted by Rethink Ireland.
- Culture of continuous improvement and innovation
- A purpose built building in Waterford city owned by the Solas organisation.

A photograph of a trellis covered in green leaves and blooming pink roses. The trellis is made of light-colored wooden or metal slats. The background is slightly blurred, showing a paved path and more greenery. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

**"ALL SERVICES IN
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I VALUE AND APPRECIATE THIS
PRICELESS GIFT IN MY LIFE"**

Hilary

KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The National Cancer Strategy 2017–2026 developed by the Department of Health identifies community cancer supports as one of the key services for cancer patients and their families in terms of psychological, emotional and practical support. It is recognised by key policy makers that the Community Cancer Support Centres (CCSCs), such as Solas, fill a substantial gap within the healthcare sector by providing this comprehensive support service for cancer patients and their families. The provision of these services is crucial to the development of a comprehensive psychological support service for cancer patients and their families. The importance of the work of CCSCs is further endorsed through the Slainte Care Action Plan 2019 vision of the 'Right Care, Right Time, Right Place.'

CCSCs operate in the charity sector and rely primarily on their own funding sources to run their services. They provide a range of services to patients, their families and carers; ranging from core services including the provision of information, psychological support and survivorship programmes, to complementary therapies, yoga and relaxation classes, support groups, financial advice and drop-in services.

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) introduced Best Practice Guidelines for Cancer Support Services August in 2020. These guidelines offer a roadmap for building on the foundation that has been provided to date by voluntary and charitable organisations and bring a more standardised approach, protocols and resources to the sector. It also identifies core services for Community Cancer Support Centres into the future and how this sector can become an integrated and integral part of national cancer survivorship services. Solas is fully in line with these guidelines and has been highlighted both as a leader in the sector and recognised as a model of best practice by the NCCP.

An additional key focus within the NCCP is to create an identified patient pathway from a hospital cancer centre to a community cancer support centre and vice versa. This will be achieved by ensuring that CCSCs become a recognised integral part of the cancer patient journey, particularly in the post active treatment phase. Whilst Solas has strong partnerships with the local hospitals, this focus by the NCCP will support its objectives of embedding its role and value within the medical community.



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

GROWTH

In the 5 year period from 2015 to 2020 the number of new clients engaging with the service grew from 514 to 964 - a growth of 53%. This growth was due, in part, to the opening of a West Waterford service in Dungarvan in September 2016.

LAUNCHED NEW SERVICES

New services introduced include Craniosacral Therapy, Play Therapy, Acupuncture, Survivorship Programmes, and School Bereavement Programme.

EMBRACED TECHNOLOGY

We upgraded our IT systems in 2016 which allows us to manage our information and diary and allows us to offer an online suite of services.

ESTABLISHED NEW PARTNERSHIPS

We have embraced new partnerships both nationally and locally in offering the best support to our clients.

SOLID FUNDING BASE

We embraced new funding opportunities that include government funding, grant agencies and corporate support.

GOVERNANCE

Full compliance with the Charity Regulator's Governance Code and the National Cancer Control Programme's Standards of Best Practice for Cancer Centres.


COVID 19

We pivoted quickly to offer online services and supports to clients during 2020 and 2021. Some of these online supports will remain as part of our delivery model in the future.

ISSUE ANALYSIS

Cancer incidence in Ireland - Data from the Irish Cancer Society shows that approx 45,000 people in Ireland receive a cancer diagnosis each year, representing almost 1% of the population. This figure is comprised of both invasive and non-invasive tumours, as well as non-melanoma skin cancers. Cancer diagnosis and treatment does not just have physical side-effects but also a variety of psychological consequences during and after treatment, which can persist for many years after active medical treatment is completed. In addition it is recognised that these psychological consequences may also impact significantly on the family and carers of individuals who have received a cancer diagnosis.





**"SOLAS HAS BEEN
A TREMENDOUS
RESOURCE TO ME ON
MY CANCER JOURNEY
AND I CAN'T BUT HIGHLY
RECOMMEND IT TO
OTHERS"**

Cecilia

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

SOLAS HAS BUILT STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF KEY STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THEIR SECTOR.

- 1. Sector policy makers such as HSE, NCCP, Irish Cancer Society:** Solas is highlighted as a model of best practice and firmly positioned in the top tier of the CCSCs nationwide. We promote a high level of professionalism and excellent corporate governance to the sector.
- 1. Medical Professionals:** Solas supports and services can play a fundamental role in improving the patient wellbeing and outcomes. They can also offer individual supports to individuals that due to time pressure is not always available within the medical environment (despite best efforts).
- 1. Clients:** a full suite of therapies, classes and group supports that are free and accessible to all in a warm, confidential and caring environment.

1. Corporate Social Responsibility: We are a local, community based organisation that has extensive recognition both through the individuals we support as well as their families and carers impacted by cancer.

1. Colleagues: We value all of our colleagues and offer an opportunity to work in a highly professional environment with an openness to new practice and innovation.

Solas Cancer Support Centre will continue to network with other organisations providing similar services in the South East including Cois Noir Cancer Support Centre in Kilkenny, Eist Cancer Support Centre in Carlow, Hope Cancer Support Centre in Enniscorthy, and in Tipperary Circle of Friends Cancer Support Centre, CARE Cancer Support Centre and Suir Haven Cancer Support Centre and Suaimhneas Cancer Support Centre.





MARKET

The population of the South East region based on the 2016 Census is at 581,600. Based on predictions by the Irish Cancer Society, the South East region will have 5,816 newly diagnosed cancer patients each year, with Waterford county estimated as having 1,161.

Solas has a number of approaches to reach these individuals and their families/carers who may benefit from their services:

1. Existing awareness/word of mouth
2. Referrals from hospitals, highlighting the value that the Solas service can provide to

patients and carers both during and post medical treatment.

3. Over the next 5 years Solas will focus on reaching demographics that previously would not have typically accessed its services. This includes targeting cohorts such as new Irish communities, men, and socioeconomic disadvantaged areas. Whilst Solas has a strong and positive profile across the region it is recognised that additional targeted programmes may be needed to both reach and remove any potential barriers that may exist in order to access the Solas services.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2023 - 2027

OBJECTIVE 1

GROWTH & DIVERSITY

INCREASE NUMBER AND DIVERSITY OF CLIENTS ACROSS WATERFORD AND SURROUNDING AREAS.

Goal 1: Increase client numbers from defined target cohorts including men, diverse backgrounds, socioeconomically disadvantaged and minority groups.

Goal 2: Increase client numbers in the West Waterford service.

OBJECTIVE 2

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

BUILD A FINANCIAL SUSTAINABLE PLAN TO SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN THE ORGANISATION

Goal 1: Develop strategic partnerships with new companies/businesses.

Goal 2: Build a financial framework around recurring giving and bequests.

Goal 3: Secure sustainable government / philanthropic funding.

OBJECTIVE 3

LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION

BUILD A BEST PRACTICE MODEL OF DELIVERY AND EVALUATION TO ENSURE CONSISTENT HIGH-QUALITY APPROACH.

Goal 1: Build organisational capability through recruitment and training to support delivery.

Goal 2: Embed an impact and evaluation model across organisation.

Goal 3: Strengthen partnerships for advocacy/awareness campaigns to support organisation growth.

Goal 4: Ensure organisation is aligned with best practice guidelines from governing bodies.

Goal 5: Develop innovative services to best support clients in a changing environment.