

IMPACT

24/25

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Our Year in Numbers



Avg. stay in
Somerton House

24.7
days

(up from 22.3 in 23/24)

52

new families
introduced to the
Palliative & Life
Limited Service



(up from 27 in 23/24)



237

admissions to adult
Inpatient Unit

(up from 230 in 23/24)

1,047

Instances of support by
multidisciplinary team
in community

(either in
person or
virtual)



(Up from 787 in 23/24)



309

patients used our
Hospice at Home
Service

(up from 278 in 23/24)

6228 hours of Hospice at
Home care provided to

52

children



13,443



Adult SPC
Nursing
Home visits

(up from 13397 in 23/24)

137,620 volunteer hours =

£1.75m

in equivalent salary costs saved



(up from 118,472 hrs and £1.35m in 23/24)

49.4%

of patients admitted
were under 65



(down from 51% in 23/24)

We actively supported



333

children and their families
in 24/25' - at Horizon House
and in the community

(up from 309 in 23/24)

It took

£19.5m

to run NI Hospice and
Children's Hospice in 2024/25



**in line with
2023/24**

91

families
provided
with
ongoing
support
by the
Palliative
& Life
Limited
Service



(up from 38 in 23/24)

394

individual sessions
of post-bereavement
support provided to
families and carers by
the Social Work team



10 children were admitted for
end of life care for

139

nights



(up from 71 in 23/24)





We are Northern Ireland Hospice



Northern Ireland Hospice is a leading local charity providing specialist palliative care for babies, children, and adults living with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions. Our care is holistic, focusing not only on managing physical symptoms but also on supporting emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being, for patients and their families alike.

Our Services

Hospice Units

We operate two dedicated hospice facilities: Somerton House, our Adult In-Patient Unit, and Horizon House, Northern Ireland's only Children's Hospice. Our multi-disciplinary teams provide compassionate, patient-centred care, ensuring dignity and comfort at every stage of illness.

Community-Based Care

The care we provide extends beyond our hospice buildings. Seven Specialist Community Nursing teams deliver care across Northern Ireland, working closely

with GPs, District Nurses, social workers, and pharmacists to create personalised care plans. In addition, the Hospice at Home service provides one-to-one nursing care, allowing families to rest while their loved ones receive expert support at home. Outreach services from physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and holistic care professionals help prevent crises and reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, ensuring care extends beyond our hospice walls.

Education, Research and Collaboration

As the largest provider of hospice care in Northern Ireland, we play a key role in education and research. Through partnerships with the All-Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AIHPC) and the Palliative Care Research Network Northern Ireland, we deliver training and contribute to the advancement of palliative care knowledge and practice.

Our Charitable Purpose

Northern Ireland Hospice exists to provide specialist palliative care and support - free of



charge - to individuals with life-limiting illnesses and their families. Our work focuses on:

- Relieving suffering and promoting comfort for children, young people, and adults, including physical, social, psychological, and spiritual support.
- Advancing palliative care through education, training, research, and evaluation, sharing knowledge locally and internationally.

As Northern Ireland's largest provider of specialist children's and adult's palliative care, we continue to work across networks to influence funding, shape service delivery, and ensure that everyone who needs hospice care can access it.

Our Vision

Is that infants, children and adults with life-limiting and life-threatening illnesses and their families, receive palliative care of the highest standards, thereby maximising their quality of life.

Our Mission

Is to inspire and deliver excellent and compassionate specialist palliative care via effective service models underpinned by exemplary education, innovation and research.

Our Values

We believe in:

- A culture of respect and acceptance without distinction or judgement, where everyone can belong.
- Acting with courage, compassion and integrity to add value to all that we do.
- Being pioneering, professional and accountable to deliver our very best.





Message from the Chair and Chief Executive Officer

We are proud to present this year's Impact Report, which reflects a period of remarkable progress and renewed purpose for Northern Ireland Hospice. Despite a challenging economic environment, we have continued to grow, innovate, and deliver on our mission to provide world-class specialist palliative care for all who need it.

Each year, Northern Ireland Hospice supports over 4,000 babies, children, and adults living with life-limiting and terminal conditions. Our care extends far beyond the patient. We support families and loved ones through bereavement counselling, emotional support, and holistic social care.

As the needs of our community become more complex, driven by an ageing population, later diagnoses, and increasing medical and social challenges, we continue to adapt to ensure we deliver the best care possible. We embrace innovation, ensuring our services evolve to meet the changing landscape of palliative care.

Our commitment is unwavering: to provide compassionate, specialist care, free of charge, for those who need it most. Unlike the NHS, we do not receive full government funding. Public funding and fundraising are *both* crucial to ensure we can deliver our services.

Our services are only made possible by the generosity of individuals, businesses, trusts, and philanthropic partners both locally and globally.

We are proud of the progress we have made over the last year. However, we continue to operate in a challenging environment, as we continue to be impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, economic uncertainty, and the rising costs of providing our services. Yet, thanks to the resilience of our team and the support of the communities we serve, we continue to deliver care that makes a profound difference to the lives of thousands.

In the 25/26 year, our operating costs are being significantly impacted by factors outside of our control, including increases in National Insurance contributions and thresholds, as well as the rise in the National Living Wage. These changes place additional pressure on our financial resources, requiring us to identify new efficiencies and funding streams to ensure we can continue to meet the increasing needs of our patients and families without compromising the quantity or quality of our care.

Despite these challenges, we have exceeded our key objectives and are proud to have reached a position of financial and operational stability earlier than

anticipated. However, challenges remain, and we acknowledge that there is more to do. Increased government funding is critical to ensuring that we can continue to provide the existing levels of care and, more importantly, to enable us to expand our services against a backdrop of increased demand for specialist palliative care. We continue to deliver improvements through our strategic pillars – Patients, People, Performance and Perpetuity and could not have done this without the dedication of our team, the generosity of our supporters and the strength of our partnerships across the health and social care system.

At the core of our strategic vision, we plan to expand both our adults' and children's services. We need to increase the number of beds available at both sites, and are planning to ensure more patients and families can access the compassionate, specialist care they need.

For our Adult Services, this includes a capital project to convert office space at Alexandra House (adjacent to the In-Patient Unit) into accommodation for patients and families. This initiative reflects our commitment to adapting our facilities to meet the evolving needs of those for whom we care. Increasingly, our patient profile includes younger individuals who are receiving palliative care while also caring for young children or supporting elderly parents. We aim to provide a welcoming and supportive environment where families can stay together, find rest, and maintain a sense of normalcy during what is often a deeply challenging time.

In our Children's Hospice, we are working toward expanding capacity from 6 to 10 beds. This will enable us to double the number of short-stay nights available per child from 6 to 12 annually, bringing us in line with provision across UK and Irish children's hospices. This expansion is not just about numbers; it is about outcomes. More bed nights mean more opportunities for respite,

more support for families, and ultimately, better quality of life for the children for whom we care.

We are actively exploring funding options to make our ambition in adults and children's Hospice become a reality.

Beyond this, we are looking at new ways to improve community pharmacy services to help patients and their families access critical medications when and where they need them.

These developments are more than just service enhancements; they reflect our commitment to delivering specialist palliative care that is accessible, sustainable, and centred on the needs of those we serve.

We await the outcome of the Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee's review into access to palliative care. We welcome this important work and hope it will lead to greater recognition of the essential role hospice care plays in the wider health and social care system, as well as increased support for sustainable service development.

We remain deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, donors, and partners. Together, we are building a future where everyone in Northern Ireland can live well until the end of life.

Ian Sheppard,
Chair



ID Sheppard.

Trevor McCartney,
Chief Executive Officer



Trevor McCartney



Our Impact in 2024/25

The strategic plan for 2023/28 is aligned with four key pillars:

Patients: Delivering compassionate, specialist care.

People: Investing in our staff and volunteers.

Perpetuity: Ensuring long-term sustainability.

Performance: Strengthening insights and reporting.

These pillars guide everything we do as we continue to provide support to babies, children, and adults with life-limiting and life-threatening illnesses across Northern Ireland.



Pillar 1: Patients – Delivering Compassionate, Specialist Care

At the heart of our work are the patients and families we serve. In 2024/25, Northern Ireland Hospice provided specialist care to over 4,000 babies, children, and adults living with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions. Our holistic model places the individual and their family at the centre, ensuring compassionate, high-quality support throughout their journey. Over the past year, we have expanded service delivery across all areas, including the rollout of non-medical prescribing, the permanent reinstatement of a bed at the Children's Hospice, strengthened collaboration with the Fetal Medicine Centre in Belfast, and the continued development of our hub services to provide responsive, community-based care.

Pillar 2: People – Investing in Our Staff and Volunteers

Our people are the driving force behind everything we do. In 2024/25, we remained committed to supporting the wellbeing and professional development of our staff and volunteers. Through our People Strategy, we continued to invest in training and upskilling to meet evolving service needs. The expansion of Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) roles, from one to three, with two nearing completion of their training, ensures we are well-positioned to manage the growing complexity of patient care. We were also proud to participate in the Sunday Times Best Places to Work Staff Engagement Survey, where Northern Ireland Hospice was the only organisation from Northern Ireland to be recognised in the 'Best Big Places to Work' category.





Pillar 3: Perpetuity – Ensuring Long-Term Sustainability

In 2024/25, we made significant strides toward securing the long-term sustainability of Northern Ireland Hospice. By applying a disciplined approach to cost management and operational efficiency, we successfully transformed the organisation to deliver enhanced services without increasing expenditure. Looking ahead, our focus is on driving income growth to safeguard service continuity. We will continue to advocate for increased and recurrent government funding that accurately reflects the value and impact of hospice care.



Pillar 4: Performance – Strengthening Insights and Reporting

In 2024/25, Northern Ireland Hospice continued to strengthen its approach to performance measurement and service delivery. We streamlined internal workflows to enhance operational efficiency and improve outcomes. Our Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) digital transformation project is progressing well and is set to deliver long-term, sustainable efficiencies across finance, payroll, and the People and Organisational Development team. We remain proud of our consistent compliance with statutory requirements and RQIA standards, while embedding value-for-money initiatives throughout the organisation. In addition, the Board refined its governance structure by consolidating five committees into three and optimising reporting lines to support more effective decision-making.

This report is structured around our four strategic pillars, illustrating how our goals are being achieved and how they continue to advance our mission.

As we look back on the year, we take pride in our accomplishments and reaffirm our commitment to delivering the highest standards of care, now and into the future.





Patients: Adult Services

At Somerton House in Belfast, our 18-bed Adult In-Patient Unit continues to provide compassionate, holistic care for people living with life-limiting illnesses. In 2024/25, our consultant-led multi-disciplinary team welcomed 237 admissions, offering expert support to help manage symptoms and, where possible, enable patients to return home. For many, this was a place where they spent their final days, supported by care that extended beyond the physical to meet emotional and spiritual needs. Over the year, we provided end-of-life care to 168 patients and their families, ensuring they had the support they needed at one of life's most difficult moments.

Bed occupancy remained high, and the average length of stay increased, reflecting the growing complexity of our patients' needs. Significantly, half of all patients were under 65, meaning our team also supported multigenerational families, including children and young people, through challenging and unexpected transitions.

We were delighted to welcome the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) to inspect both our in-patient and community services. Their feedback highlighted the excellent standards of care delivered across the Hospice, a testament to the dedication and expertise of our team.

Continuous improvement remains at the heart of our work. This year, we introduced:

- New patient-centred nursing care plan records to enhance personalised care
- Safer Care, a daily assurance system for rapid review of key patient safety metrics
- A new medicines management education tool, refreshing learning for both new and existing nursing staff

Our Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) team, now including one qualified ANP and two trainees in their final year, celebrated the first anniversary of implementing non-medical prescribing, increasing continuity and quality of care for patients.

Adult Community Services

Many of our patients wish to remain at home, surrounded by loved ones. In 2024/25, our specialist community nursing teams, alongside our Hospice at Home team, delivered **3,364** episodes of care across Northern Ireland, helping **1,541** patients achieve their wish to die at home. Our nurses made **13,443** home visits, while Hospice at Home provided **4,048** hours of direct care, offering comfort and respite for patients and families.

We introduced new Quality Indicators for our Specialist Palliative Care Community Nursing service to measure outcomes consistently and identify areas for improvement. A revised community 'patient wishes' document ensures that important conversations about patient





preferences are recorded and reviewed, supporting care that aligns with their wishes.

Our outreach services from consultants, doctors, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists continued to prevent crises and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, building on changes introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collaboration and Innovation

We continued to participate in the Belfast Palliative Care in Partnership single point of access project, working with Health and Social Care Trusts and other hospices to develop a more seamless, coordinated approach to service delivery for adults in Belfast.

Bereavement Support

Our Social Work team provided 394 post-bereavement individual sessions, alongside group support, while our Bereavement Café continued as a safe monthly space for people to connect, share, and find strength together.

Learning and Development

Staff across our in-patient and community services contributed to education and training initiatives, including the European Certificate in Essential Palliative Care and advanced communication skills training. They also mentored nursing students, doctors in training, and specialist palliative care staff from partner organisations.

Our multi-disciplinary team showcased their quality improvement work at the Palliative Care Congress in Belfast, sharing projects on:

- Medication management, safety, and expenditure
- Introduction of the Bereavement Café
- Pressure ulcer prevention initiatives

Going the Extra Mile

We understand that the quality of a patient's final weeks is paramount. Our Special Activities Team facilitated weddings, anniversaries, vow renewals, children's birthday celebrations, and family movie nights, creating meaningful moments that bring comfort and lasting memories to patients and their families.





Christopher & Leancha's Story

Leancha Smith was just 31 years old when she passed away in the Northern Ireland Hospice In-Patient Unit. Before her admission, she received Hospice at Home care in the house she shared with her husband, Christopher, and their daughter, Meabh (8). In August 2023, after making the brave decision to move to the Hospice, she spent her final weeks surrounded by compassion, dignity and love.

Christopher shared their family's experience and how Hospice care supported them through one of life's hardest journeys.

"Leancha was full of joy. She had this ability to make everyone she met feel seen," Christopher said. "She did not choose who to like or not like; she just connected with everyone. That was who she was."

A youth worker with YouthLink NI, Leancha's passion was bringing people together. *"That was her purpose," Christopher explained. "To build bridges and create community."*

Their world changed in March 2021 when Leancha was diagnosed with a low-grade serous ovarian sarcoma, a rare and slow-growing cancer. *"She had a full hysterectomy, hormone therapy, chemotherapy and then a new tablet treatment that looked good on paper, but her symptoms were unbearable," he said. "That was when we were introduced to Hospice care."*

"At first, I was scared," Christopher admitted. "To me, Hospice meant 'end of life'. But when the nurses came to our home, they explained everything so clearly and took away a lot of that fear. They did not just care for Leancha, they cared for me too."

For around four months, Hospice at Home nurses visited weekly to check on Leancha's medication and manage her syringe driver. They also introduced her to complementary therapy. *"At first, she did not like the idea of reflexology, she was nervous about people touching her feet," Christopher said. "But Mary Rose, the therapist, made her so comfortable. After that, Leancha looked forward to every session. It gave her a sense of peace that she had not felt in a long time."*

By Easter 2023, Leancha began talking about moving to the In-Patient Unit. *"She showed me a video from the Hospice website," Christopher recalled. "It completely changed my perception. Hospice was not a dark or sad place; it was calm and full of light."*

For Leancha, the decision was about protecting her family. *"She did not want to die at home," Christopher said. "She wanted to make sure Meabh would not be left with painful memories of that in our house. Hospice gave her the space to have the dignity she deserved."*

Once she settled into Somerton House, Hospice became a second home for the family. *"The staff told her, 'Invite everyone,' and she did," Christopher smiled. "Hospice made that possible in a way hospitals cannot. I stayed overnight, and so did her mum, Karen. Towards the end, they even made it possible for Meabh to stay every night. Even our dog, Ted, came to visit. He climbed on the bed and gently cuddled her. It was like he knew."*

The Hospice team also ensured that the children were supported. *"Leancha's younger brother and sister, Daniel and Lucy, were ten, and they came every day," Christopher said. "The staff made sure they understood what was happening and that they felt included."*

One of the most treasured memories was Meabh's seventh birthday, celebrated in Hospice. *"The staff asked her favourite colour, what cake she wanted and if she liked balloons," Christopher recalled. "They decorated the room and made it so special. Without Hospice, I do not think we would have memories like that."*

Leancha passed away peacefully on 31 August 2023, surrounded by her family.

"To me, Hospice is a place of solace, a place of peace," Christopher said. "For our family, Hospice was a lifeline. It gave us the chance to celebrate, to love and to care for Leancha without having to worry about anything else. They gave us time, space and compassion, and for that, I will always be grateful."





Patients: Children's Services

At Horizon House, Northern Ireland's only Children's Hospice, our care goes far beyond medical treatment. We provide comprehensive paediatric palliative care, supporting not only the child but their entire family, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. Every child we care for is unique, and our goal is to enrich their quality of life by creating meaningful moments and lasting memories, ensuring the right care is delivered at the right time and in the right place.

In 2024/25, we supported **333 children and their families**, up from **309** the previous year, and provided care to **114 bereaved families**.

In-Patient Services

Thanks to generous sponsorship, we were able to reinstate a sixth bed at Horizon House, with confirmed funding for the next three years. This enabled us to reverse previous reductions in weekend bed availability, and from July 2025, we proudly offered six fully operational beds, seven days a week. These beds provide vital care and support, particularly for children living further from the hospice.

Hub and Hospice at Home Services

Our Hub service delivers essential clinical care in the home for children who are unstable or experiencing deterioration. This year, we expanded the team increasing our capacity to provide timely follow-up and continuity of care after hospital admissions.

The Hospice at Home service provided

6,228 hours of care to 52 children across three Health & Social Care Trusts. Families consistently report that this support is invaluable, allowing them to manage day-to-day life while ensuring their child receives expert, compassionate care at home.

PALLS and Family Support

Our Palliative and Life-Limited Service (PALLS) team continues to provide vital support at the regional children's hospital, with **91 children and families** receiving ongoing care, including **52 newly referred families**. Operating at the level of an Advanced Clinical Practitioner, the PALLS Nurse guides families through difficult decisions, advanced care planning, and choices about the preferred location of care.

Our Family Support Team offers emotional, practical, and social support to all family members, including siblings and grandparents, and provides specialised bereavement care for up to two years following a child's death. This year, we introduced breathwork cafés, helping



families build resilience and self-care skills, which have received highly positive feedback.

Horizon Bereavement Project

Now in its fourth year, this project offers compassionate bereavement support for families who have experienced the sudden or traumatic loss of a child. Generously funded through the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, it is secured until October 2026, and we are seeking additional sponsorship to extend it through 2031.

Research, Learning and Strategic Influence

We remain committed to shaping paediatric palliative care in Northern Ireland. As members of the regional Paediatric Palliative Care Network, we contribute to research, policy development, and best practice initiatives, ensuring that the voices of children and families help inform the future of compassionate care.

Our unwavering commitment is to ensure that children and their families receive our care and support with compassion, expertise, and dignity during life's most difficult journeys.





Lila's Story

Lila is a spirited 15-month-old girl from a young family in Moneymore. Despite facing many challenges from a rare, life-limiting neurometabolic disorder, she "always brings a smile" to those who meet her. Her parents, Hayley and Robert, were initially told to "say their goodbyes," but a referral to Hospice care transformed their experience.

"Lila is feisty," says Hayley. "She is non-verbal but knows how to tell you exactly what she wants. We enjoy all the wee shouts, even the ones at three in the morning. She has every right to express herself because she has fought hard to be here."

"She's full of mischief," adds Robert. "The first few months were total chaos. With Lila, it is 24/7 care, plus our other children and everyday life. Without the Hospice, I honestly do not know how we would have coped."

Lila was born with Pyruvate Dehydrogenase Deficiency, a progressive, life-limiting neurometabolic disorder. She is severely hearing and visually impaired, with cognitive and mobility issues, so she will need a wheelchair. She has daily epileptic seizures, breathing and feeding difficulties, and requires a shunt for severe hydrocephalus. Lila spent four weeks on life support. "We were told to say goodbye," Hayley recalls. "Then she started having apnoeas, forgetting to breathe."

"One night she had 37 apnoeas," Robert adds. "Doctors said she was going downhill and suggested the Children's Hospice as an option."

"The word 'hospice' was daunting," Hayley admits. "We did not want to think about it. But hospital nurses who had experience with the Hospice reassured us. When the apnoeas worsened, we decided to go."

From birth, Lila's prognosis was measured in weeks. "We said goodbye three times in her first 12 weeks. I kept telling myself, 'I'll get her to one year,'" Hayley

says. "Going to Hospice, we did not expect to come back out. Then she started to thrive."

Robert explains, "Hospice was the first time it did not feel like chaos. It felt like home, a safe zone. It was family-orientated and comforting. Within the first week, Lila's apnoeas slowed. By week two, she was doing so well. The nurses also taught us one-to-one care techniques, reminding us that this was our daughter, not just a patient."

"Before Hospice, we had almost become hospitalised ourselves," Hayley adds. "The nurses encouraged us to take breaks. We enjoyed our first date night in a long time. Without Hospice, we would not have had any respite."

Lila quickly became attached to the Hospice. "She gets spoilt there," Hayley says. "It does not feel like a clinical hospital. She enjoys the heated hydro pool, soft play, sensory room and the gardens. She creates little artworks to bring home. When she got her wheelchair, nurses helped her explore outside. It is just amazing."

Robert recalls, "Everything was scary at first. We also had our eldest daughter, Mila, and two sons, Ethan and Cordell. There was no happiness for months. Hospice brought the family together. We can never thank them enough. They changed Lila's life and ours. Everything we do as a couple now is thanks to Hospice. We think of it as a second home."

Hayley adds, "We have happy memories, from Lila's first walk around the grounds to her first proper bath. Reading bedtime stories and singing with the other children. Hospice gave her experiences we will always treasure."

"Unfortunately, Lila's condition is life-limiting, so eventually she will deteriorate," Hayley concludes. "Right now, she has outlived the initial prognosis. She is stable and doing better than expected. Every day we are grateful for her. She has taught us what truly matters. Lila loves Hospice. She perks up as soon as she arrives. We would be lost without it."





Our People

Our staff and our volunteers are integrally linked to everything the Northern Ireland Hospice does. Without their commitment, dedication, compassion and professionalism across all areas and functions, we would not be able to deliver exceptional levels of care and support to our patients and to their families when they need us most.

Our staff

We are in year two of our five-year People Strategy which is designed around five key themes – People Planning and Development, Wellbeing Matters, Shaping Culture, Inspiring Leaders and Engaging Volunteers. This strategy has been designed to foster a positive, supportive and inclusive culture where everyone feels valued and empowered and happy at work; and where they are supported to do their best and be resilient during any challenges faced.

The Wellbeing Strategy completed its second year packed with initiatives, activities and fun team challenges focusing on the 4 pillars of wellbeing – physical health, mental health, financial wellbeing and social wellbeing.

The Training Academy has now completed its second year delivering 38 face-to-face training sessions to 159 staff, and we have seen an increase in our mandatory training compliance of 6% to 76.5%. We were also fortunate to have entered a partnership with Springvale Learning and more recently Impact Training to help our staff develop and grow both personally and professionally, with 15 of our colleagues currently engaged in training programmes.

We saw a positive reduction in staff

turnover of a little over 40%; a reduction in overall sickness absence by almost 5%; a reduction in the vacancy rate by more than 50% and 100% compliance for the revised performance development review process.

In 2024 we were honoured to receive a CO3 Award for Leading Workplace Wellbeing as well as being shortlisted for two CIPD awards – Best HR Team and Best Wellbeing Initiative.

Northern Ireland Hospice also participated in the Sunday Times Best Place to Work Staff Engagement Survey and we are delighted by the positive outcome – rating 80% for Average Happiness; 84% for Confidence in Management; and 87% for Pride in Working for Northern Ireland Hospice.

Celebrating our People

We have continued with our Staff Long Service Recognition Awards which have celebrated the loyalty, commitment and dedication given by our people to Hospice over many years and without whom, we would not have been able to deliver the excellent level of service we provide. We also sadly said goodbye to our longest serving colleague who retired after almost 39 years' service with Hospice. This is a truly remarkable achievement.



Our Volunteers

Our volunteers play a key role in helping us deliver specialist palliative care for our local patients and families as well as supporting our retail and fundraising operations.

In 2024/25 we had 948 committed and passionate volunteers contributing to 137,620 hours across the various areas including Children's Services, Adult Services, Corporate and Finance, Fundraising, The Old School House Café and our Hospice shops. The estimated value of their time amounts to over £1,574,373 – an incredible contribution.

As with last year, we have continued to actively recruit our volunteers through focused campaigns, aimed at increasing overall volunteering numbers, offering a wider range of volunteering roles, attracting a variety of skills and experiences and greater diversity. We had 239 new volunteers join our Hospice family, an increase in numbers from last year, and we have also now a greater diversity among our volunteers. As we continue to fill pre-COVID roles, we have recruited complementary therapists, hairdressers, drivers, care and support roles, music therapists and many more as well as some new roles including support for administration teams.

Within both Children's and Adult Services, volunteers provide vital assistance to families, and we will continue to expand our volunteering programme to offer a wider range of roles to attract and optimise the skills of our volunteers.

In addition, volunteers offer key support to our Fundraising and Retail operations, and this has enabled us to provide a sustainable service for our local communities. As our Retail operations continue to expand with two new shops opening in High Street, Belfast and Carrickfergus (bringing our Retail portfolio to 28

shops and a Café), we have been very fortunate to have so many new skilled and committed volunteers join the team.

We are delighted that, because of the experience gained through their volunteering roles within Northern Ireland Hospice, some volunteers have been fortunate to secure permanent employment.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

We recognise the invaluable contribution of our volunteers during Volunteer Week in June, and we celebrate their long service with certificates and badges, some of whom have shown immense dedication by volunteering with Hospice for 30 or more years.

This year, one of our volunteers, Judy Turner from Adult Services, will accept her League of Mercy Award in July.

We would be unable to deliver the incredible work we do without the unwavering support of our dedicated volunteers. By recognising and celebrating their dedication and commitment, we ensure they remain an essential part of our work and the wider Hospice family.





Fundraising

This year, our incredible supporters, partners and communities helped raise an outstanding £5.94 million for Northern Ireland Hospice. Every donation, event, partnership and act of kindness has had a direct and lasting impact on the children, adults and families we care for across Northern Ireland.

To put that into perspective: it costs us over **£15m** per year to deliver this vital care, and government funding covers less than half of that. The generosity of our supporters is not just appreciated, it's absolutely essential to sustaining the specialist care we provide every day.

Here are just a few of the remarkable highlights;

Community Fundraising

Our local communities have once again shown incredible spirit, helping us raise an amazing **£1.58 million**, a **42%** increase on last year. Across Northern Ireland, individuals, families, schools and small businesses came together to support Hospice care in creative and heartfelt ways.



Our dedicated volunteer Fundraising **Support Groups** continue to be the backbone of local fundraising, raising an amazing **£192,000** this year, an increase of **£18,000** on last year.

From coffee mornings and community sales to charity concerts and sponsored walks, their tireless commitment keeps Hospice care close to home for people across Northern Ireland. We are endlessly grateful for the time, creativity and energy they give to our cause.



Generous shoppers across Northern Ireland raised an incredible **£40,373.97** through **Tesco Bucket Collections**, proving that small acts of kindness can create big impact.



A heartfelt thank you to the **Belfast Brunch Co. team** and their customers, who raised an astounding **£21,035.98** through their event this year. Their commitment and creativity are shining examples of community spirit in action.

Corporate Partnerships

Our corporate partners continue to play a vital role in supporting our services, combining generosity with innovation and teamwork.



A key highlight has been our growing partnership with **A&O Shearman**, whose team has shown extraordinary enthusiasm and creativity in their fundraising. From office challenges to staff-led initiatives, their collective efforts have made a meaningful difference to our work and to the families we support.



We also celebrated the end of our two year partnership with **Ulster Bank**, whose employees have once again gone above and beyond through their fundraising activities. Their dedication exemplifies how corporate collaboration can truly transform lives.

Marketing & Events

Our flagship events once again captured the imagination and generosity of supporters across Northern Ireland. These occasions are not only about raising funds but also about coming together, celebrating life and creating lasting memories.

Our **Lights to Remember Service** is a cherished annual event that brings families and friends together to honour loved ones during the festive season, raising **£174,617**.



Our **Festive 5k** is a fun-filled, family-friendly run where hundreds of supporters laced up their shoes to support Hospice care, raising **£24,794**.

The **Dragon Boat Race** is an adrenaline-fuelled day of teamwork, laughter and friendly competition on the water, raising an incredible **£75,204**.



Major Donors, Trusts & Foundations

Generous contributions from individuals and charitable organisations led to a **£630,000** increase in income, with a total of **£1.2 million** raised.





Retail Impact: Sustainability and Growth in 2024/25

Retail continues to be a cornerstone of Northern Ireland Hospice's income, helping to fund the specialist palliative care we deliver to families across Northern Ireland. In 2024/25, our retail activities generated over £4 million, an increase of £200,000 on the previous year. This success reflects the dedication of our retail teams, volunteers, and customers, whose continued support ensures that we can provide vital carefree of charge.

Expanding Our Retail Footprint

This year, we proudly opened two new shops in **High Street, Belfast** and **Carrickfergus**, both warmly welcomed by their local communities. These openings strengthen our presence across Northern Ireland, offering affordable, high-quality goods and helping raise awareness of the Hospice's mission.

Some planned shop openings were delayed or cancelled, which affected income. We are now working closely with our legal partners to improve how we manage these situations in future. Several existing stores also saw improved performance thanks to changes in management and strong teamwork.

Triple Bottom Line Strategy: People, Planet, Profit

Our 2023–2027 retail strategy continues to focus on the Triple Bottom Line, which balances People, Planet, and Profit to ensure sustainable growth.



People: Our network of over 700 staff and volunteers remains at the heart of retail success. Their dedication contributes tens of thousands of volunteer hours every year, helping to power our shops and create welcoming spaces that reflect the Hospice's values of compassion and care.

Planet: We are committed to reducing waste and promoting sustainable shopping. Through our **CARECYCLE** initiative, we recycled 20% more textiles this year, even though global recycling prices fell. These efforts help reduce environmental impact while contributing to additional income for Hospice care.

Profit: Retail income rose by £200,000 but increased operating costs of £285,000 meant our profit was just under £1.2 million. Despite these pressures, retail continues to be a vital part of our long-term financial sustainability.



Volunteers: The Heart of Our Retail Operations

Volunteers remain the backbone of our shops. Their warmth, commitment, and community spirit ensure that every donation and every sale helps make a real difference. This year, we continued to recruit and support volunteers through improved engagement and communication, recognising their essential role in keeping our retail network strong.

Looking ahead, we will continue to grow our retail estate sustainably, enhance the customer experience, and embed our values of compassion, community, and care in everything we do.





Ollie's Story

The Grant family, Riona and Damien, their seven-year-old daughter Aria, and three-year-old Lottie, are from Kilcoo in County Down. They received support from Hospice since their beloved son Ollie was born in 2018 with a severe heart condition. Sadly, Ollie passed away in January 2023, but the family bravely shares their story of love, resilience, and the difference Hospice care made.

Ollie was diagnosed at Riona's 20-week scan with hypoplastic left heart syndrome, meaning the left side of his heart did not develop properly. There is no permanent cure. "Ollie had multiple open-heart surgeries to prolong his life," Riona explains. "Some children with this condition receive a transplant and live long lives. Unfortunately, that was not our story."

When Ollie was 12 weeks old, he deteriorated rapidly and suffered a stroke. He was subsequently diagnosed with cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Non-verbal and tube-fed, he faced daily challenges. "He was not able to walk until he was four," Riona recalls. "Getting him to walk was a huge achievement. His heart condition affected his breathing and mobility, so walking far was difficult, but he gave it his all."

Damien adds, "Considering the surgeries, stroke and period of blindness, it was amazing that he was always smiling and enjoying life."

For much of Ollie's early life, the family was told he would require 24-hour nursing care. Riona remembers thinking that if only a nurse could accompany them, they could experience simple family activities. This was when Children's Hospice first became involved. "A social worker visited the hospital to discuss support available to families. I thought it would be scary end-of-life care, but the reality was completely different."

"Hospice was a godsend," says Damien. "The communal areas were brilliant for meeting other

families in similar situations. Hospice supported Ollie and gave us the chance to create special memories together. We went from thinking he would never leave his bed to taking him to the swing park and enjoying small, precious moments."

Ollie loved the play areas at Hospice. "He roared 'Hiya!' in the silver tube at the play park and giggled at the echoes," Riona recalls. "He enjoyed arts and crafts, singing, and time in the garden. He also loved the swimming pool with the physiotherapist. Hospice made things possible that we never thought could happen."

During Covid, the family benefitted from Hospice at Home care. "Julie Chambers, our nurse, would come to our house, bathe Ollie, take him for walks, and manage his medications," Riona explains. "It gave me a chance to do everyday tasks like shopping. With a terminally ill child, even simple things are so much harder."

After Ollie passed away, the family's world changed overnight. Bereavement support provided continuity and care. Lauren, the Hospice bereavement counsellor, focused on Aria, delivering cathartic therapy sessions to help her process her grief. They made memory jars with coloured sand to represent emotions and cherished memories of Ollie.

Riona paid tribute to Julie, Lauren, and the in-house Hospice staff. "They have been absolute lifesavers. Without them, we could not have managed Ollie's care or our family life. The quality of life for Ollie, and for us, would not have been as good."

Damien reflects, "Children's Hospice gave us the support, guidance, and opportunities to make lasting memories as a family. They changed our lives and gave Ollie the best possible experiences despite his health challenges."

Ollie's story is one of courage, love, and the vital role Hospice care plays in supporting families to live fully, even in the face of profound challenges.





Our finances

Income

This year, total income grew to **£19.5 million**, an increase from **£19.1 million** in 2023/24. Our ability to raise **£9.3 million** from donations and legacies, an increase of **£0.7 million** (8.2%) from the previous year, demonstrates the strength of our community support and the trust placed in Northern Ireland Hospice. Donations alone increased by **£0.87 million**, rising from **£5.69 million** to **£6.56 million**, reflecting the generosity of individuals, families, and local organisations who continue to sustain our work.

Income from charitable activities, which includes statutory contracts and other funding sources, decreased slightly to **£6.6 million**, down from **£6.9 million** in the previous year. This reduction was primarily due to the end of fixed-term projects and

the withdrawal of certain statutory funding, partially offset by contract uplifts. These changes highlight the ongoing challenges we face in securing sustainable funding, and we continue to work closely with our Health Service partners to address this as part of the Palliative Care Inquiry led by the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Health.

Our retail operations remain a vital part of our financial sustainability, contributing **£3.51 million** in 2024/25, an increase of **£0.08 million** from the previous year. This growth reflects shifting consumer behaviours shaped by the Cost-of-Living crisis and the increasing popularity of ethical purchasing, which continues to strengthen the role of our shops in supporting Hospice care.

Expenditure

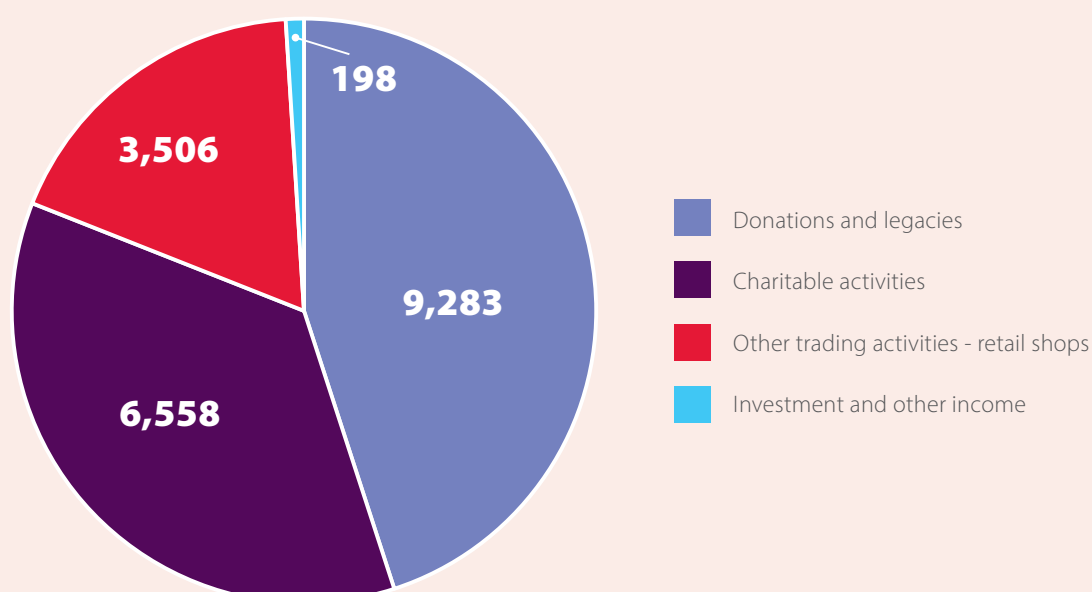
It cost **£19.6 million** to operate Northern Ireland Hospice in 2024/25, an increase of **£0.15 million** (0.8%) on the previous year. This rise was driven largely by higher staff costs, with a 5.5% increase in Agenda for Change pay rates and a 9.6% rise in the National Living Wage. These significant cost pressures were carefully managed through strict cost controls across the organisation, ensuring that resources continued to be directed towards patient care.

Our retail operations saw costs increase by **£0.3 million**, mainly due to higher pay costs and the opening of two new shops, reflecting our ongoing investment in long-term sustainability.

Despite achieving record levels of fundraising and retail income, the combined pressures of rising costs and constraints on statutory funding meant we ended the year with a small deficit. Net expenditure stood at **£0.1 million**, an improvement on the **£0.4 million** deficit in 2023/24.

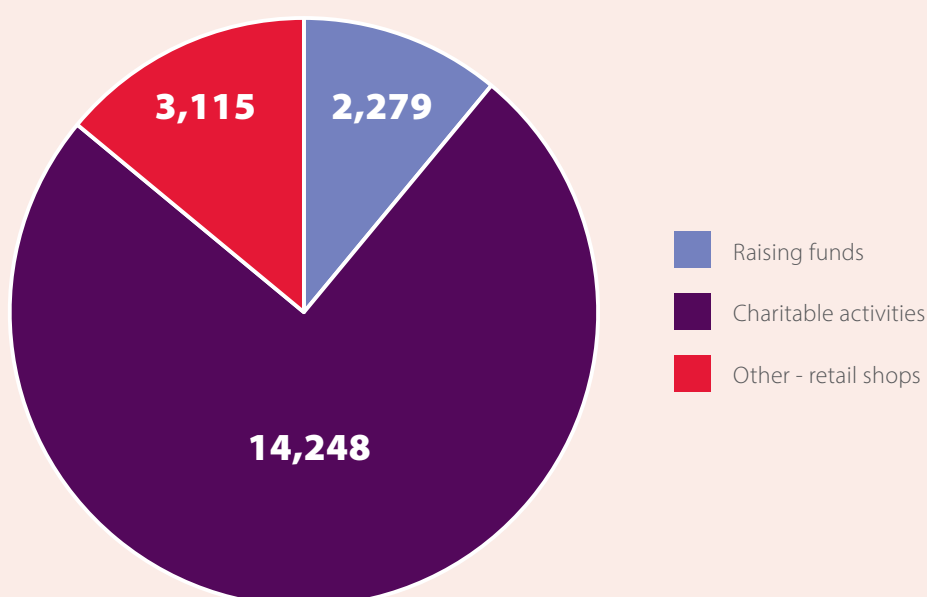
Looking ahead, the rising cost of care, particularly wage pressures, remains a concern. We continue to address this challenge by maintaining strong cost controls, working with Health Service partners on statutory contracts, expanding our retail estate, and developing new fundraising opportunities.

Income 24/25



Income	24/25	%	23/24	%
Donations and legacies	9,283	47%	8,581	45%
Charitable activities	6,558	34%	6,899	36%
Other trading activities - retail shops	3,506	18%	3,430	18%
Investment and other income	198	1%	188	1%
Total Group Income	19,545		19,098	

Expenditure 24/25



Expenditure	24/25	%	23/24	%
Raising funds	2,279	12%	2,143	11%
Charitable activities	14,248	73%	14,531	75%
Other - retail shops	3,115	16%	2,820	14%
Total Group Expenditure	19,642		19,494	



Northern Ireland Hospice

nihospice.org     **Head Office, 18 O'Neill Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 6WB**  Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

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