IMPACT 25/26 REPORT



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Northern Ireland Hospice is a Company Limited by guarantee incorporated in Northern Ireland and is a charity recognised by the Inland Revenue.
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Our Year in Numbers

5938 hours of **Hospice at Home care** provided to

50
children

We cared for over

4,600
adults and children in 25/26
(up from 4,000 in 24/25)

We supported **453**
families in total through **active care, antenatal support, bereavement services**, reflecting the breadth of hospice reach

215
admissions to the Adult In-Patient Unit

356
patients used our **Hospice at Home Service**
(up from 309 in 24/25)

Average stay in **Somerton House**
23.7
days
(up from 23.1 in 24/25)

1,050 volunteers contributed **146,255** hours =
£1.78m
in equivalent salary costs saved
(up from 137,620 hours and £1.75m 24/25)

13,734
Adult SPC Nursing Home visits
(up from 13,443 in 24/25)

47%
of patients admitted **were under 65**

We actively supported
309
children and their families at Horizon House and in the community

It took
£21.5m
to run NI Hospice and Children's Hospice
(up from £19.5m in 24/25)

91
families provided with **ongoing support** by the **Palliative and Life Limited Service**

263
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
171
nights

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. For many people, being cared for at home matters deeply. Our seven Specialist Community Nursing teams provide the specialist palliative care that helps people across Northern Ireland live well at home and, where this is their choice, remain there at the end of life. Working alongside GPs, District Nurses, social workers and pharmacists, they help ensure care reflects each person's needs and wishes.

Our Hospice at Home service provides one-to-one nursing care, enabling patients to remain at home while giving families valuable time to rest, knowing their loved one is receiving expert support.

Outreach services from physiotherapists, occupational therapists and holistic care professionals help people maintain independence, manage symptoms and remain well at home, helping to prevent crises and reduce unnecessary hospital admissions.

Education, Research and Collaboration

As the largest provider of hospice care in Northern Ireland, we play a key role in education, innovation, research and partnership working. Through collaborations with the All-Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AIIHPC) and the Palliative Care Research Network Northern Ireland, we contribute to the advancement of palliative care knowledge, practice and workforce development.

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 hospice care, we continue to work in partnership across the health and voluntary sectors to improve access to care, influence service development and strengthen collaboration. Through initiatives such as the Palliative Care Hub and our wider strategic partnerships, we are helping to shape a more integrated and sustainable approach to palliative care for the future.

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 pleased to present the Northern Ireland Hospice Impact Report for 2025/26, which was a year defined by challenge, resilience and continued commitment to those who rely on our care. Against a backdrop of sustained economic pressure, increasing demand for services and ongoing uncertainty in public funding, our organisation has remained steadfast in its purpose: to provide compassionate, high-quality palliative and end-of-life care to those who need it most.

This has been a year in which the external environment has tested the entire hospice sector. Rising costs associated with inflation, increased National Insurance contributions, and uplifts in the National Living Wage have placed significant strain on our resources. At the same time, the cost-of-living crisis has affected many of our supporters, making fundraising more challenging in some areas. Despite this, public generosity has remained a cornerstone of our work, and we are deeply grateful for the continued support of our donors, partners and communities.

We continue to operate within a system where government funding does not fully reflect the scale or complexity of hospice care provision. This year, the Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee launched their review of palliative care services, an important and timely development. We actively engaged with this process, advocating for a more sustainable, equitable funding model that recognises the essential role hospices play within the wider health system. We welcome the focus this review brings and remain hopeful that it will lead to meaningful, long-term change for patients, families and providers alike.

Demand for our services continues to grow and evolve. Over the past year, we have supported more than 4,600 infants, children and adults through our inpatient, community and family support services. Our teams have responded to increasingly complex needs, shaped by an ageing population, later-stage diagnoses and a rise in multi-condition care. This has required ongoing innovation, flexibility and a continued focus on delivering care in the right place, at the right time.

Our Adult In-Patient Unit provided over 5,000 bed nights during the year, while our community teams carried out more than 13,700 home visits, enabling more people to receive care, and in many cases pass away in the place of their choosing, in the comfort of their own homes. Children's services also saw increasing demand, with over 2,200 bed nights delivered at Horizon House and vital support provided to over 300 children and their families. These figures are more than statistics, they represent precious moments of care, dignity and support at some of the most difficult times in people's lives.

At the heart of everything we do are our people. Our staff and volunteers continue to demonstrate exceptional professionalism, compassion and resilience, often working in highly pressurised circumstances. This year, over 350 staff and more than 1,000 volunteers contributed their time, skills and empathy to support patients and families across Northern Ireland. Their dedication is our greatest strength.

We have also made important progress as an employer, reducing staff turnover, improving wellbeing support, and strengthening engagement across our workforce. Recognition as a Sunday Times Best Place to Work reflects our commitment to creating an environment where our people feel valued, supported and empowered to deliver the highest standards of care.

Alongside service delivery, we have continued to invest in the long-term sustainability of the organisation. This includes strengthening governance, enhancing digital capability, and progressing key developments within our estate to better meet future demand. Our strategic focus remains centred on delivering excellence for patients, supporting our people, and building a sustainable future for hospice care.

We are proud of what has been achieved this year, but we are also clear about the challenges that remain. Demand for hospice services will continue to rise, and expectations around care will continue to evolve. Addressing this requires not only innovation within our organisation, but also stronger partnership working across the health and social care system and a renewed commitment from government.

As we look ahead, we remain guided by our purpose and values. We will continue to advocate for those who need us, working constructively with our statutory partners to support the implementation of the Health Committee's report recommendations. Given the growing demand for services and the pressures facing the sector, it is essential that progress is made without delay. We will continue to make the case for increased statutory funding from government, recognising that sustainable and equitable investment is essential to meeting rising need. Alongside this, we will continue to adapt to changing needs and provide care that is compassionate, person-centred and accessible to all.

On behalf of the Board and Executive Team, we would like to express our sincere thanks to our staff, volunteers, supporters and partners. Your commitment makes our work possible and ensures that, even in the most challenging of circumstances, Northern Ireland Hospice continues to be there for those who need us most.

Ian Sheppard,
Chair



Trevor McCartney,
Chief Executive Officer

Our Impact in 2025/26

Throughout 2025/26, Northern Ireland Hospice continued to provide compassionate, specialist care and support to infants, children, adults and families across Northern Ireland. We did so during another challenging year, shaped by increasing demand, more complex patient and family needs, rising costs and continued uncertainty around the long-term funding of hospice care. We also reached an important point in our strategic journey, having completed three years of our five-year Strategy to 2028 while beginning to look ahead to the future demand, workforce, partnerships, technology and funding that will be needed beyond it.

During the year, we refreshed our strategic framework, evolving from four pillars to five: **Patients, Profile, Perpetuity, People and Performance**. Patients, Profile and Perpetuity describe the outcomes we want to achieve, while People and Performance provide the foundations that enable us to deliver them.

Pillar 1: Patients – Delivering compassionate, specialist care

Patients and families remain at the heart of everything we do. During 2025/26, our Adult In-Patient Unit provided more than 5,000 bed nights, while our community teams made over 13,700 home visits, helping people receive specialist care where they live, and Hospice at Home delivered more than 4,000 hours of one-to-one care and support at home.

Children's Hospice Services supported more than 300 children and their families to make the most of precious time together, while demand for specialist inpatient, respite and end-of-life care continued to increase.

We also continued to strengthen the safety and quality of care through the Safer Care framework, enhanced medicines management, strengthened nursing induction, multidisciplinary huddles and improved care documentation.

Pillar 2: Profile – Amplifying our voice and extending our reach

A significant development during the year was the introduction of **Profile** as an additional strategic pillar. Profile is about ensuring that the value and impact of hospice and palliative care are better understood by policymakers, commissioners, supporters, partners and the wider public. It brings together our communications, advocacy, fundraising, retail and partnerships to strengthen awareness, trust and support for Hospice care.

One of the most significant developments for the sector was the Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee's Inquiry into Access to Palliative Care Services. The Inquiry highlighted the challenges facing palliative care and included recommendations around funding, access and future service provision. We also continued our advocacy work as part of the Hospice Alliance NI, and other sector partners to amplify the collective voice of the sector.'



Pillar 3: Perpetuity – Securing long-term sustainability

The financial environment for hospice care remains challenging. Rising employment costs, inflationary pressures and increasing demand continue to place pressure on resources, while statutory funding does not yet reflect the full cost of hospice care. The need for fair, recurrent and sustainable funding remains a key priority.

Despite a difficult fundraising environment, Northern Ireland Hospice continued to benefit from the generosity of supporters, businesses, trusts and foundations. Retail income also grew during the year, demonstrating the importance of diversified income streams in supporting long-term sustainability.

Pillar 4: People – Investing in our staff and volunteers

Our people remain our greatest strength. During 2025/26, we continued to invest in wellbeing, leadership development, learning and organisational culture, while reducing turnover and sickness absence and strengthening workforce capability. More than 1,000 volunteers continued to make an extraordinary contribution across care, family support, fundraising, retail and corporate services.

We were particularly proud to be recognised as a **Sunday Times Best Place to Work for the second consecutive year**, reflecting our commitment to creating a workplace where colleagues feel valued, supported and proud of the difference they make.

Pillar 5: Performance – Strengthening insight, governance and delivery

Strong performance enables us to use our resources effectively and maintain the quality, safety and sustainability of our services. Throughout the year, we continued to strengthen governance, digital capability, reporting, cyber resilience and operational effectiveness. We also invested in better performance information and technology to support evidence-based decision-making and improve organisational resilience.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on 2025/26, we are proud of the progress made across all five pillars. However, we are also realistic about the challenges ahead. Demand for palliative care is expected to continue growing, needs will become more complex and the gap between the cost of hospice care and recurrent funding remains unresolved. Our focus remains on delivering our Strategy to 2028 while developing the evidence, partnerships, workforce and resources that will help shape Northern Ireland Hospice beyond it.

Patients: Adult Services

At Somerton House in Belfast, our 18-bed Adult In-Patient Unit continued to provide specialist palliative care for people living with life-limiting illnesses, supporting patients and families through some of life's most difficult moments. In 2025/26, our consultant-led multidisciplinary team supported 215 admissions, provided specialist end-of-life care for 159 patients and their families, and delivered 5,268 bed nights.

The complexity of need among those in our care continues to grow. Average length of stay increased during the year, reflecting increasingly complex physical, social and psychological needs. Significantly, 47% of admissions were people aged 65 and under, highlighting the impact of serious illness on whole families, including children and young people who often require additional support and care.



Continuous improvement remains at the heart of our work. During the year we continued to enhance patient safety, medicines management and personalised care planning, ensuring patients receive the highest standards of compassionate, person-centred care. Our Advanced Nurse Practitioner team has also strengthened continuity of care through enhanced clinical leadership and prescribing capabilities.



Adult Community Services

Many people wish to remain at home, surrounded by loved ones and familiar surroundings. During 2025/26, our specialist community nursing teams carried out more than 13,700 home visits, helping patients receive expert palliative care in the place that matters most to them.

Working closely with GPs, district nurses, social workers and other healthcare professionals, our multidisciplinary teams provide coordinated care that helps manage symptoms, prevents unnecessary hospital admissions and supports patients to make informed choices about their care. We also continued to strengthen quality standards through new outcome measures and improved approaches to recording and reviewing patient wishes, ensuring care remains aligned to what matters most to each individual.



Collaboration and Innovation

Partnership working is central to improving access to specialist palliative care. During the year, we continued to strengthen collaboration with healthcare partners across Northern Ireland and, in January, launched the Palliative Care Hub, a collaborative initiative bringing together Northern Ireland Hospice, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, local GPs and Marie Curie. The Hub has been designed to strengthen partnership working, improve access to specialist advice and support, and enhance coordination of care for patients with palliative and end-of-life care needs.



The partnership is already proving successful, creating opportunities for closer multidisciplinary working, earlier intervention and improved support for patients and families. By bringing together expertise from across the health and voluntary sectors, the Hub is helping to ensure more people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Supporting Families Beyond Bereavement

Our support for families continues long after the death of a loved one. During the year, our Social Work team provided 394 post-bereavement support sessions, alongside group programmes and our Bereavement Café, offering a safe and supportive space for people to connect, share experiences and find comfort following loss.



Going the Extra Mile

We understand that the quality of a person's final weeks is paramount. In addition to specialist clinical care, our Special Activities Team helped create meaningful moments and lasting memories for patients and families. Throughout the year they facilitated weddings, anniversaries, vow renewals, children's birthday celebrations and family movie nights, ensuring precious time together could be celebrated and cherished.





Stuart's Story

Stuart Hall was a devoted husband to Sarah and a proud dad to Ethan, 14, and Jessica, 8. Known for his big smile, mischievous sense of humour and love of cars, Stuart treasured family life. He was cared for by NI Hospice's In-Patient Unit for nine days before he died in October 2022, aged 33.

His wife, Sarah, remembers a kind man who *"would do anything for anyone".*

"Stuart was the fun parent – always laughing and playing with the children," she says. As a family, they enjoyed holidays, forest walks, day trips, as well as Stuart's passion for cars.

The family had just bought their first home together in Carrickfergus when their lives changed dramatically.

In November 2016, Stuart experienced a focal seizure, with pins and needles in one arm, a strange taste and smell, and difficulty speaking. Two months later, he was diagnosed with a grade four glioblastoma brain tumour, the most aggressive form.

"Two weeks after diagnosis, he went for an awake craniotomy and another a week later, followed by chemotherapy and radiotherapy."

Stuart's scans remained clear until the tumour returned in April 2021and he underwent further surgery. A year later, another tumour appeared, but this time it was inoperable.

Stuart gradually lost his mobility and began to lose his speech. For a fiercely independent man, this was incredibly challenging, but Sarah says he remained strong until the end.

Hospice care became part of the family's life just one month before Stuart died. Initially, Sarah was unsure.

"We were quite against hospice care at first. We didn't know much about it. We wanted to keep him at home as long as possible. But the minute we stepped through the doors at Hospice, it was like a massive weight lifted off our shoulders. Stuart looked more at peace here. They were able to control his pain better than they ever could have at home."

During Stuart's nine days at Hospice, the team cared for the whole family, not just Stuart. Staff went above and beyond to make Ethan and Jessica feel supported. They provided pumpkins for them to carve at Halloween, organised baking with Ethan, brought games, toys and Xboxes, and helped the children decorate Stuart's room with their artwork.

"They treated our children like they were VIPs," Sarah says. *"The children loved it so much that when Stuart did pass away, they didn't want to leave. I didn't even want to leave. I think that tells you a lot about Hospice."*

Small acts of kindness created precious memories. Staff stayed after their shifts so Jessica could join in pumpkin carving after school, brought sweets for trick-or-treating and gave Ethan quiet space to prepare for his transfer test. The family was also offered complementary therapy, while an evening visit from the Ukulele Band became a special memory.

"Everybody cared for Stuart so well. But it wasn't just Stuart. It was our whole family they cared for. I could spend those last nine days just with Stuart, as a wife, not as his carer. It gave us the chance to live with him, make memories, and not have the worry of his pain on our minds."

Stuart died at the Hospice In-Patient Unit on 26 October 2022.

Despite the sadness, those final days were filled with love, comfort and moments of happiness.

"The saddest of days were made bearable only by the kindness and compassion shown by the staff of the Hospice, who we will be forever grateful and indebted to."

Patients: Children's Services

Demand for hospice care continued to grow during 2025/26. While referral numbers reduced overall, the complexity of care and intensity of service delivery increased significantly. Across the year, we delivered 2,221 bed nights, an increase of 161 compared with 2024/25, alongside 834 inpatient admissions, up from 723 the previous year.



End-of-life care demand also increased, with 171 end-of-life bed nights provided during the year, compared with 139 in 2024/25. Funded Bed use rose almost tenfold, from 16 bed nights to 146 bed nights, providing essential respite and crisis support for families when care could no longer be safely managed at home.

We continue to operate six beds throughout the week, ensuring families have access to specialist care, symptom management, short breaks and end-of-life support when they need it most.

Hub and Hospice at Home Services

Our Hub service continues to play a vital role in connecting hospital and community-based care. During 2025/26, we strengthened the service through the introduction of a dedicated role designed to support children known to palliative and life-limited care services during hospital admissions, and to ensure seamless continuity of care following discharge home.

The Hub team also delivers all Tiny Horizons antenatal support. During the year, 22 families were supported following a life-limiting diagnosis, providing compassionate care and guidance from diagnosis through birth, short life and bereavement.



Hospice at Home remained a lifeline for families across Northern Ireland, supporting 50 children and delivering thousands of hours of nursing care within the family home. This service enables children to remain in familiar surroundings while providing parents and carers with valuable support, flexibility and reassurance. Families report that Hospice at Home gives them the opportunity to attend appointments, spend time with siblings and maintain a sense of normal family life while knowing their child is receiving expert, compassionate care.

PALLS and Family Support

Our Palliative and Life-Limited Service (PALLS) remains a vital bridge between acute healthcare services and hospice care. Throughout 2025/26, 91 children and families received ongoing specialist support, reflecting sustained demand for the service.



A newly appointed Regional Consultant for Paediatric Palliative Care further strengthened the service during the year. The PALLS team supported families through 38 complex conversations relating to prognosis and advance care planning, introduced 42 families to hospice services for the first time, and contributed to 120 multidisciplinary meetings, ward rounds and professional discussions to promote coordinated care across health and social care services. The team also delivered 11 education sessions, helping to build understanding and confidence in children's palliative care among healthcare professionals.

The Family Support Team continues to provide practical, emotional and therapeutic support to children, parents, siblings and extended family members, including specialist bereavement support for up to two years following the death of a child. The team also leads safeguarding across Children's Hospice Services and provides dedicated social work support within the in-patient service.

During 2025/26, additional grant funding was secured to enhance sibling support and introduce breathwork initiatives that will further strengthen family wellbeing and resilience in the years ahead.

Horizon Bereavement Service

The Horizons Bereavement Service provides specialist support for families affected by the sudden and unexpected death of a child. A key strength of the service is immediate access to counselling and support, with no waiting list, ensuring families receive help when they need it most.

To date, Horizons has supported more than 150 children, young people and adults affected by the sudden death of a child, providing compassionate guidance through grief and helping families navigate the challenges of bereavement.

Research, Learning and Strategic Influence

We remain committed to advancing paediatric palliative care across Northern Ireland. Through partnership working, education and professional leadership, we continue to strengthen awareness and understanding of children's palliative care, helping ensure that children and families receive coordinated, high-quality support wherever they are cared for.

Our unwavering commitment remains to support every child and family with compassion, expertise and dignity, helping them make the most of every moment together.







Ellie's story

"Ellie wasn't supposed to live."

Hayley and Joe Dickey live in Co Armagh with their nine-year-old daughter Ellie and their other children, Oisín and Hannah. With support from Northern Ireland Hospice, the family are determined to make memories of every precious moment.

"When we were first told about Ellie's condition during pregnancy, we were scared – but hopeful. We knew she had Spina Bifida and hydrocephalus, but no one could predict how severe it would be.

"When Ellie was born, her brain had not developed properly. She needed urgent surgery to close her spine and a shunt to drain fluid from her brain. Doctors described it as a 'thin ribbon of brain' and told us she might not survive a week. But nine years later, here she is – smiling every day.

"Ellie has the most severe type of Spina Bifida, myelomeningocele. She also has epilepsy, is visually impaired and registered as blind. Her brain injuries affect her breathing and hearing. She is non-verbal and needs 24/7 high-dependency care.

"Hospice changed everything. It is a lifeline for us as a family.

"When we first heard the word 'hospice', we were terrified. Like many people, we thought it was only for end-of-life care. But Children's Hospice opened a door we never knew we would need.

"We toured Horizon House when Ellie was a few months old. It was beautiful, warm and full of life. We have been part of the Hospice family ever since.

"Every few months, Ellie stays at Horizon House for respite, usually for three nights. The nurses know her well. We can sleep knowing she is safe and cared for. We can switch off alarms, take a breath and simply be Mum and Dad to Oisín and Hannah.

"Through Hospice at Home, nurses also visit each month. They spend time with Ellie – singing, painting and sensory play. That gives us space to work, run errands or simply sit together. It helps us keep going.

"We provide near-hospital-level care at home. We are on high alert, managing seizures, respiratory crises and complex medical equipment. Ellie sleeps with a ventilator at night.

"There have been times when we were told to prepare for goodbye. And then, somehow, she pulls through. She is so strong.

"The emotional toll is enormous. Hospice has supported us through tears, burnout and mental exhaustion. During COVID, Bethany from Hospice became a lifeline, checking in regularly and helping us through moments of crisis.

"Our youngest, Hannah, was born during COVID. A Hospice nurse sat with Ellie in hospital so Joe could be there for Hannah's birth. Without Hospice, he would have missed that moment.

"The Hospice gives us more than respite – it gives us life.

"Because of Hospice, we have had the space to make joyful memories: Christmas parties, days out at the zoo, Dream Nights and Ellie's First Holy Communion – a moment we were not sure we would ever see.

"Even the small things – a beach day in Ballycastle, a bike ride at Center Parcs or listening to the radio – become extraordinary with Ellie.

"The Hospice helps us hold on to those moments. It helps us be parents. We do not know what tomorrow brings, but we know we are not alone.

"Every birthday is a miracle. Every Christmas, we start early because we live in the now. We take it one day at a time, with Hospice behind us.

"The Children's Hospice is not just a building. It is a family, a lifeline and a safe place.

"And the truth is – we could not do this without them."

Our People

Our people – staff and volunteers - remain at the heart of everything Northern Ireland Hospice does. Their compassion, professionalism, commitment and generosity of time enable us to provide specialist care and support to patients and families across Northern Ireland. As demand for our services continues to grow, alongside increasing complexity of care and ongoing financial pressures, we remain committed to investing in the capability, confidence and wellbeing of our people, ensuring they are equipped to adapt, develop and help shape the future of Hospice care.

Our staff

During the year, we strengthened our approach to people and organisational development, aligning activity to our refreshed strategic priorities of Patients, Profile, Perpetuity, People and Performance. Our focus remains on attracting and nurturing talent; developing leadership capability; supporting inclusion and wellbeing; strengthening performance and pay frameworks; and enhancing the systems and processes that enable our colleagues to work effectively and deliver their best.

Wellbeing continues to be embedded within a broader focus on inclusion, culture and staff experience, ensuring physical, mental, financial and social wellbeing are supported as part of a positive, inclusive and values-led workplace. This commitment is reflected in several key workforce indicators. During 2025/26, staff turnover reduced by just over 41%, short-term sickness absence reduced by 24%, and we achieved 100% compliance with our revised Performance Development Review process.

We also continued to invest in learning and development. The Training Academy delivered 38 face-to-face training sessions to 51 staff, while mandatory training compliance increased by 3% to 77%. During the year, we successfully transitioned to a new online learning platform for staff and volunteers, improving access to learning opportunities while delivering efficiencies and cost savings.

Partnerships with Springvale Learning and Impact Training continued to support colleagues in their personal and professional development. Fifteen colleagues participated in development programmes, with four successfully completing Business Administration training.

We were proud to again participate in the Sunday Times Best Places to Work Staff Engagement Survey, achieving strong results across several key measures, including 79% for 'average happiness', 84% for 'confidence in management' and 87% for 'pride in working for Northern Ireland Hospice.' These results reflect the commitment, compassion and professionalism of our teams and reinforce the importance of continuing to invest in our people as a key enabler of our strategy.

Celebrating our People

We continue to recognise and celebrate the outstanding contribution of our staff throughout the year. Our Staff Long Service Recognition Awards acknowledge the loyalty, commitment and dedication of colleagues who have devoted many years of service to Hospice and whose contribution has helped shape the organisation we are today.



During the year, we were honoured to receive the Irish News Award for Best Wellbeing Strategy, and to be recognised by Springvale Learning as Large Employer of the Year. These awards acknowledge our ongoing commitment to staff wellbeing, learning and development. We were also proud to be recognised as the only Northern Ireland organisation included in the Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2025.

Our Volunteers

Our volunteers continue to play an essential role across Northern Ireland Hospice, supporting specialist care services, family support, fundraising, retail operations, corporate services, finance, the Old School House Café and our Hospice shops.

In 2025/26, 1,050 volunteers contributed an incredible 146,255 hours across the organisation, with an estimated value of more than £1.78 million. During the year, 355 new volunteers joined the Hospice family, demonstrating the continued willingness of people across Northern Ireland to give their time and skills in support of hospice care.

Yet the true value of their contribution is priceless, bringing their time, skills and commitment to support our patients, families and services.

We have continued to develop and expand volunteering opportunities across our services and income-generating activities through targeted recruitment campaigns and the reinstatement of roles paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include complementary therapists, hairdressers and drivers, alongside a range of service and administrative support roles.

The majority of volunteers continue to support our Fundraising and Retail activities, both of which play a vital role in sustaining Hospice services. With the opening of Ballymena and Portadown shops, bringing our retail portfolio to 28 locations including the Old School Café, and the continued growth of large-scale fundraising events such as One Big Walk, volunteering opportunities continue to expand across Northern Ireland.

Volunteering also provides important personal and professional development opportunities. We are delighted that a number of volunteers have progressed into permanent employment and university placements, supported by the experience, confidence and skills gained through their volunteering roles within Northern Ireland Hospice.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

We continue to recognise the invaluable contribution of our volunteers through Volunteers' Week, Volunteer of the Month awards, long-service certificates and recognition badges. We are particularly proud to celebrate volunteers who have dedicated more than 30 years of service to Hospice, demonstrating an extraordinary commitment to patients, families and communities.

This year, we were proud to nominate Rita Mannion, one of our Children's Services volunteers, for the prestigious League of Mercy Award in recognition of her outstanding service and dedication.

We could not deliver the breadth and quality of care we provide without the dedication of our staff and the unwavering support of our volunteers. By continuing to invest in, recognise and celebrate our people, we ensure they remain at the heart of our work, our culture and the wider Hospice family.

Fundraising

During the year, Northern Ireland Hospice raised £5.88 million in voluntary income, providing vital funding for the specialist care and support we deliver to children, adults and families across Northern Ireland. We remain deeply grateful to every individual, community group, school, volunteer, trust, foundation and business whose generosity helps make Hospice care possible.

Despite pressures on public giving, several areas of fundraising delivered strong growth.

Here are just a handful of some remarkable highlights:

Community Fundraising

Throughout the year, we continued to strengthen connections within local communities. Individuals, families, schools and churches all worked hard to raise money in innovative and caring ways.



For the 14th year in a row, the **Livingstone family**, their dedicated committee and everyone who supports the **Livingstone Christmas Tractor Run**, raised an incredible **£34,788.00** for NI Children's Hospice this year. Since it started, this much loved post-Christmas event has raised **£1.18 million** for local charities.



Fundraising Support Groups continue to be at the heart of their local communities, collectively raising an incredible **£162,000.00** for Hospice in 2025. From coffee mornings, community sales to charity concerts, sponsored walks and local events, their commitment helps keep Hospice care connected to communities across Northern Ireland. We are incredibly grateful for the time, energy and enthusiasm they give to supporting local children, adults and families who need our care.



Four incredible supporters took on the challenge of a lifetime, **climbing Mount Kilimanjaro** in January 2026 and raised an amazing **£29,907.11** for Northern Ireland Children's Hospice.

Major Donors, Trusts & Foundations

Support from major donors, trusts and foundations contributed almost **£1.5 million**, a **£200,000** increase on last year, reflecting the strength of the relationships we have built and the confidence our supporters place in the Hospice's work.

Marketing & Events

We also saw encouraging growth in marketing-led fundraising, with events such as the Dragon Boat Race and Belfast Marathon ensuring that community groups, local businesses and individuals can come together, celebrate and raise vital funds.

Dragon Boat

2025 saw our biggest Dragon Boat event yet, with 42 boats taking to the water for a fantastic two-day event, which raised an amazing **£101,588**. Thank you to our generous sponsor, **Domino's**, for their continued support.



Festive 5k

Our Festive 5K, combining a timed 5K race with family-friendly festive fun, brought plenty of cheer to V36, The Valley. More than 700 runners, most in Christmas fancy dress, took part, all while raising vital funds. The event raised an incredible **£40,000** and the children's Reindeer Dash was generously sponsored by **CCU Credit Union**.



Lights to Remember

More than 600 people attended our Lights to Remember Service, offering a special opportunity to remember loved ones who are no longer with us. The appeal raised an incredible **£164,000** to support vital care and services.



Corporate Partnerships

Our corporate partners remain a key source of support for our services, uniting generosity, innovation, and teamwork to make a meaningful difference.



The Odyssey Trust and **Belfast Giants** marked their 25th anniversary year by supporting NI Hospice, helping raise an incredible **£130,000** for children's hospice through their gala evening and hospice hockey event.



Thank you to **Domino's** for their continued support as **headline sponsor of our annual Dragon Boat Race**, with their own team taking to their water alongside our other competitors. Off the water, they helped bring extra energy to the day with games, giveaways and merchandise.



Long-term partners and friends of NI Hospice, **Henderson Foodservice** continued their incredible support by presenting a generous **£34,000** donation, helping us continue to provide vital care and support to local patients, children and families.

Retail Impact:
Sustainability and Growth in 2025/26

Retail continues to be a vital element of Northern Ireland Hospice's income, helping to fund the specialist care we deliver to adults, children, babies and families across Northern Ireland.

While regrettably closing one shop during the year, we remained committed to strengthening our retail network despite challenging trading conditions. We opened two new shops in **Ballymena** and **Portadown** and relocated two shops in **Ballymoney** and on **Cregagh Road**, **Belfast**. These investments contributed to a strong year for our retail shops, with income increasing by 19%.

We also increased the amount of Gift Aid claimed on donated goods, improving our processes to make sure donations generated as much value as possible for Northern Ireland Hospice.



Leona Taylor, Hospice Shop Supervisor, Ballymoney


First customer at Ballymena Hospice shop opening

While the number of donations remained high, we saw a decline in the quality of some items received. This reflects the continued growth of online selling platforms and meant our teams had to work even harder to sort, price and manage stock effectively to achieve the best possible return.

Although income increased, rising operating costs and the investment required to open new stores meant profit fell by £120,000 to £1.08 million. Despite this, our retail division continues to make a significant contribution to funding hospice care.


Ballymena Hospice Shop opening

Engaging with local communities remained an important part of our work throughout the year. We partnered with schools to support donation drives and established a new partnership with Menarys, with teams working together locally to share expertise and support retail best practice.



Portadown Hospice Shop opening

And we couldn't do any of this without our team of retail volunteers who are the backbone of the shops. Through their commitment and community spirit they help ensure that every donation, every sale makes a real difference.

Looking ahead, we want to sustain the contribution our shops make to hospice services by improving sales performance and making the most of every donation. We will continue to focus on strong retail standards, efficient stock management and ensuring good-quality donated items move quickly from donation to sale.


Cregagh Road Hospice Shop opening

We will also increase Gift Aid income by encouraging more sign-ups and improving donation processing, helping us to capture eligible donations accurately and maximise their value.

We will trial pop-up outlet shops to mitigate the impact of the decreasing return we get from recycling textiles, while increasing promotion of our shops through social media to raise awareness, attract more visitors and encourage more donations.


Ballymoney Hospice Shop opening

Influencing Change for Hospice Care


With Belfast's Deputy Lord Mayor, Paul Doherty.

During 2025/26, Northern Ireland Hospice strengthened its engagement with political leaders, policymakers and senior health officials to help ensure hospice care remained firmly on the public policy agenda.

The year marked an important period in the development of a more coordinated approach to advocacy. Working alongside our partners through Hospice Alliance NI, chaired by our Chief Executive Trevor McCartney, we focused on increasing awareness of the vital role hospices play within Northern Ireland's health and social care system and highlighting the growing pressures facing specialist palliative care services.


Attending Hospice UK event, with Danny Donnelly, MLA

A key priority throughout the year was building stronger relationships with elected representatives, government departments and decision-makers. Through meetings, political events and visits to both our Adults' and Children's services, we worked to ensure those shaping health policy had a better understanding of the care provided by hospices, the impact on patients and families, and the challenges involved in sustaining these services in an environment of increasing demand and rising costs.

Northern Ireland Hospice also played an active role in supporting the Palliative Care Inquiry undertaken by the Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee. Through evidence, communications support and stakeholder engagement, we contributed to raising awareness of the issues affecting palliative and end-of-life care across Northern Ireland. The inquiry, published in December 2025, provided an important opportunity to highlight the contribution made by hospices not only to patients and families, but also to the wider health and social care system.

Working collectively through Hospice Alliance NI, we helped develop a shared strategy aimed at securing fair and sustainable funding for hospice services. This represented an important step forward


NI Hospice Team which presented evidence to the Health Committee


Visit to NI Children's Hospice by Health Department Permanent Secretary Mike Farrar

for the sector, bringing hospices together around common priorities and enabling a more consistent and coordinated approach to engagement with government and policymakers. The Alliance also established structures to coordinate policy and public affairs activity, helping to ensure key messages were aligned across the sector.

During the year, we continued to engage with MLAs, ministers, senior civil servants and health leaders to increase understanding of the challenges facing hospice care and the need for long-term sustainability. These conversations helped strengthen awareness of the growing demand for specialist palliative care and the importance of ensuring hospice services remain available to those who need them most.

Alongside this activity, work also began on the development of the Hospice Alliance NI Vision Report. Early planning and stakeholder engagement helped establish the foundations for a shared vision for hospice care across Northern Ireland. The report was designed to provide a platform for future discussions with policymakers, health leaders and elected representatives about the role of hospice care within the wider health system and the actions needed to support its future sustainability.

Collectively, these efforts contributed to important progress during the year, including the securing of additional funding support for hospices. While this funding provided welcome short-term stability, it also reinforced the need for a more sustainable and predictable approach to financing hospice services. Hospices continue to depend heavily on charitable income to fund commissioned services, creating uncertainty that can make long-term planning and service development more challenging.

The progress achieved during 2025/26 demonstrated the value of collaborative advocacy and strong political engagement. By working together, hospices strengthened relationships, increased awareness of the sector's contribution and helped elevate conversations about the future of palliative and end-of-life care.


Mike Farrar visiting Adults' In- Patient Unit

As the financial year ended, preparations were already underway for the next phase of engagement through Hospice Alliance NI. Building on the foundations established during 2025/26, political and stakeholder engagement was expected to continue at pace during 2026/27, supported by the emerging Vision Report and a continued focus on securing fair, sustainable and recurrent funding for hospice services across Northern Ireland. This work remains essential to ensuring that future generations of patients and families can continue to access the specialist care and support they need, when they need it most.


At the launch of the Health Committee's Palliative Care Enquiry at Stormont

Our finances

Income

This year, total income grew to **£19.78 million**, a 1.2% increase from £19.55 million in 2024-25. Donations and legacies decreased by £0.90 million (9.7%) to £8.38 million. Legacy receipts fell 42% from £2.72 million to £1.59 million, while donation income increased from £6.56 million to £6.79 million. This underlines both the continued generosity of our supporters, despite cost-of-living pressures, and the inherent year-to-year volatility of legacy income.

Income from charitable activities increased by £0.70 million (10.7%) to £7.26 million. The improvement was driven primarily by £0.52 million in contract uplifts from statutory partners and a £0.18 million increase in paid beds' income. Although welcome, current statutory funding still does not meet the full cost of delivering hospice care. We continue to work with our statutory partners to secure sustainable funding, and push for the implementation of the recommendations of the Palliative Care Inquiry led by the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Health.

Retail shop income increased by £0.27 million (7.8%) to £3.78 million. Growth was supported by new shop openings and the successful relocation of selected stores to higher-performing locations. This strong performance was achieved despite a challenging retail environment, due to competition from fast fashion retailers, changing customer behaviours and the increasing use of online resale platforms, which continue to impact the availability of donated goods. The result demonstrates the effectiveness of the hospice's retail strategy and the importance of our retail operations as a sustainable, unrestricted source of income to support Hospice services.

Expenditure

It cost **£21.51 million** to operate the Group in 2025-26, an increase of £1.87 million (9.5%) from the previous year. Of this increase, approximately £1.43 million related to higher pay costs. The main pressures were the 3.6% Agenda for Change pay award, a 6.7% increase in the National Living Wage, (NLW) higher employer National Insurance costs and the full-year staffing impact of new retail shops.

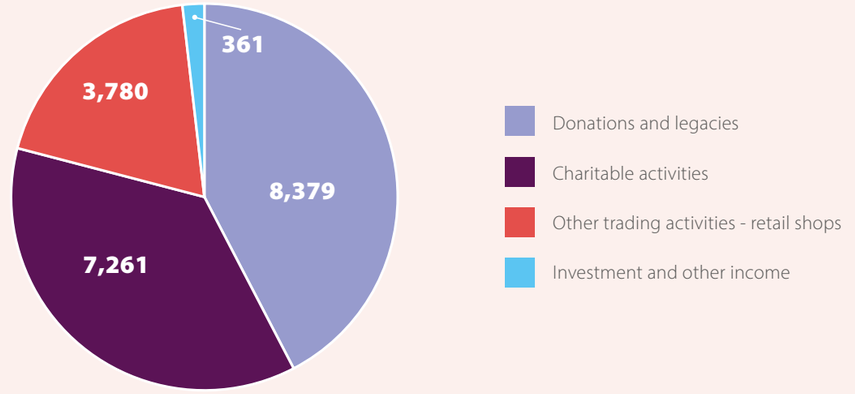
Expenditure on charitable activities increased by £0.91 million to £15.16 million as we continued to deliver specialist adult and children's palliative care in an environment of increasing demand, complexity and workforce cost pressure.

The cost of raising funds increased by £0.29 million to £2.56 million, while retail operating costs increased by £0.67 million to £3.79 million, mainly reflecting higher employment costs of NLW and National Insurance, coupled with the expansion of the retail estate.

Despite achieving record levels of recurrent statutory income, retail shop income and investment returns, expenditure continued to exceed income. Net expenditure was £1.73 million in 2025-26, compared with £0.10 million in the prior year. The movement reflects significant wage and wider inflationary pressures, together with the reduction in legacy receipts.

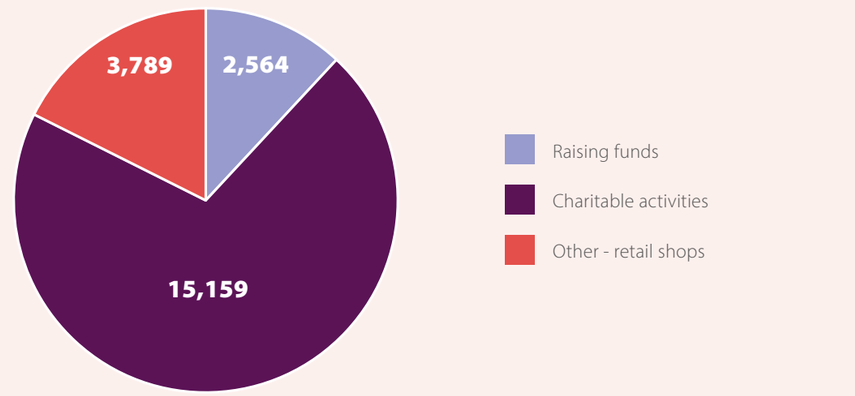
Looking ahead to 2026-27, we are continuing a three-pronged approach to strengthen financial sustainability: working with our statutory partners and pushing for funding to reach 50% of the actual cost of care following the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Health's Palliative Care Inquiry recommendations published in December 2025; diversifying our income across Fundraising, Retail and Philanthropy; and driving cost efficiencies to ensure that Northern Ireland Hospice operates as a lean organisation while protecting the quality and continuity of patient care.

Income 2025/26



Income	2025/26	%	2024/25	%
Donations and legacies	8,379	42%	9,283	47%
Charitable activities	7,261	37%	6,558	34%
Other trading activities - retail shops	3,780	19%	3,506	18%
Investment and other income	361	2%	198	1%
Total Group Income	**19,781**		**19,545**	

Expenditure 2025/26



Expenditure	2025/26	%	2024/25	%
Raising funds	2,564	12%	2,279	12%
Charitable activities	15,159	70%	14,248	73%
Other - retail shops	3,789	18%	3,115	16%
Total Group Expenditure	**21,512**		**19,642**	



Northern Ireland Hospice

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