

STRATEGY 2026-2030



North West Cancer Research

OUR VISION

Our vision is a cancer-free future for the people of our region

MISSION

A future where no-one in the North West or North Wales has their life defined or limited by cancer and where everyone gets earlier answers, kinder and more effective treatments and the best chance of a healthy future.



Introduction

North West Cancer Research is an independent charity, dedicated to putting our region's cancer needs first by tackling the cause, improving the care and finding the cure for cancer.

Our focus is on understanding and reducing both the prevalence of cancer and improving outcomes for people in our region. Our goal is to raise awareness of the causes of cancers prevalent in our region, reduce their incidence, improve access to better treatments and care and ultimately strive towards a cancer free future for the people of our region.

Our area of operation - the North West and North Wales - is varied and diverse, incorporating cities, towns, villages and the smallest rural hamlets. Within the area, we have a wealth of skills, talents and resources, but also areas of severe social deprivation and poverty. There are significant health inequalities which affect the lives of our populations differently. While everyone can be impacted by cancer, we recognise that for some, cancer risks and outcomes are different.

North West Cancer Research has a long history of funding high-quality research, and this remains at the heart of what we do. Since 2000, we have funded more than £55 million of world-class research, addressing cancer inequalities and championing our local research community to pave the way for a cancer-free future.

In 2021, we broadened the scope of our work to include innovative health awareness and health promotion work - to help people make healthy lifestyle choices which, over time, reduce the incidence of cancer. Since then, we have delivered face-to-face education which has reached tens of thousands of people in the region. Our campaigns and education programmes have been seen by millions and have won awards.

As we look to the future, our strategic vision remains unchanged; to achieve a cancer-free future for the people of our region.

Those people will be at the heart of what we do and will guide all of our activities. They will ensure that our understanding goes beyond data and includes the personal experiences of people in our region. Their lived experience will shape our work, providing an important voice along the way. In this strategy we will set out a new way of working which expands and draws together all of our work in order to maximise the impact that we have.

We will continue to work closely with leaders, academics, communities and clinicians across the North West in order to maximise the impact that we have.

We look forward to the future with excitement and are confident that we can make a real and lasting difference to the future health of the people of the North West and North Wales.



Cancer in the North West and North Wales

Cancer is one of the greatest health challenges of our age and remains a complex problem. The name 'cancer' groups together more than 220 different conditions under a single name, and each person's cancer experience is very different and unique to them.

One in two people will develop some form of cancer during their lifetime and at the present time around 3.5m people are living with cancer – a number which has risen by 500,000 since 2020. Annually, over 386,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed in the UK (based on 2017-2019 data), equating to roughly 1,000 new diagnoses daily.

Across the UK, the four most common types of cancer are prostate, breast, lung and bowel. Although there are naturally a number of parallels between the national and regional pictures of cancer prevalence, there are also significant differences.

Within our region, cancer is significantly more prevalent than you would expect, with more cases per head of population than the all-England or all-Wales average figures would suggest.

There are also particular cancer types which are much more common in our area. Examples of this include:

+17%

Across North Wales and North-West England head and neck cancer rates are 17% higher than the national average;

+19%

There are high levels of lung, trachea and bronchus cancers across our region, but in particular, the North-West of England where rates are 19% above the national average;

+19%

Oesophageal cancer rates are stubbornly high. Oesophageal cancer is 19% more common in the North West of England than the all-England average, while in North Wales, this figure is 26%.

+26%

+26%

Gynaecological cancer rates are high. In North-Wales cervical cancer is 26% higher than the all-Wales average while in North-west England this figure is 18%.

+18%

Rates of certain cancers are alarming and highlight significant regional disparities. Treatment outcomes also vary which impacts upon quality of life and mortality.

Our goal is to understand why these differences occur and to take action to reduce these disparities over time.



Our work to date

North West Cancer Research was founded in 1948 and in more than 75-years we have funded hundreds of life-saving cancer research projects.

Much of our work has focussed on understanding the mechanisms which cause cancer; the microscopic changes which occur within cells which lead to tumours and allow the faulty cells to continue living after they should have naturally died and been recycled within the body. This early-stage research is critical in creating the under-lying knowledge which will later be used by researchers to drive innovation and to create a pipeline for change.

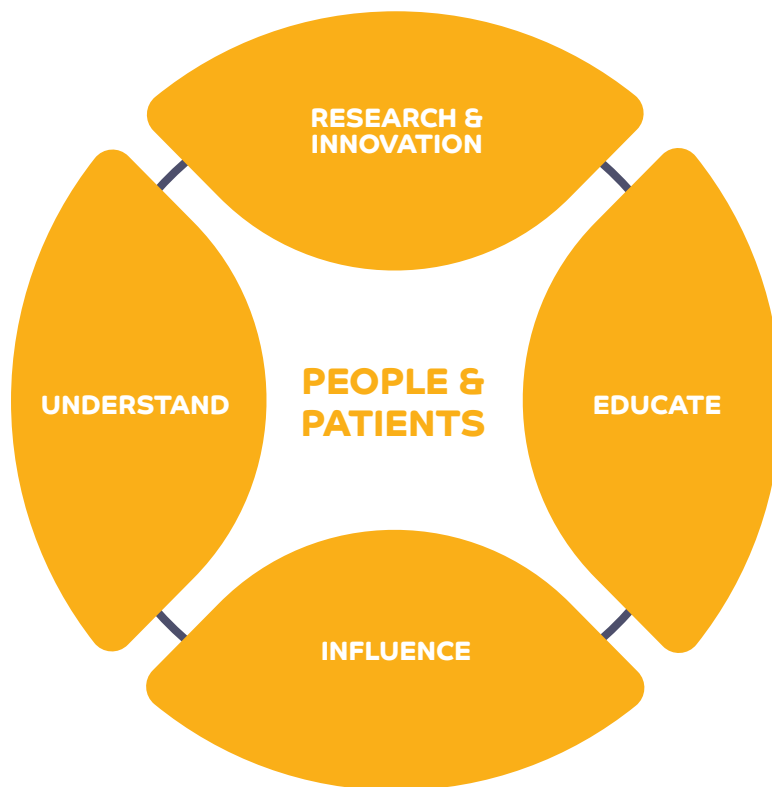
In addition, we have invested in techniques which will improve the early detection of cancers. Our research into bio-markers – tell-tale signs of cancer in the body – is informing the development of ground-breaking tests which could detect undiagnosed cancers before they start to produce symptoms.

We are a funder of translational research – taking early discoveries and supporting them as they start to work through the complex systems and tests needed as they become patient treatments - and then studies which advance treatments themselves and include creating kinder treatments for cancer. In recent years we have also expanded our work into applied (patient focussed) research along with studies on our region which enable us to understand more around the inequalities which different communities and patients face.

In 2021 we expanded our charitable objects to enable the Charity to provide campaigns which highlight the signs and symptoms of cancer, raise the profile of screening services and high-light the need for early-diagnosis. We have also provided targeted face-to-face education with simple health messaging for those aged 3-103. These messages focus on simple steps which can be taken in order to reduce the risk of cancer and to live a longer, healthier life. In 2024 these face-to-face sessions reached over 32,000 people and our campaigns had a combined audience of over 120 million potential viewers.



Our Strategy 2026-30



Our strategy for 2026-30 will focus on four key strands:

- **Understand**
- **Research and innovation**
- **Influence**
- **Educate**

Running through each of these will be a number of consistent themes.

- **People and patient focus** – The people of our region need to sit at the very heart of what we do. North West Cancer Research will involve people, giving them a voice as well as benefitting from their lived experience.
- **Fundraising focus** – To help achieve our objectives, all of our work will reflect the need for North West Cancer Research to continue to grow its brand awareness and income. Every piece of funding we provide, campaign we initiate or education that we give will also provide benefits in growing our brand and therefore our income so that we can continue to invest in even more world leading research;

Everything we do will be focussed on the needs of our region and to address the regional disparities which exist. We will measure our success and report back on this to our supporters and the public. We will produce annual impact reports to show what our work has achieved and use consistent measures to track the effectiveness of this.



Understanding our Region

In the North-West and North-Wales we have higher rates of cancer than many other parts of the country. In order to speak authentically and to address issues in the region, North West Cancer Research needs to understand the scale of the problem, the issues this causes and the impacts on people and patients. We also need to understand the drivers of cancer in our region, how these drive inequalities and change outcomes.

What we will do

To underpin our strategy and our work, we will work through two streams to seek to understand cancer in our region. These are:

1. The development of a cancer data repository and analysis function within the region;
2. The development of relationships with a network of patient groups within the region.

These will help us to speak with authority on cancer questions around the region such as:

- why overall cancer rates are higher than the national average;
- why we have a greater prevalence of particular tumour groups and the risk factors involved in these;
- the cancer and health inequalities which exist in and between our communities;
- the barriers to information, treatment, care and support in our region;
- the impacts which cancer has in our region on people and patients.

We will ensure that this information is available to clinicians, Public Health teams, commissioners and patient groups across the region to enable them to improve their services.

How we will measure success

The work from this strand will underpin every other action that we take. Our education, outreach, research and thought-leadership will all be designed to answer questions developed in line with the information above. Success will mean:

- The Charity oversees the holding and analysis of rich data on cancer and health in our region;
- The opening of this data source to partners;
- The Charity becomes the leading source for information on cancer in our region;
- Our website provides a rich resource of data, illustrated by patient stories which are referred to by other organisations.

Influence

The providers of cancer services within our region face many pressures and demands upon their time. It is difficult for them to actively engage with all of the research and the information which is becoming available to them including the latest and most effective ways in which treatments can be provided.

North West Cancer Research has a wealth of information – relevant to our region – which comes from the activities we undertake. We have a responsibility to share this in order to influence the providers of services and the key decision makers in our region to ensure that they are aware of patient feedback, research outcomes and information from our campaigns.

What we will do

North West Cancer Research will:

- Develop our knowledge of the region including NHS and public health data
- Develop a network which enables us to listen to and understand the views of patients across our region
- Learn from our research
- Develop networks of the key stakeholders and decision makers in cancer in our region
- Speak into the healthcare and local government systems of the region in order to influence policy, commissioning and the provision of care services in our region.

How we will measure success

Our aim is to become a leading stakeholder on key cancer questions in our region. We will provide useful information that helps professionals and health organisations make improvements to services. Success will mean:

- Providing networks for key stakeholders in the NHS, local and regional leaders and executives which will enable us to bring our knowledge and expertise to their decision-making responsibilities;
- Developing a policy arm for North West Cancer Research which enables us to speak with authority on key questions and their application to the region as well as advising key regional and national figures on the needs of the region.



Research & Innovation

North West Cancer Research seeks to ensure a cancer-free future for the people of our region. Our vision is a future where no-one in the North West or North Wales has their life defined or limited by cancer and where everyone gets earlier answers, kinder and more effective treatments and the best chance of a healthy future.

This will only be possible through a carefully targeted programme of research, from the earliest theoretical discoveries to applied and patient-based studies. All of these will need to deliver impact for the people of our region.

What we will do

North West Cancer Research will fund research which is relevant to cancer and its impact must be felt in our region. Our research will not be limited to one part of the research pipeline, or to a single discipline but rather we will seek to make resources available to advance knowledge and the application of that knowledge from the earliest part of discovery through translational research to the development of treatments for cancer.

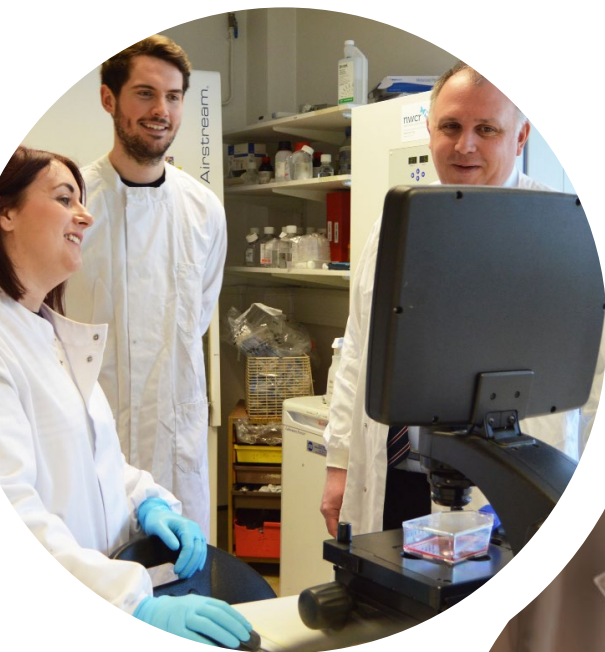
Work will focus on activity which can have real impact for people and patients and we will work closely with clinicians, academics and patient groups to ensure that it can be translated into real action. We will:

- Work to ensure that we understand the impact our funded research has through traditional routes such as academic papers, outreach, and the attraction of additional funding;
- Develop pipelines which ensure that the Charity continues to support work which is leading to impact – moving it through translation and towards patient application;
- Communicate our research to the public, ensuring that we can take the complex science of the lab to the general public in an easily digestible form;
- Ensure that clinicians and patients are at the heart of all of our funded work;
- Proactively ask questions for the research community to respond to – ensuring that these are relevant and appropriate to the region;
- Support and fund innovation to benefit people and patients in our region. We will provide for innovations in health, small pieces of equipment and patient amenities which would otherwise not be available to individuals in the region. These will be chosen as things which make a difference to people and patients in our region and where we can measure the impact these have.

How we will measure success

Success will be measured through:

- The 16-domains of activity and impact within our database system – including positive PR / patents / licences – measurable benefit
- The quality of the information which we provide to the general public
- The quality of applications received and funded by the Charity
- Progress in moving research through translation and into clinical application
- Impact upon the lives and outcomes of people and patients



Our Strategy

– Educate

North West Cancer Research is striving for a cancer-free future for the people in our region. Many cancers are brought on or aggravated by lifestyle factors – preventable parts of our modern lives which we can influence. The World Health Organisation estimates that between 30-50% of cancers are preventable if we change our approaches on issues such as alcohol, tobacco, exercise, diet, UV exposure, pollution, radiation and workplace hazards. The Department of Health estimates that in the UK around a third of cancers are preventable. For us, it makes sense to work to prevent as many cancers as possible before they occur – rather than relying solely upon early detection and treatment.

In our region, the public receive health messages from a large variety of different sources which are sometimes contradictory and that struggle to gain traction in the consciousness of individuals.

We will use our local knowledge and connections in order to make the information we provide appropriate and relevant to the community and targeted at their needs.

What we will do

North West Cancer Research will:

- Deliver health campaigns across the region which provide information on the signs and symptoms of cancer, the importance of screening and early diagnosis and the need for individuals to take action in order to reduce their cancer risk;
- Deliver face-to-face information to members of the general public in community settings such as in schools and groups. The information will be age appropriate, delivered in an accessible manner and easy to digest;
- Provide targeted information in accessible formats to communities which statutory agencies find it more difficult to engage with;
- Engage with patient support groups to provide them with information and advice which will improve their lives living with and beyond cancer.

How we will measure success

Success will be measured in different ways depending on the activity identified above, but this will include:

- The number of individuals engaged with on a face-to-face basis;
- The reach, impressions and audience of campaigns;
- The number of contacts with patient groups along with the numbers of patients reached;
- The behavioural changes we see, increase in knowledge and understanding derived from delivered work.

