



The Alliance of
Community Cancer
Support Centres
and Services



Survivorship
Programme

The Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services: an initiative of the Survivorship Programme of the National Cancer Control Programme Annual Report 2024



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Foreword

The year rolls around quickly and here we are writing our third Annual Report for The Alliance. From my point of view it has been another successful year of growth and consolidation. The Alliance is continuing to secure its place as an integral part of cancer support services in Ireland. I hope you enjoy reading this report. I think there is a lot for all members to be proud of and this report helps us to showcase and celebrate our progress.

I would like to welcome new members and encourage you to attend the network meetings. The meetings are a source of information, inspiration and friendship. Members of the Alliance are an enthusiastic and dedicated bunch and they are there to collaborate, provide helpful advice, or just listen.

The Alliance was collectively supported by the strategic endeavours and success of the funding working group and others who campaigned for increased resources. The group met the Minister for Health, Senior Civil Servants in the Department of Health, and local politicians. The combination of data, evidence-based impact of services and patient and family stories really impressed. I am very grateful for their continued efforts, which allows us to bring greater financial stability to organisations and grow The Alliance.

Thank you also to the steering group and working group members, including patient representatives who give up their time freely to contribute to our organisation. It is really appreciated.

We had very well-attended network meetings throughout the year. There were many interesting presentations from network members, NCCP staff and research collaborators. Input or feedback for upcoming agendas is always welcome. We put a lot of effort into trying to make meetings interesting, educational and good opportunities for you to meet and socialise with one another. We are always open to suggestions.

In 2024, we completed another round of Self-Assessment and Peer Review against the Best Practice Guidance for community cancer support centres. We would like to congratulate centres, and thank them for participating. The peer review teams were very impressed that the spirit of excellence and continuous improvement is alive and well in our sector.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the NCCP survivorship team; Dorothy Thomas, who is such a support and leader for The Alliance, Bernie O'Loughlin, Niya Mateeva and Clare Leatham and Rebecca Ryan. Our nursing colleague, Róisín Lawless, who joined us on a too short secondment from Beaumont Hospital and did Trojan work on the CTS programme, finished up in April 2024 and continues to be missed by all who worked with her. A special thank you to Ellen Stafford who has contributed so much using her design skills, capability with data and reports and gift for communicating our work effectively to promote the Alliance at many events; all of which will have a lasting impact.

I am looking forward to 2025 with gratitude and hope for the future of The Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services and continued growth in meeting the needs of cancer patients and their families across Ireland. Thank you to all of you for continuing to support The NCCP Alliance.

Louise Mullen



Dorothy Thomas



Introduction

The National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP), established in 2007 as a directorate within the Health Service Executive (HSE), works in partnership with healthcare providers and other stakeholders to prevent and treat cancer, and to improve survival rates and quality of life for those affected. The NCCP translates research, surveillance data, and outcome evaluations into practical strategies and actions, implementing the recommendations set out in the National Cancer Strategies.



In its efforts to align cancer services with the National Cancer Strategy, the NCCP collaborates closely with the Department of Health's Cancer Policy Unit, other HSE departments and cancer services, and a wide range of voluntary and charitable organisations. The NCCP's vision encompasses the following goals:

- Reducing the incidence and impact of cancer
- Improving the experience of patients and their families by ensuring care is equitable, high-quality, patient-centred, evidence-based, and delivered by multidisciplinary teams
- Addressing inequalities in cancer care access and outcomes
- Promoting a consistent national approach to the delivery of cancer services
- Fairly prioritising and planning service enhancements and investments to ensure value for money

The National Cancer Strategy 2017–2026 recognises the important role played by the voluntary and community sector in supporting cancer patients, their families, and carers. It identifies survivorship support as a vital part of the cancer care journey and emphasises the importance of psychosocial support in delivering high-quality cancer services.

As part of its commitment to integrated care, the NCCP has led the development of the Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services (The Alliance). This initiative was established to foster a patient pathway between the acute and community settings and collaboration among community-based cancer support providers throughout Ireland.

The primary aim of The Alliance is to offer information, support, and opportunities for capacity building to these organisations, facilitating their integration into the wider cancer care system. The Alliance is dedicated to ensuring that all cancer patients, along with their families and support networks, have access to equitable, high-quality support services that address the physical, emotional, and psychological challenges associated with a cancer diagnosis.

The Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services offers two types of membership: Member and Associate Member. The main difference between these categories is the eligibility requirements and associated benefits.

- Associate membership is open to all organisations that provide or support community cancer support services. To qualify, these organisations must sign the Charter and confirm their adherence to the Charities Governance Code. Associate membership is a prerequisite for participating in the self-assessment and peer review process required to become a Member of The Alliance.
- Member status is open to community cancer support centres who have undergone the self-assessment and peer review process that demonstrates compliance with the NCCP Best Practice Guidance. To achieve Member status, community cancer support centres must first become associate members, sign the charter and apply to undergo the self-assessment and peer review process.

The Alliance was officially launched in 2022, with 10 Member organisations, 11 applicants for membership, and 14 Associate Members. In 2023, six centres successfully completed the self-assessment and peer review process, increasing the number of members to 16. Three new organisations joined as Associate Members, bringing the total to 17.

The Alliance at a Glance 2024



The Alliance Memberships

In 2024, nine organisations applied for the self-assessment and peer review process. Of these, four deferred to the next cycle which is anticipated to take place in 2027. Four organisations successfully achieved Member status. One organisation was asked to make improvements in one practice area and is expected to receive Member status in 2025 upon successful completion and review of their Action Plan. Five organisations joined the Alliance as Associate Members in 2024.

At the end of 2024, there were 20 Member organisations, one Applicant Member organisation and 20 Associate Member organisations. See Appendix 1 for the list of members.

The Peer Review Team members are integral to the process, ensuring that the key areas of Service Provision, Governance, Adherence to Professional Ethics and Conduct and Impact Monitoring and Evaluation are reviewed against the standards set out in the Best Practice Guidance. Sincere thanks is extended to all peer review team members for the 2024 cycle:

Service User Reviewers

Ms Kathleen O'Connor

Ms Siobhan Hayes

Mr Martin Sweeney

Mr Paddy McMahon

Cancer Support Centre Reviewers

Ms Bernie McHugh, LARCC Cancer Support Sanctuary

Ms Elaine Corcoran, Cancer Care West

Ms Mary Ruddy, Cuisle Cancer Support Centre

Ms Maureen Grealish, Tuam Cancer Care Centre

Mr John Conroy, Dochas Offaly Cancer Support

Clinician Reviewers

Ms Fiona Kelly, NCCP

Ms Jane McCarthy, St. Vincent's University Hospital

Dr Jennifer Fennell, Beaumont Hospital

Dr Susan O'Flanagan, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital

Dr Vicky Cooper Lunt, Beaumont Hospital

Review Team Coordinators

Ms Clare Leatham, NCCP

Ms Niya Mateeva, NCCP

Ms Dorothy Thomas, NCCP

Funding in 2024

Grant Funding

In 2024 there were two NCCP grant calls, one for Members and Applicant Members; and the other for Associate Members of the Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services. A total of €3.7M in once-off funding was disbursed.

The 16 Member and Applicant Member organisations were provided with grant aid for direct service delivery activities which included the following:

- New client intake meetings
- Direct delivery of Lymphoedema services
- Direct delivery of NCCP coordinated survivorship programmes: Cancer Thriving and Surviving (CTS) and CLIMB®

Six Associate Member organisations were provided with grant aid for the following activities:

- Impact monitoring/service evaluation
- Direct service delivery
- Regional and national collaborative developments aimed at improving the quality of life for people affected by cancer.

Recurrent Funding

Building on the achievement of securing once-off funding for 2024, the Alliance Members and Applicant Member organisations advocated again in 2024 for core multi-annual funding for 2025 from the government. Independent to the NCCP, the Funding Working Group led on this campaign on behalf of 21 organisations in 2024.

The working group was made up of the following people:

Deirdre Grant, ARC Cancer Support Centres, Dublin

Caitriona O'Mahony, Cork ARC Cancer Support House (until February 2024)

Conor O'Leary, Purple House Cancer Support Centre, Wicklow

Gemma Fort, Recovery Haven Kerry Cancer Support House

John Conroy, Dochas Offaly Cancer Support Group

Mary Dolan, Cois Nore Cancer Support Centre (until March 2024)

Richard Flaherty, Cancer Care West, Galway & Donegal

Tracy McDaid, Solas Cancer Support Centre, Waterford

In response to the campaign and pre-budget submission, the Minister secured an allocation of €5.5 million in recurring funding for Members and Associate Members of The Alliance in the 2025 budget. This very welcome funding will be distributed by the NCCP.



Activity Summary

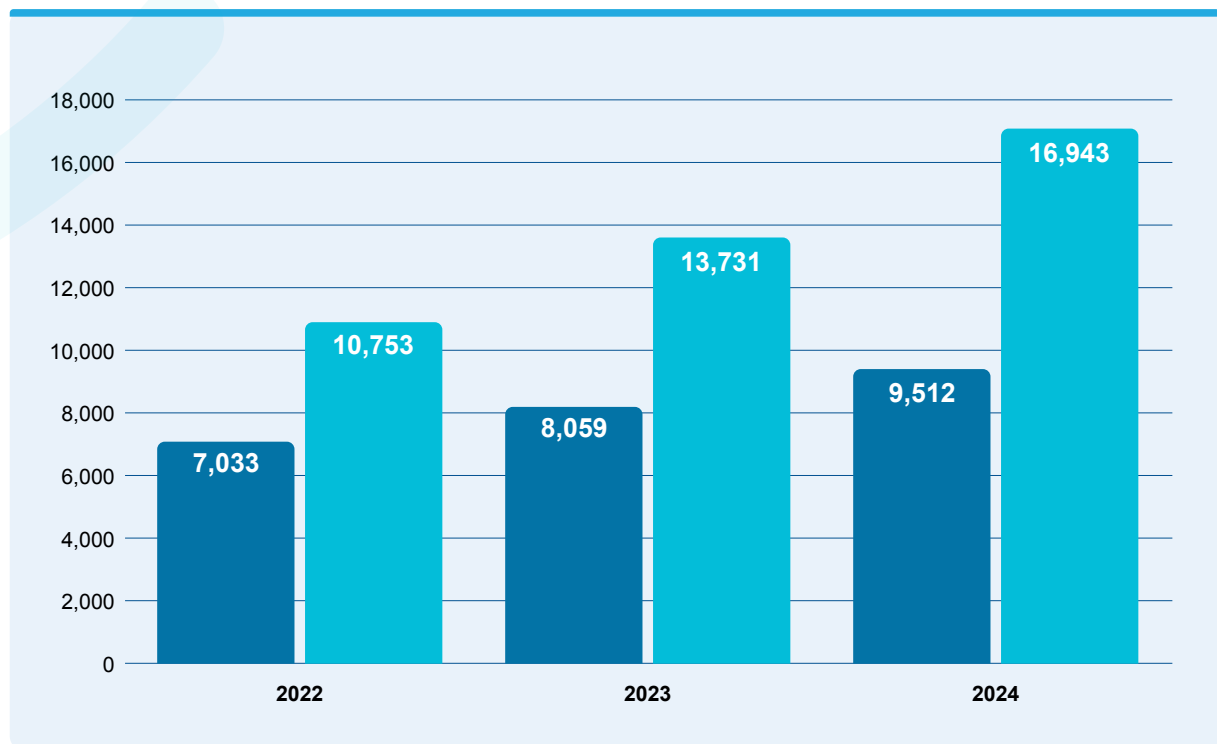
The NCCP collects anonymised activity data through a monthly activity tracker. The content and scope of this data collection is agreed and monitored by a working group comprised of representatives from small, medium and large community cancer support centres and the NCCP. The data has multiple uses, including forming the basis of the NCCP's activity based funding model for Members of The Alliance.

29 organisations (20 members, one applicant member and eight associate members) submitted a full dataset for 2024. Only full datasets received by the NCCP were included in this report. Members of The Alliance are required to submit their activity data each month.

In 2024, 9,512 new clients utilised the services of community cancer support centres. Please see appendix 1 for a breakdown of each centre's new clients in 2024. A total of 16,943 clients accessed the support services provided by the 29 community cancer support centres. As well, 2,969 clients moved on from the centres.

The network has experienced remarkable growth in clients between 2022 when the Alliance was launched and 2024. New clients grew by 14.5% from 2022 to 2023; 18% from 2023 to 2024 - and 35% overall. Total clients grew by 28% from 2022- 2023; 23% from 2023 to 2024 and 58% overall.

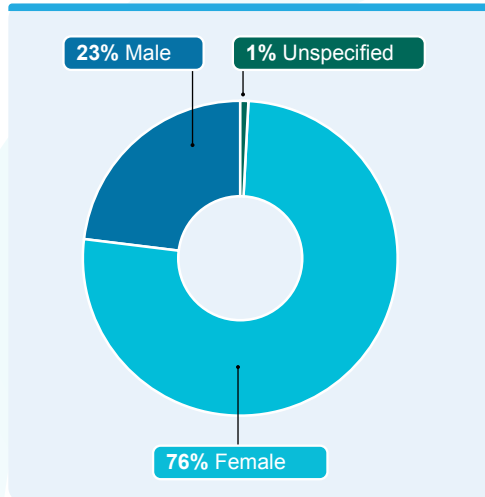
New and total clients



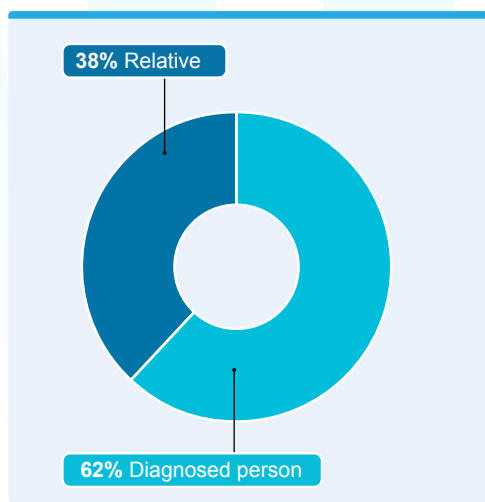
New Client Demographics

New client demographics remain consistent across gender, age and cancer status.

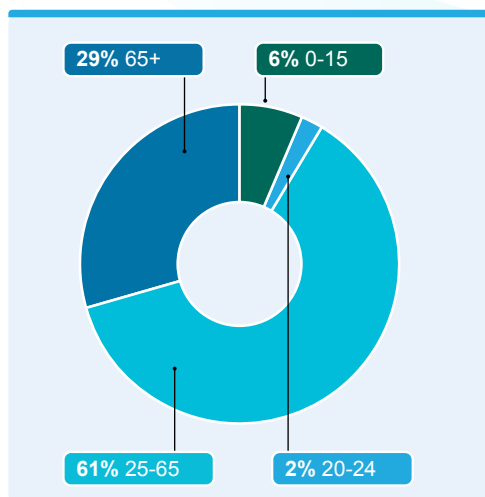
Gender



Cancer Status



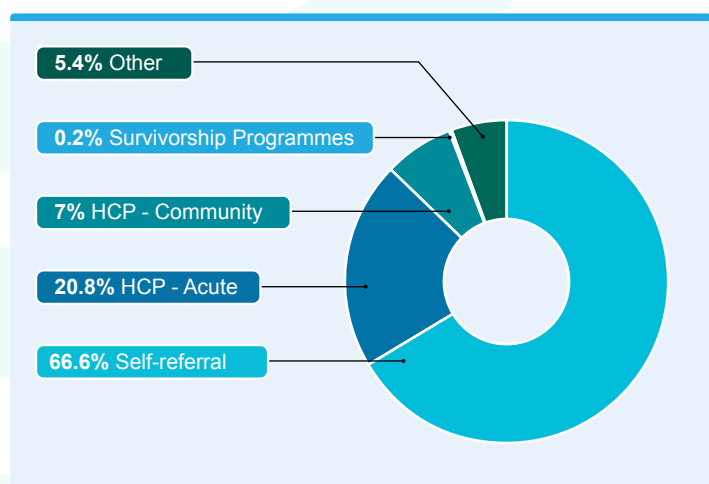
Age



Referral Sources

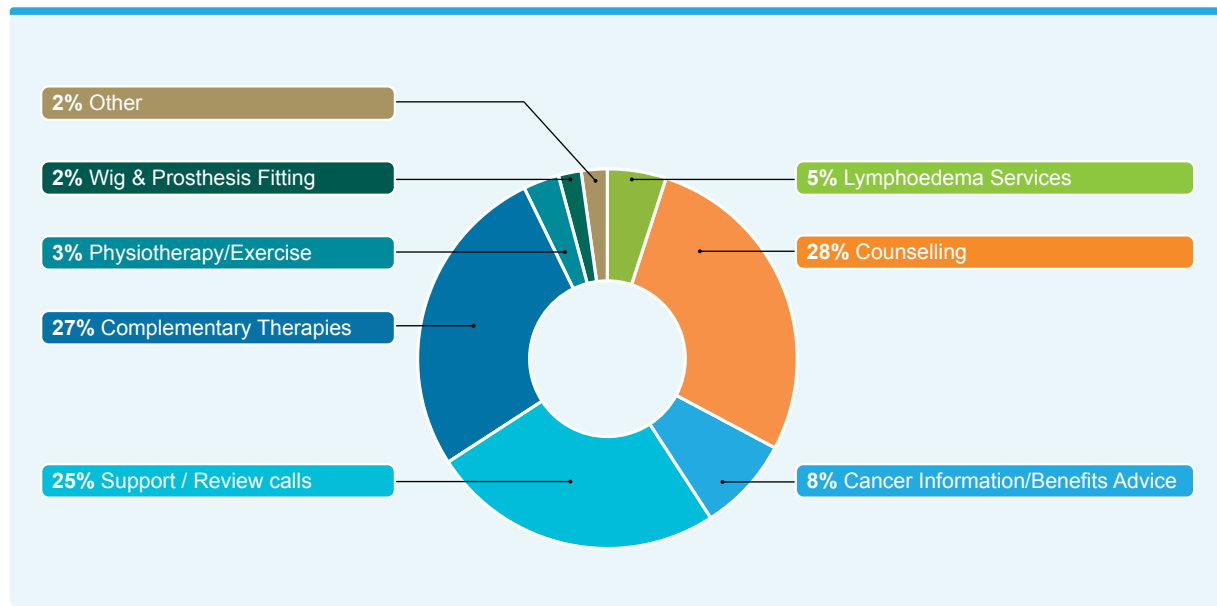
How new clients found their way to community cancer support centres remained relatively unchanged from 2023.

New Clients: Referral Sources



Attendances

Overall attendance percentages for both individual and group services remained broadly the same as 2023.

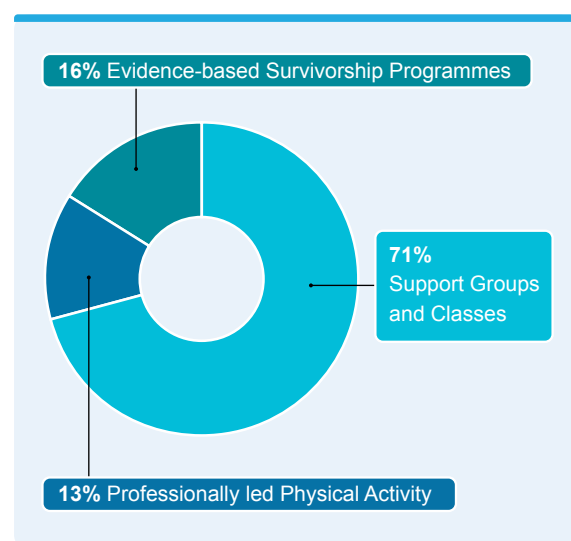


Individual Services

In line with previous years, counselling, complementary therapies and support calls comprise the majority of individual activities. Support calls remained the same as in 2023 at 25% of individual activity. There was an 18% drop in attendances for counselling and a 29% increase in attendances for complementary therapies. One to one exercise captured in this category is led by a physiotherapist or an exercise physiologist. Other activities including newer services such as coaching and foot care are emerging.

Attendances for Group Services

Holistic movement such as yoga and tai chi, support groups, classes and talks all continued to be very popular with more than 35,000 attendances in the year. On average, clients attended two - three group activities per month. Physical activity programmes remained steady with attendances accounting for 13% of total attendances for group services. Evidence based survivorship programmes accounted for 16% of total attendances for group services. This is a remarkable increase from the four percent reported in 2023.



Evidence-based Survivorship Programmes

The NCCP currently coordinates three evidence-based survivorship programmes;

- Cancer Thriving and Surviving (CTS)
- Children's Lives Include Moments of Bravery (CLIMB)
- Building Better Caregivers (BBC)

The NCCP ensures these programmes are accessible either in-person or online, to anyone wishes to avail of them.

Cancer Thriving and Surviving CTS

The CTS programme is a self-management programme developed by Stanford University which is based on a rehabilitation best practice model. The programme provides an opportunity for participants to adjust, reflect, manage and flourish, providing knowledge and skills to enable and empower participants to assume a central role in the recovery of their health.

The NCCP co-ordinates the delivery, facilitates free leader training and provides funding for the CTS programme, which is delivered in both community and acute hospital settings throughout Ireland.

Activity Summary

32 CTS Programmes were delivered nationally. **349 individuals** who have had cancer treatment completed the programme. This represents a **26% increase** in participation over 2023 and 48% since the Alliance launched in 2022.

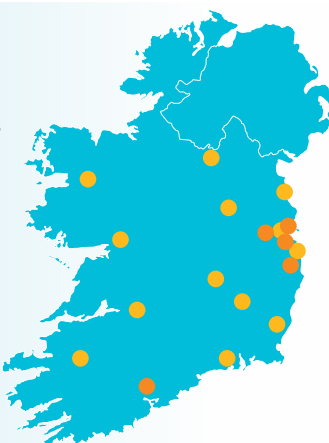


CTS Programmes Delivered Locations 2024

Online Programme Delivery Ensures Nationwide Accessibility and was provided by:

Cork Arc Cancer Support House
ARC Cancer Support Dublin
Marie Keating Foundation
Purple House Cancer Support
St. Vincent's University Hospital

The CTS programme was delivered in 13 locations around the country and 5 organisations provided online delivery to ensure national accessibility.



“

“There were times I felt so alone ... the course provided me with a release valve”

“Tackling real life problems for cancer survivors made me come back”

“The holistic approach and specific skills development in each area gives great confidence in the ability to handle the future”

“Brilliant way to help people struggling with a cancer diagnosis to get back to a normal life and feel more empowered”

“Every ‘survivor’ should be given the opportunity to do this course”

”

Children's Lives Includes Moments of Bravery CLIMB®

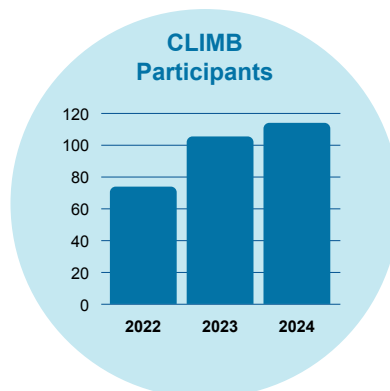
The Children's Lives Includes Moments of Bravery (CLIMB®) programme is for children aged between six and 12 years who are experiencing the impact of a parent's cancer diagnosis. The programme aims to build upon the child's strengths and increase their ability to cope with the stress associated with their parents' illness. Over six sessions, these small groups engage in art and play therapy which enables the children to express their feelings.

The NCCP coordinates the delivery of the CLIMB programme in Ireland both online and in person. In October the NCCP provided free training for 17 new CLIMB leaders. Participants attended from 10 organisations, three of which had not previously delivered the programme.



Activity Summary

- **3 new organisations trained**
- **12 programmes delivered**
- **113 attendees** which represents an **8% growth** of 2023
- **59% growth** since the Alliance was launched in 2022.



**CLIMB
Programmes
Delivered
Locations
2024**



Building Better Caregivers

Building Better Caregivers (BBC) is a self-management programme developed by Stanford University which is based on a rehabilitation best practice model. The programme is aimed at enhancing caregiving skills and reducing caregivers' stress (Lorig, 2012, 2019).

Topics covered in the programme include:

- Staying healthy and well
- Tools for managing fatigue
- Getting a good night's sleep
- Communication skills
- Getting help and action planning
- Dealing with challenging emotions, situations and behaviours

Following the 2023 feasibility evaluation by Recovery Haven Kerry in partnership with Munster Technological University, The NCCP expanded its Self-Management Resource Centre license to include this programme.

The team at Recovery Haven Kerry ran two programmes that were nationally available online. 16 people who were caring for a loved one with cancer availed of the programme.



SMRC Master Trainers Siobhán MacSweeney and Noreen O'Flaherty

“

“The course absolutely invaluable. I'd actually do it all over again.”

“The best part was the contact with people who are doing or going through the same thing.”

”

Progressing the Psycho-Oncology Integrated Patient Pathway

Highlighting Collaboration in the South East

The National Cancer Control Programme's Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres (CCSCs) is an instrumental part of the patient pathway following a cancer diagnosis and interfaces with a range of organisations and institutions, including other voluntary organisations, acute hospitals, and primary care services. Successful integration of CCSCs' services into the patient pathway involves intentional partnership between these organisations.

A unique opportunity arose in the South East with the implementation of a new Psycho-Oncology Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) based in both University Hospital Waterford and outpatient primary care locations in late 2023. New to Ireland, Principal Psychologist of the Psycho-Oncology MDT Jennifer Kilkus, was keen to build relationships with other support services in the area. CCSCs are an essential part of Ireland's Psycho-Oncology Model of Care, and strong working relationships between these services ensures patients have access to a variety of services outside of scope offered by the Psycho-Oncology MDT.

Dr Kilkus found an enthusiastic collaborator in Tracy McDaid, manager of Solas Cancer Support Centre in Waterford. They both saw the opportunity for collaboration in a number of areas: Cross-referral between services, the development of patient-focused programmes offered by the Psycho-Oncology MDT, and opportunities to transfer expert knowledge in Psycho-Oncology to the counsellors working in CCSCs across the region.

Cross-Referral

A first introduction was made with a “Meet and Greet” of the Psycho-Oncology MDT in January of 2024. Hosted by Solas, seven CCSCs in the South East region (formally CHO5) attended for an education and networking session on psycho-oncology and the MDT service. Referral pathways were discussed and Centres were invited to contact the MDT with consultation or referral requests. Since that time, Solas has provided the MDT an online portal for direct referral with 24 referrals made in 2024. Consultation and cross-referrals are ongoing.

Patient Programmes

This partnership has been instrumental in increasing the number of group interventions and workshops available for patients. Limitations with space and parking have made it challenging for the Psycho-Oncology to offer these services. Collaboration with CCSCs has allowed for shared efforts in offering these services with CCSCs assisting in registration, advertising, and hosting space. To date, this has led to a successful five-week cognitive behavioural therapy group, a workshop on managing side and late effects of cancer treatments, and a two-part series on self-compassion during cancer, serving a total of 67 patients, hosted at Solas Cancer Support Centre. A workshop on managing Fear of Cancer Recurrence and Progression will be offered at Eist Cancer Support Centre in May 2025, with ongoing plans to extend these programmes across the region.

Training

An outcome of the successful “Meet and Greet” in January 2024 was identification of a desire for training in psycho-oncology by cancer support centre counsellors. Counsellors were polled on their preferred topics for continuing professional development (CPD), and two CPD courses have been offered to counsellors in the South East region to date. These courses focused on evidence-based interventions in cancer

supportive care and were designed to increase the breadth of services offered by CCSC counsellors.

These courses have been extremely well received, with a total of 28 participants from seven CCSCs attending. Counsellors rated the amount of knowledge gained an average of 8.4 on a 0-10 scale. Additional feedback was very positive: “The training you provide is so valuable and has had a significant impact on my work with clients. I would welcome further opportunities to train in the specifics of oncology counselling”; “This training I see now as necessary requirement for working with people going through cancer or survived cancer”; [I have a] better understanding of the mental/ physiology of what cancer survivors are going through.” Dr Kilkus is currently networking with other Principal Psychologists in Ireland to extend similar courses to other CCSCs nation-wide.

Plans for 2025

Exciting plans for continued partnership are on the horizon for 2025. The South East Psycho-Oncology MDT will assist the CCSCs with a series of patient support videos providing education on a variety of topics, as well as offer a national CPD training for counsellors as part of the 2025/2026 training plan.

Overall, the partnership in the South East has been a highly successful endeavour, with patients, CCSCs, and the local Psycho-Oncology MDT benefitting from these joint efforts.



Dr Jennifer Kilkus, Principal Psychologist, Psycho-oncology, University Hospital Waterford & Ms Tracy McDaid, General Manager, Solas Cancer Support Centre

Building Evidence

There is a notable dearth of research in effective cancer survivorship interventions, worldwide. While some evidence exists for the prevalence of certain symptoms like depression, pain, and fatigue, knowledge gaps remain regarding cognitive and physical impairments, employment, financial well-being, and relationships. The NCCP has actively encouraged both members and associate members of the Alliance to prioritise engaging in research that will make meaningful progress towards enhancing survivorship care and support.

Alliance Supported Research Initiatives

Organisations participating in the Alliance supported four pieces of research aimed at building the evidence base for effective cancer survivorship interventions. While these organisations did not lead the research directly, their contributions were essential in advancing our collective understanding of the challenges and needs of cancer survivors in the areas of employment; using video conferencing to improve accessibility; physical activity and exercise initiatives and lymphoedema services in community cancer support centres.

CanWork

Principal Investigator: Prof Deirdre Connolly, Trinity College Dublin

Aim: Examine the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of a work and cancer self-management intervention to support women with breast cancer to return to work.

Methodology: This study is a multi-site, cluster randomised controlled trial evaluating the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of CanWork—a six-week, occupational therapy-led programme designed for women with breast cancer. A process evaluation is also being conducted to examine the implementation of the programme.

Status: Ongoing.

Usability of Connected Health in Cancer Survivorship Care

Cancer Thriving and Surviving Case Study

Principal Investigator: Isaiah Gitonga, PhD candidate, Maynooth University

Aim: Explore the usability, effectiveness, and participant motivations associated with Connected Health delivery of the Cancer Thriving and Surviving (CTS) programme in Ireland.

Methodology: A cross-sectional survey was conducted with individuals living with and beyond cancer who had completed the CTS programme via a connected health platform, i.e. video conferencing. Both closed- and open-ended questions captured user experiences and motivations. Usability was assessed using the Telehealth Usability Questionnaire.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that the CTS programme, when delivered through connected health, is effective in supporting cancer survivorship, with high user satisfaction and usability scores. This approach shows promise as a complementary method to in-person care within the Irish digital health landscape.

Status: This study is complete and will be published in 2025.

A Scoping Review of Physical Activity and Exercise Initiatives for Cancer Patients in Ireland

Principal Investigator: EasCaR Research Consortium, Dublin City University

Aim: Undertake a scoping review of physical activity and exercise services available for cancer patients related to the cancer continuum (secondary prevention, prehabilitation, during treatment, rehabilitation and for those living with and beyond cancer) and to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify existing physical activity services and programmes across the cancer continuum
- Highlight gaps in provision and distinctions between research-led and community/facility-based interventions
- Explore opportunities to expand physical activity services for individuals living with and beyond cancer
- Examine barriers to physical activity promotion and suggest solutions
- Develop national recommendations and strategies for implementation

Methodology: A scoping review was undertaken to identify current provision of exercise programmes and physical activity services in Ireland. This included an international literature review and roundtable discussions with a variety of stakeholders to identify barriers to physical activity promotion and potential solutions concerning the expansion of physical activity services for cancer in Ireland.

Conclusion: Based on the findings from these three stages, the scoping review report makes several recommendations to enhance the integration of physical activity into cancer care pathways. Stakeholders across the health and community sectors are encouraged to review the findings and consider the proposed strategies to promote sustainable physical activity services for people affected by cancer.

Status: The report was published in December 2024 and is available on the NCCP website. The survivorship team in the NCCP are developing actions to progress its recommendations.



Members of the EasCaR Research Consortium with the NCCP at the launch of the Physical Activity Scoping Review

Evaluation of the Impact of Community-based Lymphoedema Services

Principal Investigator: Dr Mairead Cantwell, Technical University Shannon

Aim: Evaluate the impact of community-based lymphoedema services delivered by members of The Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services

Methodology: A pragmatic evaluation of lymphoedema services delivered in community settings was conducted to assess the impact on quality of life and symptom severity in individuals living with cancer-related lymphoedema and to capture service users' perspectives to inform service improvements.

Conclusion: Participants reported improved quality of life and reduced self-reported symptoms such as pain, swelling, and restricted range of motion. Over 90% of respondents were very satisfied with the care they received. More than 75% rated their experience as excellent and 95% reported a positive or very positive impact on their symptoms and ability to self-manage.

Status: This study is complete and will be submitted for publication in 2025.

NCCP Supported Survivorship Initiatives

In 2022, a number of Alliance member organisations embarked on projects aimed at building an evidence base for innovative survivorship programmes in Ireland. The NCCP provided some seed funding towards these projects with the goal of determining the acceptability and suitability of these survivorship programmes with a view to national rollout. Below is an update on the progression of these projects in 2024

Dance Exercise Intervention in Survivorship Evaluation (The DEISE Project)

Partners: Solas Cancer Support Centre & South East Technological University

Aim: To pilot and assess the feasibility of a ten-week, community-based physical activity intervention using dance, targeted at young women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, leukaemia, or lymphoma.

Methodology: The intervention consisted of a 10-week peer-supported dance class led by a qualified dance exercise instructor. Participants were encouraged to attend with a 'dance buddy'—a friend, spouse, or family member—to promote engagement and sustained participation.

Conclusion: The intervention was well-received and successfully met the needs of the participants. A mixed-methods analysis indicated increases in physical activity levels, reductions in fear of exercise, and improvements in overall health. These outcomes are consistent with findings from international literature. Qualitative feedback strongly highlighted the positive effects of the programme on participants' physical, mental, and social well-being. Future iterations will need to address challenges related to recruitment and participant reach.

Status: Final report received.

Women, Menopause and Cancer – The EMPOWER Programme

Partners: ARC Cancer Support Centres & University College Dublin

Aim: To conduct qualitative research with women affected by treatment-induced menopause, and to develop and pilot a six session, expert-led online programme for women who have experienced early menopause as a result of cancer or its treatment.

Methodology: Four programme cycles were delivered in 2023. Following each cycle, participant feedback was used to refine and enhance the content and delivery of the programme, supporting ongoing improvement and robust evaluation.

Conclusion: Analysis of pre- and post-programme survey data revealed broad improvements across several measures, with statistically significant positive changes in key areas. Participants reported increased knowledge, enhanced coping strategies, and improved overall wellbeing.

Status: Final report received. The NCCP has assumed responsibility for the national co-ordination of the Empower programme and has developed a training model to expand the programme delivery to other cancer support centres.

Alliance Networking Events

Three Alliance Networking Events took place in 2024 where representatives from all Member and Associate Member community cancer support centres and services of The Alliance attended. These meetings had a focus on planning, education, research and networking.



NCCP representatives Dr Helen Greally, National Clinical Lead in Psycho-Oncology, Ms Louise Mullen, National Lead in Cancer Survivorship and Ms Dorothy Thomas, Patient Engagement Manager with Minister of State at the Department of Health, Colm Burke TD congratulate the associate member organisations.

June 2024: Celebrating Community Support at Farmleigh House

In June 2024, NCCP hosted a special event at Farmleigh House to celebrate the achievements of the Alliance since launching in 2022. Minister of State at the Department of Health, Colm Burke TD, presented each member of the Alliance with a plaque, recognising their accomplishment in successfully completing the Self-Assessment and Peer Review process. Associate members were also given a plaque to display on their premises as well.

The event also included the following highlights:

- Introduction of the Alliance's inaugural steering group
- Launch of the 2023 Annual Activity Report
- Acknowledgement of the €3 million in once-off funding through Budget 2024



Ms Louise Mullen, National Lead in Cancer Survivorship, NCCP

Minister of State at the Department of Health, Colm Burke TD

October 2024

On 16 October a virtual networking meeting took place online Microsoft Teams. This session provided a valuable space for collaboration, peer learning, and operational alignment.

The agenda focused on the key areas below:

- service delivery
- communication strategies
- data management
- governance

Discussions explored tools like activity trackers, appointment scheduling, and referral processes, as well as best practices around SMS and email communications. The meeting also featured dedicated breakout workshops on the use of database systems, giving members the opportunity to share insights and practical solutions. This event further cemented the Alliance's commitment to delivering high-quality, standardised support services for people affected by cancer across Ireland.



December 2024

The Alliance Network Meeting took place on Wednesday, 4th December 2024, at the NCCP Offices in Dublin. The day included the presentation of plaques to new associate members: Oesophageal Cancer Fund, Cancer Connect, and Balbriggan Cancer Support.

Key updates were shared from the NCCP on survivorship, psycho-oncology, and nursing, alongside research presentations on physical activity and lymphoedema. The afternoon focused on future planning, including discussions on the Alliance Work Plan, the Empower Programme, CanWork, and recent collaborative studies. The event concluded with an open forum and valuable insights from all participants.

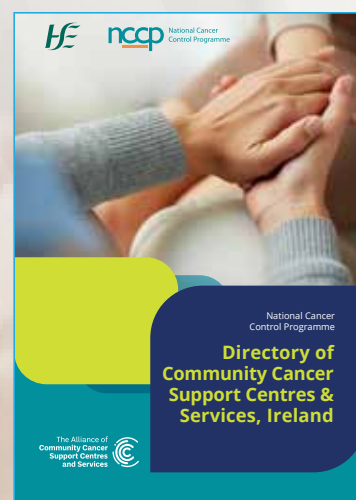
Photo: Louise Mullen National Lead in Survivorship at NCCP congratulating Helen O'Driscoll, Cancer Connect; Helen Callan, Balbriggan Cancer Support and Sharon Cooney & Carmel Doyle, Oesophageal Cancer Fund.

The Alliance Communications

There was a strong focus on communication and public relations for the Alliance in 2024. The team took a multi-faceted approach including publishing the Directory of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services, Ireland; issuing the News for the Cancer Support Community e-bulletin monthly; presenting posters and talks on the Alliance at three international conferences and attending eight national conferences, highlighting how Alliance member organisations can work with statutory; voluntary and academic colleagues to provide quality survivorship care in the community.

Directory of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services, Ireland

The NCCP Directory of Community Cancer Support Centres & Services which includes information about The Alliance member organisations and their services was launched in early 2024. The directory is available in print and online



“News for the Cancer Support Community”

The “News for the Cancer Support Community” digital bulletin was published monthly in 2024. The newsletter includes information about cancer survivorship programmes, cancer services and resources, upcoming events, information for cancer support staff and volunteers, job and research opportunities and much more.

You can find the link to subscribe to receive “News for the Cancer Support Community” at hse.ie/thealliance



Promotional Stands

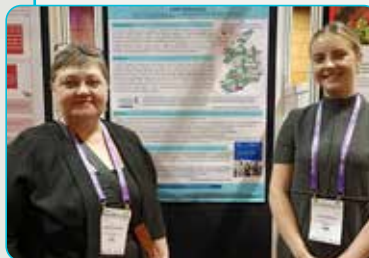
The Alliance tried to capitalise on all opportunities for promotion and attended eight conferences in 2024. These stands give us the opportunity to illustrate the work of the cancer support organisations engaged in the Alliance. We aim to ensure that healthcare professionals are familiar with the supports and services available to their patients and their families.



Irish Head and Neck Society Conference – 19th/20th April



Marie Keating Foundation – Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day – 11th October



International Gynaecologic Cancer Society Conference – 16th October



Irish Cancer Society Patient and Volunteer Day in Limerick - 14th November



South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital Cork's Head and Neck Cancer Patient and Carer Information Day – 9th November



RCSI MyHealth Series – 13th November

Posters and Presentations

World Cancer Congress 2024

Louise Mullen delivered a presentation and an e-poster on 'The role and value of community cancer support centres: creating the Alliance' at the World Cancer Congress 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland on the 19 September

2024. This conference, which occurs every two years, brings together the global cancer community to share innovation and collaborate on cancer control. The audience was very interested in hearing of our cross-sector structure and network for delivering support and survivorship services to cancer patients and their families nationally.



ISPON 2024

In March the Irish Psychosocial Oncology Network (IPSON) held its first conference in over a decade. Over 150 multidisciplinary professionals from across Ireland came together at the Trinity Centre for Health Sciences at St James's Hospital for the day-long event. The conference theme was Enhancing Psychosocial Cancer Care and Survivorship in Ireland: We Are All in it Together.

The Alliance poster was exhibited, and John Conroy, Manager of Dochas Offaly Cancer Support Group, spoke on behalf of an Irish Cancer Society-funded partnership with Dochas, Trinity PPI Ignite, and Trinity St James's Cancer Institute. Their project, Playing Our Part, offers guidance to community cancer support centres and researchers on understanding the benefits and limitations of participating in research.



Presentations on the Alliance were also made at the International Conference on Integrated Cancer in Belfast and the International Gynaecologic Cancer Society Conference in Dublin.



Implementation of Actions from 2023

The following actions were recommended to be actioned in the short to medium term:

2023 Recommendation	2024 Status
Set up steering group and develop a programme of work to expand and develop the work of The Alliance.	Steering Group was set up and met four times in 2024. The Group agreed a programme of work and struck committees to focus on the progression of key areas.
Complete the Self-assessment and Peer Review Process for Applicant Members annually	2024 process concluded with four successful candidates and one candidate with an action plan expected to be accomplished by Q3 2025.
Make associate membership a pre-requisite to full membership of The Alliance.	Complete with 5 organisations joining as associate members in 2024
Publish and distribute digital and print versions of the NCCP Directory of Community Cancer Support Centres & Services for healthcare professionals and the public	Completed and available for download: 2024 NCCP Directory of Community Cancer Support Centres and Services Next version due in Q2 2025.
Promote The Alliance at conferences and events	The Alliance had an exhibition stand at 8 events in 2024.
Continue working towards Alliance members being fully integrated partners on the patient pathway between community cancer support centres, acute hospitals and primary care	Work in progress – ongoing
Review the Best Practice Guidance and Self-assessment and Peer Review Process	Planned for 2025 – 2026 programme of work
Increase the number and variety of evidence-based survivorship programmes endorsed by the NCCP	Building Better Caregivers, a programme for those with a loved one with cancer came on stream in 2024.



The Alliance Steering Group 2024 at Farmleigh House

Conclusion and Recommendations for the Future

2024 was another very successful year for The Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres & Services. The Alliance experienced growth in all areas, while upholding the core vision of an Ireland where anyone affected by cancer is able to access evidence-based psychosocial and rehabilitation supports delivered by appropriately trained practitioners in a location that is convenient to them.

Most sincere thanks is extended to all of the stakeholders in The Alliance including all of the Members and Associate Members; the Survivorship, Psycho-Oncology and Cancer Nursing teams in the NCCP supported by colleagues from across the organisation and the wider HSE community, the Department of Health and the Minister of Health, Mr Stephen Donnelly.

The following actions should be prioritised for the short to medium term:

Actions

Progress the work plan of the Alliance Steering Group

Continue to promote The Alliance at conferences and events

Review the Best Practice Guidance and Self-assessment and Peer Review Process

Continue working towards The Alliance members being fully integrated partners on the patient pathway between community cancer support centres, acute hospitals and primary care

Publish and distribute updated digital and print versions of the NCCP Directory of Community Cancer Support Centres & Services for healthcare professionals and the public

Increase the number and variety of evidence-based survivorship programmes endorsed by the NCCP

Appendix 1

Membership of the Alliance 2024



Associate & Full Members 2024

The Alliance of Community Cancer Support Centres & Services

Members

ARC Cancer Support Centres Dublin – three sites
Cancer Care West – two sites
Cancer Support Sanctuary, LARCC
Circle of Friends Cancer Support Centre
Cois Nore Cancer Support Centre
Cork ARC Cancer Support House – two sites
CUAN Cancer Social Support Centre
Cuisle Cancer Support Centre
Dochas Offaly Cancer Support Centre
East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support*
Éist Cancer Support Centre Carlow
Gary Kelly Cancer Support Centre*
Gort Cancer Support Centre*
Hope Cancer Support Centre
Mayo Cancer Support Association*
Recovery Haven Kerry Cancer Support House
Purple House Cancer Support Centre
Sligo Cancer Support Centre
SOLAS Cancer Support Centre
Tuam Cancer Care

Applicant Members

Vita House Roscommon Cancer Support

Associate Members – Community Cancer Support Centres

Arklow Cancer Support Group
Balbriggan Cancer Support Centre*
CARE Cancer Support Centre
Donegal Cancer Flights & Services
Greystones Cancer Support
Iris House Cork Cancer Support
Midwestern Cancer Foundation Patient
Information & Support Centre
North Tipperary Hospice Foundation
Suaimhneas Cancer Support Centre
Suir Haven Cancer Support Centre
Wicklow Cancer Support Centre*

Associate Members – National / Service Organisations

CanTeen Ireland – Teenage Cancer Support
Cancer Connect*
Childhood Cancer Ireland
Hand in Hand Children's Cancer Charity
Irish Cancer Society
Kerry Cancer Support Group
Look Good Feel Better Ireland
Marie Keating Foundation
Oesophageal Cancer Fund*
YouCan Cancer Support Network Ireland

*New in 2024


Appendix 2

Number of new clients reported by Alliance Member and Associate Member Community Cancer Support Centres

Community Cancer Support Centre	Total 2024
ARC Cancer Support Centres Dublin – three sites	1,358
Balbriggan Cancer Support Centre	65
Cancer Care West – two sites	904
Cancer Support Sanctuary, LARCC	245
C.A.R.E Cancer Support Centre, Clonmel	49
Circle of Friends Cancer Support Centre	130
Cois Nore Cancer Support Centre	202
Cork ARC Cancer Support House – two sites	1,038
Iris House Cork Cancer Support	212
CUAN Cancer Social Support Centre	230
Cuisle Cancer Support Centre	455
Dochas Offaly Cancer Support Centre	343
Donegal Cancer Flights and Services	88
East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support Centre	250
Éist Cancer Support Centre	159
Gary Kelly Cancer Support Centre	369
Gort Cancer Support Centre	91
Greystones Cancer Support	113
Hope Cancer Support Centre	307
Mayo Cancer Support Association	139
Midwestern Cancer Foundation Limerick	333
Purple House Cancer Support Centre	355
Recovery Haven Kerry Cancer Support House	437
Roscommon Cancer Support Service	79
Sligo Cancer Support Centre	440
SOLAS Cancer Support Centre	870
Suaimhneas Cancer Support Centre Nenagh	64
Suir Haven Cancer Support Centre Thurles	95
Tuam Cancer Care	92
Total	9,512

Appendix 3


Alliance network meetings hosted in 2024



Network Event
Thursday, 27 June 2024
Farmleigh House & Estate


11:30am	Registration; tea, coffee & networking	
11:45am	Welcome & Introductions	Ms Louise Mullen, National Lead in Cancer Survivorship, NCCP
11:55am	Reflections on the Peer Review Process 2023	Ms Siobhán Hayes, Peer Reviewer Ms Niya Mateeva, Project Manager Psycho-oncology & Survivorship, NCCP
12:10pm	Introduction of the Inaugural Steering Group of The Alliance	Mr John Conroy, Manager, Dochas Offaly Cancer Support
12:20 pm	Alliance Activity Report 2023	Ms Dorothy Thomas, Patient Engagement Manager Ms Ellen Stafford, Project Coordinator, Survivorship NCCP
12:30pm	Minister's Address & Presentation of Alliance Plaques	Minister of State Colm Burke, TD, Ms Louise Mullen, National Lead in Cancer Survivorship, NCCP, Dr Helen Grealley, National Clinical Programme Lead in Psycho-Oncology, NCCP
1:15pm	Closing remark	Dr Helen Grealley, National Clinical Programme Lead in Psycho-Oncology, NCCP
A light lunch will follow immediately in the Atrium		



Alliance Network Meeting
14:00 Wed 16th October, 2024
Microsoft Teams

Agenda

14:00	Welcome & Introductions	Louise Mullen, National Lead in Survivorship NCCP
14:15	Focused Discussion: Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity Tracker data - Scheduling appointments - Registration lists - Attendance records - Referral process - Client notes Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SMS texts - Group emails - Events - Fundraising Profiles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clients - Staff/contractors - Volunteers - Board of Directors - Donors Governance/Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confidentiality - Policies - Certs & CPD 	All, moderated by Dorothy Thomas, Patient Engagement Manager, NCCP
15:00	Workshop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MindaClient breakout room - Salesforce breakout room 	Sorcha Dalton, Support & Internal Sales Manager & Brian Kelly, CEO, MindaClient James Quinn, Support and Training Manager, Enclude
15:45	Re-group	All
16:00	Close	Louise Mullen, NCCP



Alliance Network Meeting
10:30-15:00 Wednesday 4th December, 2024
NCCP Offices, Dublin

Agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Speakers
10:30	Coffee & Networking	All
11:00	Welcome Presentation of plaques for new associate members: Oesophageal Cancer Fund Cancer Connect Balbriggan Cancer Support	Louise Mullen, National Lead in Survivorship NCCP Dorothy Thomas, Patient Engagement Manager, NCCP Niya Mateeva, Psycho-Oncology & Survivorship Project Manager, NCCP
11:15	NCCP Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivorship • Psycho-oncology • Nursing team 	Clare Leatham, Survivorship Project Manager, NCCP Niya Mateeva Psycho-Oncology & Survivorship Project Manager, NCCP Dawn Whelan, CNM 3 Nursing Projects Manager, NCCP
12:15	Research Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Activity Report • Lymphoedema Study 	Bernie O'Loughlin, Programme Co-ordinator - Cancer Survivorship, NCCP Máiréad Cantwell B.Sc., M.Sc., PhD Lecturer in Clinical Exercise Physiology & Exercise Science; Course Coordinator B.Sc. Physical Activity & Health Science & B.Sc. Exercise & Health Science, Department of Sport & Health Sciences, Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
12:45	Lunch	
13:30	Looking Ahead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Alliance Work Plan • IPOS /IPSON • UCD/NCCP study on cancer support centre utilisation • CanWork Programme • Empower Programme 	Orla Gillespie, Manager Mayo Cancer Support Centre & Steering Group Member Amanda Kracen, Ph.D. (pronouns: she/her) Associate Professor, Psychology Psycho-Oncology Wellbeing Research (POWER) lab National College of Ireland & President, Irish Psychosocial Oncology Network (IPSON) Louise Mullen, NCCP Dorothy Thomas, NCCP Bernie O'Loughlin, NCCP
14:30	Open Forum	All
15:00	Close	



The Alliance of
**Community Cancer
Support Centres
and Services**



Survivorship
Programme