

The Acorn Cancer Support Group Annual Report for 2021-22

It is heartwarming to report that after lockdowns and a highly constrained operational period over some 18 months Acorn was able to restart its support operations in July 2021. From then we provided a restricted range of support to cancer patients and carers to the end of the FY ending 31 March 2022. Restrictions still applied through a combination of factors, not least the impact of new variants Delta and Omicron of the Covid-19 virus, which impacted on attendance at venues and the number of deliverable therapies. We proceeded carefully, following guidelines that people should arrive wearing masks, and use hand sanitiser on entry before they sit to join the group; when moving around or having therapy they should replace masks. The Trustees met four times to ensure safe and effective governance of the Charity.

Following the pattern of 2020-21, only a brief summary report is provided for this financial year. The report concentrates on the attendance numbers at support meeting, the number of therapies delivered at meetings, and the number of individual social outings provided. These are the activities we use to meet our objectives to alleviate distress through mutual support, therapy/seated exercise, and to show through social engagements that despite a diagnosis of cancer they can still have a good quality of life.

Given the challenges Acorn has faced in re-opening, including the need to find a new venue in St Ives for meetings and the Film Club, we regard our activity as reasonably successful. Ten new members joined us, but we recognize there will be many newly diagnosed affected by cancer that we have not been able to help yet. We hope to reach more as the Covid environment, Trustee promotion activity and funding resources allow. The main outcomes were:

Support meetings: Only 23 monthly meetings out of the normal 36 meetings were held

- total attendance 448. Some 275 were patients and carers, including 7 new patients and 3 new carers
- relaxation therapies delivered – 103; seated exercise participants - 208

Individual social outings: A total of 236 were provided, as detailed below

Summer Lunch – 62; Christmas Lunch – 64; three Summer Boat Trips with total of 40; Film Club – 41; Ramsey Group Outings – 29.

The outlay for support meetings and 236 social outings at no-cost to members, coupled with reduced fund raising, meant that expenditure exceeded income. We are very grateful for donations received from the Huntingdon Freeman's Trust, St Ives Rotary Club, the Ramsey Hospital Charity Shop, the Butterfly Legacy Trust, St Ivo Masonic Lodge and a "Magic Little Grant" from the Postcode Lottery Community Trust Fund. This, together with HMRC return of GiftAid, individual donations through localgiving.org, and money raised through collection boxes, raffles and sales of items has served to reduce the income gap. The deficit was £5225, which Acorn has been able to cover from its cash at bank. Going forward, our activity and provision of support will need to be balanced against our promotion and funding-raising capacity.

We end this report by thanking all those who have helped Trustees to sustain Acorn in the trying past year, especially those who have continued to attend or support events after recovery themselves from Covid-19.

Gordon Dyer MBE, Secretary, on behalf of Trustees of The Acorn Cancer Support Group.
Approved by the Trustees at Zoom Meeting 27 April 2022