

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Improving the Cancer Journey Lanarkshire

Annual Report

Reporting period: April 2025–March 2026



Executive Summary

During 2025–2026, the Improving Cancer Journey (ICJ) service across Lanarkshire has continued to deliver accessible, person-centred, non-clinical support for people affected by cancer, with a strong focus on sustainability, early intervention and equity of access. The service is now embedded within local communities, supporting individuals to navigate care and access the right support at the right time. This year has seen continued development of peer support groups, progression of the Compassionate Communities approach, and targeted work to reach underserved populations, including within HMP Shotts. Alongside this, a focus on workforce wellbeing and strong partnership working has supported the ongoing delivery and improvement of the service. ICJ's impact has been recognised through the NHS Lanarkshire Excellence Award for Best Team Collaboration, and the programme remains committed to sustaining and strengthening support for people affected by cancer across Lanarkshire.

Introduction

The Improving Cancer Journey (ICJ) service in Lanarkshire has now moved beyond its initial launch phase (March 2024) and continues to be embedded within local communities, providing accessible, person-centred, non-clinical support for individuals affected by cancer. The service supports anyone impacted by cancer at any stage of their life, whether personally or through a family member or friend, connecting people to the right support at the right time through a holistic needs-led approach.

This reporting year (April 2025 – March 2026) reflects a period of sustained delivery, development and strengthening of the ICJ model across Lanarkshire. The focus has been on ensuring the service remains equitable, responsive and aligned to what matters most to people affected by cancer, while continuing to embed a consistent and sustainable approach across both North and South Lanarkshire. Key priorities during this year have included promoting staff wellbeing and supporting a resilient and sustainable workforce, alongside ongoing service development and improvement. The programme has also strengthened its contribution to wider system priorities, including alignment with Realistic Medicine principles, ensuring people are supported to access the right care, at the right time, in a way that reflects their individual needs and preferences.

Significant progress has been made in expanding and enhancing the support offer available through ICJ. This includes the continued development of ICJ Peer Support Groups, the progression of the Compassionate Communities Project, and targeted work to improve access for specific populations, including within HMP Shotts. The service has also been recognised through the NHS Lanarkshire Excellence Awards, receiving the award for Best Team Collaboration (Non-Clinical Support), reflecting the strength of partnership working and integrated approaches across the programme.

ICJ continues to provide a dedicated key worker model, supporting individuals through holistic needs assessment to identify concerns and navigate services and pathways effectively. The service remains easy to access, with referrals accepted via online and telephone routes from professionals, individuals and carers.

Our mission remains to work in the community, with the community, ensuring that people affected by cancer in Lanarkshire receive the information, support and care they need, efficiently and at the right time. Our vision is that by 2027, everyone diagnosed with or directly affected by cancer in Lanarkshire is offered a personalised conversation through a holistic needs assessment, ensuring their individual needs are understood and supported throughout their cancer journey.

Objectives and Priorities for 2025–2026

1. Improving Access and Reducing Inequalities

To ensure equitable access to ICJ support across Lanarkshire, with a particular focus on reaching individuals in areas of higher deprivation and those most at risk of poorer outcomes

2. Strengthening Integration Across Services

To embed ICJ within multidisciplinary teams and strengthen partnership working across health, social care, and community services, enabling a more coordinated and person-centred approach

3. Developing Community Capacity and Resilience

To expand community-based models of support, including community hubs, peer support groups, and compassionate communities approaches, enabling sustainable, locally driven support networks

4. Demonstrating Impact and Value

To strengthen the collection and use of data and outcomes, improving the ability to evidence the impact of ICJ on individuals and the wider system

5. Planning for Long-Term Sustainability

To begin planning for the future sustainability of ICJ, considering workforce, delivery model, and funding beyond the current programme

Activities & Achievements

During 2025–2026, Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) continued to deliver a comprehensive, person-centred support service across Lanarkshire. The service has evolved to meet increasing demand while strengthening integration across health, social care, and community settings.

What We Delivered

- Delivered holistic, non-clinical support to 1975 people affected by cancer, addressing practical, emotional, and financial concerns
- Completed 2156 electronic Holistic Needs Assessments (eHNA), enabling personalised care and support planning
- Supported individuals from diagnosis through treatment and beyond, ensuring access to the right support at the right time
- Facilitated 3627 referrals to a wide range of community and third sector services to address identified needs

New Initiatives and Developments

- Expansion of community-based hubs, improving accessibility by delivering support within local communities as well as in people's homes
- Compassionate Communities pilot (South Lanarkshire) in partnership with Kilbryde Hospice, extending support to those with palliative and life-limiting conditions
- Development of peer support groups, building community-led support networks and reducing isolation
- Continued innovation through integration within HMP Shotts multidisciplinary teams, improving outcomes for individuals living with cancer in custody

Partnership Working

Strengthened collaboration with:

- NHS Lanarkshire and Clinical Nurse Specialists
- North and South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnerships
- Third sector organisations (e.g. community support services)
- Justice services – HMP Shotts
- Worked in partnership to ensure seamless referral pathways and coordinated, person-centred care.

Service Improvements and Innovation

- Enhanced integration within multidisciplinary teams, allowing clinical staff to focus on treatment while ICJ addressed non-clinical needs
- Improved access routes, including telephone and online referrals, making the service more accessible
- Continued development of a community-led model of care, supporting prevention, early intervention, and resilience
- Strengthened data collection and reporting processes to better demonstrate impact and inform service development

Service Activity Overview (2025-26)

During the reporting period, Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) continued to deliver high levels of activity across Lanarkshire, supporting individuals through a wide range of non-clinical needs.



1,975 referrals

118 declined service

Processes regarding appropriate referrals are being addressed

172 requested information only

(No eHNA completed)

168 end-of-life support

(No eHNA completed)

5 currently in hospital

19 unable to make contact



1,493 locked care plans*

*eHNA figures include all assessments created, including partial or duplicate records, whereas locked care plans reflect fully completed and closed cases within the reporting period.

74% of referrals from SIMD 1, 2 and 3

This reflects targeted outreach to communities experiencing the highest deprivation-related cancer inequalities.

*71 cases had no postcode (under review)

SIMD Quintile	Number of Referrals by Local Authority	
SIMD 1	North Lan	313
	South Lan	201
SIMD 2	North Lan	280
	South Lan	258
SIMD 3	North Lan	151
	South Lan	199
SIMD 4	North Lan	125
	South Lan	156
SIMD 5	North Lan	92
	South Lan	113

Key Activity Highlights

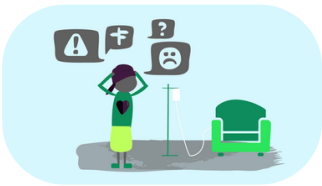
ICJ supported 37% of all people diagnosed with cancer in Lanarkshire

The most common cancers in Scotland are prostate, breast, lung, and colorectal, accounting for 56% of all diagnoses (Public Health Scotland, 2026). The number of people diagnosed with cancer in Lanarkshire has **increased by 121 people** since last year

Cancer Type	Public Health Number of Diagnosed 2023	Number of ICJ Referrals (March 2025-February 2026)	Referrals as Percentage of Number of Diagnosed
All diagnosed cancer	4,526	1,660	37%
Lung	669	298	45%
Breast	695	276	40%
Prostate	633	61	10%
Colorectal	563	247	44%

3,627 referrals to community services

Most frequent referral: Cancer Card and Macmillan Cancer Support



2,156 eHNAs identifying 4,043 concerns

7,603 hours of client-facing work



Increase of 2748 client-facing hours

Demand for the service has increased since last year

1,378 supported at diagnosis/prehab stage



Impact and Outcomes

During 2025–2026, Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) has continued to make a significant difference to individuals affected by cancer across Lanarkshire, improving access to support, reducing inequalities, and contributing to wider system efficiencies.

Improving Access to Support

- ICJ supported 1,975 individuals, representing 37% of all people diagnosed with cancer in Lanarkshire
- The service maintained accessible referral routes via professionals, self-referral, telephone, and online access
- 1,378 individuals were supported at diagnosis or prehabilitation stage, enabling earlier intervention and support
- This demonstrates ICJ's role in ensuring people receive the right support at the earliest possible stage of their cancer journey

Addressing Inequalities

- 74% of referrals came from SIMD 1–3, the most deprived communities
- Strong reach across both North and South Lanarkshire demonstrates equitable service delivery
- ICJ is successfully engaging individuals most at risk of poorer outcomes and addressing wider determinants of health

Meeting Holistic Needs

- 2,156 holistic needs assessments (eHNAs) identified 4,043 individual concerns
- The most common concern identified was financial (662 individuals)
- Other key concerns included:
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Treatment-related questions
 - Mobility and fatigue
 - Transport and access
- This highlights the breadth of non-clinical needs experienced by people with cancer and the importance of a holistic support model

Enabling Access to Wider Support

- 3,627 onward referrals were made to community and third sector services
- Key partners included Cancer Card, Macmillan Cancer Support, and local support organisations
- ICJ plays a critical role in connecting individuals to appropriate services, reducing fragmentation and improving overall experience

Impact and Outcomes

During 2025–2026, Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) has continued to make a significant difference to individuals affected by cancer across Lanarkshire, improving access to support, reducing inequalities, and contributing to wider system efficiencies.

Reducing Pressure on Clinical Services

- ICJ delivered 7,603 hours of client-facing support, which would otherwise have required clinical staff time
- A further 3,234 clinical hours were saved through completion of holistic needs assessments
- ICJ enables clinical teams to focus on treatment, while non-clinical needs are addressed effectively elsewhere

Supporting People at Key Points in Their Journey

- Individuals were supported from diagnosis through treatment and beyond
- 168 individuals received end-of-life support, ensuring needs were addressed even where full assessment was not appropriate
- The service also supported those that required information only or short-term intervention
- This demonstrates a flexible, person-centered approach tailored to individual need and circumstance

Overall Impact

- ICJ continues to demonstrate strong impact by:
 - Improving access to timely, person-centred support
 - Reducing inequalities in access and outcomes
 - Addressing a wide range of practical, emotional and financial needs
 - Strengthening community connections and support pathways
 - Delivering measurable efficiencies for the wider health and care system



Case Studies

Supporting Choice, Dignity and Family Through Advanced Cancer

Mr D was referred to ICJ following a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. Mr D and his daughters had concerns around his mobility, eating, pain, emotional wellbeing, practical supports at home, and future planning as his illness progressed. Mr D wanted to remain as independent as possible and stay at home for as long as he could.

Barriers included inconsistent overnight support, rapid changes in Mr D's condition, emotional strain on the family, and the challenge of coordinating services quickly enough to meet increasing needs.

I provided ongoing support to Mr D and his daughters from referral through to end of life. Through regular contact, home visits, emotional support, advocacy and ongoing reviews, ICJ helped the family navigate equipment, care supports, future planning and end-of-life discussions. Support focused on emotional wellbeing, practical problem solving, future planning and helping the family feel less alone while navigating a very difficult situation. I advocated with district nurses, occupational therapy (OT) for equipment and home adaptations, social work, tech team and other professionals to help put support in place quickly as Mr D deteriorated.

Following support, Mr D and his daughters reported feeling more supported and less alone. His daughters felt listened to and reassured during an incredibly emotional period. Mr D was ultimately able to remain at home and died peacefully with dignity in line with his wishes, with his family later sharing positive feedback about the difference the support had made.

"Thank you for all your help, advice and support over these difficult months. It has made the journey easier....and helped us carry out Dad's wishes to remain at home" - Mr D's daughter

Case Studies

Supporting Treatment, Recovery, and Risk Management in Custodial Setting

Mr R was referred to the ICJ following a cancer diagnosis while in custody. Mr R presented with high anxiety, significant pain, and disrupted sleep. Mr R also presented with some behavioural challenges – he had previously responded to stress with violence but was motivated to change, identifying reading and physical activity as more positive alternatives. He also felt uncertain about treatment and recovery, as he was undergoing radiotherapy.

Mr R required consistent, holistic support to manage both treatment-related effects and behavioural risk. ICJ provided ongoing emotional support, advocacy, and coordination with the multidisciplinary team throughout radiotherapy and subsequent recovery. The ICJ provided:

- Ongoing emotional support
- Positive coping strategies
- Advocated within the MDT to escalate concerns regarding pain management, sleep difficulties, and symptom control
- Supported communication between services to ensure coordinated care
- Encouraging realistic expectations of recovery, particularly following completion of treatment
- Responding to emerging risks, including health complications and behavioural concerns

Mr R remained engaged with ICJ support throughout treatment and into the recovery phase, and fed back that he felt supported throughout. Following support, he demonstrated increased understanding into behaviour and coping strategies and adopted healthier coping mechanisms, including reading and exercise.

Case Studies

Coordinated Support During Crisis: Mrs C's Cancer Journey

Mrs C was referred to the service, recently diagnosed with stomach cancer, experiencing significant financial, practical, and emotional challenges.

She and her husband had just started new businesses and were under significant financial stress. Mrs C was facing multiple urgent needs:

- She had no income and was at risk of eviction
- She had limited access to necessities, including food for herself, her children, and her pet
- Her car had broken down, limiting her ability to attend hospital appointments, and she was concerned about the impact on her husband's work and income
- High emotional stress, with worry about her health, her family's wellbeing, and managing practical tasks while awaiting further test results

ICJ's involvement was to support Mrs C in managing practical, financial, and emotional challenges while ensuring she could attend essential hospital appointments. The ICJ provided a single point of contact to coordinate urgent support.

The Wellbeing Practitioner contacted the council to request an emergency housing discretionary payment, resulting in her rent arrears being placed on hold. Welfare rights services were contacted for an emergency referral, facilitating completion of her Universal Credit application within hours. CAB was contacted to arrange fuel vouchers, and a referral was made to a pet pantry for her dog. The Wellbeing Practitioner collected pet food when Mrs C was unable to attend due to car issues. During a home visit, the Wellbeing Practitioner also liaised with Lanarkshire Cancer Care Trust to arrange transport for hospital appointments and completed her Blue Badge application. The Wellbeing Practitioner continues to support Mrs C through follow-up appointments and ongoing coordination.

As a result, Mrs C was able to stabilise her financial situation, access essential services, and attend hospital appointments without additional stress. She expressed gratitude for having a single, reliable point of contact, reporting a significant reduction in stress and anxiety.

Care Opinion

Care Opinion is an online platform where people can share their experience of health or care services, and help make them better for everyone. The following feedback was received from service users this quarter.

"My Cancer Journey"

Posted by MartinQ2 (as the patient)

I was struggling with a sore chest for a few months then went to the hospital. They gave me antibiotics thinking I had an infection. I then had to return due to breathing they gave me sinus relievers. I then went to my doctor and they referred me for an X-ray which had shown some shadowing. I was referred to the respiratory clinic, which showed cancer. I went through all tests that day and waited 9 days for my results, to be admitted straight away. I went through chemo immuno therapy, which was called R-CHOP. This has been the hardest thing I have ever been through in my life and I struggled, physically, mentally and emotionally. I spoke with Mcmillan and Jennifer had spoken to me and helped me so much with paperwork, befrienders and therapies. Which helps me so much. Jennifer was very professional and fabulous with me and my partner and checked in regularly. I have now been told I'm in remission and the next 2 years are crucial for me. I am hoping to get back to work in January, this will help me massively financially and mentally.



"My Fathers Cancer Care"

Posted by Ammoairdrie (as a relative)

In March 2020 my father was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumour, which required immediate surgery. Following this 10 hour surgery, in the blink of an eye, my father was unable to work, drive, talk and his mobility had been seriously impacted also. Fast forward 5 years and in summer 2025 he has been diagnosed with a second cancerous tumour which is growing on the part of the brain which controls mobility. My father lives alone with only 1 forty year old son, me. Due to his severely impacted mobility he is now single level living and struggles to get from room to room, take a shower, make food, get dressed etc. We contacted the social work hub in Airdrie to ask if there was any help available. Jennifer from McMillan cancer journey contacted us and went through everything we should be looking at or may require to make my dad's journey easier. Hopefully now we have a date when his care will start and hopefully allow us to ease a bit of stress with having to care for him.



"Exceptional Support From MacMillan Improving Cancer Journey"

Posted by Scatcho24 (as a service user)

I was referred to MacMillan Improving Your Cancer Journey a few months back after being diagnosed with AML and needing a stem cell transplant to save my life. The service has made a huge difference to me in terms of being able to speak about my journey for me to realise just how far I've come. The service also provided me with support and advice with financial services and benefits which takes a huge weight off you at a very uncertain time in your life. Pauline's manner, time and support had been invaluable to me. She really is a credit to your team. She really has went above and beyond to ensure I feel supported in the best way. You can truly hear the passion She has for caring and supporting people in a very difficult situation. For this I would like to express my appreciation for Pauline's time it really has ment so much to me. Going through a journey with cancer makes you realise how much you rely on charities and support networks as they really do make such a difference to your whole journey. I belief Pauline is very special and absolute in the right job. I will forever be grateful for her everything she has done for me. I have a few people that stand out in my journey for their care, support and time nd Pauline certainly is one of them. MacMillan Improving Your Cancer Journey really has been amazing. You all do such a special job. Thank you so much once again Pauline.



"About finding out I have cancer"

Posted by Rollo Tomassi (as the patient)

I had to have my lymph nodes removed in my groin area and biopsy showed cancerous tissue. At first I was devastated, then I was fast tracked for chemo rather than another operation. At this point a woman I know, Jennifer told me who she works for (Macmillan). From this point onwards Jennifer has been a great help for my wife & I. She has helped us to better understand what we are facing and doing so in a positive a caring manner. Financially she has helped us to receive benefits I honestly didn't think I was due. We receive and make calls to Jennifer regularly and is always ready to listen to any worries or issues my wife and I might have. I can honestly say it is a great relief and a very calming feeling to know that Jennifer and of course Macmillan is out there for people like me & my wife. Jennifer is holding a charity night in a local bar my wife and I will be attending, tickets bought. I can look back now with pride. About 15 years ago myself & several colleagues from an offshore platform walked the West Highland way for Macmillan and we raised approximately £6500. I can only hope in the future to do more fundraising. Thank you again Jennifer and Macmillan.



"My cancer"

Posted by Edimston (as the patient)

After scans at the hospital it was confirmed that the growth in my pancreas was cancerous and I was eventually contracted by Sharon who has been most helpful in advising me what help was available and I am deeply grateful to her for that and showing me how to get the right help for my condition and I am now benefiting from that help that has been provided.



What We Need

To sustain and build on the impact achieved during 2025–2026, Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) requires clear, timely decisions and continued commitment across system partners.

1. Clarity on Long-Term Funding

Confirmation of funding beyond the current programme timeline

- Alignment on funding for key roles, particularly the Project Manager and Central Hub
- Early planning to ensure continuity beyond 2027

Without this clarity, there is a risk to service stability, workforce retention, and continuity of care.

2. Agreement on a Sustainable Service Model

- Definition of the minimum ICJ model required to deliver safe and effective services
- Agreement on core staffing and infrastructure, including administrative and coordination functions
- Recognition of the central hub as essential to coordination, referrals, and data management

3. Continued Integration Across the System

Ongoing support to embed ICJ within:

- Multidisciplinary teams (MDTs)
- Clinical pathways
- Community and third sector networks

Recognition of ICJ as a core component of person-centred cancer care, not an add-on.

4. Support to Demonstrate Impact and Value

- Continued investment in data systems and reporting capacity
- Strengthened outcomes measurement and evaluation

Ability to evidence:

- Improved patient experience
- Reduced inequalities
- System efficiencies (including demonstrated cost savings)

5. Commitment to Reducing Inequalities

- Sustained focus on reaching those most in need
- Recognition of ICJ's strong reach into the most deprived communities
- Support for approaches addressing wider determinants of health (financial, social, and practical needs)

6. Support for Long-Term Sustainability Planning

- Time and resource to develop a clear sustainability plan
- Exploration of future funding, workforce, and delivery models
- System-level commitment to sustaining and embedding ICJ as part of core service provision

Summary

ICJ has demonstrated significant impact across Lanarkshire supporting nearly 2,000 individuals, reducing pressure on clinical services, and improving access for those most in need.

To maintain and build on this success, timely decisions and continued system support are now required to ensure the service remains sustainable, integrated, and responsive to future demand.

