

# Spring 2021 Newsletter

FINDING MORE EFFECTIVE WAYS TO DETECT AND TREAT CANCER

## A MESSAGE FROM MARK ROBSON

**It is a great pleasure for me to write this message on behalf of my family. It's normally a job for my Mum but, now she's 87, my two brothers and I think we should pick up more of her workload!**

The whole family are involved with the work of the Foundation, and have been since its formation. I'm very proud to be Chair of our Board of Trustees.

This charity meant the world to Dad and it's incredibly important to Mum. Everyone affected by this terrible disease will understand why. It's that feeling of doing something positive in the face of something so negative.

My Dad had cancer five times and there's a wonderful quote of his, which I think sums up the attitude of our fundraisers very well.

He said: "Every time I've had cancer, it hasn't knocked me over. I didn't think, 'That's the end of me.' I've always said, 'Oh, right. What are we going to do about that, then?'"

I love that. It was Dad's approach to life and to cancer and I know that, by making a donation or fundraising for us, our supporters share his positive attitude.

In this newsletter you will read about sponsored head shaves, bike rides, coffee mornings and more. We are always impressed

by the efforts fundraisers go to and very grateful for every donation received.

We have also focused on some of the work we've funded to help children with cancer thanks to your support.

And we're proud to be part of the Newcastle Hospitals Charity, which has a new and ambitious Charity Strategy giving particular focus to cancer, child health and tackling health inequalities.

There's a lot of work still to be done but I hope you feel a sense of achievement when you read about the progress being made to find more effective treatments for young patients. And the support we're able to offer them as they undergo cancer treatment.

I'm proud to know our Foundation is contributing to that and I know Dad would want us to keep on doing what we're doing to help everyone, young or old, facing cancer.

With thanks and very best wishes,

*Mark Robson*



## FOCUS ON RESEARCH

### Vital children's cancer trials continue



Dr Quentin Campbell-Hewson pictured before COVID-19

**Cancer in children is, thankfully, relatively rare compared to adults, with around 110 new cases diagnosed in the North East and Cumbria each year.**

This means new treatments for young patients need to be effective for what are, by their very nature, extremely specialist conditions, and why clinical trials provide a lifeline for children unfortunate enough to be diagnosed with the disease.

In 2016, our Foundation gave a £1million grant to fund four posts within the Innovative Therapies for Children with Cancer Unit, which has doctors, nurses and research staff based at the Great North Children's Hospital and Newcastle University's Wolfson Childhood Cancer Research Centre.

The team is led by Consultant Paediatric Oncologist, Dr Quentin Campbell-Hewson, and is embedded within the hospital's clinical service, meaning research is not separate from routine care of patients and nearly all young patients are involved in clinical trial studies.

This ensures they receive the most up-to-date therapy possible and that progress continues to be made in developing better care. Through research, five-year survival rates for children with cancer have improved from about 30% in the 1970s, to around 85% today.

Given the importance of the trials, at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr Campbell-Hewson requested and received permission to continue with them.

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Dr Campbell-Hewson says: "When the pandemic started, we didn't know how much of a risk it would be for our patients and that was something we needed to discover. And we didn't know to what extent our team would need to assist in other clinical areas or be redeployed.

"What we did know was that children's cancer wouldn't stop. It's one of the leading causes of death for children and we can only combat this with the precise, timely and intensive therapies we use."

Our £1m funding enabled the Innovative Therapies for Children with Cancer Unit to expand by appointing a consultant level clinical fellowship post, two specialist nursing roles and a clinical study fellowship (early phase clinical trials).

In the North East and Cumbria, treatment for childhood cancer is centralised, with every child and young person diagnosed coming into Newcastle for specialist treatment.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, individual treatment needs have continued to be met at the Great North Children's Hospital and trials of new treatments driven forward.

The Innovative Therapies for Children with Cancer Unit has also recruited patients to a national study monitoring COVID-19 infection in immunosuppressed children and Newcastle is the highest recruiting site after the main trial centre in Southampton.

This revealed that COVID-19 infection rates are

low and, thankfully, very rarely serious in children, even when they are severely immunosuppressed.

Dr Campbell-Hewson adds: "It's hard to overstate the importance of clinical trials for young cancer patients. We meet with children and young adults with cancer every day and we know what these new treatments mean to them.

"We're basically the Sir Bobby Robson Cancer Trials Research Centre but for children and we're making very good progress. But there's still much more to be done and we're hugely grateful to everyone who has made a donation to the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and helped support our work."

## REBECCA HENDERSON'S STORY:

Three weeks after her eighth birthday, Rebecca Henderson from Billingham was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare form of cancer found in the muscles, bones and soft tissue areas.

It was a great shock to Rebecca and her family and in that instant her life changed. Previously a very active and sporty child, Rebecca suddenly faced lengthy cancer treatment.

Now 15, she has faced cancer four times in her young life, each time hoping it has been beaten.



Mum, Tracy, says: "Rebecca was first diagnosed in 2014 and again in 2017, 2019 and 2020.

"It's really hard on her and every time she completes her treatment, we're all hoping to hear the 'all clear.' We want her to have her life back and have freedom from treatment and hospitals.

"We all feel like the treatment she gets is truly cutting-edge and we know, as bad as things are, that we're getting the best help we can.

"The last three times Rebecca has needed cancer treatment, she's taken part in brand new chemotherapy trials, often being the first person on our ward to try the drugs.

"Throughout all the problems caused by Covid, the Great North Children's Hospital staff have been amazing, they always are. It's true that there's been an extra layer of stress caused by the pandemic but everyone at the hospital goes above and beyond to help reduce that.



L-R Research nurses Emily Parsons and Linda Coates giving Rebecca her trial drug Eribulin

"Yes, everyone has to wear masks, but we always know there are smiles behind them."

Rebecca says: "During different treatments for my cancer, I've taken part in eight research trials.

"Most trials have been easy but some have been difficult. One trial I did tested an anti-sickness drug on children. It really helped me and now children all over the world can use it, too."



Rebecca in October

## CHARITY TEAM PROFILE

In this edition, our Charity Team Profile is focused on Gareth Williams and our partnership with Newcastle United Foundation.

Since 2017, we have funded a very special support role for children receiving cancer treatment at the Great North Children's Hospital.

Project Co-ordinator, Gareth Williams, works closely with young patients to engage, inspire and motivate them to take part in tailored sporting and education activities and programmes. He also works with the siblings and families of patients.

Gareth's role is delivered in partnership with Newcastle United Foundation and football often provides a strong focus for his work.

Recently, patients with an interest in journalism were able to practice their interview skills by questioning a well-known broadcaster and an

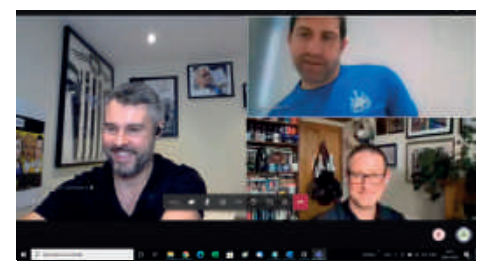
experienced football writer about their experiences in sports reporting.

Pete Graves is a well-known face at Sky Sports, where he has been presenting for over a decade, and George Caulkin is a highly-respected football journalist, who was at The Times for more than 20 years and now writes for The Athletic. George is also one of our Foundation Patrons.

The pair were quizzed during an online interview by Grace Olley, aged 14 from County Durham and Kai Surtees, aged 16 from Saltburn-by-the-Sea.

Grace's Mam, Catherine Olley, says: "Pete and George's advice was really helpful and very informative, and delivered in a fun and upbeat manner. As a parent listening in on the call, it was just like listening to a group of friends talking about a subject they all really enjoyed.

"It allowed two young people dealing with cancer to focus on their future aspirations and not the illness."



L-R Pete Graves, Gareth Williams and George Caulkin

Kai says: "Pete and George's stories were really interesting and they gave me a good idea of what to expect if I got into sports journalism.

"Journalism is definitely a career worth exploring because of the opportunities it provides like travelling around the country or even the world."

Gareth's work with young cancer patients has been so successful that the Great North Children's Hospital Fund is now funding an equivalent role at the hospital supporting children with chronic health conditions.



# SPOTLIGHT ON FUNDRAISING



You may have seen some runners out and about wearing football shirts recently. Quite possibly, they were taking part in the first Sir Bobby's Football Run, which took place during March and April.

The challenge was to run 10km, the same distance as a top-flight footballer does during a game, and to 'run a match' for Sir Bobby, or to run 'half a game' and do 5km.

Sir Bobby's Football Run was free to enter and attracted experienced, and not so experienced,

runners from across the country who were asked to try and raise £50 in sponsorship.

We look forward to letting you know the total raised and hope to repeat Sir Bobby's Football Run next year. Our thanks to everyone who took part.

And, if you would like to run a little bit further and take on the famous Great North Run for us, we have a limited number of places available. For more details, or to register for a place, please email [nuth.charity@nhs.net](mailto:nuth.charity@nhs.net).

Barber, Debbie-Leigh Jones Clark from Denton Burn in Newcastle, had the tables turned on her recently when her Dad, Raymond Jones, shaved all her hair off.

Raymond is receiving life-extending immunotherapy treatment at the Sir Bobby Robson Centre and Debs describes his care as second-to-none. In fact, she says, "He's being treated like an absolute rock star."

The head shave was Debs' idea and she raised an incredible £2,500 to help support our work.



Debbie-Leigh Jones Clark



Johnny and Dylan McDermott

During lockdown, nine-year-old Dylan McDermott from North Tyneside decided to get on his bike and do something positive.

As his Granda, Johnny McDermott, had prostate cancer, Dylan decided to cycle 100 miles, a little bit each day, to raise money for our Foundation.

It was his way, and his family's way, of saying thanks for the treatment Granda Johnny had received. And to help other people facing this disease in the years to come.

Dylan not only completed his cycling target, he also raised an amazing £1,600 for us.

Sadly, Granda Johnny died just before Christmas, but he saw Dylan complete his ride and was very proud of him. And so are we.



Dylan McDermott

In December, one of our most enthusiastic fundraisers, Bridget Andrews, held her annual Christmas coffee morning online instead of at her home in Washington.

Incredibly, as well as learning some new IT skills, she raised over £3,000 for us.



Bridget's online coffee morning

Clive Tyldesley has been a sports commentator since 1976 and readies himself before every match by creating a detailed commentary sheet.

Handwritten and laid out with his personal colour coded system, the commentary sheets include all the player and team information he will need during a match.

Notes from some of the most special games he has covered are of great interest to football fans and he now produces a range of quality reproductions of those commentary sheets, which are available to buy.

Clive kindly donated a very special Newcastle United commentary chart to be auctioned for us, which raised £200.

The notes, signed by Clive, were originally prepared in 1996 ahead of Kevin Keegan's Newcastle United taking on Manchester United at St James' Park. It was a game the Magpies memorably won 5-0.

Alan Shearer, who scored the fourth goal in that game, is now a Patron of our Foundation and says: "This is a fantastic thing for Clive to do. I have one of these charts myself, from this match funnily enough!

"I have great memories of the game and it's fascinating reading the stats and information Clive felt would be important before kick-off."



Alan Shearer with a Clive Tyldesley commentary chart



Clive Tyldesley



# FUNDRAISER NAMED CHARITY CHAMPION CHARITY PROJECTS

One of our most dedicated fundraisers has been recognised in the prestigious North East Charity Awards.

Keith Farquharson, from Heaton in Newcastle, was honoured to receive the Charity Champion of the Year trophy, which is given to volunteers who have shown great commitment for their chosen charity.

Last year, despite having stage 4 bowel cancer, Keith completed all 2,082 miles of the Tour de France 2018 at his home by converting his road bike to a static bike and using a special simulator to replicate the many hills and mountains. In the process, he raised more than £6,000 for our Foundation.

Lady Elsie, who phoned Keith to congratulate

him, adds: "What wonderful news this is. We're all extremely proud of Keith. His commitment to raising funds to help us continue our work is amazing."

Keith is a Sir Bobby Robson Centre patient.



Keith with his Charity Champion trophy

## PARTNERSHIP NEWS

### Sunderland's Luke O'Nien receives award

Sunderland AFC's Luke O'Nien has been named the North East Football Writers' Association's Personality of the Year, an award given in association with our Foundation to recognise someone who uses their position in football to benefit the wider community.

Luke was the stand out name to receive the honour this year after he raised more than £7,000 for NHS Charities Together and helped keep Sunderland supporters active during lockdown by delivering daily fitness sessions via YouTube.

He was thrilled to receive a fantastic picture of himself doing the workouts, which was drawn by eight-year-old, Ethan Adams, who plays football for Harton and Westoe Hurricanes.

The young Sunderland fan from South Shields has a rare cancer, rhabdomyosarcoma, and is receiving treatment at the Great North Children's Hospital where he is also being supported by two projects funded through our Foundation.

Luke, who called Ethan to thank him for the picture, says: "I feel very humbled and very privileged to receive this award, particularly because there are so many people out there



Ethan Adams

who have done far more than I have over the last year or so.

"During the first lockdown we could see NHS workers putting their lives on the line to save other people and the only way most of us could really contribute was by listening to their advice and staying at home."



Luke O'Nien

## Cancer Deadline Day campaign



During December and January, we joined a team of eight cancer charities in a new national fundraising campaign called Cancer Deadline Day.

It ran alongside football's transfer window, when players can move between different clubs, and fans were asked to donate online to, "Make a transfer for cancer."

The first ever Cancer Deadline Day ended on 1 February and raised over £28,000

## WE'D LOVE TO KEEP IN TOUCH

If you have enjoyed this newsletter and would like to hear more about the work of the Newcastle Hospitals Charity, please sign up to the charity's new e-bulletin via [www.charity.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.charity.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk).



## HOW TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Sir Bobby Robson launched our Foundation in 2008 as a fund within Newcastle Hospitals Charity. Our aim is to find more effective ways to detect and treat cancer by funding cutting-edge treatment and innovative cancer support services.

If you would like to support our Foundation as an individual, group or company, or to find out more about our work or make a donation, please get in touch with our Charity Office or visit our website:

0191 213 7235

[nuth.charity@NHS.net](mailto:nuth.charity@NHS.net)

[www.sirbobbyrobsonfoundation.org.uk](http://www.sirbobbyrobsonfoundation.org.uk)

Or show your support on social media via

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Or, if you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please opt out at any time by contacting the Charity Office.

