

CLAN (Cancer Link Aberdeen & North) Cancer Support

CLAN was established in 1983 by a group of patients, carers and health professionals who identified a need for support, not only for cancer patients, but for their families and carers. Since its creation, it has expanded from one small base in Aberdeen city centre to 13 wellbeing and support centres and outreach facilities covering the North-East of Scotland, Moray as well as the island groups of Orkney and Shetland, providing cancer support services in the heart of local communities. More than 3,000 people living in it are diagnosed with cancer each year, a figure expected to rise to over 5,000 per year by 2022. At the end of 2014, there were almost 20,000 people in the area living with cancer. Service provision across this large, dispersed geographical area is challenging due to the isolation of remote, island and rural communities, which has been firmly grasped by CLAN in making for a wide Community network covering many hundreds of miles. This is to ensure that the services provided meet current needs, and are also sustainable and fit for purpose in the future.

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Mission

CLAN's mission is to provide person-centred, community based, professional cancer support services free of charge to anyone with any type of cancer and their families and friends, throughout the North-East of Scotland and the Northern Isles. Services provided across these locations include counselling; a range of wellbeing services, such as advice on nutrition and exercise; advice on conditions arising as a result of cancer treatment and surgery, such as hair loss, scarring and tissue damage; emotional support; and practical support, complemented by a range of therapies that include reflexology, aromatherapy and massage aimed at the management of pain and stress.

CLAN also works in partnership with, and provides signposting to, services provided by other local cancer support agencies. It is an active partner in the Grampian Cancer Partnership Group, which brings together all of the cancer support charities in the same geographical area.



CLAN House main entrance

This work ensures that service provision is continuously reviewed and adapted, according to local client needs. Partnership working means that CLAN ensures that it is not duplicating services, but filling gaps and any unmet needs. Our team works tirelessly to create accessible, professional services as close to people's homes and communities as possible.

CLAN has established a considerable number of charity shops based in places including Aberdeen, Ballater, Orkney and Shetland, and brings a sense of community fundraising to provide some income for the organisation as a whole.

Development

During the last 3 years, we have worked to develop three key areas of support in response to feedback from our community network – CLAN in the Community, Children and Families Services, and CLAN Haven. As we work to the Scottish Government's aim of delivering cancer support services tailored to the needs of the individual, as close to their home and community as possible, a growing need for additional support for children and families within the communities in which we operate was identified. Since Aberdeen is the medical centre for oncology in NE Scotland, patients (and their family members) living in isolated areas will frequently travel to Aberdeen for treatment, which is stressful and costly.



CLAN reception hall

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The development of CLAN House allowed us to create CLAN Haven, unique purpose-built bed and breakfast accommodation consisting of 27 en-suite bedrooms. The Haven helps guests overcome the challenges of travelling out with their community for treatment; reduces feelings of isolation; fosters peer-support; and provides access to the range of services available at CLAN House while guests are undergoing their treatment, often for many weeks at a time.



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Operational 365 days a year, CLAN's dedicated team (see below) works tirelessly to ensure that this home-from-home environment is as warm and welcoming as possible, and is on hand 24 hours a day to offer practical and emotional support.

The "Team"

This includes 60 staff and a further 50 therapists and counsellors, who deliver a wide range of support services. It has over 400 volunteers undertaking a variety of roles. They work at 11 locations, namely Aberdeen, Ballater, Banchory, Elgin, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Kirkwall, Lerwick, Peterhead, Stonehaven and Turriff. None of this can happen without the huge commitment of raising over £2m every year through the generous support of many individuals, families, organisations and whole communities.

[Editor's comment: Having been based in Aberdeen since 1964, I have watched the development of cancer support organisations throughout my career, notably from about the mid 1980's. As a "survivor" myself, I became increasingly aware of what is being done in this sphere for people less fortunate than me who were not right on the spot when they needed treatment or who had to have the level of care that thankfully I did not require. They say "charity begins at home", and certainly this and other organisations have made this perfectly clear. My adopted home being Scotland, it is with some pride that I would like to publish something that everyone associated with cancer needs to truly appreciate – the support side. We will in future be featuring other similar organisations that contribute hugely to this side of the business. Our thanks go to Susanne Shepherd (Communications Manager) and Dr Colette Blackwell (Chief Executive Officer) for providing the valuable information about CLAN.]



www.clanhouse.org