

▶ HOW YOUR SUPPORT HAS HELPED SERIOUSLY ILL YOUNG ADULTS ACROSS THE UK



20 SPECIAL YEARS

The milestone of celebrating our 20th anniversary has enabled Willow to reflect on its journey... from humble beginnings with a handful of volunteers creating 17 Special Days in 1999 to a wonderful team raising funds and delivering over 1,000 tailor-made, unique Special Days per year to seriously ill young adults.

We have seen how our work has helped beneficiaries cope with their treatment and diagnosis, to bring light at the end of a dark tunnel and to support families and friends remembering those they have lost. However, we also recognise the need to demonstrate clearer and more tangible evidence around the impact of the Special Days we deliver. Therefore, we will be launching a more in-depth survey across our medical professionals and beneficiaries in Q3 of this year to allow us to better share the impact of our Special Days.

Whilst we look back and celebrate, we also look to the future with even more enthusiasm and determination.

We are excited to be launching some new fundraising initiatives alongside our regular activities as well as continuing to build and grow strong relationships with our partners and adding extra special touches to our Special Days.

Thank you for your continued support.

Jonathan Aves
Chief Executive Officer



Stuart's story

Stuart, 30 from Lancashire has Sarcoma. For his Special Day, Stuart asked for an overnight stay with his girlfriend Jade at their favourite spot in Windermere.

"Prior to diagnosis, my partner (now my wife) and I had bought our first house and were very much enjoying our lives building a home together. We both worked full time, and I was extremely active. Following diagnosis, I had major spinal surgery resulting in a loss of significant nerve function, leaving me needing to use a wheelchair and only able to walk extremely short distances with the use of a zimmer or crutches.

Unfortunately, since I finished treatment, the cancer has spread significantly such that I am now terminal. This has left me unable to work or maintain what was an extremely active lifestyle.

Our Special Day was fabulous and gave me the opportunity to propose to my long term girlfriend some seven years after we first started dating. Thankfully she said yes, which made the experience even more special."



BEHIND THE SCENES IN SPECIAL DAYS

Our new Nurse Advisor Bev joined Willow in September 2019, having worked for 30 years in palliative care as an adult and children's nurse.

We are delighted to welcome Bev to Willow where she will build and strengthen relationships with medical professionals. She shared her thoughts on how Special Days help patients.

"Special Days make a huge difference to patients' lives. It gives them something to focus on and definitely something to look forward to. When applicants are going through such awful treatment it gives them a reason to keep going and gives them hope, which is extremely important. Patients want to make memories with families and friends and Special Days enable them to do this. The best part of my job is talking to professionals about some of the amazing things we

can do to make the lives of seriously ill young people better, and working with such a great dedicated team at Willow who are determined to make a difference.

The challenging aspect of the role is looking at applications for young people who are sadly very poorly and dying. They are such young people and often have children of their own, which is always hard. However, knowing that we are going to make a difference enables me to do my job. I am constantly reminded how precious life is."



HOW WE WORK WITH MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS – WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

Willow employs three part-time Nurse Advisors who have two key roles:

1. To build relationships with the medical profession across the UK including GPs, consultants, social workers and nurses, whilst raising awareness of our service.
2. To ensure eligibility of our applicants, performing medical checks on beneficiaries and advising our Day Makers on medical requirements and appropriateness of the chosen Special Day.

In 2019, Willow worked with 1,017 medical professionals across the UK who referred 1,694 patients for a Special Day.

SPECIAL DAY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible, applicants must be:



aged between 16 and 40 (inclusive, on the date we receive the completed application form)



resident in the United Kingdom



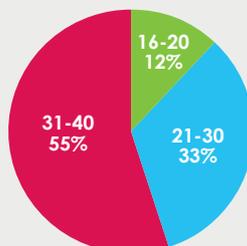
being treated for a life-threatening illness (e.g cancer, motor neurone disease, cystic fibrosis and Huntington's disease amongst others) on the date we receive the completed application

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN 2019

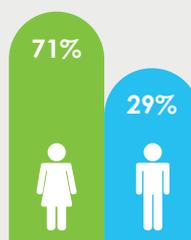
BY LOCATION

East	9%	Scotland	8%
East Midlands	7%	South East	15%
London	4%	South West	10%
North East	5%	Wales	5%
North West	16%	West Midlands	7%
Northern Ireland	4%	Yorks & Humber	10%

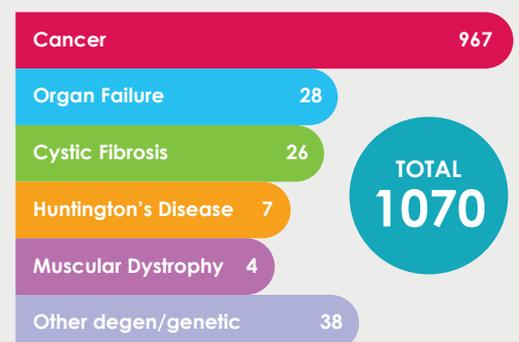
AGE



GENDER SPLIT



BY CONDITION



▶ HOW DAY MAKERS PUT THE 'SPECIAL' INTO SPECIAL DAYS

Claire is a Day Maker and has been at Willow for 13 years, but her first experience of Willow came in 2004 when she was being treated for leukaemia. Here is her story:

I was diagnosed with leukaemia four months before my wedding day and my plans for a hen party and honeymoon had to be cancelled. My nurse thought it would be a lovely idea to have some pampering before the big day and put me in touch with Willow. They organised an overnight stay at Champneys and it was so amazing as I had never been to a spa before.

My Special Day was one of my most happy memories, because for 24 hours I forgot everything that my life had become and just focussed on being the 'bride to be'!!

The most rewarding part of my job is the initial phone call. Sometimes, when a beneficiary picks up the phone I can instantly tell if they are struggling or having a down day, having been there myself. The difference it can make when you tell them why you are calling is just incredible. I love planning their Special Day with them and hearing the excitement in their voices, not to mention children screeching with joy in the background when Mummy or Daddy tell them that they're all going on a Special Day!



Claire on her Special Day during treatment

The most challenging part of my job is when a beneficiary doesn't make it to their day.

Some of the hardest phone calls can be from heartbroken relatives, saying their loved one has passed away or are at the end stage of life.

Nothing can really prepare you for that. When you have spent time planning, bonding and getting excited with a beneficiary, it's just so sad when it ends in this way. I have a truly amazing team and supportive colleagues across Willow and we are all there for each other – a hug is never too far away.

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Because I experienced a Special Day, my family and I will forever be grateful to Willow. They love to get involved, especially my beautiful twins Archie and Megan. As a family we have raised money for Willow by taking part in a tea party, cake sales and school discos. I also ran the Willow 10k and we are planning more fundraising.

"The Special Days team is a busy place to be and planning 1000+ days a year can be crazy at times, but I love it!!!!"



Claire today as a Willow Day Maker

▶ HOW WE HAVE DONE THINGS DIFFERENTLY IN 2019

In 2019 we focussed on making our Special Days even better in a number of ways:

Our new partners at The Tiny Box Company donated bespoke, high quality Willow-themed gift boxes, free of charge, for us to send out details of a Special Day to each beneficiary.



Inside these bespoke boxes, we are now including added extras such as toys, colouring books and pencils, chocolates and small gifts – all themed to each Special Day.



Having more staff hours per beneficiary helps us to improve the beneficiary experience and gives us more capacity to source the best packages and research new options and ideas for Special Days.



We have also recently recruited volunteers to work directly alongside Willow Day Makers to help with research for Special Days and add creative touches.



Kate's story

Kate is currently receiving palliative chemotherapy to control advanced lung cancer which has spread to her bones. She had a magical weekend at Center Parcs for her Special Day.

"I have two beautiful children and a wonderful fiancé. In January last year I went to my GP as I had a sore rib. Initially it was thought I had a lung infection but after various tests and scans it was revealed that in fact I had Stage 4 lung cancer which had spread to my ribs and spine. The shock was an understatement and I couldn't believe how this could be happening. Since then my life has been a whirlwind of appointments, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and scans.

Whilst undergoing treatment I heard that my application for a Special Day had been successful.

For our Special Day we escaped the appointments, the talk of the big C and we were able to be a 'normal' family. Seeing the excitement on my children's faces, walking in the fresh air and just being in the moment was wonderful. Now when I'm struggling to come to terms with my prognosis I close my eyes and think of our Special Day."



◀ My favourite part of our Special Day was...

When we all went swimming as a family to a subtropical paradise and Max went down a mini slide on his own!
It was amazing!!!
Thank you xxx

OUR STRATEGY FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

1. GROWTH

- To continue to build and diversify Willow's income streams with a focus on long-term sustainability
- A renewed focus on growing our supporter base through new fundraising campaigns. Recent examples include participation in The Big Give and growing our regular giving donor base
- To enable us to increase our beneficiary reach, our nurse advisors continue to work with the medical profession promoting our service

2. IMPACT

- To ensure that Special Days remain equally available across the UK to all with eligible conditions and to provide over 1,000 individual Special Days this year
- We plan to roll out a more comprehensive quantitative service feedback survey in Q3 2020, enabling us to share how a Special Day can help beneficiaries to cope with their situation
- To introduce a medical professional survey that measures impact of our Special Day service on patients

3. SUSTAINABILITY

- To ensure Willow operates with financial sustainability and maximises its resources in an efficient and cost effective way. For example we have just renegotiated the lease on our head office resulting in a significant saving
- A continued approach to build and shape multi-year, strategic partnerships with existing and prospective funders and partners
- Ensuring we make our supporters' donations go further by negotiating discounts with Special Day suppliers. In 2019 we raised £313K in gifts in kind