



Highlights Report Spring/Summer 2025

How your support enabled seriously ill 16 to 40-year-olds to make lasting memories

Welcome

2024 was a huge year for Willow, especially with us marking our 25th anniversary. Twenty-five years is a great achievement for any charity and I hope you will agree that Willow has come a long way in that time.

Last year, we passed the milestone of having supported 22,000 beneficiaries, providing Special Days, Breaks and Treats to young adults with a range of life-threatening illnesses. These experiences allowed them to make lasting memories with loved ones and take time out from a schedule filled with treatments and medical appointments, something that none of us expect to face in the prime years of our lives.

To help provide these experiences, Willow relies on a broad range of fundraising opportunities including events, corporate partnerships, community giving, sporting challenges, gifts from individuals and grants from trusts and foundations. We're always looking for new ways to attract supporters and recently launched two new fundraising events with the help of some familiar faces – Catch of the Day with Honorary President, David Seaman MBE, and Williamson's Walk which was fronted by Willow ambassador and Lioness, Leah Williamson.

Other events such as our renowned Willow Ball saw similar success. In 2024 the event was hosted at The Dorchester for the first time and smashed all previous records by becoming the fastest selling in its history.

Looking forward, we have ambitious plans to scale up our offering to support even more beneficiaries in the lead up to our 30th anniversary and you can find further detail on our growth plans in this document. Lastly, I'd like to take this



opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has supported Willow over the last 25 years. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together in the next 25.

Jonathan Aves, Chief Executive Officer

Beneficiary foreword



Hi, I'm Ashley. I'm 34, from Worcester, a mum of two to Mia (12) and Oscar (10), and I live with my husband Alex. I was diagnosed with primary breast cancer in 2018, shortly after getting married. Just under two years after I'd got the all clear, I found a lump in my neck. I knew instantly that the cancer had come back. I was then diagnosed with incurable breast cancer at the age of 31.

Cancer has been part of our lives for over six years and it's all Mia and Oscar have ever known. When people ask me how they cope, my answer is always, "They don't know any different." It breaks my heart to say, but it's true. They've grown up understanding what cancer is and no child should have to know this.

Willow treated us to an experience that we would never have been able to afford. They have given me and my family the chance to tick off some of our living list items and make incredible memories that will last forever.

To have a few days where cancer wasn't part of our story, we'll be forever grateful. To see the smiles on our children's faces meant everything to Alex and I. Just to have that time to forget our harsh reality, to just have some fun and be mum, dad, Mia and Oscar, it meant the world to us.

Willow has been helping people like me make memories



for over 25 years and the number of people they have given Special Days to is incredible, but they couldn't do it without your support.

My time with my family is limited but we've made some amazing core memories because of Willow. Your support really does make a difference so from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

Ashley Smith, Willow beneficiary

Why Willow is needed

Being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness has a considerable effect on many aspects of life. Along with the direct impact receiving such news has on our beneficiaries' mental health, many will also feel that they have lost their sense of identity, becoming merely a hospital patient.

Our beneficiaries often mention that relationships with loved ones are put under strain as they become a patient and carer, while others feel guilt over missed opportunities to be involved with their young children's lives.

The impact stretches far beyond mental health as illness can impact a young adult's ability to do regular paid work, forcing them to reduce their hours or take medical retirement. This, combined with the financial burdens of regular travel to and from medical appointments, increased utility bills and the need for a partner to take on an unpaid caring role, mean that many of those we support would not be able to afford the experiences that Willow provide by themselves.

About Willow

Each year thousands of 16 to 40-year-olds across the UK are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. Willow is dedicated to helping them take much needed time out from the reality of living with serious illness, creating magical moments that become lasting memories.

From our bespoke treat boxes to experiences at home for all the family, fun packed days out and quiet breaks away from it all; we offer the chance to spend quality time with family and fulfil dreams. In the toughest times, Willow creates life-affirming experiences that boost morale and bring loved ones together to create precious memories.

Willow was founded in 1999 by former Arsenal goalkeeper and TV presenter, Bob Wilson and his wife Megs, as a lasting memorial to their daughter Anna, who died of cancer aged 31. The inspiration for Willow came from Anna's determination to live every moment to the fullest, despite the most difficult circumstances.



IN 2024 WE
SUPPORTED
1,257
BENEFICIARIES

Our work with medical professionals

We employ two part-time Medical Advisors who work closely with health professionals. They ensure that everything we plan is safe and appropriate for the needs of the beneficiary as well as helping to reach more groups who may benefit from our services.

“My role at Willow provides an opportunity to redress the balance by providing the patient and their loved ones an opportunity to look forward to a Special Day, to simply enjoy an activity and put illness aside for a while.”

Elaine, Willow Medical Advisor

We have been working on promoting our treat boxes to those who may not have heard of Willow, focusing on young adults

with rare diseases. Through targeted promotion we have been able to reach beneficiaries at palliative care units based in hospitals, hospices, renal units and transplant centres. We have also built relationships with other UK based charities and organisations, including Maggie's and MPS Society.

“The days out that Willow has provided for these young people means they can access opportunities that they would not normally be able to, make amazing memories with their families and be included the same as everyone else.

We cannot thank you enough for providing this support to the wonderful young people that we care for.”

Claire, a Transition Navigator at Demelza hospice



Willow Medical Advisor, Sian, with our Special Treat Coordinator, Vicky, and Claire from Demelza hospice



Josie, our Special Day Team Leader with Medical Advisor, Sian, and the team from Noah's Ark Children's Hospital Charity

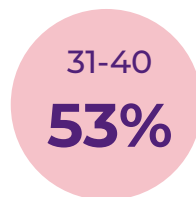
Special Days and Breaks in 2024

In 2024 Willow helped seriously ill 16 to 40-year-olds make lasting memories by providing Special Days and Breaks across the UK. From overnight city breaks to relaxing spa days, thrilling theme park trips to seeing their favourite sports team or musical artists live, our Special Days and Breaks were enjoyed by 777 beneficiaries and their loved ones.

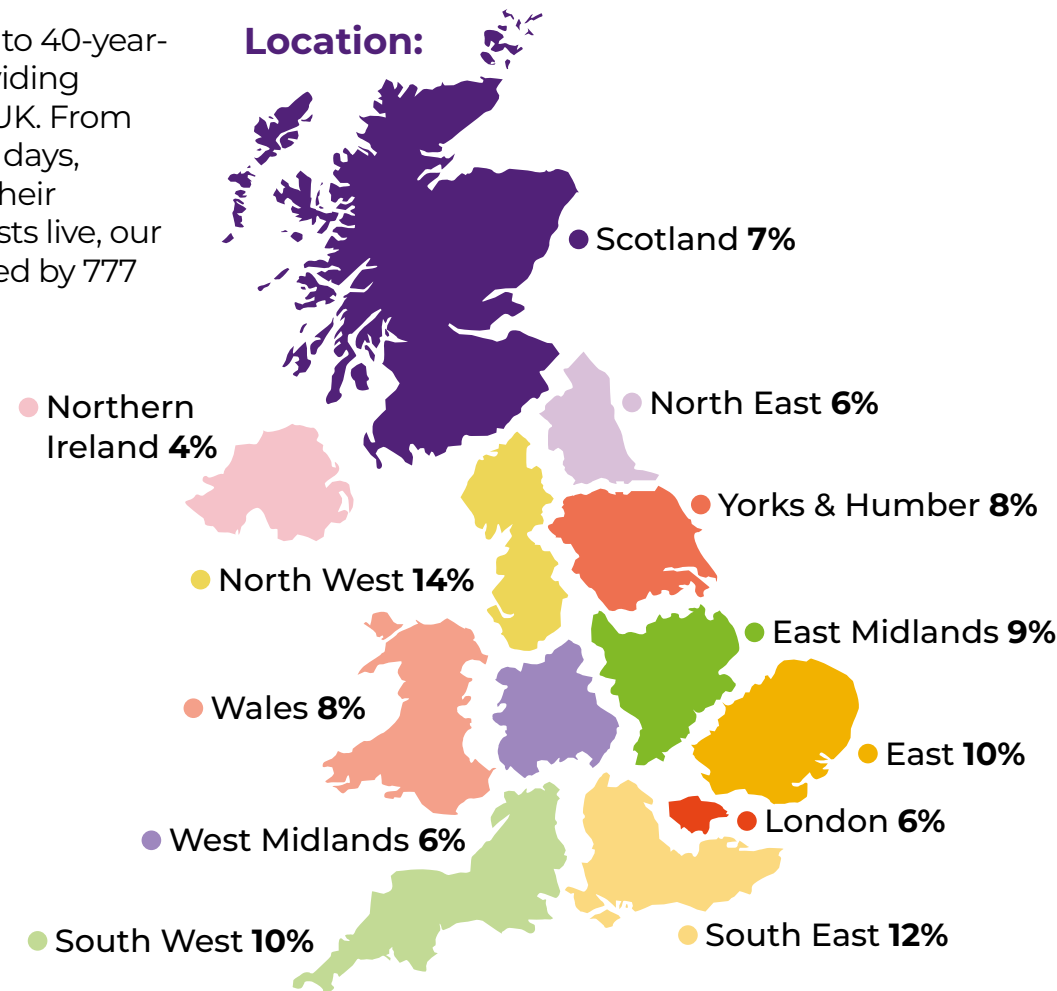
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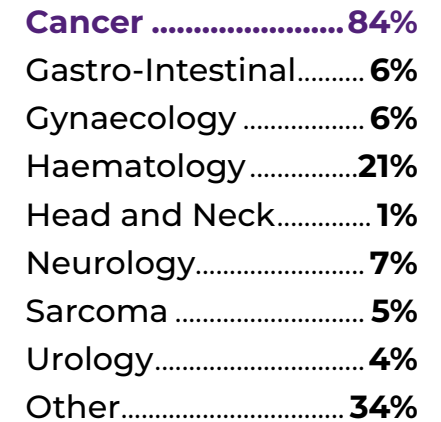
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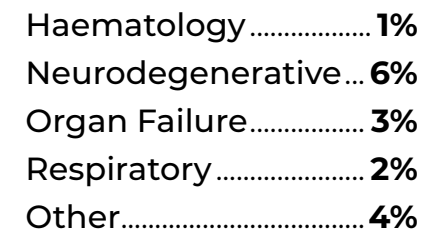
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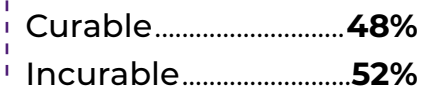
Condition:



Non-Cancer

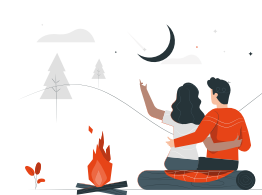


Curable vs incurable:

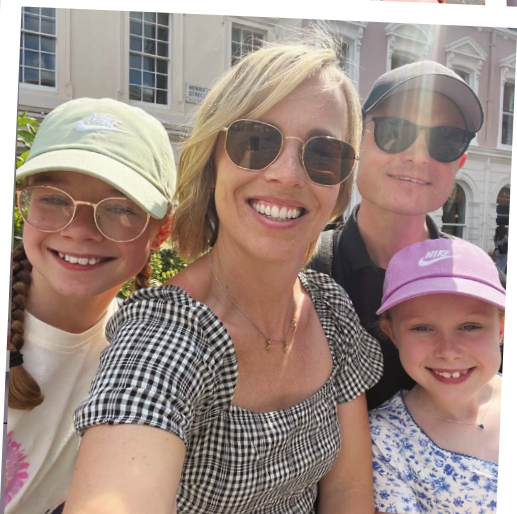


We have seen an increase in support for cancer patients which was mostly made up of young adults living with an incurable cancer diagnosis and those living with rare cancers.

Over half of the beneficiaries supported through Special Days were aged between 31 and 40. This corresponds with the higher incidence of serious illness with our older beneficiaries.



IN 2024 WE
DELIVERED
777
SPECIAL DAYS
AND BREAKS



Adam's story

Thirty-eight-year-old Adam from Lincolnshire was diagnosed with terminal oesophageal cancer. Willow arranged a trip to London for Adam, his wife Laura and their two daughters, to help them make lasting memories while they were still able to. Laura shares their day:

"What a fabulous trip we had. Not having any of the time-consuming research and booking to do was a godsend. The Lion King was incredible, we were all absolutely blown away by the production and costumes. Our seats on the second row and on to the aisle gave us a perfect view of the show and the activity down the aisle. A show none of us will ever forget!

"We enjoyed a pizza in Covent Garden before heading to the hotel, which was lovely and very easy to get to at the end of the day as we felt weary.

"The following day we spent most of our time at the Science Museum, which we all enjoyed, before a last stop at Leicester Square to visit the Lego and M&M shop.

"We are so grateful that you made this memorable trip to London as a family possible. Life feels very heavy and difficult at the moment so it was wonderful to have something to look forward to, allowing us to escape and have some fun together.

"At the moment the children have no idea the significance of the trip but one day they will appreciate how special the time together was."

We were sad to hear that Adam passed away shortly after their Special Day.

Special Treats in 2024

Our treat service ensures that those with incurable and advanced illnesses can take a moment out from days filled with medical appointments and treatments. While these beneficiaries may have rare diseases or conditions which prevent them from taking part in a day out or break away, our bespoke treat boxes contain items such as card games and sensory toys, giving them the opportunity to make memories with their families.

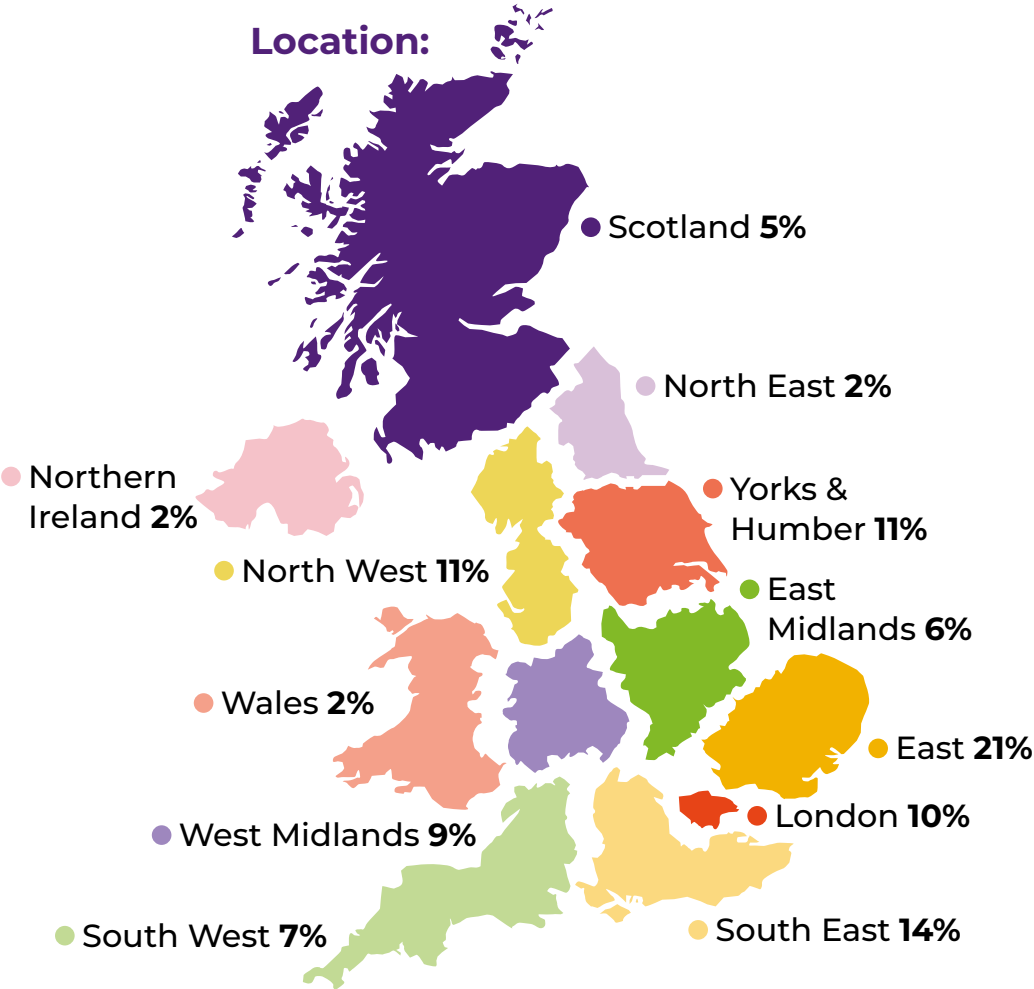
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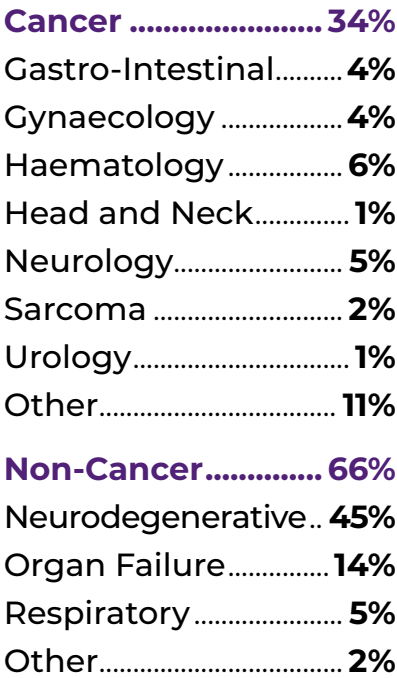
Age:



Location:



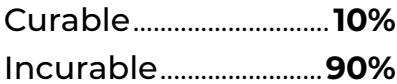
Condition:



In 2024 we delivered:



Curable vs incurable:



Our impact

Willow's range of special experiences aim to lift spirits, and when surveyed, we received the following feedback:*



94%

had an experience they could not have otherwise afforded

"My Special Day gave me something to aim for. A time with Russell, my husband, where we were a couple. Not a patient attending a hospital appointment. As Russell has worked and I have been unable to, money has been rubbish and treats very few. This was a weekend in London we absolutely would never have been able to afford. We had a lovely time and laughed lots. I am so grateful for your help and support in organising it for us."

Jacqueline



99%

said it gave them the opportunity to spend quality time with loved ones

"Having a Special Day was something we had been looking forward to and holding onto especially in the lows of treatment. It was much needed to get some R&R and have a moment together to pause as a couple, after all we've experienced since having our first baby and then cancer. It allowed myself and my partner to have a moment to relax and reconnect, interrupting the rhythms and routines of hospital appointments. In Willow offering us this Special Day we felt seen as a couple and young family for what we are going through."

Robina



99%

believed it gave them the opportunity to create precious memories

"Our Special Day was a refreshing escape and a chance to truly enjoy time with our boys. It was a powerful reminder of how far we've come, moving forward and leaving the past year behind. After all that I have been through and as a family, the things we have missed out on because of my cancer journey, it meant the world to have this special time with the boys and my partner. The memories we created will stay with us forever."

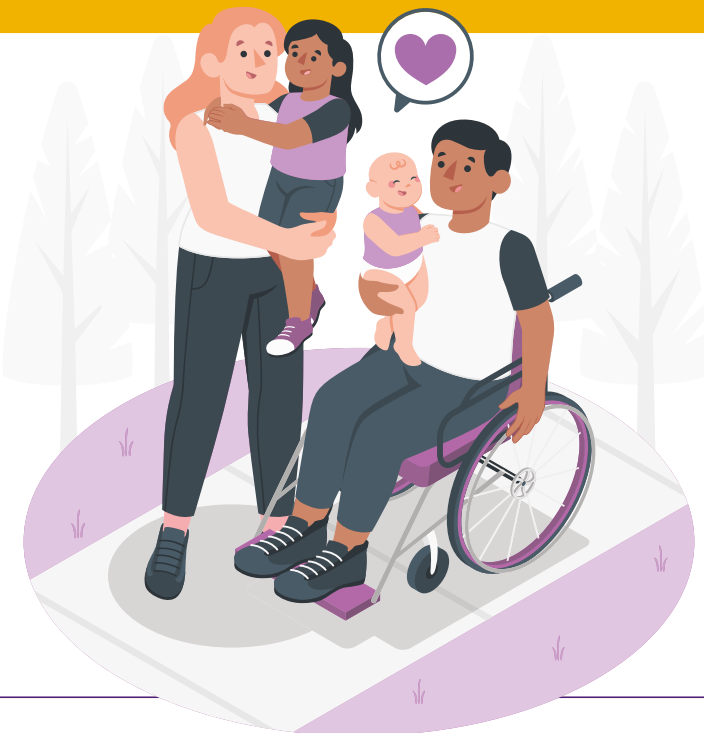
Emily

*Based on 369 beneficiaries surveyed

The impact of being diagnosed with a serious illness affects not only our beneficiaries but their families too. From parents feeling helpless in witnessing what their child is going through to partners forced to take on an unpaid caring role, these people see first-hand the difference that taking time out can make for their loved ones.

“My highlight of the Special Day was seeing my daughter smiling and having fun doing the kind of things a normal 18-year-old should do...shopping, eating good food, browsing local markets in London, swimming in the hotel pool and enjoying the Harry Potter Studio Tour.”

“Hearing my son say that for the first time since he was diagnosed with cancer he felt happy and forgot about having cancer. That was absolutely priceless.”



“We spent time together without chores, without juggling kids, without feeling like a patient and a carer. We got to feel like best friends together again.”

“She got to take some real time away from the stress of life and fully relax for the first time since the cancer hit her. She hasn’t been able to do that since that day. I think it helped her come to terms with where she is now.”

Willow in numbers

The last 12 months have seen us launch fundraising events, increase our volunteer support, welcome new ambassadors and much more. Here are some of the highlights:



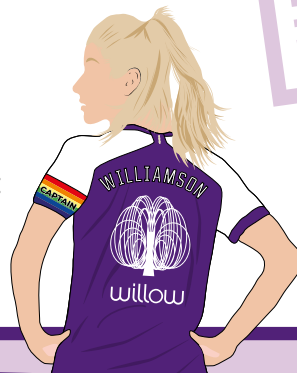
1
Guinness World Record for the fastest marathon in a 10-person costume

4

new ambassadors were welcomed to Willow -
Aaron Ramsdale,
Alex Newman,
Dan Field and Tom Rosenthal

7

Arcade Walk. The address of our newest shop which was opened in Hitchin, Hertfordshire in November 2024



**WILLIAMSON'S
WILLOW WALK**

400

fundraisers took part in Williamson's Walk



16.1%

growth in our average social media content engagement



8

gifts in wills were gratefully received

55lb

was the largest fish caught at our new event, Catch of the Day with David Seaman

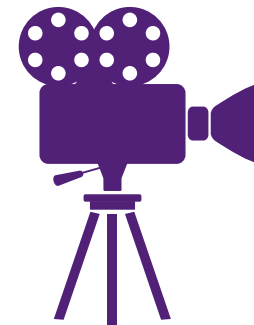


330

guests attended the 25th Willow Ball, the fastest selling in its history

14

media titles were represented at our event, the London Football Awards, providing digital and print coverage



30%

increase in volunteer hours, with total support equivalent to approximately 15 members of full-time staff

**willow
10K**

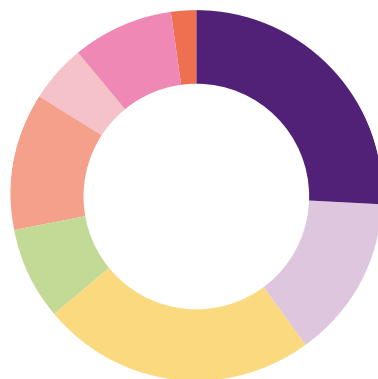
4175

the total number of kilometres covered by Willow 10k fundraisers

Making your support work harder

Our income in 2024 came from:*

● Major Events	26%
● Community & Challenge	14%
● Retail	24%
● Corporate Partnerships	8%
● Trusts & Foundations	12%
● Individual Giving	5%
● Legacies	9%
● Investments	2%



As a charity it is key that we make every pound go further. A fundamental part of our fundraising strategy is to reduce service costs through discounts and gifts-in-kind. Our service delivery team work with providers such as hotels, holiday parks, restaurants, theatres, sports venues, theme parks and many others to help us deliver our bespoke experiences. During 2024, gift-in-kind support from our partners helped save an average of £208 per Special Day. These savings allowed us to be there for more seriously ill young adults.

- We receive pro bono support from a host of media and communications partners. Ahead of our event, the London Football Awards, VERSUS and the i Paper delivered coverage to help raise awareness while Gung Ho Communications lent their expertise to increase our reach and Jump Design created visual content. As a charity we would not be able to purchase this support.
- More than 100 auction lots were donated by individuals, celebrities, small local companies and larger corporates over the last 12 months. The sales of these raised more than £200k.
- We are grateful to all supporters who completed Gift Aid declarations. During 2024 we were able to claim £133,401 on top of their charitable donations.
- In the autumn of last year, we brought the creation of our treat boxes in-house. Each bespoke box is now packed by our volunteers and we have built relationships with many small companies to enable us to deliver packages tailored to the needs and wishes of our beneficiaries. Partners supporting our treat box initiative gave £10,794 worth of discounts or gifts-in-kind, allowing us to increase the value of each box by £22.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the following generous partners who contributed to our Special Days, Breaks and Treats:

Arsenal FC, Beauty Banks, Butlins, Center Parcs, Chelsea FC, Liverpool FC, Tastecard, De Vere, Paul White MBE, Tottenham Hotspur FC, Premier Inn, Manchester United FC, Manchester City FC, Leonardo Hotels, RFU, Ambassador Theatre Group, Sally Sherling, Nicki Swan, Festival Republic,

Trilogy, Colchester Zoo, Fallow restaurant, Big Cat Sanctuary, Silverstone Circuits, Millenium Gloucester Hotel, Nymetwood Treehouses, West Midlands Safari, St Andrews Golf Course, Lords Cricket Ground, UFC, Auto Finesse, Red Letter Days, Haven Holidays and Forest Holidays.

* These figures are draft subject to year end adjustments and auditor review.

The year ahead: our plans for 2025 and beyond

In 2025 we will embark on a new five-year strategy with a plan to double Willow's impact by our 30th anniversary in 2029. This means that we intend to grow the number of young people supported to 2,400 per year.

To ensure that we continue to reach those who need us most, we have developed the following key themes to shape our priorities as we move into the first phase of our growth plan:

Medical urgency – Young adults who have been given a short prognosis or have a shortened life expectancy. This group also includes those living with life-long degenerative conditions, whose health is deteriorating over time.

Least supported – This includes groups not as well supported by other charities due to the nature of their illness. Young adults living with rare diseases will be the focus for this group.

Representation and diversity – We are aware of the challenges faced by those from underrepresented communities. Willow strives to be an inclusive organisation and our focus in this area will ensure that our support is representative of a range of patient groups across age, gender, region, ethnicity, disability and more.

Financial situation – We will continue to support those facing financial hardship, whether as a result of their medical condition or otherwise. This group will include those on low incomes, from areas of deprivation or who have had to give up work and rely on government support because of their illness.



Shantel's story

Shantel, 34, from Leeds, West Yorkshire, was diagnosed with organ failure and received a heart transplant. A trip to Legoland meant Shantel, her husband Renfold and 16-month-old son, Sire, were able to take a break from a year of medical appointments.

"My family and I had a phenomenal time at Legoland. I loved seeing the happiness and joy on my son's face. After such a trying year of doctors' visits and surgery this experience made me feel a sense of normalcy and great joy. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity!"

A huge thank you

Willow is thankful for the support of all supporters including our generous benefactors and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Aaron and Georgina
Ramsdale
Access Group
Adam and Kayleigh Canning
Alan Gaby
Alex and Claire Reeves
Alexion Charitable Foundation
Angela and Adam Brown
Anna and Paul White MBE
Arsène Wenger
Bernie and Steve Lane
Bob Weston
Boux Avenue
Capital Industrial
Chadwick Charitable Trust
Chris and Jo Bayne
CJ O'Shea & Co Ltd
Concord London
Developments Ltd
Danielle Hooper
David Kyte
De Vere
Dickie Davis
Dover Gooners
Drilltec and Graham Ball
Experience More Limited
Fishing Republic
Folk by the Oak
Frogmore
Gary and Heidi Coombe
Gerry and Katie Clyde
Giles and Louise Witheat
Greg Nicholson
Gung Ho Communications
Gurman and Mina Hundal
H&G Recruitment Solutions
Hand Picked Hotels
Harvey Soning
Hewer-White Trust
Hireworks

Howden Re
HSS Hire
Hugh and Mindi Byrne
Ian Stirling
Jackie Dennis
Jamie Newington
Jemaine Saville
Jill Scott MBE
John James Bristol
Foundation
Jump Design
Katey and Jon Jorgensen
Ket and Claire Chauhan
LeeStock Music Festival
Mark Abbas - Cainhoe Wood
Golf Club
Mark and Sam Ewington
Mark Pearson - Mid Herts Golf
Club
Martin Bayfield
Mel and Aidan Bartlett
Michael and Viviana
Hirschmann
Mike and Eve Audis
MiQ
Moonpig Group Foundation
Multiplex
MZ Contracts and Max Zanni
Neil Dudman
Newmark
Nick and Caroline Ramsdale
Nicki Swan
Oak Hill Lawn Cemetery and
Crematorium
Oliver & Akers
Opes International
Parag and Sophie Gandesha
Paypal Giving Fund
Peter Olsen
Pink Ribbon Foundation

Red Letter Days
Richard Davis
Richard King
Rob and Helen Parkinson
Sally Sherling
Simmons Bakers
Sophie Tea Art
Stephen Casey
Steph's Wishes
Steve Blight
Steve Harris and CloudClevr
Target Sports
Terry Kneeshaw
The Andor Charitable Trust
The Arsenal Foundation
The Childwick Trust
The David and Ruth Lewis
Charitable Trust
The Edward Showler
Foundation
The Fidelis Partnership
The Geoff and Fiona Squire
Foundation
The Hugh Fraser Foundation
The Hut, Colwell Bay
The i Paper
The Michael Cornish
Charitable Trust
The Paphitis Charitable Trust
The Patrick and Helena Frost
Foundation
The Pierrepont Trust
The Richard Harris Charitable
Trust
The Ripley Trust
The Roger Counter
Foundation
The Tompkins Foundation
The William and Elizabeth
Davies Charitable Trust

Theo Paphitis
Tom Rosenthal
Tony and Pat Lennon
Tony Gibbon
Toscafund Asset
Management LLP
TP ICAP
Weston Homes
Wrights Estate Agents

Willow Founder and Life President

Bob Wilson OBE

Honorary Presidents

David Seaman MBE
Frankie Seaman

Trustees

Richard King
Nick Aldridge
Dave Waddington CBE
Elena Ciallie
Glyn Taylor
Martin Ryan
Vanessa Steel
Paul Phedon
Sangita Shah
James Newman

Ambassadors

Natasha Kaplinsky OBE
Pat Jennings OBE
Mary Nightingale
Theo Walcott
Jim Rosenthal
Linda Lusardi
Sam Kane
Lee Dixon
Gary Mabbutt MBE

Simon McCoy
Ian Poulter
Gary Lewin
Ian Wright MBE
Martin Chivers
Ossie Ardiles
Katie Swan
Alfie Boe OBE
Leah Williamson OBE
Daniel Field
Alex Newman
Petr Čech
Aaron Ramsdale
Tom Rosenthal

Fundraising board

Tony Gibbon - Chair
James Ebel
Gavin de Klerk
Christopher Murray
Trevor Racke
Neil Thompson

Ball committee

Claire Chauhan
Frankie Seaman
Vanessa Steel
Bob Wilson
Alison Wright

London Football Awards committee

Stuart Burrage
Danny Simmonds
Gillian Hoffman
Gareth Parker
Akshay Madhavan
Ollie Gill
Paul Hutton



Willow, Gate House, Fretherne Road,
Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 6NS
T: 01707 591 159 **E:** info@willowfoundation.org.uk
W: www.willowfoundation.org.uk



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