

Highlights Report Autumn/Winter 2025

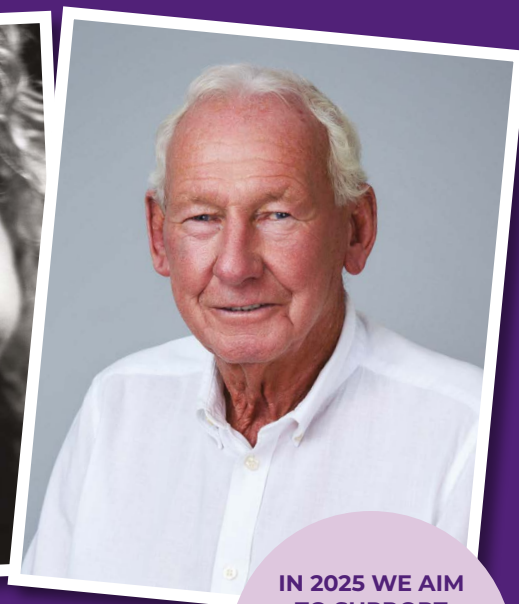
How your support enabled seriously ill 16 to 40-year-olds to make lasting memories

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.

Our team of dedicated Special Days Coordinators use their expertise to plan a whole host of Special Days, Breaks and Treats. These tailored experiences take each beneficiary's preferences, needs and circumstances into account and span from wholesome family breaks to unique experiences with favourite sports clubs or musicians.



Willow was founded in 1999 by former Arsenal goalkeeper and TV presenter, Bob Wilson and his late 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 2025 WE AIM
TO SUPPORT
1,400
SERIOUSLY ILL
YOUNG ADULTS

Redefining our focus



Hello and welcome to the 2025 Autumn/Winter Highlights Report.

We are now well into the first year of our five-year growth plan, with the aim of increasing our yearly support to 1,400 beneficiaries in 2025.

At the same time as growing our overall reach, we are introducing several key themes and projects to ensure we are directing our support at the groups who need us most. This saw us launch our project focused on young men with cancer in April 2025, which is about rebalancing gender representation across our services. We have already seen a 19% increase in applications from this group and are working towards maintaining this as the project continues.

Expanding our reach amongst medical professionals and health-focused organisations is pivotal to our growth. To achieve this, our Medical Advisors have attended conferences relating to male cancer, palliative care and rare conditions.

To be more sustainable, we have increased volunteer support across the charity by around 21% so far this year, with the services team leading the way. The team currently benefits from the support of 20 dedicated volunteers and our treat box service is predominantly delivered in this way.

I'm incredibly proud of the groundwork that we've done in 2025 but there's still more to be done to ensure as many young people living with a serious illness can make lasting memories with their loved ones as possible.

You can find out more about the ways we're doing this in this document, including hearing from Paul Nanson, our Deputy Director of Fundraising & Events, on how we'll fund this ambitious increase in our services.

Dominic Heath, Director of Services

Services fit for the future

Our plans to grow our reach before Willow's 30th anniversary are focused on several key themes:

Medical urgency – Young adults with a short prognosis or a shortened lifespan. Making memories is even more important for this group.

Financial hardship – Where families would otherwise not be able to afford the experiences arranged by Willow.

Least supported – There is limited support available for young adults living with rare conditions and this has been a long-term project for Willow.

Inclusion – Our range of beneficiaries must reflect the incidence of serious illness across genders, ethnicities, ages, and locations.

We have developed several projects linked to the themes, to target specific groups of beneficiaries. Supporting young men with cancer (featured on page 6) has been a focus in 2025, alongside:

Less survivable cancers

Our goal is to increase support for those diagnosed with a less survivable cancer - brain, liver, lung, oesophageal, pancreatic and stomach. The chance of surviving for five years after being diagnosed with one of these is only 16%, on average. So far in 2025, we have been there for more than 104 young adults with a less survivable cancer.

Rare diseases

A rare disease is a condition that affects fewer than 1 in 2,000 people. A diagnosis can be a lonely and isolating experience, especially for 16- to 40-year-olds. Each year, we aim for at least 40% of beneficiaries to have rare diseases or rare cancers. So far in 2025, we have supported 584 young adults with rare conditions, making up 44%.

Looking ahead

In 2026 we will introduce a focus on financial hardship. Due to loss of income and additional costs linked to treatment, our beneficiaries feel an increased financial strain. Our next project will focus on supporting these young people, as well as those with lower incomes or living in the most deprived areas of the UK.

What a Special Day means to our beneficiaries and their loved ones

The impact of a life-threatening diagnosis extends far beyond the patient and their time spent at hospital appointments and receiving treatment. For our beneficiaries and their loved ones, changes to mental health, finances and physical abilities have a negative lasting effect. That's why a Special Day, Break or Treat is invaluable in allowing seriously ill young adults to take time out.

"It was so nice to switch off from the normal week of appointments and treatment. The week was just for us as a family and we loved every second of it. It had such a positive impact on my husband's mental health and helped us create lasting magical memories."

Rebecca, wife of beneficiary

"We were able to spend quality time as a family on the break, making lots of fun memories for our two young children. My personal highlight was seeing the kids so happy, full of laughter and smiles. It made life feel 'normal' again. From start to finish it was extra special."

Naomi, wife of beneficiary

"Many people don't realise the impact that cancer can have on the family, and my Special Day was the perfect way for me to enjoy a fun day with my brother who deserves it, and to see him enjoy it with me."

William, beneficiary

"My weekend was a real escape from my daily challenges. It allowed me to relax, reflect and dream about my future. Having something to look forward to and feel excited about is incredibly powerful."

Amber, beneficiary

Launching our project to support more young men with cancer

Young men have been under-represented in our beneficiary pool for some time. With research indicating that men are reluctant to visit the doctor, we have observed that this group is also hesitant to apply for our services following a diagnosis. As a result, young men living with cancer have not benefited from the same level of support as their female counterparts.

To raise the funds needed to kick start our project focused on young men with cancer, we worked with our friends at Arsenal to deliver an exclusive dinner at the Emirates Stadium. Supported by Paul White, and with matched funding made available by LGT Wealth Management, the evening celebrated the history of

Arsenal goalkeeping with Bob Wilson and David Seaman, alongside six other iconic goalkeepers, interviewed by Sports Commentator, Jim Rosenthal.

Our beneficiary Jason, spoke at the event and made an impassioned speech about the stark realities of living with an incurable cancer diagnosis. We were astounded by the generosity of our guests who together raised £110,000 in support of the project.

Our commitments:

- Support 30% more young men with cancer in year one
- Grow our network of referring medical professionals to increase service applications
- Encourage referrals from existing referrers who work with patients affected by those cancers with the highest incidence in men aged 16 to 40



Making a real difference to the lives of young men with cancer

Thanks to events like those held at the Emirates Stadium, we've been able to deliver special experiences for young men living with cancer, like Tom and Christian.

Tom's Special Break

"Knowing you have a disease at a stage that you can't come back from is a huge weight, not just on yourself but on the people around you. I loved being able to spend time with my wife and children. We had a really special weekend."

After receiving a diagnosis of colorectal cancer, 37-year-old Tom from Gwent was signposted to Willow by Michelle, his clinical nurse specialist. Tom shared his experience with his wife, Christie, and their three children, Seren (15), Ffion (12) and Griff (7).

Seren shared what the trip meant to her and her siblings: "I had the best time this weekend! It meant so much to spend time with my dad away from all the chaos and have a carefree weekend."

Tom sadly passed away shortly after his Special Day.



Christian's Special Break

Twenty-four-year-old Christian is living with Burkitt lymphoma. He asked for a Special Break on the Isle of Skye with his partner, Rosemary, where they were able to enjoy a peaceful stay on their own terms.

"Willow has been so generous and our time away was truly healing after what has been a difficult period for both of us. I'll remember it for years to come!"

Rosemary added: "The break came at the perfect time, helping Christian reset and rest after some very difficult months. It was one of the first times since his treatment ended that it was just the two of us. We had the opportunity to create our own routine and spend quality time together."



Funding our growth over the next five years



While funding our growth is no small task, we'll build on our strong foundations to make it happen. To get there, we'll play to our strengths while embracing new opportunities to grow our income, driven by our key themes and projects.

Thanks to years of refining our fundraising offering, we'll concentrate on high-return activities and improving our spending ratio. Existing supporters are the backbone of our charity, and we will

continue to build long-term engagement with them. We'll also be taking a proactive approach, reaching out to new audiences, leaning on our ambassadors and celebrities for support.

Over the years, our events and fundraising portfolio has evolved significantly. Today, we benefit from an extensive offering spanning livestreaming, fishing, golf, football and comedy to name a few. A broad offering means we're able to engage a diverse community of supporters.

As we look to the next five years, we remain committed to learning and innovating to ensure we can grow our income. I invite you to continue reading to learn more about some of these exciting developments. Finally, I want to extend my thanks to everyone who has supported Willow to help us get to where we are today.

Paul Nanson, Deputy Director of Fundraising & Events

At the start of the year, our iconic event, the London Football Awards, was hosted at the equally iconic Wembley Stadium. With winners including Tottenham Hotspur's Archie Gray and Aggie Beever-Jones from Chelsea Women's, the evening saw the best of the Premier League, WSL and EFL, past and present, turn out in support of Willow.

We were hugely grateful to welcome MiQ as our new headline partners of the event, who were on stage to present the Premier League Player of the Year and Women's Young Player of the Year awards. We were also delighted to be joined by both long term and new partners of the awards including: Jump, Versus, Frogmore, Barclays, Odyssean, Gung Ho Communications, The i Paper and Weston Homes.

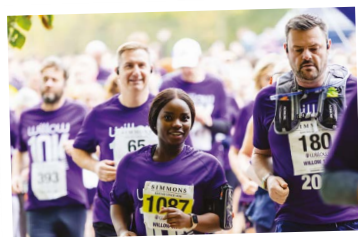


Our longstanding events

The team at Folk by the Oak have been huge supporters of Willow since the festival made its debut back in 2008. In 2025, Folk by the Oak had a bumper turnout and donations throughout the day yielded our highest fundraising total to date from the event!

2025 saw the biggest turn out for the Willow 10K since pre-Covid, with 650 people heading to Hatfield House to take part in our headline running event, family fun run and 5K. Runners were set off by our Honorary Presidents, Frankie and David Seaman MBE, who were also on hand to give out medals.

Earlier this year, our charity shops in Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage and Hemel Hempstead celebrated 10 years of trading. Our retail arm provides a sustainable approach to fundraising, with the longevity of these shops highlighting this.



...and partners



FROGMORE
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We have worked with Frogmore for many years across a range of activities. In addition to attending many of Willow's signature events, they hold their own annual fundraisers. The Frogmore shoot and golf days are firmly marked in the calendar as opportunities for the property industry to network while raising funds.

**Weston
Homes**



Weston Homes has been a long term supporter of Willow, dating back

to the early years of the charity. The team's involvement extends well beyond event attendance, with Weston Homes most notably providing headline sponsorship of the Willow Golf Classic.

New fundraising initiatives for 2025

We held our first ever firewalk in collaboration with Black Point Recruitment and Welwyn Garden City BID in July. The challenge encouraged everyone to push past their fears and attracted new support from local people and businesses.

Over the summer of 2025, six supporters took to the skies over Salisbury to complete Willow's first ever Go Grab Life Skydive. The event was led by Willow ambassador Alex Newman, in honour of his late wife, Nicky Newman. Nicky was

diagnosed with stage four breast cancer and became a source of inspiration for many others as she documented her life after diagnosis. In 2021, Willow gave Nicky and Alex a much-needed break at Port Lympne Safari Park which marked the beginning of our close partnership with Nicky and later, Alex.

Our retail and fundraising teams recently teamed up to host an Arsenal pop-up event at John Lewis in Welwyn Garden City. Building on our existing partnership with

the department store, the occasion helped raise awareness of Willow among shoppers, who were offered the chance to shop from a curated selection of merchandise and win a signed Arsenal shirt.

To tap into the continued popularity of gaming, we launched Streaming for Willow at the end of the year. Thanks to Newcastle United goalkeeper and Willow ambassador, Aaron Ramsdale, and renowned streamer, Angry Ginge, the launch attracted the support of over 11,000 spectators online.



Elita's Special Treat

Elita, from Angus, is 20 and had renal cancer. While others her age were enjoying newfound opportunities and independence, Elita received a stage four cancer diagnosis. By delivering a bespoke treat box to Elita, we boosted her mood and helped her take a moment to appreciate some of the small joys life can bring.

"I had just left home to go and study at Glasgow University when I received my diagnosis. What I expected to be one of the most exciting years of my life turned out to be the hardest. Being given a diagnosis of stage four cancer is hard at any age but seems especially hard at 19.

"Despite starting palliative treatment, I have managed to complete my first year of university which I am really proud of. Trying to stay positive is hard but I'm very close to my family and we're all there to support one another.

"I was so excited to receive a treat box. It was lovely to feel special and unwrap all the lovely treats. I know it may seem silly but these little things make such a difference."



The power of partnership

Partnerships are crucial to the success of our fundraising. We are fortunate to have many partners who all believe in the power of Special Days, Breaks and Treats.

Since 2022, we have been supported by the Alexion Charitable Foundation (ACF). Thanks to their generosity, Willow has delivered more special experiences for young people living with rare diseases who can feel isolated due to the nature of their illness. At least 40% of our beneficiaries live with a rare condition or rare cancer and supporting these young people continues to be a priority for Willow with it forming part of our plans for the next five years.



Daisy's Special Break

Daisy is 29 years old and lives in Surrey. In November 2024 she was diagnosed with Behçet's disease, a rare inflammatory condition which affects the entire body.

"Unfortunately, I have one of the most severe presentations, neuro-Behçet's, which causes lesions in the brain and spinal cord. The disease gives me severe pain and affects my self-esteem due to my hair falling out with the chemotherapy drug and my appearance changes from the steroids. I am receiving specialist psychological support."

Special Days Coordinator, Kaylee, arranged a honeymoon trip to the Cotswolds for Daisy and her husband, Alex, allowing them the opportunity to spend time together as newlyweds and escape the challenges of daily life.

"Alex usually has to care for me on top of his full-time job so to spend time alone as a married couple, without him having to cook and clean was extremely special. It was just what we needed after our wedding and a trip we will always remember."





We were delighted to once again participate in the annual ICAP 2024 Charity Day. David Seaman, Petr Čech and Marlon Harewood took to the trading floor on behalf of Willow, alongside ICAP professionals in fancy dress, to support a high-octane day that was memorable for all involved. ICAP generously donate all profits from this day to good causes around the world.

We worked with Landsec and Piccadilly Lights to deliver a once in a lifetime opportunity for Willow. In November, during peak commuter time, we shared a ten-minute animation, spotlighting the stories of our beneficiaries to raise awareness of the services we provide. Some of the featured beneficiaries were in attendance with their loved ones, alongside members of the Willow team, making it a very emotional moment for all involved.



De Vere has been steadfast in their support of Willow. In 2025 alone the team have gifted hotel stays for beneficiaries, donated auction lots, chosen Willow as a charity partner for their first charity gala dinner and even volunteered at some of our biggest events! De Vere's support has been invaluable in helping deliver more breaks to seriously ill young adults.



Stevenage Football Club chose Willow as its charity partner for the 2024/25 season with our logo featuring on the team's third kit. With opportunities spanning from attending a match to gather donations to hosting a player meet and greet at our nearby shop, the partnership raised funds and awareness of Willow within the local community.



The lasting impact of a Special Day

Jan

In June 2025, beneficiary and long-time supporter, Jan utilised her gardening skills to create a display inspired by Willow. The garden was shown at BBC Gardeners' World Live at Birmingham NEC and received both a silver merit and the award for 'Best interpretation of theme - Beautiful Borders'.

Jan benefited from a Willow Special Day almost 20 years ago. After being diagnosed with osteosarcoma in 2006, Willow arranged for Jan to have afternoon tea at The Dorchester before going to see The Sound of Music and meet the star of the show, Connie Fisher. Since then, Jan has shown her support by volunteering her time, giving talks about our work, hosting events and fundraisers.

Jan said, "I'm so pleased to have had the opportunity to share the work of Willow through this very special garden. As a Willow beneficiary, I know only too well the profound and lasting impact of a Special Day and the precious memories that come with it." – Jan O'Brien



Bea

To celebrate what would have been her dad Luc's 40th birthday, nine-year-old Bea completed 40 laps of Herne Hill Velodrome, somewhere they spent happy times together before Luc sadly passed away in 2024.

After being diagnosed with adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus, Willow arranged a stay at Legoland for Luc, Bea and the rest of his family. The time away had a lasting impact on Bea, who said:

"After my dad was diagnosed with cancer, Willow gave us a short break to Legoland. We loved it and it was so much fun. I wanted to raise money so other people can enjoy a special treat."



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