

Radiotherapy UK

Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026

OUR VISION:

To save lives by ensuring everyone in the UK has access to high quality radiotherapy treatment and support.



Welcome

Radiotherapy UK are at an exciting new stage of development, as we plan for the future and focus on what we can do to improve things for radiotherapy patients and the workforce.

We are the UK's only charity dedicated to improving radiotherapy treatment. Radiotherapy is a life-saving cancer treatment that 1 in 4 of us will need in our lifetimes, and yet it only receives 5% of the cancer budget. We stand up for vital cancer treatment and the rights of every cancer patient in the UK to have the best radiotherapy treatment available.

This is our Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026. It sets out the direction we are heading in and how we plan to get there. It identifies core goals for the charity and is guided by the views of radiotherapy patients and families and the radiotherapy workforce.

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Consulting and Listening

In the summer of 2022 we ran a consultation asking radiotherapy patients and families, and the radiotherapy workforce about their experiences of radiotherapy - where there were gaps in support and what they needed from Radiotherapy UK. We also held a series of focus groups to provide more in-depth discussion and understanding of what is happening for radiotherapy patients.

We received an overwhelming response with 511 patients/family members and 208 radiotherapy professionals completing our surveys. This high level of response and shared experience provided us with a real insight into how radiotherapy was experienced and delivered. We are so grateful to all those who responded for taking the time and sharing their thoughts and experiences.

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Key findings

Radiotherapy Patients and Family

Patient Information

Our findings showed major inconsistencies in the provision of quality information about radiotherapy across the entire care pathway. **50%** of respondents stated they had a ‘moderate’ knowledge of radiotherapy with **31%** knowing ‘very little or nothing’ about it. Less than **40%** of respondents found the information they received ‘adequate’ and only **31%** of respondents found the information ‘easy to understand’.

Over **66%** of respondents sought out information online although the preferred way to receive information was face-to-face. Just under half also liked to receive information through leaflets. This tells us that there is no one source of information that will meet the needs of radiotherapy patients.

Patients and families told us that they rely on accurate and trusted information to understand what is happening and what to expect from their treatment. Our consultation showed a wide disparity in how patients accessed information and the quality of information. As such, it appears that a patient’s experience is entirely dependent on which centre they visit or which professional they engage with. As one radiotherapy patient said;

“ You don't know what you don't know. ”



Late Effects

The importance of access to accurate information when understanding the short and long term effects of radiotherapy treatment was a huge issue for many of the patients and their families who responded. A majority of consultation respondents (**54%**) told us the one thing they wish they had known about radiotherapy was the long-term physical effects of treatment in advance. Not having the information left them unprepared, and less able to cope.

“ Just having the validation and the education that actually there's a reason (for the late effects) makes such a difference. ”

Our Plans

There is an evident need for detailed information about radiotherapy treatment from a trusted, independent source, accessible to all patients across the UK. In its absence, patients told us they felt powerless, struggling to understand what treatment they are receiving, for what purpose, and what the potential effects may be.

We aim to address this need and to provide the patient and their families with the tools and information to be at the centre of their care, rather than feeling like part of the machinery.

Radiotherapy Workforce

Those who responded to our consultation from the radiotherapy workforce consistently highlighted three key areas that they would like to see the charity developing

- Increased workforce engagement
- Improved public awareness
- Provision of comprehensive patient information

Most respondents know us from our advocacy and campaigning and were keen that we continued this important work, representing their needs and the needs of the patients they treat;



“ I think you're doing a fantastic job in providing the profession with a unified voice. I like how reactive and quick-footed you are and able to comment on relevant issues. ”

Workforce Engagement

Respondents noted that they wanted us to provide more support for the workforce's professional development including networking opportunities, learning from each other and to improve our outreach activities within radiotherapy centres across the UK.

“ ... find ways to bring the RT community together. It seems to me, the profession often lacks confidence to stand up for itself. Perhaps conferences, event etc. would help to strengthen our identity. Thank you! ”

“ Radiotherapy is hugely technologically advanced and always developing. We are a separate workforce to diagnostic radiographers. ”

Public Awareness

The need for increased public awareness of what radiotherapy is and how it is delivered was a major theme that ran across all the responses to the survey. This was reflected in comments that described radiotherapy as frequently misunderstood, historically underinvested in and under-resourced.

The workforce identified a clear need for the public to better understand how innovative and advanced radiotherapy is as a treatment and that the professionals working in this area are specifically trained to deliver specialist cancer care.

To deliver a public awareness campaign is a long-term significant commitment for the charity but the lack of public understanding as to what radiotherapy is indicates a clear need.

“ Educating patients on the variety of Radiotherapy techniques so they are empowered and know what to ask and what options are out there in terms of radiotherapy. ”

“ Raise awareness of what radiotherapy is, how it works. I think the basics still aren't getting through enough. ”

“ Raise awareness of radiotherapy and help better prepare patients regarding what to expect. ”



Our Strategic Plan

Following the consultation analysis and in line with the charity's ambitions to develop and grow its services, influence, and impact, we have identified the following 5 outcomes that we will deliver through our 3 year Strategic Plan. These outcomes are short to medium term, and we recognize that we will need to work in collaboration with others to access relevant resources and build relationships to meet these outcomes in their entirety.

To achieve these outcomes we have broken them down into key activities that we can measure to assess our progress in delivery, look at ways to grow and improve and share how we are doing.

OUTCOME 1

Radiotherapy Patients and Families can rely on Radiotherapy UK to be a trusted and complete source of information about radiotherapy throughout the entire care pathway.

1. Improve the quality and accessibility of information available about radiotherapy
2. Empower the patient and their family to engage with their treatment and options
3. Support radiotherapy workforce in supporting the patient experience.





**OUTCOME
2**

The radiotherapy workforce is supported across all specialties operating within the service.

1. Develop and promote radiotherapy community
2. Support enhanced knowledge and shared experiences within RT community.

**OUTCOME
3**

Equality of access to high quality radiotherapy treatment across the UK is at the fore of campaigning work.

1. Decision and policy makers are aware of the vulnerabilities of the UK's radiotherapy service and its potential to save lives if adequately resourced
2. Patients are aware of the options available to them in radiotherapy treatment
3. Radiotherapy community are engaged and promoted within advocacy.

**OUTCOME
4**

Radiotherapy UK will develop a motivated and multi-talented team and adhere to standards of good practice.

1. Develop and maintain a quality staff / volunteer team
2. Improve organisation's financial resilience and sustainability
3. Advance good governance through strong organisational development.

**OUTCOME
5**

Radiotherapy UK develops a strategic approach to increasing public awareness of radiotherapy and promotes increased engagement and awareness of the charity's work.

1. Promote engagement and awareness of Radiotherapy UK
2. Increase public awareness
3. Promote radiotherapy with international collaboration.

