

CANCER AND NUTRITION HELPLINE



IMPACT REPORT YEAR 1

This report covers our first year of operations, from 2 May 2023 – 1 May 2024. Our opening hours were every Tuesday 12–2pm, and every Thursday 6–8pm.

A LETTER FROM THE CEO

World Cancer Research Fund examines how diet, weight and physical activity can affect your risk of developing cancer. Since 1982, we've been keeping healthcare professionals and the public up to date with the most reliable information about preventing cancer thanks to our life-saving research.

What we're perhaps less known for is the support we also offer to people living with and beyond cancer. Last year, we were excited to add to our support programme with the launch of our new and indispensable Cancer and Nutrition Helpline. Staffed by Oncology Specialist Dietitians, our helpline offers a unique service for people affected by cancer and their loved ones to ask questions about diet and nutrition.

While there is evidence that maintaining optimum nutrition throughout a cancer journey is essential, many people report they haven't seen a specialist dietitian.

We've even heard from our own supporters that up to 80% received no nutritional support whatsoever, so we are committed to addressing this gap.

Through the helpline and our ambitious plans to grow our support programme, we aim to ensure that people living with and beyond cancer have access to the most up-to-date, evidence-based information.

I hope that this report not only highlights the significant impact we've had for our users, but also inspires you to support our plans to reach even more people in need.

RACHAEL GORMLEY

CEO,
World Cancer
Research Fund



A NOTE FROM THE PROGRAMME MANAGER

It's been a fantastic first year for our helpline, and we're incredibly proud to have launched a service that has made such an impact on people living with and beyond cancer. We're equally very inspired by some of the feedback we've received from people who've used our service, which we've included in this report for you.

We've also been working hard with healthcare professionals across the UK to promote our service to their patients, and their comments have been so positive across the board. It's been

our pleasure to support our vital NHS services during a time when they're busier than ever, and can't always stretch their limited resources to reach everyone they need to.

I'm sure you'll agree that we've built a solid foundation in our first year of operation, and share in our excitement about our plans for growth in the years to come.

CHRISTOPHER ALLEN

Cancer Support
Programme Manager



BACKGROUND/NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Being able to eat and enjoy food is something most of us take for granted, but imagine losing your appetite, sense of taste and feeling nauseous. This is what life is like for around half of the approximately 3 million people living with cancer in the UK.

Both cancer treatment and the cancer itself can leave people with debilitating side effects. This often means that cancer patients do not eat well and miss out on the vital nutrients they need for recovery and to improve their quality of life.

Evidence suggests that many people living with cancer don't have access to a specialist dietitian to help them to manage these side effects or can be waiting many months for an NHS appointment.

Our helpline is a vital support to people living with and beyond cancer, ensuring they have access to expert information and support when they need it



“ Working on the Helpline has been a joy. It's wonderful to hear from people wanting to be proactive and get evidence based information rather than turn to the myths, fads and false claims that seem to plague social media now. Easy and free access to the service as well as quick responses mean the information can provide immediate relief to anyone at any point during their cancer journey, and we've heard just how grateful the users are. This is a really special service. ”

Megan Pattwell, World Cancer Research Fund Helpline Dietitian

BETHENNEY'S STORY

I was talking to a colleague one day about her husband, who had just been diagnosed with bowel cancer. When she described his symptoms, I felt like there was a weight making its way from my throat down to my stomach. I'd been having all those symptoms too – I felt sick and terrified.

I hoped I'd be fine but a few weeks later, my consultant said, "Unfortunately the scan shows you have bowel cancer. We'll give you some information booklets. Do you have any questions?"

My head was spinning, and I felt sick. Suddenly, I remembered my colleague saying how important nutrition was. It can even affect how well your treatment and recovery go.

My consultant agreed to make a dietitian referral, but I was told the wait could be anything up to 8 months.

At home, my husband and I immediately went online to see if I could get faster access privately. Just as I was spiralling about our finances, Nick called over from his laptop, "there's a helpline! A charity called World Cancer Research Fund has one with oncology dietitians. They're open now – I'm calling them."

After the chat, we both felt so much calmer. The dietitian was so reassuring and answered all our questions. We could also get back in touch as many times as we needed to.

All I can say is, "thank God for the helpline!". I've never spoken to such a kind, caring, patient and understanding healthcare professional before. The dietitian answered my questions so

knowledgeably and clearly, which filled me with confidence and hope. I realised just how much tension and anxiety had been building up as it melted away during our call.

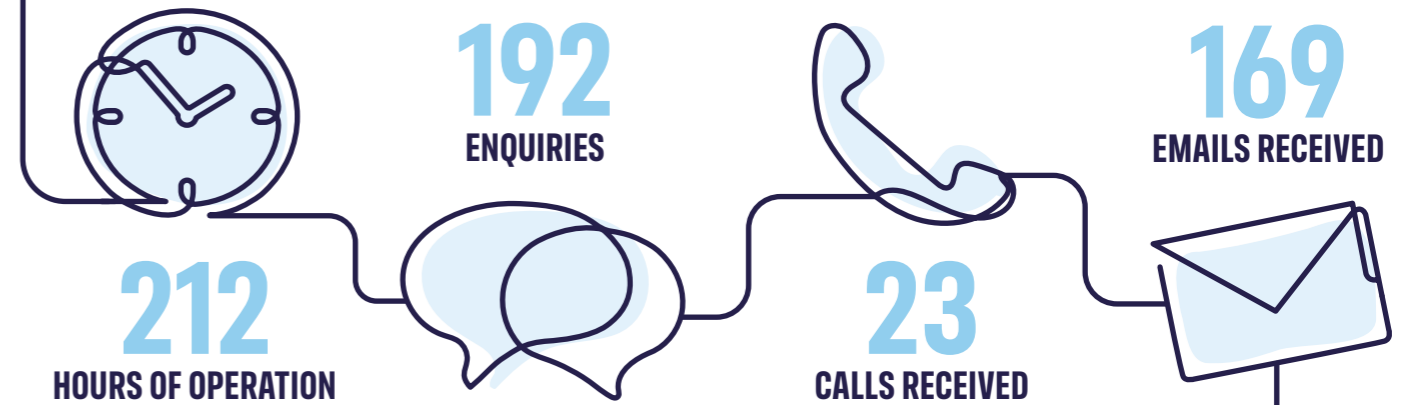
My situation is much more common than people think, so it's even more worrying that some people never get access to a dietitian who's an expert in cancer.

Even though I've got cancer, I feel stronger and healthier than ever thanks to the changes I've made to my eating habits. I don't think this would have been possible without World Cancer Research Fund's wonderful helpline giving me all the tools I needed to be as healthy as possible before my cancer treatment.

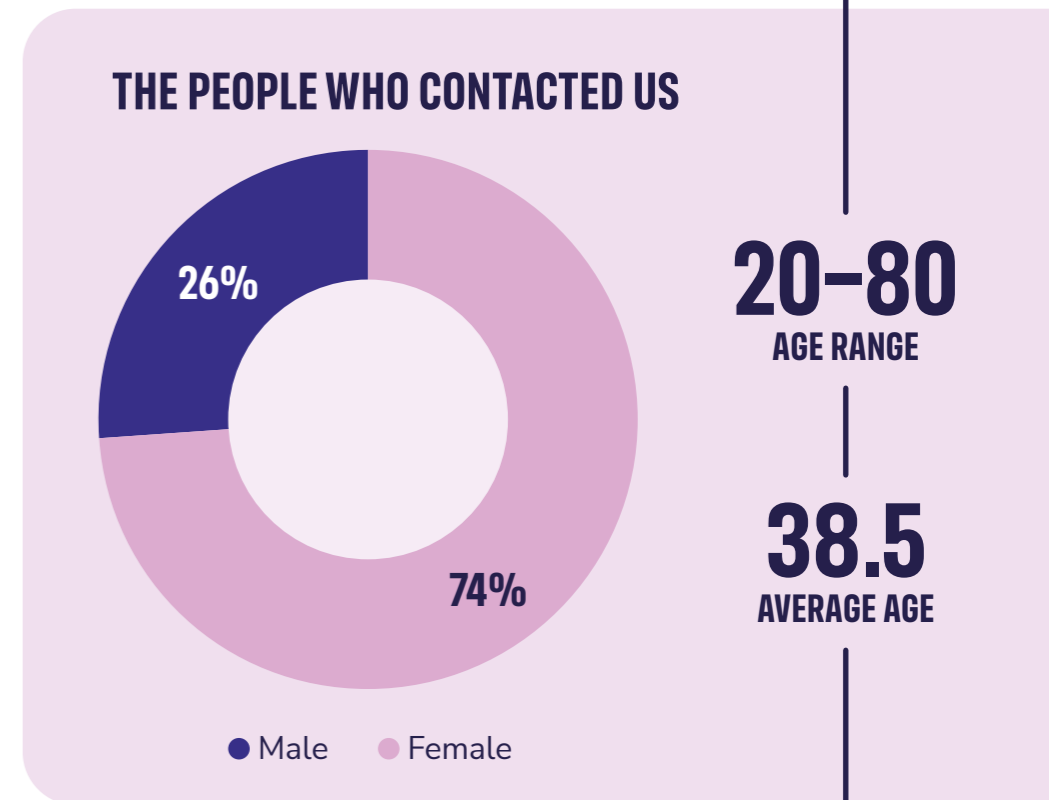
" Thank God for the helpline! I've never spoken to such a kind, caring, patient and understanding healthcare professional before. "



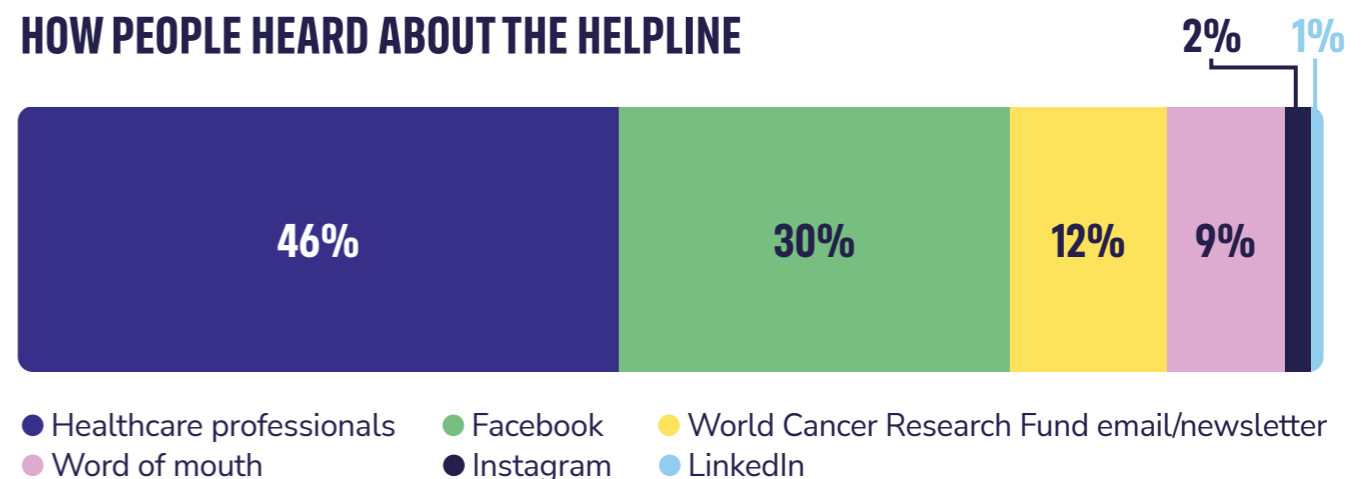
THE NUMBERS FOR 2024



" I'd lost hope of ever getting to speak to a dietitian about my cancer diagnosis – thanks so much World Cancer Research Fund for being there for me so I can finally take control back with my diet. Your dietitians are simply wonderful and have answered all my questions so thoughtfully and patiently! I will be arranging for a regular donation to be set up. "

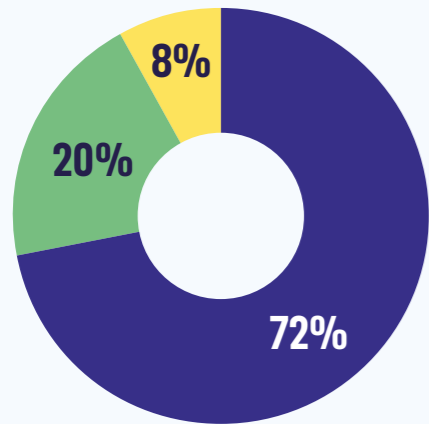


HOW PEOPLE HEARD ABOUT THE HELPLINE



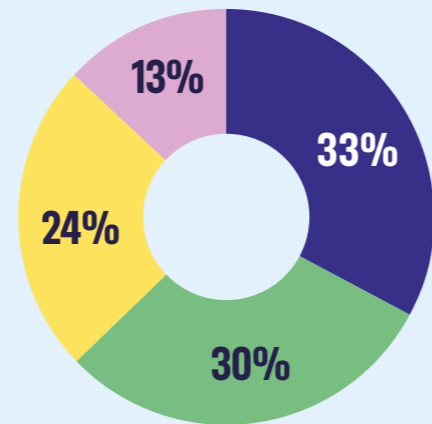
ENQUIRY DETAILS

SEEKING ADVICE FOR



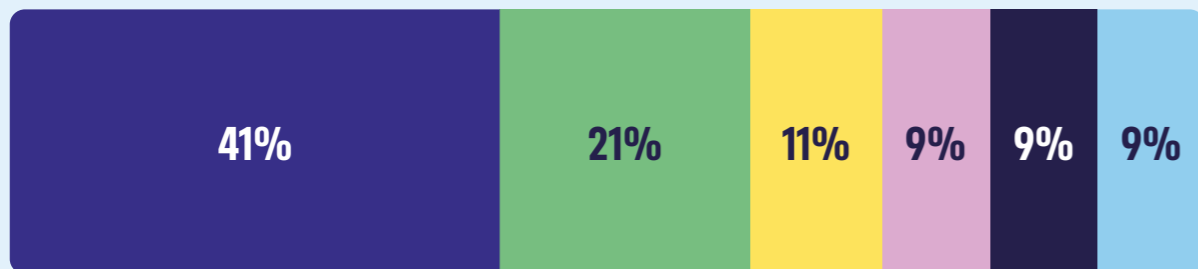
- Themselves
- Family member
- Partner/spouse

STAGE OF CANCER JOURNEY



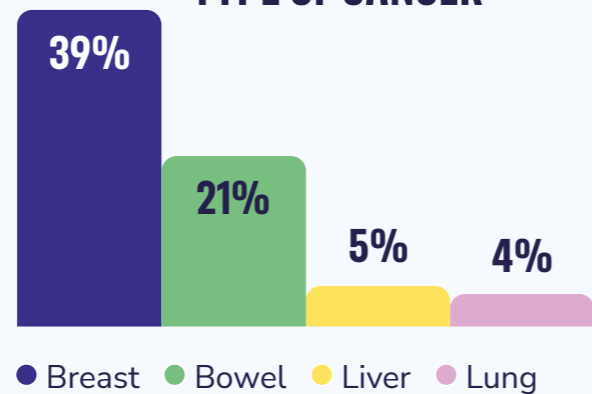
- N/A
- Currently having treatment
- Pre-treatment
- Post-treatment

PRIMARY REASON FOR CONTACT



- Myth-busting and current evidence
- Maintaining a healthy diet
- Weight loss/managing a healthy weight
- Taste changes/appetite loss
- Food/medication interactions
- General prevention information

TYPE OF CANCER



- Breast
- Bowel
- Liver
- Lung



FEEDBACK

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE FOLLOWING?

Overall experience using our helpline



The information received



HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO DO THE FOLLOWING?

Use our information and resources for support with lifestyle changes



Recommend our helpline to family or friends



AFTER USING OUR SERVICE...

How do you feel about managing your diet, or any side effects associated with cancer?



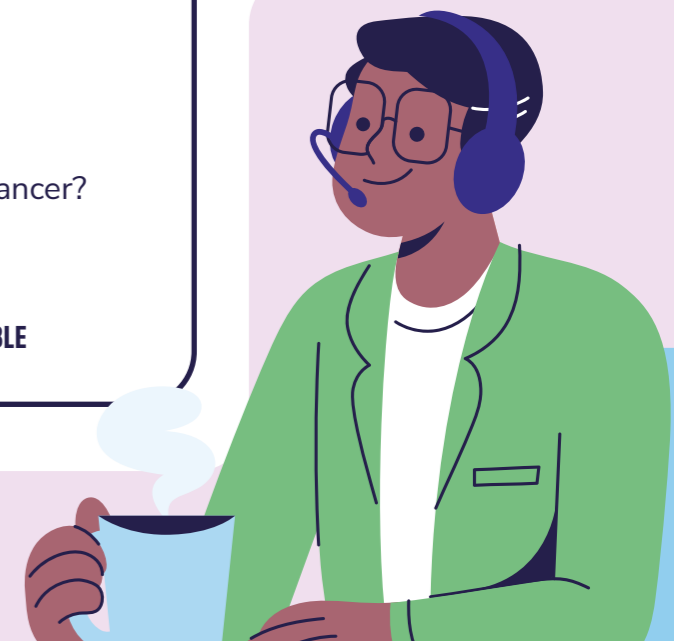
How do you feel about nutrition in relation to cancer?



" I am so glad I spoke to the helpline. I had such a quick reply with every single question answered – so wonderful! I want to take back control from my cancer and I'm very grateful for the help from World Cancer Research Fund. Feeling stronger already! "

" Great surprise to see your service on Google when I was feeling very lost trying to find cancer diet info. Your diet specialist answered all my questions so patiently and I feel so much confident to make some changes to what I'm eating. Thank you thank you!! X. "

" A very detailed and helpful response to my question – thank you so much! This will help me to prepare better food for my mum while she fights her breast cancer. "



97 surveys completed in full

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We have some exciting plans for the future of our helpline!

For example, we're currently planning an extensive advertising campaign, aimed at reaching as many people affected by cancer as possible to promote our service.

We've also been exploring pilot projects with NHS Trusts to provide direct support for people accessing their services. This is particularly important to us as part of our helpline's core mission to increase our direct support of the NHS.

Our aim is to broaden the offering of our service and ensure accessibility for all, as well as seizing opportunities to create even more improved and tailored experiences for anyone using the helpline.

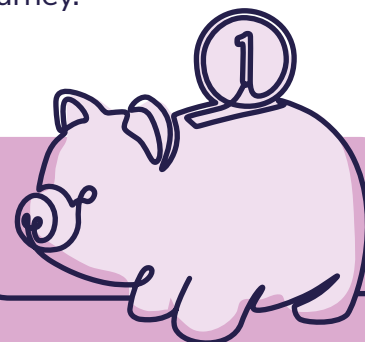
A THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The first year of our helpline has been made possible by financial grants from:



Basil
Samuel
Charitable
Trust

Their generosity has helped us to provide people in the UK diagnosed with cancer with vital information and support throughout their treatment and recovery journey.



A CALL FOR FUNDING

Your generosity has been essential in establishing this life-changing service, but now we are now at a pivotal moment. Without your continued support, we risk losing the ability to provide this vital resource.

Donating just £50 could empower a skilled dietitian to answer the call of someone grappling with the side effects of cancer treatments. Your contribution could provide a lifeline for those navigating conflicting and confusing advice.

We need **£230,000 over the next 3 years** to expand this service and ensure that more people affected by cancer can benefit, and further reduce the burden on the NHS.

We cannot continue this vital, life-changing service without your continued support.

Together, we can keep this essential service going and bring hope where it's needed most.

To donate or support us, please visit: wcrf-uk.org/helpline

CANCER AND NUTRITION HELPLINE

T: 0300 102 2523

E: helpline@wcrf.org

wcrf-uk.org/helpline

Registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales (Registered Charity No. 1000739). May 2024.

