

help is at hand...

CANCERlifeline

Tuesday 7th October 2025

John Walsh
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS
Belfast

Chief Executive's Office	
Date:	09/10/25
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Dear Mr Walsh

Re: Request for Funding to Support Counselling Services for Cancer Lifeline Service Users (£16,920)

I write on behalf of **Cancer Lifeline** to respectfully request your consideration of a possible grant of £16,920 from Belfast City Council to support the provision of critical community-based counselling services for people affected by cancer. Our services primarily target the North Belfast community because of its higher incidences of cancer and poor health outcomes.

About Cancer Lifeline

Cancer Lifeline is a local community led, support organisation based at 42 - 44 Alliance Avenue, Belfast BT14 7PJ www.cancerlifeline.info. All the volunteer management committee are living with cancer themselves.

We provide drop-in support, practical and emotional care, bereavement support, access to welfare benefits advice, wellbeing workshops, complementary therapies, support groups, and counselling services etc. to those living with cancer and their family networks and carers who are impacted. Our vital holistic support service targets isolated, vulnerable people from the North Belfast community who are facing a traumatic cancer diagnosis in their lives. Supporting them at this time of crisis in their lives to develop their skills, relationships, resilience and connections with others to help rebuild their lives and move forward. Our mission is to ensure that some of the most vulnerable in our community do not have to face the physical, mental and emotional burden of cancer alone. Instead, we offer vital support to help them work alongside their health professionals' whilst having access to holistic, compassionate support so they can maintain dignity, mental well-being, and quality of life.

Need & Rationale

Coping with a cancer diagnosis (and its treatment, aftermath, or recurrence) places significant psychological distress not only on patients but also on their families, carers, and support networks. Many individuals struggle with anxiety, depression, fear of relapse, grief, and existential distress. These emotional burdens can, in turn, impair recovery, adherence to medical regimes, social functioning, and overall wellbeing.

Our community led, counselling service is a unique model of support, offering specialised, quick response services in response to community need. Many report the service is a

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“Lifeline” to them. Demand far exceeds our current financial capacity resulting in having to place people on waiting lists, raising serious concerns for those who are very vulnerable or potentially facing end of life.

By funding this service, Belfast City Council would:

- Ensure equitable access to high-quality counselling for all, regardless of financial means.
- Reduce barriers to psychological care, especially among those on lower incomes and the most vulnerable in our community.
- Complement medical care by strengthening mental health, which increasingly is recognised as integral to recovery and quality of life.
- Demonstrate civic leadership in addressing cancer’s psychosocial impact within our city.

The Request: £16,920 to fund the shortfall in counselling service delivery costs up to the end of the financial year. We estimate that £16,9200 would enable us to sustain a dedicated counselling allocation up to the end of March 2026. Additional funding applications are in progress for the time period beyond this.

Cost breakdown

Delivery of 564 sessions of counselling @ £30.0 per session for professional counsellor fees.

Total amount requested

= £16,920

Outcomes & Benefits

With your support, we anticipate the following:

1. **Number of service users helped:** we estimate being able to provide counselling to 70 additional vulnerable clients affected by cancer.
2. **Improved psychological wellbeing:** reductions in anxiety, depression and distress levels.
3. **Enhanced treatment adherence and outcomes:** clients better able to engage with medical care, attend appointments and follow treatment plans.
4. **Reduced burden on statutory mental health services:** by providing early intervention, preventative support, clients may avoid escalation to crisis services, hospitalisation or more acute interventions.
5. **Strengthened community resilience:** families and carers are better supported, improving overall social cohesion and reduced isolation.

This potentially fatal diagnosis has profound consequences. It represents a crisis point in people’s lives evidenced by extreme feelings of fear, isolation, anxiety, distress and helplessness. We target those who are isolated and vulnerable, many of whom lack the confidence or capacity to reach out and ask for help, despite their complex needs. These target beneficiaries experience significant need.

We will provide Belfast City Council with all requested monitoring reports, including anonymised client numbers, reported health improvement outcomes, case studies, and financial accountability.

Alignment with Belfast City Council Priorities

This request aligns strongly with the council's priorities around **public health, community wellbeing, social inclusion, and support for vulnerable populations**. By funding emotional health alongside physical health services, we can help ensure more holistic care for people affected by cancer in Belfast.

Sustainability and Co-funding

We are actively pursuing a diversified funding model and view this grant as cornerstone funding that will enable us to leverage further funds from trusts, charitable foundations, private donors, and fundraising campaigns. In time, we hope to secure recurring resources, so the counselling service becomes a stable, long-term offering.

Request and Next Steps

We respectfully request Belfast City Council's consideration of a **£16,920** grant to sustain counselling services for the remainder of the financial year. We would be very happy to meet with you (or your representatives) to present a fuller proposal, budget, and implementation plan at your convenience.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the welfare of our local community. We hope you will partner with us to ensure that no one facing cancer is left to face the psychological burden alone.

Yours sincerely,



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