Understanding the needs of younger adults with cancer

May 12th 2026

Ceinwen Giles, Co-CEO

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What is Shine about?



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Who we are



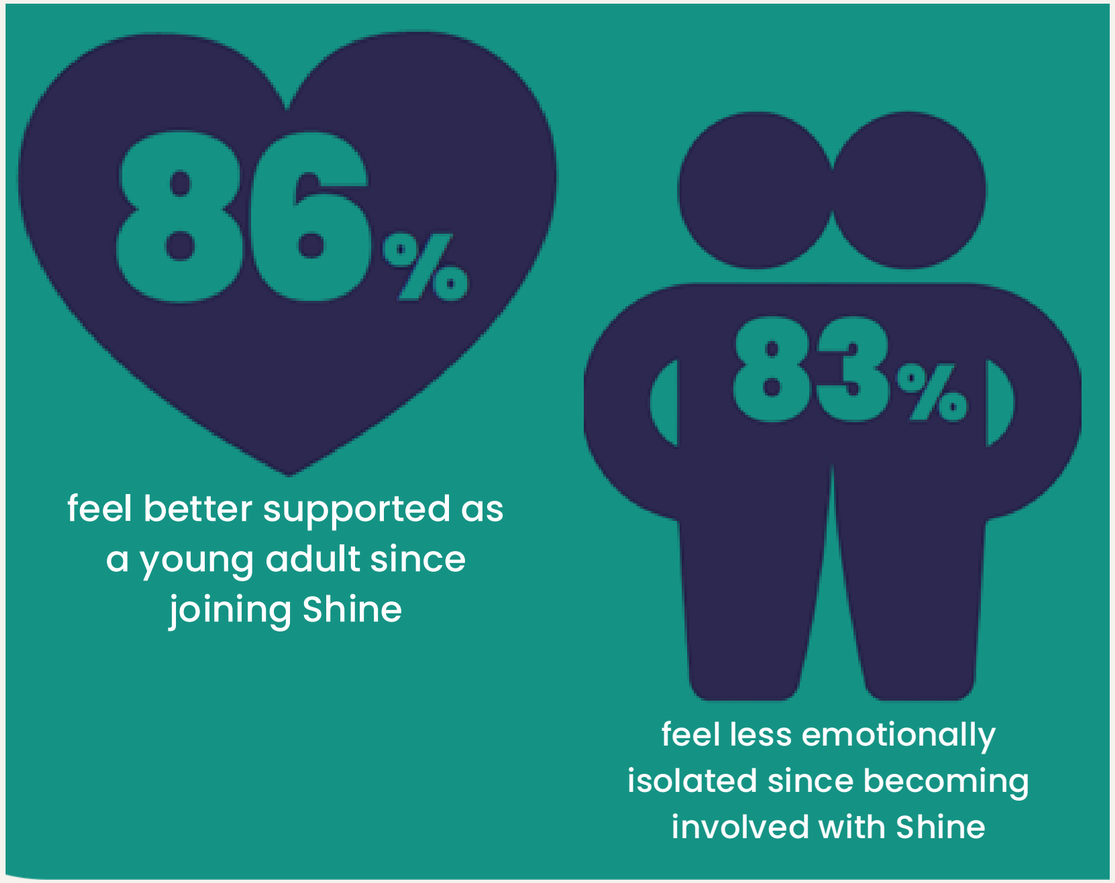
Our vision We want every adult in their 20s, 30s and 40s who is diagnosed with cancer to know they're not alone, and to have the support, knowledge, and confidence to navigate whatever cancer throws their way.

Our mission There's never a good time for a cancer diagnosis, but in your 20s, 30s or 40s there are particular challenges to navigate, like work, dating, finances and more. At Shine Cancer Support, we've been there and we get it. We're here to help you deal with everything that your diagnosis brings, before, during and after treatment, and to welcome you into our community.

Why we're different We're a patient-led organisation and we co-design all of our programmes and events.

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Why we're different



Patient-led

- Half of our employees have had a cancer diagnosis as a younger adult.
- All but one of our Trustees is a cancer survivor.
- 95% of our volunteers are young adults with cancer

Co-designed programmes

- All of our programmes and activities are co-designed with young adults with cancer and relevant experts.

The scale of the problem



38k

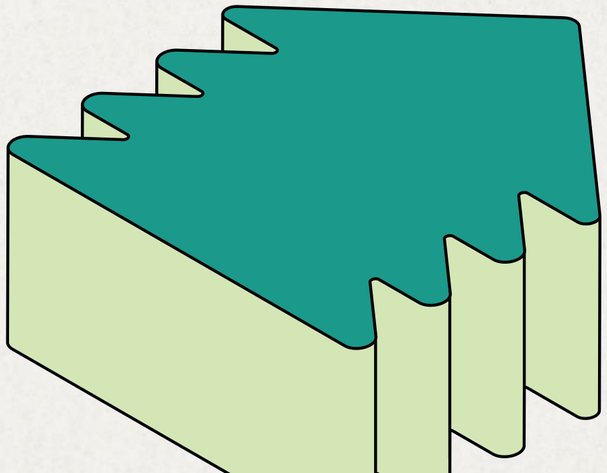
diagnosed each year

210k

living with cancer

A growing problem...

UK incidence of cancer in the under 50s rose by 22% between 1990 and 2019.



Is early-onset cancer an emerging global epidemic? Current evidence and future implications

Tomotaka Ugai[1,2,18], Naoko Sasamoto[3,4,18], Hwa-Young Lee[5,6,18], Mariko Ando[7,18], Mingyang Song[2,8,9,10], Rulla M. Tam

Analysis

Cancer is on the rise in under-50s – a key task is to work out why

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

Nine in 10 of all cancers affect people over 50 but research shows a worrying rise in early onset cases



BMJ Oncology

Global trends in incidence, death, burden and risk factors of early-onset cancer from 1990 to 2019

Jianhui Zhao,[1] Liying Xu,[1] Jing Sun,[1] Mingyang Song,[2,3] Lijuan Wang,[4] Shuai Y
Yingshuang Zhu,[6] Zhengwei Wan,[7] Susanna Larsson,[5,8] Konstantinos Tsilidis,[9,

What makes younger adults different?

Identity development

Financial instability & employment

Social comparison

Long horizon for living with uncertainty & late effects

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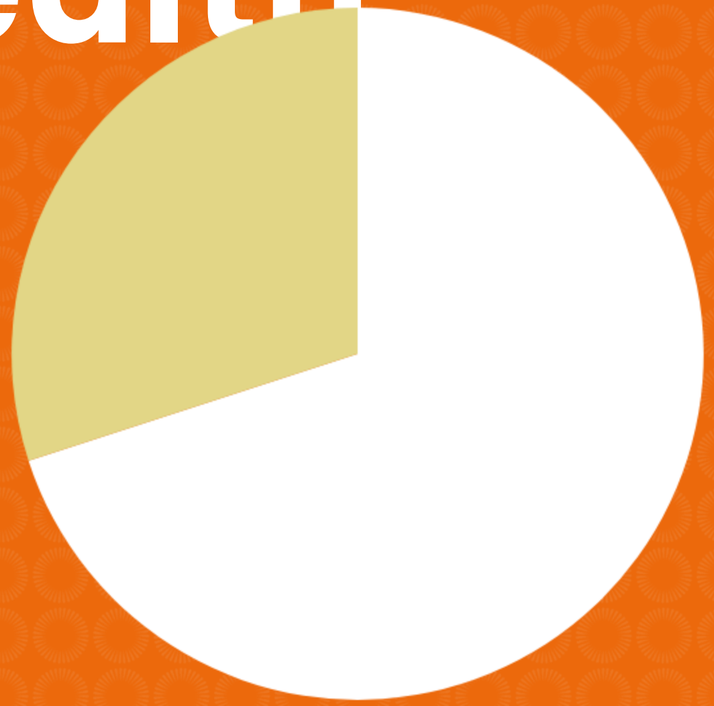
Shine's survey

571 survey respondents

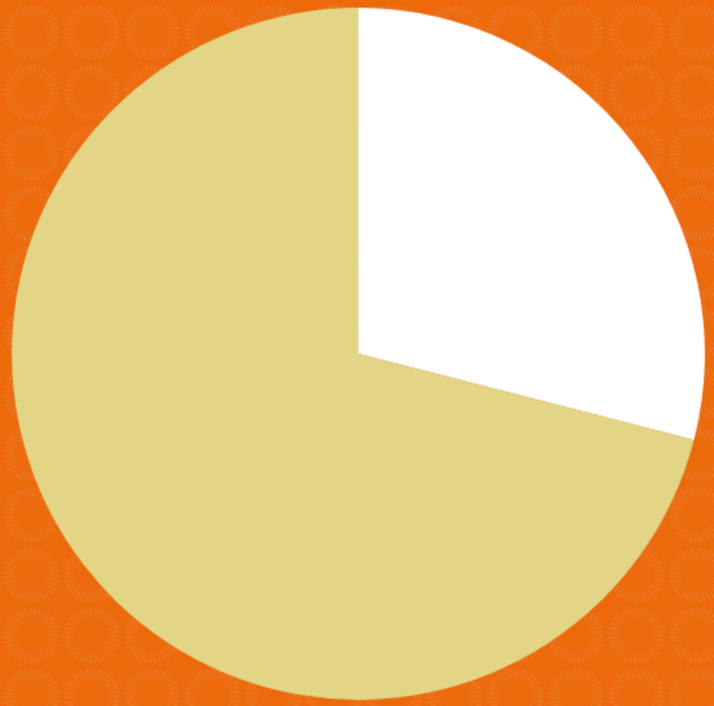
15 qualitative interviews



Mental health



70% of young adults we surveyed said their mental health got worse.



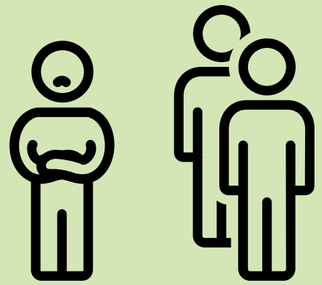
Compared with 29% in other age categories

Mental health

“Having cancer so young is very, very lonely….”

Shine survey respondent

59% report feeling lonely or isolated





had not been offered psychological support

37%

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Shine Cancer Experience Survey, 2024

Relationships and social life

73%
became less socially active after diagnosis

85% said their sex lives were negatively impacted

But only 19% were offered support

Fertilit

y

1 in 5

never told
treatment could
affect their fertility

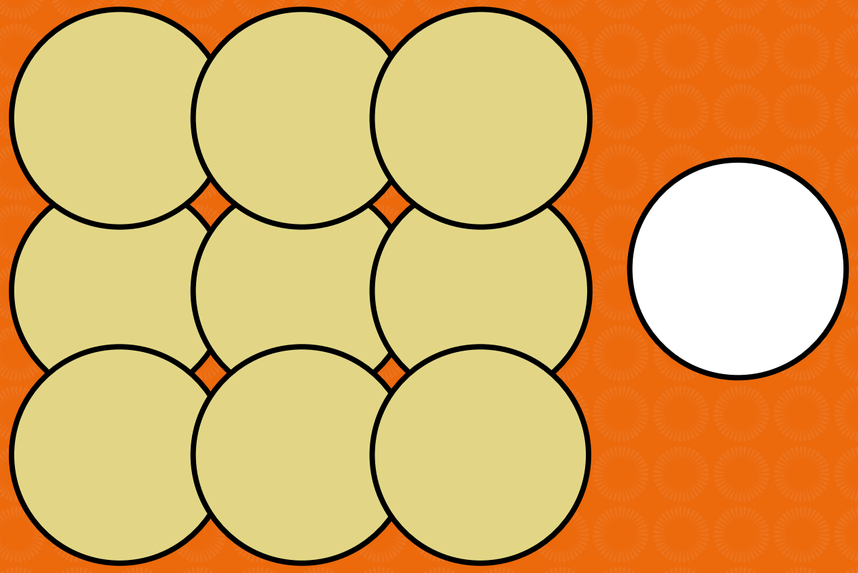
Over a third told only after they had begun treatment



Family life and parenting



1 in 3 said their family life had been negatively affected.



1 in 10 had experienced a real crisis.

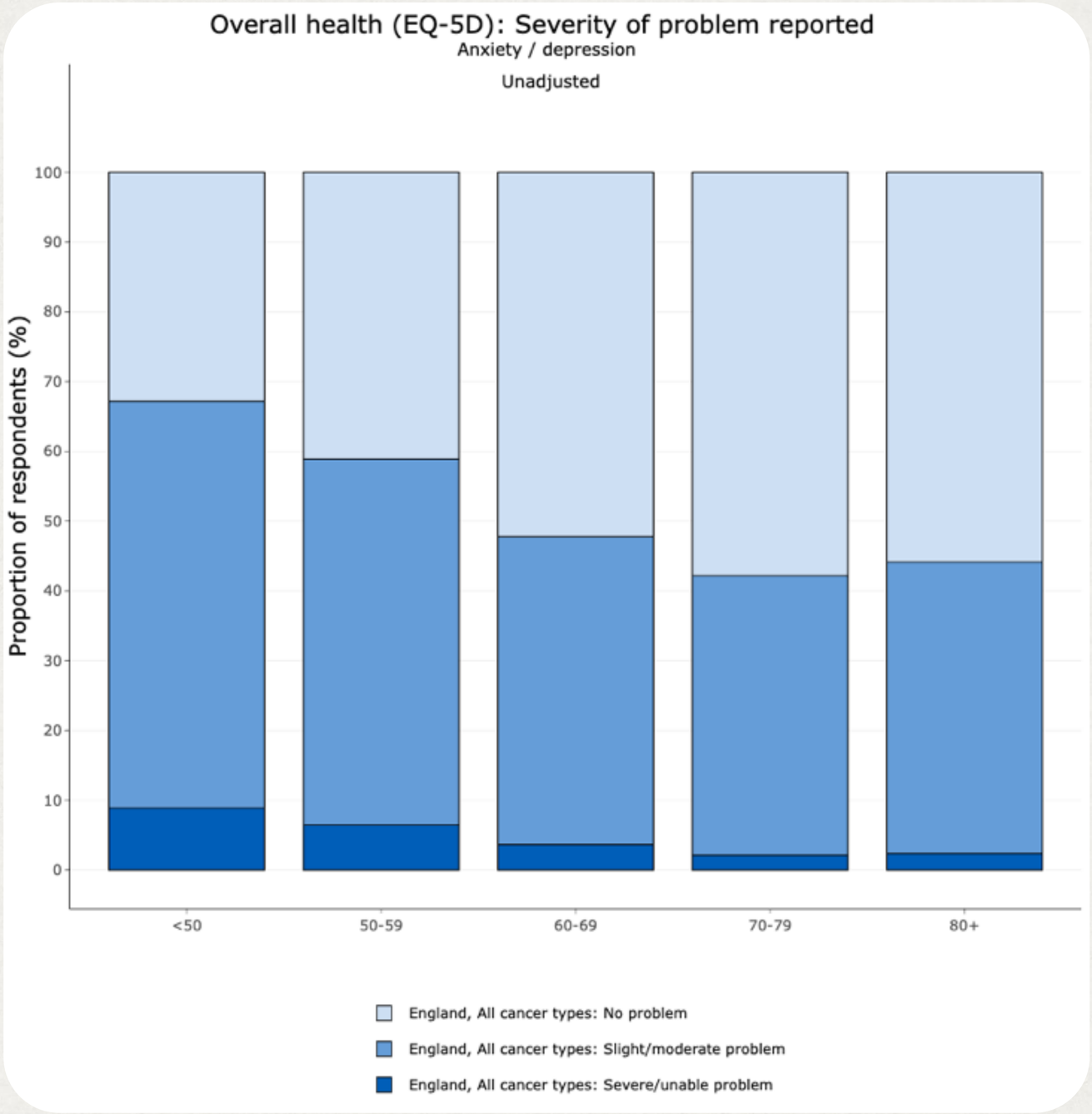
Work and finances

69%
financially impacted by cancer diagnosis

54%
felt their diagnosis would harm their chances of getting a new job

Quality of life survey

Quality of Life survey shows higher rates of anxiety and depression for those under 50.



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CPES results



CPES 2024 results show adults aged 25-44 are less likely than older patients to report that they were:

- as involved in decisions about their treatment as much as they would like to have been.
- told about their cancer in a sensitive way.
- feeling a sense of confidence and trust in the teams looking after them.
- able to discuss their worries and fears with staff when treated as an outpatient.
- offered the right level of support for their overall health and well-being.
- able to get enough emotional support at home from the community or voluntary services.

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What Shine offers



How Shine supports young adults



Online programmes



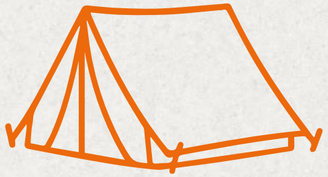
In-person Shake Ups



Shine local networks



Shine podcast



SHINE Connect 2026

National events



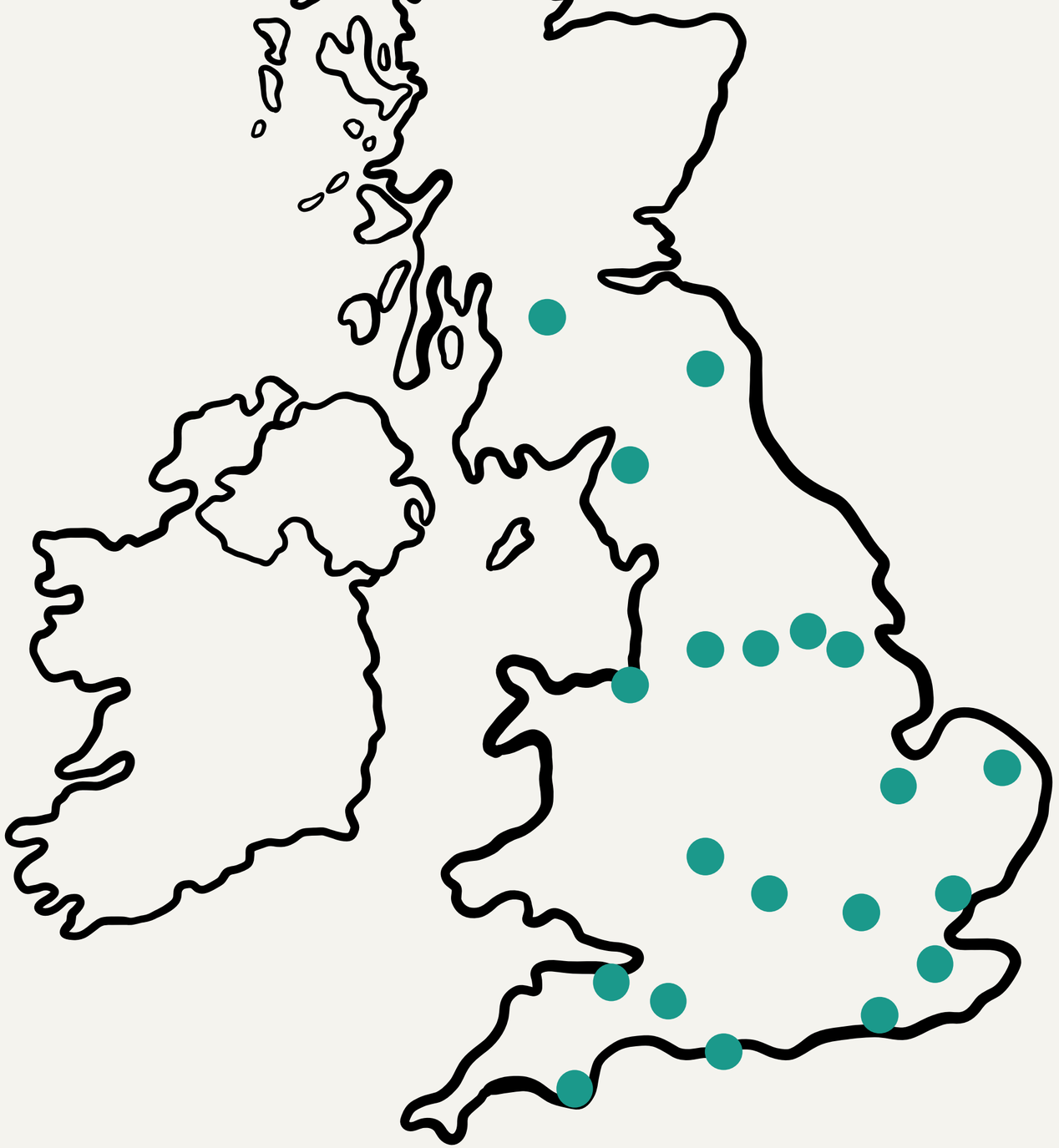
FB groups and socials



Personal experiences

23 networks run by 32 Volunteer Network Leaders

- Bristol
- Norwich
- Devon
- Wiltshire
- West Mids
- Dorset
- Hampshire
- London
- Manchester
- Liverpool
- Cambridge
- North Yorkshire
- South Yorkshire
- Glasgow
- North East
- Kent
- Essex
- Oxford
- North Cumbria
- Hull



Shine online Programmes

- Six weekly sessions of two hours
- Online
- Groups of 6-12 participants
- FREE - with refundable deposit of £50
- Two facilitators for each group
- Start programmes in Oct, Jan, April and June

SHINE BREAK OUT PROGRAMME

IN TREATMENT OR REMISSION

FOUR TIMES A YEAR

SHINE CIRCLES PROGRAMME

LIVING WITH INCURABLE CANCER

FOUR TIMES A YEAR

SHINE RESET PROGRAMME

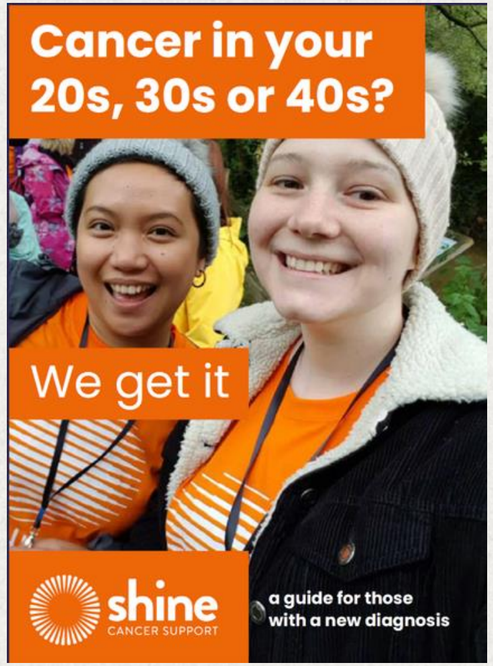
AGED 20-28

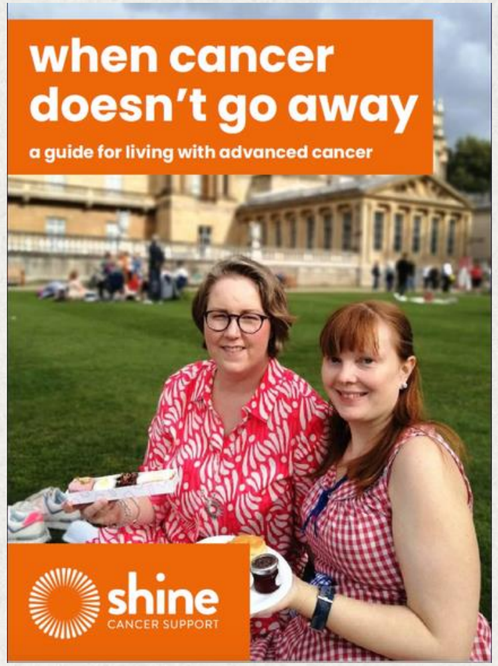
TWICE A YEAR

SHINE PLUS ONES PROGRAMME

PARTNERS OF YA WITH INCURABLE CANCER

TWICE A YEAR



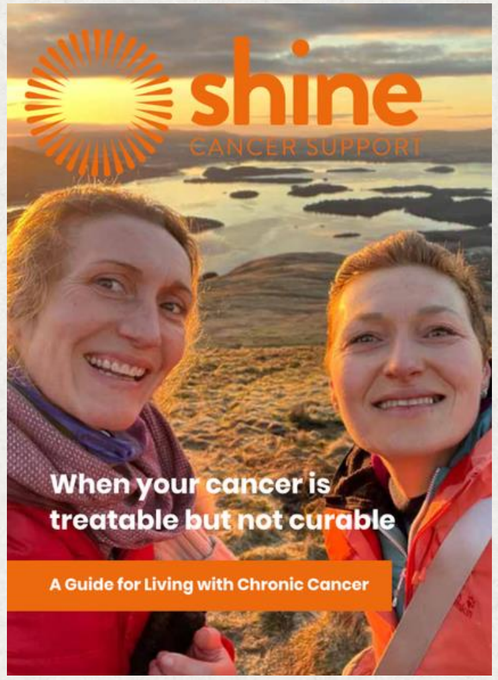




Co-produced booklets

Available as hard copy or pdfs online

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Advoacy and training



We run a three session CPD accredited webinar series

Our CEO, Ceinwen, was the Chair of the Patient & Public Voices Forum for the NHS England Cancer Programme between 2019 and 2024

We deliver bespoke talks and workshops to cancer teams working in the NHS

We speak at healthcare conferences about the needs of younger cancer patients

We run a year long Shine Champions programme - next starting in 2027

Questions?



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Website: www.shinecancersupport.org

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