

Spring 2024

# COBALT NEWS

Celebrating our



supporting the NHS with innovation  
in medical diagnosis and treatment

**SIX DECADES OF INNOVATION  
AND PATIENT CARE**

Registered Charity Number: 1090790





## ABOUT US

Cobalt Health (Cobalt) is a medical charity that works in partnership with the NHS to improve the lives of people affected by disease, including cancer and dementia. We do this by providing the best possible patient care using state-of-the-art imaging technology including MRI, CT and PET/CT scanners. The charity also funds and participates in research mainly within the fields of cancer and dementia.

## OUR VISION

To pioneer innovation in medical imaging diagnosis by investing in equipment, integrated research and education, to improve outcomes for patients now and in the future.

## WELCOME

Welcome to the Spring 2024 issue of Cobalt News.

We are writing this as we enter our seventh decade of challenging the status quo of patient care by investing in the most up-to-date technology helping improve the ability to identify and diagnose disease and injury with increased accuracy, efficiency and at an earlier, more treatable stage. Today Cobalt's great teamwork with our NHS colleagues enables us to provide services using this innovative equipment, which would not otherwise be available, to over 130,000 patients each year.

In this issue, we talk about how the charity was founded and we introduce our newly-promoted Director of Clinical Operations who talks about her



experience of working for Cobalt for over 30 years. We look at the impact the charity continues to make every day through our services, our research and much more.

Please do contact us if you would like further information or would like to support the work of the charity.

*Malcolm*

**Malcolm MacKeith**  
Chief Executive Officer

☎ Fundraising Team: 01242 535922  
✉ fundraising@cobalthhealth.co.uk  
[www.cobalthhealth.co.uk/support-us](http://www.cobalthhealth.co.uk/support-us)

## COBALT IS CELEBRATING ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR!

In 1964 Dr Fred Hanna, Howard Crooks and a committee of medics established the Cobalt Unit Appeal Fund, to raise money to build a centre for cancer treatment in Cheltenham. The unit would benefit local patients who were having to travel long distances when they felt most unwell.

Two years later the Cobalt Unit was established (now known as the Oncology Centre) at Cheltenham General Hospital.



*The cobalt machine looked similar to this picture and contained a live source of radioactive Cobalt 60.  
Photo credit: Ingenium; 1966.0043*

From humble beginnings in a small room within the Cobalt Unit, they continued to raise funds for other innovative equipment and buildings to assist the local NHS to support patients more efficiently and effectively. Fundraising projects included an appeal for a whole body X-ray scanner and a public cancer and smoking cessation awareness campaign. In 1989 the charity established the Gloucestershire breast screening service at Linton House, a property purchased from Cheltenham College.

Linton House then became the charity headquarters and investment was made into several mobile MRI scanning and mammography screening units. The charity's reach extended into the three counties, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. In 2005 building work began

on a new Imaging Centre adjacent to Linton House and was completed the following year. Cobalt acquired another building in 2018 which accommodates the local NHS breast screening service. Today, the Cobalt Imaging Centre houses two high-spec MRI scanners and a PET/CT scanner.

The mobile fleet now comprises seven mobile MRI scanners, a mobile PET/CT scanner and nine mobile CT scanners, which travel around the whole of the UK.

### Volunteers at our heart, from the start!

In the early days the charity was run purely by volunteers. Two of the founders, Dr Hanna and Howard Crooks attended fundraising events in their spare time, and Ivy Doughty took care of all the admin work for the fledgling charity. Today, Cobalt employs 146 staff, 100 of whom work at Linton House, with the rest staffing the mobile scanners. We are proud to have kept true to our origins, with volunteers being just as integral to Cobalt as they were in the beginning. We have over 150 amazing volunteers whose dedication and loyalty continue to impress us every day.

Cobalt cards is our largest volunteer-led project and started as one of the first green recycling schemes in the 1980s,



Cobalt continues to invest fundraised money and any surplus created by delivering its services in projects which make a tangible difference to patients, through advancements in imaging technology, research trials and supporting education for medical professionals.

very many years before kerbside recycling was available. Many of our volunteer card-makers have been recycling cards for decades, and last year the project raised over £32,000.

Volunteers help in our busy fundraising office every day. They deliver cards and collect money from around the county. They bake, knit, proofread and help run our open gardens and other events - a huge amount of donated hours without which Cobalt would not be where it is today.



*Volunteers supporting Cobalt at Gloucestershire Vintage and Country Extravaganza*





# AN INTERVIEW WITH KAREN HACKLING-SEARLE

## Director of Clinical Operations

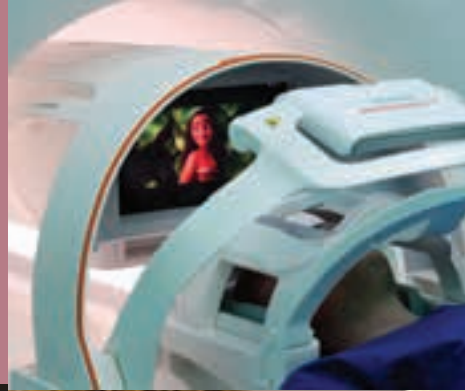
Karen has been working for Cobalt for 30 years and has recently been promoted as Director of Clinical Operations. She is now responsible for all aspects of the charity's clinical services, including the imaging centres in Cheltenham, Birmingham and Gloucester and the mobile/relocatable MRI, CT and PET/CT units that support NHS services around the UK.

We asked Karen about her career at Cobalt. She said "What I originally wanted to do was forensic science, however in the careers office I found information about radiography and became interested in the idea of being able to look inside people's bodies, study their anatomy and identify disease."

She went on to tell us about the changes she had experienced in the industry in the past 30 years.

"There have been continuous technological advances in equipment and software, such as increasing magnet strengths in MRI, enabling fine-detailed imaging of certain body parts and the ability to scan patients more quickly. Patient comfort is a huge development area, with the introduction of features like ambient lighting and 'in-bore' entertainment for patients during their scan, reducing anxiety and helping patients with claustrophobia to go through with their appointment."

*Karen on her first day working for Cobalt*



Karen told us that one of her career highlights to date was project managing the build of our Imaging Centre in Birmingham. This imaging centre supports research for the Institute of Translational Medicine, which is a central hub for clinical trials and research data, aiming to turn the information into innovative patient treatments. Karen was involved in the design of both the scanner and the modular building which houses it. She is very excited about the research made possible by this collaboration with some of the UK's leading clinicians.

So what does the future hold for medical imaging? Karen said:

"We are currently the largest provider of low-dose CT for targeted lung health checks in several locations where the prevalence of lung cancer is highest and this has proven to be very successful, identifying cancer in smokers and ex-smokers at a more treatable stage, both saving lives and saving the NHS money in the long term. Within the next five years I believe we will be involved in cardiac MRI and CT scanning services and wider screening programmes, such as prostate cancer."

*Top: Cobalt patients can enjoy an 'in-bore' experience during their MRI scan.*

*Middle: Cobalt's Imaging Centre at the Institute of Translational Medicine, Birmingham.*

*Bottom: Karen Hackling-Searle*

## THE ROLE OF AI IN MEDICAL IMAGING

Cobalt is embracing the efficiencies that Artificial Intelligence is introducing. We are already using AI software to reduce how long it takes to scan each patient, without compromising - even in some cases improving - image quality. The time saved allows us to see more patients, reducing waiting times. Our radiologists, the doctors who write the reports about the patient scans, are also using AI to do a 'first read' or initial analysis of the images, pinpointing areas of interest for them to investigate in their full reports.

We are consistently researching and are excited about working with future AI innovations where they demonstrate tangible benefits for patients.



## OUR NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMERCIAL FOUNDATION

We are delighted to announce a new partnership with Commercial Foundation, a fantastic organisation which helps local young adults who have previously experienced barriers to work or education, to get their lives back on track. They run a 12-week employability programme, helping their volunteers develop skills, build confidence and self-esteem, with real-life, on-the-job work experience.

The Foundation's volunteers run a digital print studio, which we now employ to print the inserts we use to make Cobalt cards. This partnership means that Cobalt

cards not only provide the charity with important funds, great public awareness, and create a weekly social activity for over one hundred volunteers, they now also help improve the lives of local young people!

**At a suggested donation of £1 each, Cobalt cards are a wise and environmentally-friendly choice for all your family and friends. To find out your nearest stockist call the fundraising team on 01242 535922.**





# COBALT OPEN GARDENS:

We are extremely lucky to have two beautiful Cotswold gardens opening their gates for a day to raise funds for us. We will be running a pop-up café at both events, with delicious homemade cakes and light lunches, made and served by our friendly volunteers. Please make a note of this year's dates in your diary and come along to join the fun, knowing that you are raising important funds from your day out.

## **The Old Rectory Quenington Sunday 14th April Rare Plant Fair and Open Garden 11am – 4pm**

This stunning garden sits alongside the mill race and the River Coln, a tranquil setting for an organic garden full of spring flowers, mature trees and sculptures of many kinds. Lucy and David Abel Smith have nurtured art and nature in their garden, and with the help

of Robert Wyatt – gardener here for over 30 years – have made an oasis of calm and beauty. Come and stroll the lawns whilst choosing new plants for your garden, and sample homemade cakes in the poolside Cobalt café.



## **Highnam Court Gloucester Sunday 23rd June Garden open for Cobalt 11am – 4.30pm**

Highnam Court's owner, Roger Head, has restored the gardens to their former glory over the last three decades, with many new additions which complement and enhance the original design laid out by the 19th century owner, Thomas Gambier Parry. This year our open day

should coincide with the heady aroma of the rose garden in full bloom. There are many acres of lakes and hidden gardens to explore, including the wildflower meadow and a recreation of Monet's garden. Afterwards visit Cobalt's pop-up café in the Orangery for refreshments.





# CAPTURE A MOMENT FOR COBALT THIS SPRING

Cobalt's 4th annual photography competition runs from Monday 1st April until Wednesday 31st July 2024. Entry is just £2 per image. We have £1,300 worth of fabulous prizes donated by our kind sponsors for the winners, and each winning entry will feature in Cobalt's 2025 calendar, which will go on sale later in the year. Linton House will host the exhibition of winning images in the autumn.

Visit the 'Support us' pages on the Cobalt website for more information or scan the QR code below.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



MON  
1ST APR

Capture a Moment Photography Competition opens



SAT  
13TH APR

10.30am - 12.30pm  
Jenny's Clothes Swap at Emmanuel Church Hall Leckhampton



SUN  
14TH APR

11am - 4pm  
Rare Plant Fair and Open Garden at The Old Rectory Quenington



SAT  
27TH APR

11.30am Charity Fashion Show at Naunton Park Primary School



SAT  
27TH APR

1pm - 4pm Afternoon Tea hosted by The Stroud Stragglers at Rodborough Community Hall



SUN  
23RD JUN

11am - 4.30pm  
Highnam Court Open Garden at Highnam



SUN  
14TH APR

10am Arthur's Spring Stroll starting outside Nailsworth Fire Station







It is back. Can you help us by holding a coffee morning with your friends this spring? If 20 coffee mornings each raise £250, together we will raise £5,000. How do you raise money from a coffee morning? Invite 20 people, ask them to pay £2 to come along and pay £5 for a drink and cake, hold a small raffle charging £1 per ticket (prizes can be home baking, home-grown plants, or a box of chocolates) and have a cake or produce stall selling goodies to take home.

Since we started Coffees that Count we have raised over £5,000. The events ranged from a supporter inviting friends to her garden for tea and asking for small donations, to groups booking a village hall and selling crafts and cakes as well.

**If you'd like a chat about this or another idea, please call Kirsty on 01242 535922**

**Cheryl Barnes** and her family held an Orchard Wassail at their farm near Newent recently, and raised £100 from friends and neighbours who came to help bless the orchard trees to ensure a good harvest later in the year. This is a lovely west of England tradition; thank you to Cheryl and all their friends and neighbours who helped to raise funds for Cobalt.



**Jenny Bailey and Judith Anderson** raise money each year for Cobalt with an October Coffee Morning at Emmanuel Church Hall in Leckhampton. This is a wonderful community event that raised over £1,700 last year! Thank you to Jenny and Judith for their very loyal support and thank you to all the friends and neighbours who regularly help and support this well-established event. Jenny also organises a Clothes Swap each year, which will be held on 13th April at Emmanuel Church Hall, Leckhampton.



**Stuart Robins**

We are delighted to announce that Stuart Robins is running the London Marathon for Cobalt on 21st April. Stuart is taking on this massive challenge to raise funds in memory of his cousin Tracey, who died three years ago at just 52 years old. Stuart is an experienced marathon runner who has made a fantastic start to both his training and his fundraising.

**If you would like to help Stuart reach his £2,500 target, his JustGiving page is <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/stuartrobins>**



# THANK YOU TO...

**The Crypt School Gloucester**

The Crypt School donated an incredible £9,903 to Cobalt during the Big Give which became a whopping £15,961 after match funding. The money was raised by the Miles for Miles Challenge when the whole school - staff and students - ran either 1,5,10,15 or 20km having pledged to raise £10 each. Their fundraising was amazing, and they raised over double what was expected. Thank you to everyone involved with this fantastic challenge at The Crypt School!



**Chipping Campden School**

Chipping Campden School held a Pink Day for Cobalt in the autumn, where students dressed in pink and paid to wear non uniform for the day. This fun day raised a fantastic £1,351 which was match funded during the Big Give to make a massive £2,702. Thank you to the teachers who made this day possible and thank you to the students for entering into the spirit of the day.





# April is our Make A Will Month

Having an up-to-date will in place is important for both you and the people you love. It can offer you peace of mind that your wishes have been made clear, whilst also helping to make things easier for your loved ones, at the time they need it the most.

During April, our partner solicitors are donating their expertise and time to support Cobalt. Through the scheme they will write or update a straightforward will, in return for a voluntary donation to Cobalt. The suggested minimum donation to Cobalt is £150 for a single will and £200 for joint mirror wills.

The Make a Will Month scheme was launched by Cobalt over thirteen years ago. To date, more than 950 wills have been drafted by our partner solicitors, raising over £120,000 of charitable funding. Whilst there is no obligation to include a gift to Cobalt in a will made through this scheme, gifts in wills provide a vital source of income to Cobalt. After taking care of family and friends, even a

small amount can make a big difference. By remembering Cobalt in your will, you will be helping to ensure that we are able to continue to provide life-changing services and equipment for future generations.

Cobalt supporter Lynne shares why she chose to include a gift to Cobalt in her will:

"I am keen to support Cobalt as it is a unique, innovative medical charity involved in the diagnosis of cancer and dementia, to which I have sadly lost relatives. The work of Cobalt is constantly evolving through research, outreach projects, training and the acquisition of 'state of the art' equipment. Cobalt is here for people locally, but reaches those further afield through its work. Overall, in my opinion it is a very worthwhile cause, and we are extremely fortunate to have it, but for its continuation and development it needs our support."



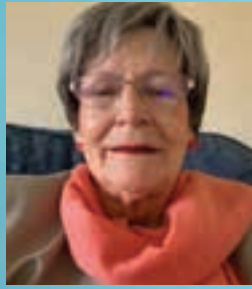
If you have not yet made a will or need to update your current will, please do consider Cobalt's annual Make a Will Month scheme. For a list of the participating solicitors and further information, please visit our website or call the team on 01242 535922 or email [helen.tomes@cobalthhealth.co.uk](mailto:helen.tomes@cobalthhealth.co.uk) for a pack. Please note that places are limited, therefore early enquiries are recommended.

We are so grateful to Willans, Davis Gregory, Langley Wellington, Dee & Griffin and Sewell Mullings Logie who are donating their time and expertise to support Cobalt through this scheme.



# PATIENT STORIES

## Rosemary Westgate



Rosemary started her journey with Cobalt at Linton House, Cheltenham in the Summer of 2012 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She recalls that attending her first appointment was a bit of a traumatic experience but that she was welcomed with friendliness, compassion and professionalism.

She said "To date I have had eighteen PET/CT scans, annual checks after my original treatment, then after six years on one scan it showed I had developed secondaries. Again, treatment followed by scans to monitor progress. Unfortunately, in 2019 the scan indicated I needed further treatment.

Then along came Covid with lockdown, temperature checks on entry, masks and social distancing. A difficult time for everyone. I was having scans every

three to four months by then, which has continued up to the present day, interrupted in September 2023 when I commenced treatment again. Having originally been scared of something new, it has become completely routine. The need for blankets during the scans as the room is so cold for the benefit of the machine, the mobile van outside, the welcome hot drink afterwards but most of all the friendship [with] staff [which] has developed over the years."

**We would like to thank Rosemary for sharing her experiences with us. If you are a Cobalt patient and you would like to share your story, please contact us at enquiries@cobalthhealth.co.uk**

Please cut here

## Together we can make a difference

Every year, thousands of local people need life-changing scans to give their medical teams information which is crucial in determining the best treatment for them. We want you to know that we are determined to do all we can for our patients, now and in the future.

### Please make a gift today

Full name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

Email address: .....

Telephone number: .....

### Your gift

I would like to support:

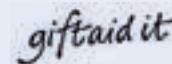
- Equipment appeal
- Breast Cancer Nurses
- Teenagers and Young Adults with Cancer Nurse Specialist
- Prostate scans
- Where the need is greatest

My chosen amount: £.....  
(please make cheques payable to Cobalt)

- Please send me an acknowledgment letter
- Please email me with an acknowledgment (please provide email address above)
- I would like to set up regular direct debit donations, please send me details
- Please contact me about setting up a tribute fund
- Please send me details of how to leave a gift in my will

Are you donating in memory of a loved one? Please tell us more and in whose memory you are donating:

.....  
.....  
.....



**Boost your donation by 25p per £1 donated**

Yes, I would like Cobalt to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year and all donations I make from this date until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax to cover the amount that all charities will reclaim on my donations in the tax year, and it would be my responsibility to pay any difference.

No, I am not a UK tax payer



# Thank you!

**Please return this form to: Cobalt, Linton House, Thirlestaine Road,  
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 7AS.**

You can also make a single donation online at [www.cobalthhealth.co.uk](http://www.cobalthhealth.co.uk).  
or by calling us on 01242 535922.

If you are eligible for Gift Aid, we can maximise your donation by 25%.

Regular Giving - regular donations are extremely important to us and make a really big difference to our patients every day. By choosing to give a regular monthly donation, you will be helping us to plan ahead and make long-term improvements for our patients and their families.

Please visit the Cobalt website and complete the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Bank online donation form. If you would like us to send you the form please call 01242 535922.

✕ @cobaltfr

f @cobaltsupporters

📷 @cobaltsupporters

For further information about how we protect your information please view our privacy policy at [www.cobalthhealth.co.uk](http://www.cobalthhealth.co.uk) You can change you contact preferences, request a copy of our privacy policy, or ask a question by contacting the fundraising team on 01242 535922 or [fundraising@cobalthhealth.co.uk](mailto:fundraising@cobalthhealth.co.uk)

[www.cobalthhealth.co.uk](http://www.cobalthhealth.co.uk)

Registered Charity No: 1090790

