

## THE ELLEN MACARTHUR CANCER TRUST – Q&A FOR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

*“One of the most positive things I’ve learned during lockdown is I’ve got a huge, huge community around me all going through the same storm. We’re not necessarily in the same boat, but we look out for each other.” - Wen, who was shielded and confined indoors in complete isolation for 11 weeks due to immune deficiency issues from her 2010 treatment.*

### What challenges are the young people the Trust supports facing through and in the aftermath of COVID-19?

Young people in recovery from cancer are going to need the Trust more than ever through and in the aftermath of the pandemic. We have to be here for them. That is why we exist. These young people can be categorized into two groups.

- 1) Young people who are post-treatment and have been isolated, especially through shielding - the Trust is the light at the end of their tunnel, where they can enjoy the freedom of being outside, be with friends and share their experiences of something only they can truly appreciate and understand.
- 2) Young people currently on treatment - they are experiencing all the horrendous aspects of cancer treatment at the worst time possible. Some are physically and socially isolated, can't have physical and only very limited contact with their families and their increased vulnerability means the fear of catching COVID-19 looms constantly.

The young people's cancer network is in agreement; unprecedented levels of mental health and wellbeing issues are anticipated. Isolation, loneliness anxiety, anger and fear are all challenges young people and their families experience during and after cancer treatment. COVID-19 is intensifying every one of these to unimaginable levels.

### How did the Trust support young people during lockdown?

We provided daily online support and engagement for young people and wider Trust community so they were able to stay connected and benefit from the support of the whole Trust family. These daily activities included:

- ‘Trust Tuesday Hangouts’, including quiz nights, Bingo, singalongs, painting sessions and Netflix parties
- The launch of our Sound Waves podcast, discussing issues affecting young people with cancer and their families, on Mondays.
- ‘How To’ Thursdays vlogs and blogs from our skippers and volunteers on everything, from mastering the trip favourite, Uno, to how a sail works.
- Saturday Stories - sharing inspirational case studies from the Trust community.
- Volunteer training and development continued on Zoom on Wednesdays.

## How has this been developed beyond lockdown?

It is critical young people get the support they actually need, not what we think they might want. After announcing the cancellation of our 2020 trips, we invited young people, their parents and the hospital and charity partners who work with them, to tell us what they were going to miss most about not coming on a Trust trip in 2020 and how we could fill that gap.

There were more than 180 responses.

We learned the biggest thing young people would miss was their friends, the people who just get what they have been through and understand how they are feeling without having to explain anything. The friends that stop them feeling like the 'only one'.

And they would miss learning new skills on trips, the skills that help them realise they are more capable than they believe and which give them a sense of achievement many have not experienced since finishing their treatment.

They wanted to still feel that connection to people who relate to them in a way others can't, to not feel isolated, to be involved in a way that makes them more positive and confident about the future and to have something to look forward to. This feedback led to the formulation of the young-people centred 'Virtual Summer' programme.

## What is the Virtual Summer?

The 'Virtual Summer' runs from July to September – across our traditional trip season. This is a comprehensive, mainly online, support programme, which covers the areas of social engagement, skills and training, peer-to-peer support and mental health support.

- The Trust Hangouts have been expanded to run more frequently across the week, and to be targeted at different age groups so there's something for everyone.
- Skipper 'How To' blogs and vlogs are continuing so young people can brush up on their sailing skills ahead of their next trip.
- 'Wider Horizons' sessions and Q&As are a new addition as people – including young people supported by the Trust after cancer – share their insights on getting into certain careers, on to courses or developing life skills to get back into employment/education.
- Regular Drop-in sessions will be held in partnership with post-cancer care experts for young people who need further or specific support in their recovery.
- A Book Club for over 18s and Pen Pal exchange for under 18s are being trialed.
- Volunteers can undertake online RYA Training courses, to develop their sailing knowledge and/or to add to their CVs and discuss in job/university interviews.
- There is a new Signposting page on our website for young people who need further support beyond the Trust.
- Our Sound Waves podcast is continuing in six-week 'seasons'.
- Parents and guardians are supported with virtual coffee mornings, where they can 'meet' our skippers and volunteers and chat about issues affecting them in their child's recovery.

### Might it still be possible to support young people face-to-face this year?

Potentially. Although we have cancelled our scheduled Return Trip programme as it stands, we would still love to run some level of return and/or siblings activity later this year, but only if and when it becomes safe to do so. There could also be the opportunity to bring young people together in a different environment over the winter, again if and when it became safe to do so. This would be new activity.

In addition to our core activity, we run one-off day sails for young people on palliative care and their families. Later in the year it might become possible and safe to run some of these too. Unfortunately, there will be no on-the-water First Time activity this year. However, whether a young person in recovery has been previously supported by the Trust or not, every one who needs us will be able to access our 2020 support programme.

### How is the Trust planning for 2021?

We are continuing to nurture the strong relationships we have within the UK's hospital network and are working closely with our partners in the charity sector, particularly CLIC Sargent and Teenage Cancer Trust, to ensure every young person who needs us in 2021 has the chance to access Trust support. We also have designated contacts in our team speaking to the young people and families to provide ongoing support and look ahead to 2021.

### What costs have been incurred during 2020?

When COVID-19 hit, we had already progressed with payment of necessary overheads, including the rent of one of our premises, deposits on all our season boat charters and residential centres, insurance and marina boat berthing fees. These are unrecoverable costs.

Young people need us more than ever and we need our small team to focus on how we can support them right now whilst getting plans underway for 2021. This is reflected in the fact that we furloughed only one member of staff and made no redundancies.

We have taken the high-level strategic decision to continue investing in fundraising and communications so that we come out of the COVID-19 crisis in as strong a position possible in terms of potential income streams and profile.

### Has the Trust received any financial support beyond its fundraising activities?

We are currently not eligible for any Government funding available for charities.