

## **Weston Park Cancer Charity Podcast**

### **Episode 1 – Our Aims**

**Ruby Osborn:** Hello and welcome to the Weston Park Cancer Charity Podcast, sharing stories about our work, what we do, and the people we support. From funding life-saving research to providing practical help and emotional support, it's our job to care in every sense for our patients and their families. I'm Ruby, and in today's episode, our first episode, I'm going to be talking to our Chief Executive Sam Dixon, about some of the changes the charity has been through recently and what that means for the support we're able to offer people in the region living with, and beyond, cancer. But first I'm going to let our patron Dean Andrews give a little overview of Weston Park Cancer Charity.

**Dean Andrews:** One in two of us will develop cancer. So whether that's us, or someone we care for, every one of us can expect cancer to affect our lives. The good news is that when cancer changes everything, so can we. Because Weston Park Cancer Charity and our supporters are doing amazing things. We fund vital research by world-leading specialists, so we're improving treatment, survival and recovery. We enhance the experience of treatment too – by improving wards, offering therapies like massage, or helping patients with the cost of travel to appointments, which can be a huge worry. We also provide a range of support given in the community, or at our support centre. People can socialise, take part in an activity or they might just want a moment of quiet. Maybe they need to talk to someone who really understands the emotional challenges of life with cancer. And we're there, because it's our goal to care, in every sense, for our patients and the people around them. It's the reason we've been through some changes recently, bringing the charity and the support centre under one name and brand, and working more closely with the cancer centre. Together, we are a stronger support for all, a completely united Weston Park. Cancer changes everything, but so can we.

**Sam Dixon:** I'm Sam Dixon and I'm the Chief Exec of Weston Park Cancer Charity.

**Ruby:** We heard there that the charity's been through some changes recently, can you tell us more about that?

**Sam:** Yes, we've been through a lot of changes and some of those may be more obvious to supporters than other things but I suppose the principle one is that on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018, the Cancer Support Centre and Weston Park Cancer Charity merged as one new organisation and on the back of that we have created a very exciting and ambitious five year strategy for the direction we're going to take over the coming years, and to reflect our new organisation and our new ambition we also have a new brand which might have been probably more visible to supporters than some of the other things that we've done.

**Ruby:** Why was the decision taken to do this change now and why was it done at all?

**Sam:** I mean that's a very interesting question and in some ways it was a very brave decision for trustees to decide to merge two organisations and just to put it into context there are roughly 166,000 registered charities in the UK but only 50 a year choose to merge or takeover another. It's because it's a very, very highly complicated process. What we saw is that in the future the need for the services that we provide will increase dramatically. We serve a population of 1.3 million people. We know from research that one in two of us will develop cancer over our lifetimes. It's a figure that we use quite regularly and I don't want it to seem trite, that's a shocking statistic in many ways, therefore we know that whilst we're providing a great service at the moment we really are just rubbing the surface in terms of the emerging need over coming years. So as a charity we need to be able to respond to that challenge and we felt that as one organisation we were better placed to be able to do that, both in terms of raising the money that we need to support people, but actually to develop the range and the level of services that we provide across Sheffield and the wider region. So, it is very ambitious but it's what is necessary if we really are going to do the very best for cancer patients and their families across the region.

**Ruby:** You mentioned there's a five-year plan, so over the next year or so, what are we going to see?

**Sam:** Over the next year or so you'll see the beginnings of the work on that five-year plan. We will continue to invest in high quality cancer research, which is taking place locally, which will deliver improved outcomes for patients now and in the future. I suppose the biggest changes are relating to the support that we give, the holistic support that we give, to not just patients but also, I think quite importantly, families and carers. What you'll see over the coming years is an increase in the services that we provide at the Cancer Support centre, so helping more people, but what our research has shown is that the people who are probably most in need of that support are actually not using our centre in the way that we would hope. There's lots of reasons for that, some of that is geography, some of it is that they just don't know about our services, but actually these people should be benefitting from things like the welfare rights service that we provide, being able to access a support worker or a nurse who can talk to them about all the issues that they are facing. So, I think the biggest change you're going to see over the next year is that we will start to roll out that outreach activity. Some of that will be done directly by ourselves. A lot of it will be done in partnership with others, so for instance we have a new partnership funded by the Premier League with Sheffield United Community Foundation, so working together we'll roll out some of that work. We're also going to be looking at satellite centre in another part of the region which I'll probably be able to tell you about later in the year. One of the ambitious parts of the strategy is that we have set ourselves the objective of directly supporting 47,000 people over the coming five years and that's roughly a 58% increase on current activity levels. Now there is a plan to do that but obviously a lot of that comes down to having the money to be able to do that.

**Ruby:** If people want to get involved and if they want to help the charity to reach these ambitious numbers, what can they do?

**Sam:** There's lots of ways that people can help us, and at this point I just want to thank everybody who is helping us or has helped us over the years. One of the ways that people can support is through fundraising and every year we need to raise over 2.5 million pounds to deliver the services that we deliver so we need everybody's help. People can visit our website [westonpark.org.uk](http://westonpark.org.uk) or call the office on 0114 553 3330 and speak to one of our friendly fundraisers and they will be able to guide you and give you the material support that you need. 'Every little helps' as a famous supermarket says. We always want volunteers as well and again that ranges from helping to deliver services to patients but also with fundraising, you know, shaking a collection tin at a football match, anything like that, but just open the dialogue with us. I'm sure we can find a way of working together.

**Ruby:** What is it that you think is special about Weston Park Cancer Charity?

**Sam:** For me, and maybe I am biased, but I think that if you walk into our offices, if you speak to one of our staff or our volunteers, I hope you feel the pride that they have in the work that they do, that you feel they are people who are caring, that will listen to what you have to say. I believe that's true, I feel it, others tell me that that's what they feel as well. I have a really committed team, whether it's staff or volunteers, who always go that extra mile, whether that's making a phone call to someone who's in need out of hours, whether that's going to visit a supporter, again in their own time. I think these are important things, people do this because they care about the organisation and the impact that it has. It is our job to care in every sense for our patients and our families but also our supporters. We're here for you, we're here together at every step and we hope that will not change over the next five years.

**Ruby:** That's all for this episode of the Weston Park Cancer Charity Podcast. Thank you for listening and I hope you'll tune in next time when I'll be learning about the history of the charity.

**Dean:** Cancer changes everything, but so can we.