

# THE ENTREPRENEURIAL VALUES DRIVING THE CANCER IMPACT CLUB

Business builders are coming together to drive scientific discovery into patient benefit

It's a sobering thought, but nearly one in two<sup>1</sup> people will get cancer in their lifetime. In fact, the average number of new cancer cases in the UK each year is projected to rise from around 420,000 cases in 2023-2025 to around 506,000 cases in 2038-2040.<sup>2</sup>

There's never been a more important time to invest in groundbreaking research that will help prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.

That's why a year ago Cancer Research UK launched its *More Research Less Cancer* philanthropy campaign, the largest ever philanthropic campaign by a UK charity, aiming to raise £400 million to help accelerate a golden age of cancer research and change the outlook on cancer for this generation and the next.

## The challenges behind major cancer breakthroughs

Many scientists believe we're on the brink of discoveries that will transform how we understand and overcome cancer. Rapid technological advances are enabling major strides, particularly in immuno-oncology, cell-based therapies, cancer vaccines and multi-cancer early detection tests.



Darren Redmayne, one of the Cancer Impact Club's founding members

However, scientific breakthroughs can only benefit people affected by cancer once they are used to develop new tests, treatments and technologies. This process can be difficult, expensive and high-risk for investors, especially in its early stages.

Cancer Research Horizons<sup>3</sup> was set up to overcome this challenge. It is a non-profit, entrepreneurial subsidiary of Cancer Research UK that fast-tracks scientific discovery into effective tools, treatments and diagnostics for people with cancer.

## Turning discovery into tests and treatments

Cancer Research Horizons' track record speaks for itself. It has supported over 80 start-ups which have collectively leveraged a further £3 billion in investment from other sources. And it has taken 14 drugs to market, which have been used to deliver over six million courses of treatment for people with cancer worldwide.

Overall, around £600 million from royalties and intellectual property has been reinvested by Cancer Research UK to fund further discovery and progress. But with increased funding it could achieve much more. Currently, many potentially transformative ideas are lost in the gap between where academic, discovery-oriented research funding ends and commercial investment becomes viable.

To propel more scientific breakthroughs from the lab towards the clinic, Cancer Research UK has allocated £15 million in seed funding to Cancer Research Horizons. The Seed Fund will enable investment in early-stage ventures with the potential to benefit people affected by cancer, and any financial returns will be reinvested to fund future research.

## The business builders helping to change the future of cancer treatment

To help boost the impact of the Seed Fund, Cancer Research UK has established the Cancer

Impact Club. It's a unique initiative bringing together a community of people with private equity, venture capital and entrepreneurial backgrounds to support the Seed Fund through their philanthropy, expertise and networks.

One of the Cancer Impact Club's founding members, Darren Redmayne, has had a 30-year career in professional services, building businesses in partnership with private equity. Like so many of us, he has been personally impacted by cancer and saw a unique opportunity to establish an entrepreneurial proposition to support the work of Cancer Research Horizons.

Darren is on a mission to boost funding for early-stage start-ups developing promising research ideas that may not otherwise make it to clinical settings.

"We are on the cusp of a golden age of cancer research with AI, with vaccine technology, with genomics, and we haven't got a moment to lose," Redmayne said.

"Currently, too many pharmaceutical companies or biotech investors typically only invest in companies further down the line, after more research and testing. But philanthropy can help to bridge this gap."

Redmayne went on to explain: "The goal of the Cancer Impact Club is to accelerate the translation of the most promising research. That's why we're passionate about the need for philanthropy from entrepreneurial individuals with a business mindset, to help double the size of the Seed Fund."

Each member commits £100,000 in support over three years, which translates as £55,000 net for a top rate taxpayer – amounting to £18,000 a year. Each £1 donated will be combined with £1 from the Seed Fund, delivering £200,000 in funding for early-stage cancer ventures.

"This is an area suited to philanthropy, and the impact of just one or two of these groundbreaking ventures reaching patients could be game changing," he added.

Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666), the Isle of Man (1103) and Jersey (247).



When asked why someone who was considering making a philanthropic investment would join the Cancer Impact Club, Redmayne was clear.

"The reason they've likely been successful in their professional lives is because they've been thoughtful around where they invest their money. They want to work with experts and want that money to have every chance of delivering transformative impact. The Club, the Seed Fund, Cancer Research Horizons, the whole community, has been set up to maximise our chances of collective success with higher risk but potentially transformative innovations," he said.

Redmayne highlighted how joining the Cancer Impact Club is more than simply a financial transaction.

"You are seeing ventures that would not be

able to progress without your support moving forward. You get to be part of a community with like-minded industry peers, with insight into cutting edge early-stage ventures in one of the most dynamic parts of the economy, and some of them will go on to raise more funds and become commercially investable," he explained.

"What's more, you leave a legacy, because successful ventures can deliver a return to save more lives, and power further discovery for years to come."

## The real-life outcomes of philanthropic investment

The Seed Fund was established in 2022, and since then has invested in a dynamic portfolio of early-stage ventures. One example is Infitopes<sup>4</sup>, which is soon launching a clinical trial of a new vaccine to prevent metastasis of oesophageal cancer. Infitopes has recently been cited as one of the top 10 European biotech start-ups.<sup>5</sup> Other ventures backed by the Seed Fund include Trogenix<sup>6</sup>, about to start trials of targeted gene therapies to treat glioblastoma brain tumours; Elaitra<sup>7</sup>, using AI to detect breast cancer; Biocaptiva<sup>8</sup>, developing more effective blood tests for cancer; and Suil Vision<sup>9</sup>, allowing scientists to

translate complex biological data into virtual reality maps that aid analysis.

Combined with £10 million from the Garfield Weston Foundation, a family-founded grant-maker, the Cancer Impact Club is looking to double the power of the Seed Fund by raising an additional £5 million from 50 members, each contributing £100,000 over one to three years.

The Cancer Impact Club is already attracting a community of supporters from private equity, venture capital and entrepreneurial backgrounds and will launch on 20 March 2025.

More research today will mean less cancer tomorrow. Joining the Cancer Impact Club now is a unique opportunity to help transform the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer for millions.

To find out more, visit [cruk.org/lesscancer25](https://cruk.org/lesscancer25)

**More Research Less Cancer**

