

Sussex Cancer Fund Research Strategy

September 2025

www.sussexcancerfund.co.uk

[#raisedInSussexStaysInSussex](https://twitter.com/raisedInSussexStaysInSussex)



Our Research Strategy

Background

The Sussex Cancer Fund (SCF) is a Sussex-based charity that funds a portfolio of cancer research projects and provides a range of services to cancer patients and hospitals across Sussex. In 2022, SCF Trustees agreed a **five-year vision** for the charity and formally documented its objectives (see www.sussexcancerfund.co.uk/strategy).

The **purpose** of this document is to set out **SCF's strategy for funding cancer research in Sussex**. It will:

- Re-state the charity's overall purpose and vision, showing how research activities align.
- Explain why SCF funds cancer research.
- Introduce the two partner organisations central to our strategy.
- Define and explain our Research priorities.
- Summarise our strategy.
- Identify development areas for the next 12-24 months.

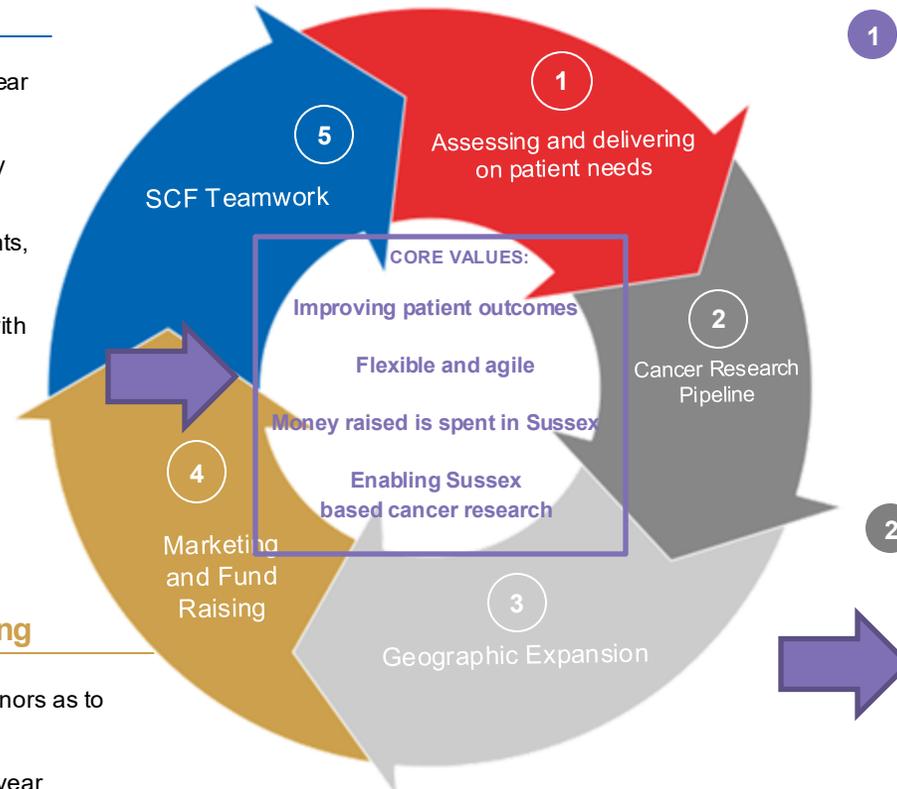
Sussex Cancer Fund Overall 5 Year Vision

5 SCF Teamwork

- Enhanced Trustee group with clear roles and responsibilities
- Continue strong governance - by effective management of risk, financial reserves, research grants, personal data
- Develop volunteer resources - with clarity of roles (ambassadors, volunteers)
- Low operating costs

4 Marketing & Fundraising

- Enhanced communication with donors as to how £ raised are spent
- Target of minimum £500,000 per year fundraising excluding legacies
- Careful promotion of legacy donations
- Audiences and 'Awareness' targets defined and actioned
- Further enhance social media and 'in person' presence across Sussex



3 Geographic Expansion of SCF support

- Select the priority cancer treatment units for support based on their needs above core NHS funding
- Target step by step other Sussex cancer units over the next 5 years - with a robust action plan and review annually

1 Assessing and delivering on Patients' needs

- Substantial Horizon Centre contributions
- Services - including acupuncture, physical exercise programs and massage therapy
- Selective equipment purchases - generally be above core NHS & Medical School funding
- Free consumables such as teas/coffees, new magazines and car parking for SCC
- Patient and NHS staff engagement programs

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Cancer Research Pipeline

- National 'Kite mark' for each project
- Working with NHS and Health Education England to promote and increase the impact of local research in Sussex
- Assist in attracting and retaining researchers in Sussex
- Cancer Research map to show the public where we invest and why

Alignment of this Research Strategy with the SCF Purpose and 5 Year Vision

The Purpose of the Sussex Cancer Fund (SCF)

“We work together with the NHS to help make life better for cancer patients in Sussex – providing equipment and services that make a tangible difference for patients who are often on a difficult and stressful journey.

We also selectively fund and enable Sussex based cancer research programs that contribute to the understanding of cancers and improved outcomes for patients.”

(Approximately half of our income is spent on funding such research projects.)

SCF 5 Year Vision

In 2022 the Sussex Cancer Fund agreed a 5-year vision that includes:-

- A 100% increase in our income from fundraising (with an assumption that at least half of that growth is available for spending on research)
- A commitment to develop a strong set of cancer research projects based in Sussex for the benefit of patients in Sussex



Why SCF Funds Cancer Research

The Purpose of the SCF is to work with the NHS to help improve the lives of cancer patients in Sussex. Funding research supports this goal in the following ways:

- **Patients in research active hospitals experience better quality of care**, have greater confidence in treatment decisions and are better informed about their conditions and medications. Research brings economic benefits to the NHS and the wider population.
- SCF acts **nimbly to fund selected early-stage projects** that national charities are unlikely to support. Such projects can enable researchers to obtain pilot data which justify larger-scale applications to external funders in future. ("**Pump Priming**" projects)
- SCF funds projects that **focus on the specific needs of the Sussex population**. This includes involving local patients in clinical trials and piloting new treatments and information in Sussex before a broader UK roll out.
- Sponsoring Sussex based research fellows and clinicians in research work helps **attract and retain high calibre staff in Sussex** which supports the NHS in improving the quality of care. Research provides opportunities for professional growth and fosters an environment in which staff are more engaged and effective.
- Currently the national cancer charities spend very little money in Sussex. Our spend on research projects is aligned closely with the goals of the Sussex Cancer Research Centre - one of which is to **secure national centre-level investment in Sussex** from bodies such as the Medical Research Council and national cancer charities.



Key Alliances for Our Research Strategy

The Sussex Cancer Fund is a small, local charity that – for cost-efficiency reasons – partners with organisations that share aligned objectives and can support us with research, medical and process expertise.

1) The Sussex Cancer Research Centre (SCRC)

Established in early 2024, the SCRC marked a key development in the direction of cancer research in Sussex. Prior to the SCRC's creation, a considerable amount of high-quality cancer research was taking place in the University of Sussex, University of Brighton, the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, and the University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust (UHSx).

The SCRC aims to bring together cancer researchers from these institutions in an inclusive and organised way – fostering inter-institutional collaboration and placing patients at the centre of cancer research. The SCRC believes that the collective impact of these collaborations will be significantly greater than the sum of their parts.

Its longer-term goals are to expand the clinical trial portfolio, attract and retain leading talent in the region, and secure national-level investment in cancer research (e.g. from MRC or CRUK) and to promote translational bench to bedside research.

As the Sussex Cancer Fund continues to grow its research portfolio, we will do so in close partnership with the SCRC, whose objectives are highly aligned with our own. The SCF & SCRC will agree a schedule of SCF sponsored funding rounds where the SCRC will advertise for, receive and evaluate research project applications. The SCRC scientific panel will make recommendations for funding to the SCF Trustees.



Key Alliances for Our Research Strategy

2) The Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)

The AMRC is a UK membership organisation that supports its member charities in funding the highest-quality research and driving breakthroughs in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease.

Over 150 charities – including many large national organisations as well as smaller, local ones like SCF – are members of the AMRC and benefit from its best-in-class processes for medical research funding.

The AMRC sets strict criteria and best practices for allocating research funding. This includes a robust and transparent application assessment process, carried out by an independent panel of scientific experts.

In addition to its funding standards, the AMRC provides guidance on public and patient involvement in research and on the ethical use of animals in research.

The organisation also serves as a united voice for the sector, influencing policymakers and providing thought leadership. Through the AMRC, the SCF has access to expert research policies and standards essential resources we would otherwise be unable to maintain in-house as a small charity.

The Sussex Cancer Fund joined the AMRC as an interim member in 2024 and is expected to become a full member in early 2026.



Sussex Cancer Fund - Research Priorities

It is our objective to fund research that is **Patient Focussed**, of **High Quality**, that is Sussex **Aligned** and which is an **effective** and **efficient** use of our research expenditure.

Patient Focussed – The Sussex Cancer Fund only funds research that has a clear line of site to delivering benefit to patients

High Quality – The SCF depends on donations and so places the utmost importance on ensuring it only funds research of the highest quality, achieved by a stringent peer review.

Sussex Alignment – It is a priority to support research that is part of a broader Sussex research strategy and that is aligned with the needs of Sussex patients

Efficient Giving – We use both Pump Priming as well as Joint Funding In order to maximise the use of our research spend

(these points are covered in more detail on the following slides)



SCF Research Priorities

PATIENT FOCUSED – We exist as a charity to improve the lives of cancer patients in Sussex. We fund research programs that contribute to a better understanding of cancer and lead to improved outcomes for patients, in line with SCF's stated *purpose* (see slide 4).

- We fund projects that provide direct benefits to patients – for example, offering online advice for managing cachexia-related symptoms or evaluating existing clinical processes to improve the quality of care.
- We support projects that increase opportunities for Sussex patients to participate in clinical trials, helping them to contribute to cancer research. One such project funds additional radiotherapist time to run clinical trials that would otherwise not be available in Sussex.
- We fund a balanced portfolio of research. Alongside patient-adjacent projects with a high likelihood of patient benefit, we also support lab-based basic science with the potential for revolutionary impact. We only support lab-based projects that are driven by patient needs.
- We engage with patients through events such as Science Cafés, fundraising activities, and via our website and social media, fostering two-way communication about the research we support.



SCF Research Priorities

HIGH QUALITY – As a relatively small Sussex-based charity with limited funds, we place the utmost importance on funding only the highest-quality research projects.

- We partner with the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and the SCRC to ensure that we support research of the highest standard.
- The AMRC is a well-established national organisation that has developed expert funding processes used by many of the UK's largest well-known charities. When selecting projects to fund, we follow the AMRC's best practises, including independent assessment by a panel of experts.
- The SCRC runs funding rounds on behalf of SCF and other project sponsors. Their grant review process is fully AMRC-compliant and provides a competitive environment in which leading scientists and clinicians score and rank each project against defined criteria.
- When awarding funding, we often place conditions that encourage timely delivery against agreed milestones.



SCF Research Priorities

SUSSEX ALIGNMENT – We are a Sussex-based charity, and it is a priority for us to align with patients, clinicians, and the scientific research community in Sussex.

- The SCRC is a collaborative initiative between the Universities of Sussex and Brighton, their joint medical school, and Sussex's hospital Trusts. Our partnership with the SCRC ensures that our efforts are aligned with the broader cancer research community in Sussex – enabling us to fund projects that raise the profile of cancer research in the region and support a shared vision for its development.
- We fund many projects in Sussex's areas of research strength, including blood cancers, brain cancer, gynaecological cancers, the effects of stress on cancer, and cancer-related fatigue.
- Our projects involve Sussex-based clinicians - including doctors, nurses, and radiographers - and many include participation by local patients in clinical trials that support the research.



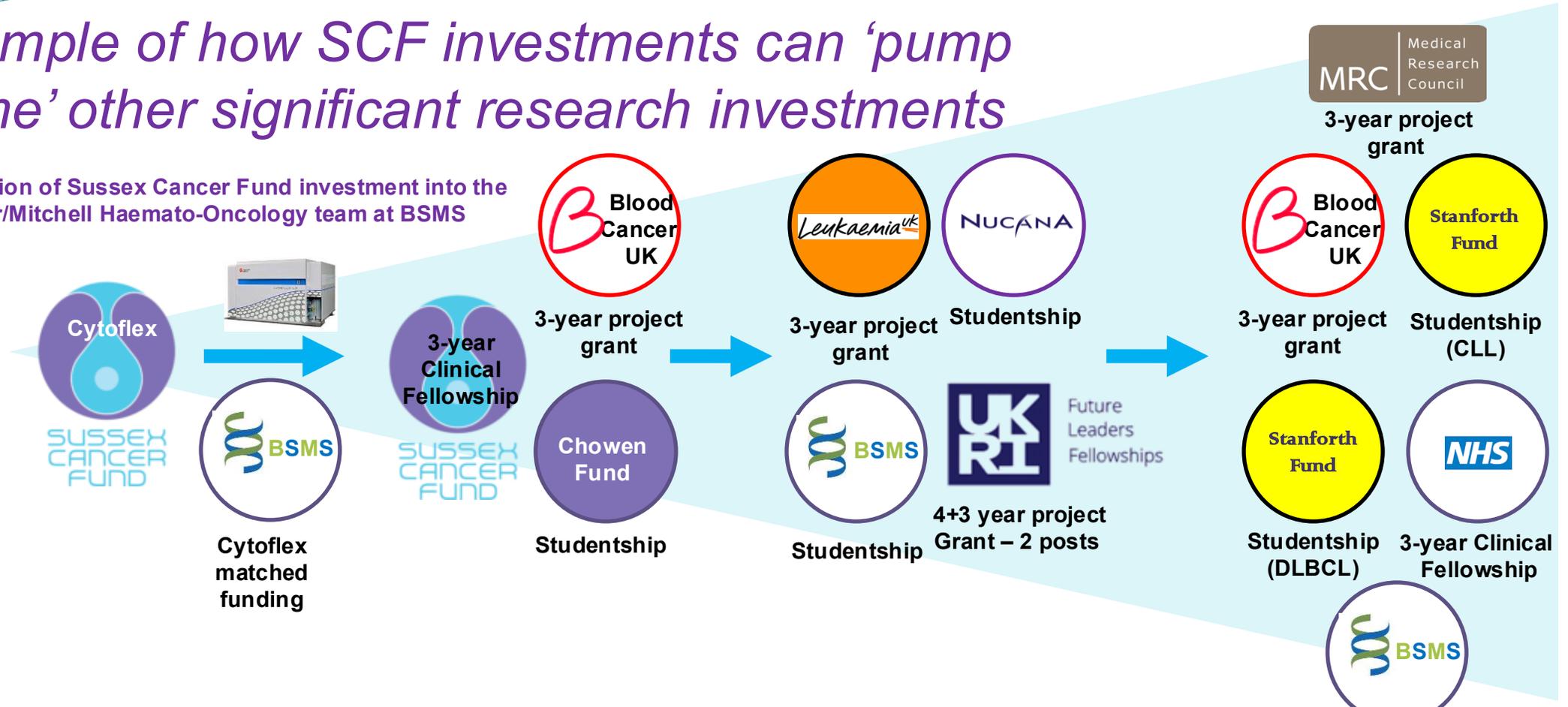
SCF Research Priorities

EFFICIENT GIVING – The funding we receive from our generous donors is a valuable resource. We have a responsibility to use these donations as effectively and efficiently as possible.

- For all major research investments, our strong preference is to co-fund with other research institutions. This approach allows us to support a wider range of projects with the same amount of funding.
- A significant number of our smaller projects are designed to generate key pilot data that can support applications for larger grants from UKRI and national charities. These are often referred to as “pump-priming” projects - the diagram on the next slide illustrates how impactful this approach can be.
- We partner with other expert organisations and leverage their knowledge and processes, rather than building a costly in-house capability.

Example of how SCF investments can 'pump prime' other significant research investments

The evolution of Sussex Cancer Fund investment into the Pepper/Mitchell Haemato-Oncology team at BSMS



2018
£80k SCF
investment

2019
£200k SCF Clinical
fellow investment

2023
£2.7 million
research project funding

SCF multiplication factor of 9.6 X £280,000 investment = £2.7m



Strategy Summary

To fund a strong and growing portfolio of cancer research projects that contribute to a deeper understanding of cancer and lead to improved outcomes for patients in Sussex.

To act nimbly by “pump-priming” research - funding early-stage projects that can justify larger-scale applications to external funders – while ensuring that responsiveness is balanced with strong governance.

To work closely with the Sussex Cancer Research Center, hospital trusts, and local universities to enhance the research profile of Sussex, with the short-term goal of retaining and attracting staff to the region, and the longer-term goal of securing national charity funding.

To collaborate with the AMRC and SCRC to ensure effective quality controls are in place across our research projects, maximising the impact and value of our donor’s funds.

To continue learning through experience and partnerships, and to further develop our strategy over the next two years as our research funding grows. Areas for further exploration and development include:

- Research in the community
- Cancer prevention research
- NIHR (National Institute for Health and Care Research) funding
- The impact of AI on cancer research
- Regular standardised reporting and the evaluation of outcomes