

Breastfriends Cardiff and Vale Breast Cancer Support Group

November 2020

Coping with Covid...

These are testing times for all of us and cancer services, like everything else, have had to adapt to the new normal. Support services haven't disappeared—they've just gone online (see page 4).



Breastfriends is also finding new ways to deliver friendship. For more information, see the **letter from our chair** (page 2).



Who are we?

Breastfriends, described by one of our members as a source of instant friendship, is a friendly support group for anyone who has had a diagnosis of breast cancer, whether it was last week, last month, last year or many years ago.



Breast cancer can be isolating and scary, but talking to others in a similar situation and sharing information and experiences can make a real difference.

With regret, we have decided to cancel our **walks** and **meetings** for the time being. This is in light of current government advice on social contact. Our priority is to keep everyone safe at this difficult time.

Adjusting to the New Normal

A letter from our chair,
Maggie Hourihan

Dear Breastfriends,

The committee and I hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones well in these strange times, as we all learn to live in this “new normal” but very different world.

In such a short time, what we find ourselves able and unable to do has absolutely changed our lives, but as a group of people who have had their lives changed before, I am hopeful that we are all taking this new world in our stride.

I wanted to assure you that the various support groups; Breast Cancer Now, Maggie’s and Macmillan, are all still here for you, although now operating virtually, rather than face to face. There is more about this in this newsletter, but please do reach out if you would like further information regarding how you can access support.

Recently, your Breastfriends support group committee met online to discuss how we can continue to provide support, friendship and advice.

We have decided that continuing to produce our newsletter will give us all a place to share information and stories which we hope you will find both useful and a comfort moving forward. We are sending this issue to all our members in order to reassure you that we are still here and offering support.

Until further notice, we cannot host our Friday meetings in Cardiff and Barry, but we aim to organise a ‘virtual’ meeting in December (see back page for details).



We have also been advised that, due to social distancing guidelines, unfortunately it is unsafe for our walking groups to meet for the time being, however, we are hopeful that there will be an opportunity to re-start them in the future as they have become very popular.

Although we will be unable to walk together for the foreseeable future, please do continue to take care of both your physical and mental well being. Eat well, take regular exercise and remember to take time for the activities you enjoy and that make you happy.

With very best wishes,

Maggie Hourihan (Chair)

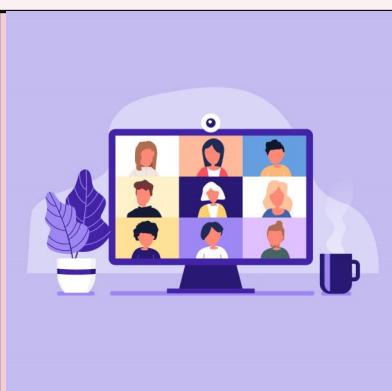
Breastfriends
Breastfriends Cardiff and Vale
Breast Cancer Support Group

Do you have a story to share?

If you have a breast cancer experience you’d like to share with our readers, we are taking contributions for future newsletters.

Please send your stories (max. 200 words) to:

info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk



Breastfriends Cardiff and Vale AGM

Along with every charity in the UK, and most probably throughout the world, the arrangements for the 2020 Annual General Meeting for Breastfriends Cardiff & Vale Breast Cancer Support Charity Ref: 1113068 followed a very different format to previous years.

Gone was the opportunity for us all to get together over tea, delicious cakes and strawberries and cream, catch up with news from members and learn about the latest developments in treatment and research.

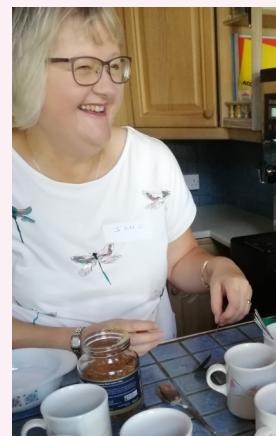
Instead we had to embrace the 'new normal' forced upon us by the Covid-19 pandemic and arrange a virtual meeting via Zoom. Special thanks here go to former trustee Jane Millar, who helped facilitate the meeting.

The main thing we had to ensure was that enough members attended so that we were quorate. This would enable us to formally adopt the annual report and accounts and deal with other items of business. So thank you to those who accepted our invitation to 'make up the numbers'.

The meeting itself was a lot quicker! – a record 10 minutes to get the reports ratified and the 3 retiring trustees re-elected.

This year we welcomed back Ruth as our treasurer and founder member of the charity for a further three years, along with Margaret who organises the speakers for our monthly meetings and Sue who adds her considerable knowledge of the work of other charities.

This doesn't do justice to the expertise that they and, indeed, all the other trustees lend to the charity and which makes Breastfriends such a vital means of support to those who have or have had in the past a diagnosis of breast cancer.



Secretary, Jane Shatford

Breastfriends' reputation has been built on its ability to provide personalised support in small non-threatening groups and this pandemic has hit at the very heart of what we do. We can only hope that the situation will ease in the months to come and we can re-start our activities when completely safe to do so. The committee wishes to thank everyone for their support and understanding during these difficult times. If you would like any further information about the charity, any aspects of its work or would like to join the committee itself then please don't hesitate to contact us at info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk

Our website has had a facelift! www.breastfriendscandv.org.uk



Support online



Moving Forward

Our **Moving Forward Online** courses are here for you. They have been created as an alternative online service whilst Breast Cancer Now's face-to-face services are suspended due to the Covid-19 crisis.

The course is open to people who have had a primary breast cancer diagnosis and have finished their hospital-based treatment within the last two years.

To register to join the course please complete our online registration form. Alternatively, if you have any questions about the course you can contact us on movingforward@breastcancernow.org or 0345 077 1893.

Maggie's Cardiff

While we can't see people in the centre just now, our cancer support specialist, benefits advisor and clinical psychologist are working as usual. Just call us on 029 2240 8024.

We are also running many virtual groups on Zoom, Facebook Live and by phone. For the most up to date information please follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/maggiescardiff>

Living with Secondary Breast Cancer

Face-to-face services have been suspended until January 2021, but there is an online programme and virtual meetings.

Our **Living with Secondary Breast Cancer Online** programme is a private group on our online forum where you will be able to access specialist information and share experiences, understanding and support with people who are also dealing with the uncertainty and challenges that secondary breast cancer brings.

The programme is open 24/7 so you can access it any time that suits you. During office hours, Breast Cancer Now staff are around 'virtually' on the programme to offer support and answer any questions you may have. As well as our online programme, we are also running regular virtual group meetings open to anybody living with secondary breast cancer across the UK.

If you have any questions about the programme or virtual meetings, you can contact us on secondaryservices@breastcancernow.org or 0345 077 1893.



If you are over 70..... Message from South East Wales Breast Screening Centre

'We will not invite you, but you are still able to be screened if you wish. Please ask us for an appointment by getting in touch with your local Breast Test Wales screening centre. Screening is only available every three years'.

South East Wales Breast Screening Centre, 18 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ. Telephone: (029) 2039 7222

"Hello! How are you today?"

Anne Donald, a volunteer with Breast Cancer Now's **Someone Like Me** telephone support service, describes what it has been like to be down the line during the coronavirus crisis.

I have been involved in telephone support for women with breast cancer for about 14 years now. So, how did things change because of Covid-19.

Contacts I was given were in the slightly older range (but that had been the trend - I am 71 after all!). The oldest being mid-eighties. I have been busier than usual. The lock-down meant an emphasis on shielding and isolation and just the words gave an added set of unknowns to the uncertainties of dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis.

Our Someone Like Me Team (working from home or furloughed) gave me the encouragement, information and support I needed to keep the boundaries clear, while giving a bit extra without losing perspective.

I found the women to be just as normal as we all are (of course), some a little nervous of getting "lost" but finding the community, health and other support systems were there for them.



There have been no significant changes to the Someone Like Me service. This service has been vital in providing remote support over recent months, with around 1,288 matches provided in the past year. This is around 15% more than last year and a huge 70% more than two years ago.



The existing team and service will continue in its current structure, and in the coming months the team will begin recruiting and training new volunteers.

**Breast Cancer Now: 0114 263 6490
Helpline 0808 800 6000**

Someone Like Me telephone support

CancerPal—helping you support your loved one with cancer



Jo Riley explains why she set up the CancerPal website to provide support and information as well as pamper packages for people going through treatment.



When my amazing Mum was diagnosed with breast cancer, I felt completely helpless. I just didn't know what to do or say to help. I literally spent hundreds of hours researching the treatments, potential side effects and, importantly, products to help ease those nasty side effects.

Providing practical support like this comforted Mum – but it also enabled me to feel I was doing something to help.

Because I understand how hard it is to watch a loved one go through cancer, I've now set up CancerPal to help other family & friends provide the best possible support to their loved ones going through cancer.

CancerPal shares practical tips, helpful advice & recommendations from people who have been there and within the CancerPal Online Shop we carefully curate hundreds of products that have been recommended to help ease the side effects

of cancer treatments and provide support and comfort to our loved ones.

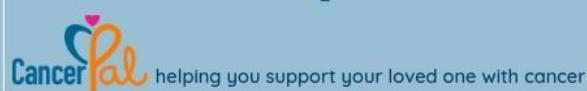
If you're supporting a loved one with breast cancer, find us at www.CancerPal.co.uk and if you're currently going through breast cancer, please tell your friends and family about CancerPal, so that we can help them, provide the best possible support to you.

Thank you! Jo - Founder of www.CancerPal.co.uk.

#CancerTips ❤️

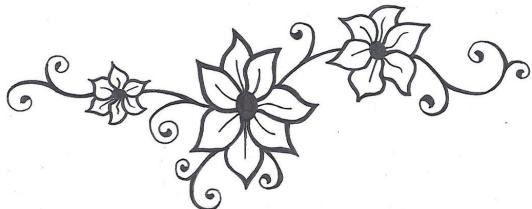
Remember...no matter
what you do or say -
you won't make their
cancer worse...

www.cancerpal.co.uk



Creative Choices for Reconstruction

In a previous newsletter, **Polly Davies** shared her experience of having a tattoo to cover her surgery scars. Here, she updates her story.

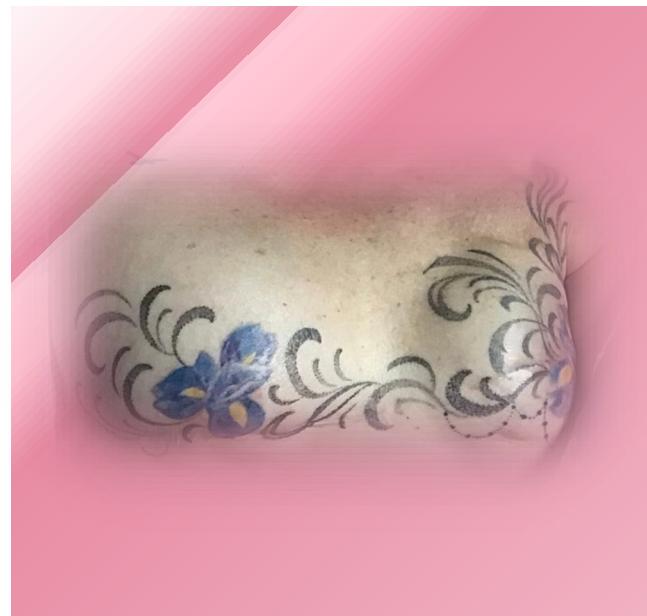


Following a diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer on the left side in 2008, I decided to have double reconstruction in 2010. Because the left muscle had been damaged by radiotherapy, I had silicone 'expanders' placed under the muscle on both sides to try and gain some symmetry between both breasts.

Whilst the right side looked great (and still does), the left side wasn't so good.

Then in March 2019 I noticed that the left side was getting smaller, so I saw my breast care nurse at Llandough who referred me to Ms Donna Egbeare. She offered to redo it using a relatively new technique - a Muscle-Sparing Breast reconstruction.

The implant is wrapped in a pre-shaped Braxton mesh and placed under the skin on top of the muscle.



It's a much quicker op, recovery time is quicker, and it looks and feels amazing; I now need no prosthetic and no bra!

The only trouble Ms Egbeare had was in trying to make sure she didn't disturb my tattoo too much. She told me afterwards she had re-stitched it 3 times before she was happy with it! I'm sure you will agree, she has made an excellent job of it.

Polly Davies





Virtual Breastfriends

We miss you!

At the start of 2020, Breastfriends entered its 17th year of friendship and support and we were thriving! We had a great programme of talks lined up for both our Cardiff and Barry groups and our coffee and chat after our weekly walks around Roath Park, Barry Island or the Knap were a great place to put the world to rights. Sadly, Coronavirus came along and stopped us in our tracks.

Breastfriends has a very special place in the hearts of those of us who help run the groups and, in a nutshell, we really miss you!

Amongst our happiest memories have to be our Christmas get togethers, so with that in mind, we're planning an online Christmas party on Friday, December 11th, 1pm -3pm.

We can all wear our Christmas jumpers, share how we've been managing throughout this strange year and raise a glass to better times ahead. We may even have a quiz!!

Take care and stay safe!



Join us for a virtual meeting
Breastfriends will be holding a virtual meeting
Friday, 11th December, 1-3pm.



We'll be using Zoom, software you may already be familiar with because lots of people are using it to keep in touch with family, friends and other groups. It's free to download and relatively easy to use. If you'd like more information about joining our online Breastfriends Christmas party, then please let us know by emailing info@breastfriendscandy.org.uk and we'll be in touch.

Please note: the same rules of confidentiality apply to online meetings as they would to face-to-face meetings.

Contact Us

Phone: messages care of Breast Cancer Now Cymru on 0845 0771894

Please check our website for up-to-date information

Email: info@breastfriendscandy.org.uk

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