

## Breastfriends Cardiff and Vale Breast Cancer Support Group

May 2026



### Strawberry Tea & AGM

Our annual strawberry tea will take place on Monday 15th June at 7pm in The Canolfan. Join us for delicious cake, strawberries and cream and a glass of prosecco or non-alcoholic alternative.

During the evening, we will be updated about the latest developments in the field of breast cancer research and treatment from Dr Annabel Borley, Consultant Clinical Oncologist at Velindre Cancer Service in Cardiff.

We will also hold a very short Annual General Meeting with time to reflect on the work that Breastfriends Cardiff & Vale has been doing over the past 12 months and invite those attending to influence our programme for the coming year.

In fact, we are always looking for new committee members to help keep this vibrant support group going, so if you'd like to get involved, please contact us (email below). We usually hold 3 committee meetings per year so the demands on our time are kept to the very minimum.

As usual the evening will end with a raffle, so if you would like to donate a prize please let us know.

### 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 meeting others in a similar situation and sharing information and experiences can make a real difference.



### Talk with us

We meet in Cardiff once a month. **See back page for more details.** We know that walking into a room of strangers can be off putting, so please get in touch if you'd like a buddy for your first meeting.

[info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk](mailto:info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk)

# Coping with Medical Anxiety

Seats were in very short supply at our meeting in February as we welcomed **Psychotherapist Colette Hart** to talk about Medical Anxiety.

Colette, who has worked with the NHS in Wales and with Breast Cancer Now and Macmillan, explained that such anxiety can emerge following any direct contact within the health environment, be it routine, procedural or diagnostic, where the person develops an anxiety or fear by association. Historical influences, resourcefulness and behavioural patterns which are unique to us, shape how we manage medical anxiety. Unfortunately, an initial bad or unsatisfactory experience can be stored as a memory in our brain which potentially makes us more hyper vigilant in future situations.



So, if you feel a heightened sense of anxiety when approaching an appointment, you're unlikely to get the best out of the experience. You probably won't be prepared to ask pertinent questions, not fully understand what is being discussed or be afraid to say something. This then leads to a sense of not being in control of your health or not being included in plans for your care and/or treatment. Such instances may also be complicated by displays of 'empathy burn out' by medical staff themselves.

Colette went on to explain that the brain goes into survival mode when a person feels frightened or scared. This 'threat system' wipes out the logical thinking function of the brain frequently resulting in further negative experiences. We often blame ourselves for not being more involved in our appointments, but it's not our fault. Our brain thinks we are under threat and our body and brain respond accordingly.



Psycho-education contributed by Colette Hart of Heart2Hart Solutions Ltd based on professional experience and reading material from Medical Trauma /Medical Anxiety/ Trauma published Authors



## So, what can we do to feel included in our medical experiences?



How do we have a voice? how can we retain a sense of calm when faced with such situations?

Colette explains that preparation is key, together with tools for helping us feel safe. Engaging in 'self soothing' and grounding activities by focusing externally instead of internally help our nervous system to regulate. Taking control of the appointment in advance by writing down questions beforehand or asking a trusted person to come along with you can help to keep our logical brain functioning effectively. That way we feel safe, and included in our care, and not tempted to cancel the appointment as avoidance maintains the anxiety.

'Positive distraction' is one method that can help regain a sense of calm before an appointment. Unless you have already mastered yoga or deep breathing practices which can take a considerable amount of time to develop, simple mindful grounding techniques which practice awareness of 'being in the moment' by focussing on 5 things you can see, hear, touch, taste or smell will stop your mind from wandering.

Developing your own de-stressing tool kit made up of things that have a positive association for you e.g. photos, a perfume, the feel of a fluffy jumper, a piece of music etc triggers nostalgia and meaning making which allows our brain to re-set. Once you are in a calmer state of mind remember to refer to your list of questions and write notes during the appointment, ask for explanations of medical terminology used. Terms like *stage*, *grade*, *palliative* and *invasive* are all words that medical professionals use without making sure that patients understand what is meant by them. If in doubt ask - there is no such thing as a stupid question.

Colette advises it's important to look for coping strategies that feel helpful for us if seeking counselling. Talking therapy tends to be more suited to those who need a non judgemental, safe space to have a voice. CBT(Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) often supported by the NHS aims to help change patterns of behaviour and thinking, whilst not necessarily paying attention to emotions and meaning making. It appears that there is not one definitive method of combating medical anxiety.

All too soon, the session was over and subsequent questions raised by members of the audience demonstrated just how complex an issue medical anxiety is and how unique it is to each person. Hopefully, Colette will be able to return at a later date to continue this fascinating exploration into how we can all get the best out of our appointments and ultimately our future care and treatment.

# Cancer Diets - Myths and more...

**At our meeting in November** we were joined by Jenny Blackhouse, Lead Dietitian at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board based at Llandough Hospital.

Jenny started the meeting by acknowledging that news of a cancer diagnosis is an extremely difficult time for both patients and their families and friends. So, it is not surprising that many people will look to their diet to see if any changes can help fight cancer or alleviate treatment side effects. Indeed, we are all bombarded relentlessly through articles online and in the media suggesting that certain dietary changes can have health boosting benefits.

**But how do you know if any of these claims are actually true and/or are supported by robust research?**

Jenny circulated a short document produced by The Association of UK Dietitians' Oncology Specialist Group. '**Cancer Diets – Myths and More**' is a guide to understanding different diets and how to know if you are making the right or wrong changes. It covers myths around certain dairy products, soya, sugar, alkaline and ketogenic diets, fasting and the use of certain supplements.

It also provides tips to help you decide if a diet is credible or a myth and who you should tell if you decide to follow an alternative or complementary diet. This guide can be found by searching for BDA cancer diets myths.

Jenny also explained the importance of vitamin D and calcium which are needed for healthy teeth and bones and the impact of alcohol on the development of cancer. For more information, please go to the 'links' page of our website: [WWW.breastfriendscandv.org.uk](http://WWW.breastfriendscandv.org.uk)

**When going through treatment or during your recovery and beyond you should aim to adopt a healthy diet. The Eatwell Guide helps you to create a balanced diet of fruit and vegetables, fibre, protein, dairy and the odd treat!**



# Fashion Show Raises Funds for Breast Cancer Now

On Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March The Canolfan was packed with women eager to see the latest spring fashions from local boutique Calon Rhiwbeina. The five volunteers including two from Breastfriends - Sharon, Beth, Keeli, Lynn and Lisa, who have all had experience of breast cancer - modelled several outfits and a fantastic total of £1940 was raised on the evening. Special thanks go to Cath, the owner of Calon Rhiwbeina, who sponsored and compered the show.



## Our Upcoming Meetings



### Back by Popular Demand Tai Chi Taster Session on 10th July

Join us in exploring the therapeutic benefits of this ancient form of exercise which has been proven to have immense benefits for both physical and mental well-being.

This session will be held in The Canolfan at 1pm on Friday 10th July.



Just come along, no need to book.

### Friday 13th November – Wreath Making

#### Book your place now

Just in time for Christmas, we have partnered with a local Florist to run a wreath making workshop on Friday 13th November at 1pm.

We are expecting this to be a popular event so we are asking for a 'commitment to attend' deposit of £5. Those attending will then be entered into a free raffle. So, if you would like to reserve your place, please contact one of our committee members or email [info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk](mailto:info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk)

# Breast Cancer Now

## A bold new chapter, a brand-new look

In an open letter from Rachael Power, Breast Cancer Now Senior Community Fundraising Manager, London, South and Wales, she explains:



*From late March this year things are looking a little different at Breast Cancer Now. Some important changes to our brand to help us supercharge progress - and achieve our vision that by 2050, everyone with breast cancer will live and live well.*

*To deliver on our bold ambitions, we need to make it easier for people to find us. We need more people to join us. And we need to fund even more of our amazing science and support.*

*That's why we've got a brand-new look. We're still Breast Cancer Now. We're still funding life-saving science, life-changing support and change-making campaigns. And we've kept everything that we know people value in us – like our warm and supportive nature, our trustworthiness and our expert knowledge. But we've refreshed how we look, how we sound and how we talk about the difference we can make to people's lives. All to help make it simpler and clearer for people to engage with us.*

### ***We're Breast Cancer Now until we're Breast Cancer Never***

*We want to get to the day when the 'Now' in our name becomes 'Never'. And everything we're doing right now helps us get closer.*

*<https://breastcancernow.org/> our new look website.*

### ***We're more determined than ever***

*Together, we can make change happen. Now.*

## **Living with Secondary Breast Cancer**

Secondary breast cancer is full of uncertainties. But you can count on **Breast Cancer Now's** Living with Secondary Breast Cancer to be there for you, no matter what, in person or online. Whatever you choose, you'll be able to talk, listen and learn with people who understand what it's really like to live with secondary breast cancer.

There are also Speakers Live events specifically for Secondary Breast Cancer with topics including tests used for diagnosing and monitoring metastatic breast cancer, benefits and financial advice, HER2+ secondary breast cancer and talking to children.

To find out more or to register for one of the Secondary Breast Cancer services you can email: [secondaryservices@breastcancernow.org](mailto:secondaryservices@breastcancernow.org) or call them on 0345 077 1893

# SUPPORT FOR PRIMARY BREAST CANCER WITH BREAST CANCER NOW

## **Moving Forward**

Moving Forward gives you the tools to adjust to life after primary breast cancer treatment  
For more information email: [movingforward@breastcancernow.org](mailto:movingforward@breastcancernow.org)

## **Younger Women Together**

If you're aged 18 to 45, Younger Women Together is for you. It gives tailored support and the chance to meet people your age who understand what you're going through.

For more information you can email: [youngerwomen@breastcancernow.org](mailto:youngerwomen@breastcancernow.org)

## **Someone Like Me**

You never have to face breast cancer alone. With Someone Like Me you can find somebody who really understands what you're going through.

For more information you can email: [someone.likeme@breastcancernow.org](mailto:someone.likeme@breastcancernow.org)

## **Speakers Live**

Do you want to learn more about topics relevant to your primary breast cancer diagnosis? Join our online Speakers Live sessions.

For more information email: [services@breastcancernow.org](mailto:services@breastcancernow.org)

Sessions are also listed on the events page of our Breastfriends website

[www.breastfriendscandv.org.uk](http://www.breastfriendscandv.org.uk)

You can call 0345 077 1893 for any information on any of Breast Cancer Now's service

## Ever wondered what to do with your old bras?



The charity Against Breast Cancer has a bra recycling scheme that takes your unwanted or unloved bras and through its network of bra banks raises vital funds for pioneering breast cancer research.

There are currently 'bra banks' at Spire Cardiff Hospital Croescadarn Road, Cardiff, CF23 8XL and at Northwood Estate and Letting Agents, 1a/1b Heol Y Deri, Cardiff, CF14 6HA.

The charity's website also lists other sites that have a bra bank.

Just go to its website for more information.

<https://www.againstbreastcancer.org.uk/recycling/bra-recycling>





# What's on at Breastfriends

Join us at one of our meetings

## Cardiff Meetings

**Our Cardiff group meets on these dates from 1pm-3pm at The Margaret Whittaker Lounge, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, CF14 6LX**

**Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> June at 7pm in The Canolfan, Strawberry Tea and AGM**

**Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> July - Tai Chi Session at The Canolfan**

**Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> September - Coffee and Chat**

**Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> October - Speaker TBC**

**Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> November - Wreath Making at The Canolfan - booking required. Please contact us at [info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk](mailto:info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk)**

**Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas Party and Quiz**



## Contact Us

Phone: messages care of Breast Cancer Now Cymru on  
029 2280 2899

Please check our website for up-to-date information

Email: [info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk](mailto:info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk)

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