



For Immediate Release

“My cancer diagnosis saved my sister’s life” - Nottingham councillor speaks out and joins forces with Macmillan

Nottingham City Councillor Wendy Smith has spoken out about her cancer diagnosis which saved her sister’s life.

Cllr Smith was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 53 at a routine mammogram appointment. Thankfully, as the cancer was caught early, she could be treated successfully at Nottingham City Hospital. However the experience prompted her younger sister Emma to get herself checked too and a much larger lump five times the size of Wendy’s was discovered.

She said: “Shortly after I was diagnosed my sister, who is 10 years younger than me, noticed a dimpling in her breast. We thought we were being over-cautious, but she had a mammogram anyway and was recalled. I went with her to hear the results from the same surgeon who had seen me. My sister's tumour was 35mm, compared to mine which was only 7mm.

“My cancer was picked up by a routine mammogram but my sister was below the screening age. If my situation hadn't made her more aware, she may not have thought that dimpling of the skin could be a sign of breast cancer and she might not be here today.”

Cllr Smith is sharing her experience now to help raise awareness of breast cancer and the importance of early diagnosis. She's teamed up with Macmillan Cancer Support to produce a 2016 breast cancer awareness calendar for GP surgeries across Nottinghamshire.

The calendar contains information about risk factors, such as family history and lifestyle choices, as well as signs and symptoms, common cancer treatments and local support available after treatment such as support groups and Macmillan services. It aims to raise awareness amongst the general public and also with GPs so they're able to better support their breast cancer patients both at the point of diagnosis and with follow up care.

Cllr Smith said: "There can't be many people who haven't been affected by breast cancer themselves, or have a relative or a friend who has been affected. Early diagnosis is the key and this can only be achieved by women attending their regular screening appointments, being vigilant in between appointments and women who are too young or too old for regular screening checking that all is well."

The calendar forms part of the work being undertaken by the Macmillan Cancer Partnership in Nottinghamshire which is investing £3 million to improve cancer services across the county and improve support for the growing number of cancer survivors.

Elaine Wilson, Senior Macmillan Development Manager and lead for the Macmillan Cancer Partnership in Nottinghamshire, said: "We know that early diagnosis is absolutely crucial to effective cancer treatment which is why we were keen to work with Cllr Smith on the calendar when she approached us with the idea. We are already working closely with GPs across the county to improve

support for breast cancer patients, both in the form of earlier diagnosis and also follow up support to prevent recurrence, so the calendar complemented our approach perfectly.

“We have invested just over £380,000 in redesigning cancer care follow up pathways in breast, colorectal, gynaecology, lung, upper GI and urology cancers to improve patient outcomes and experience at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust. The new pathways offer tailor-made patient care and include holistic needs assessments and treatment summaries to ensure support for patients continues out in the community when treatment ends, to avoid clinical deterioration and enable them to live as healthy a life as possible for as long as possible. It also aims to empower patients to self-manage following treatment and signpost them to other support services and extended members of the cancer team.”

Wendy and her sister Emma were both treated at Nottingham City Hospital with a lumpectomy followed by five weeks of radiotherapy. Emma also had a partial reconstruction. However they aren't the only members of their family to be affected by cancer.

Wendy said: “Almost all of my older relatives have died of cancer - breast, liver, stomach, bowel, leukaemia - so I have had a lot of cancer experience. My mother, now 83, was diagnosed with bladder cancer in 2014. Three friends have died of cancer in their early fifties - two of Non Hodgkin Lymphoma and one of lung cancer. I currently have friends with prostate cancer and lung cancer.”

“I wanted to do something to raise awareness, so when I turned 60 I thought I'd do something useful to mark it. I thought raising awareness of breast cancer would be useful, and I felt a calendar would be something which people would keep.

“I was delighted to find that Macmillan were interested in producing the calendar. As a result, it is even more informative than I had hoped and I'm very proud to be working with the Macmillan Cancer Partnership which does so much to improve the lives of those with, and affected by, cancer in Nottinghamshire.”

If you're affected by cancer and need information or support, call the Macmillan Support Line on 0808 808 00 00 or visit www.macmillan.org.uk

Find out more about the Macmillan Cancer Partnership in Nottinghamshire by visiting www.macmillan.org.uk and typing 'Macmillan Cancer Partnership Nottinghamshire' into the search bar.

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For further information, please contact:

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About Macmillan Cancer Support

When you have cancer, you don't just worry about what will happen to your body, you worry about what will happen to your life. At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything and we're here to support you through.

From help with money worries and advice about work, to someone who'll listen if you just want to talk, we'll be there. We are millions of supporters, professionals, volunteers, campaigners and people affected by cancer. Together we make sure there's always someone here for you, to give you the support, energy and inspiration you need to help you feel like yourself again. We are all Macmillan.

No one should face cancer alone. Call us free on 0808 808 00 00 (Monday to Friday, 9am–8pm) or visit macmillan.org.uk