

Welcome to this issue's special feature highlighting the services of South West based health organisations Sirona care & health's Health Links service and CAAFI Health, both of whom support communities in accessing healthcare services.

Flourish Magazine was fortunate enough to run a creative workshop with Health Links and CAAFI Health, and women from the local community. This pull-out reflects on the impact of that workshop and offers advice and resources about cancer and cancer services.

We also bust some myths about cancer that Health Links and CAAFI have identified as often coming up amongst the communities they work with, and at the back of the pull out you can find information about Health Links service and CAAFI, alongside resources to help everyone through their cancer journey, from support with treatment to more holistic services, such as support groups and exercise classes.



## How creativity can help make sense of a cancer diagnosis and bring communities together

By Lucy J Turner

Ahead of Issue 4 of Flourish Magazine, we teamed up with CAAFI and Sirona care & health's Health Links service, two South West based health organisations, to run an embroidery workshop with 20 women from St Paul's & Easton's Somali and Bangladeshi communities who had been affected by cancer.



### Embroidery created by women in the workshop

The session was run by Anurita Chandola, an artist and designer who leads wellbeing workshops that encourage creativity as a path to healing. Here, we reflect on the incredible impact of the session and the power of creativity in bringing us together.

Anurita Chandola regularly works with communities who have health or mental wellbeing problems and encourages people to "spend more time being creative". In Anita's workshops "every stitch represents a message"; through textiles and embroidery, she facilitates a calm space where participants are encouraged to share their experiences.

In January this year, we joined Anurita and 20 women from St Paul's

& Easton's Somali and Bangladeshi communities who had been affected by cancer at Easton Leisure Centre in Bristol for an embroidery workshop. Participants ranged from beginners to those who have been embroidering their whole lives, but Anurita explained it was more about the process of creating than the end result. "It's about taking the time to be mindful and having a creative focus can help reduce anxiety and create a calm sense of being".

At the start of the session we were given individual embroidery hoop kits, fabrics and embroidery floss. Anurita showed the group an example of what they were working towards: beautiful, embroidered flowers. As we began our

intricate designs, it was clear how the embroidery worked as a tool to create and distract at the same time.

As people got into the task and began to relax, they started to share their experiences with cancer. "It affects the whole family and not just the individual. I was scared. I'm 70 years old and I have lost both of my breasts," one woman shared.

Another expressed that she had come along because her mother had been recently diagnosed with cancer and she wanted her to join a wellbeing workshop where she would meet people, "It is my job as her daughter to get her out of the house and I also have to help myself make sense of this".

Many expressed how faith and prayer were at the forefront of their lives, but had become even more important after cancer, helping them through tumultuous times. They discussed how vital their healthcare workers and interpreters had been to their cancer journeys, with the healthcare workers and interpreters in attendance reflecting back a strong sense of responsibility, care and adoration for their patients and community.

It was inspiring to see how one workshop managed to create a safe, peaceful environment to generate conversations and reduce feelings of isolation, which are so common when going through cancer. By

the end of the session, most of the women had shared their stories openly and it felt like they had long been waiting for a space to talk.

"We can share here as well as be creative" one participant said. "Our hands are busy

working and our mouths are sharing stories and connecting to each other."

The workshop showed the power of creativity in bringing us together. Creating together connects us and provides an opportunity to

voice fears and emotions, meet others going through the same struggles, have vulnerable conversations and embark upon a creative healing journey.

## 5 MYTHS ABOUT CANCER BUSTED

### MYTH: You are alone with cancer

**TRUTH** If you are unsure about how to get tested for cancer, how to deal with a diagnosis, or you need support in accessing cancer services – there is plenty of free help to hand. CAAFI and Health Links can answer questions you have about cancer and your treatment, come along to appointments to advocate, interpret or translate, or even come to you in your home.

### MYTH: Cancer is a death sentence

**TRUTH** Cancer is an incredibly common disease, with 1 in 2 people in the UK developing cancer in their lifetime. When caught early, survival rates are vastly increased. This is why it is essential to attend the NHS's free cancer

screening services when you are invited to. If you are concerned you may have cancer, it's vital to get tested. Organisations like CAAFI and Health Links can assist you with this.

### MYTH: Smear tests impact your ability to have children, and you need to be sexually active to require one

**TRUTH** Smear tests are crucial for women aged 25 and over in preventing and diagnosing cervical cancer. The NHS will contact you directly about getting a screening, first starting 6 months before you turn 25, then every 3 years between 25 and 49, and every 5 years between 50 to 64. It is vital to attend these, as early detection of cancer increases chances of survival exponentially. For breast cancer, almost all survive when detected

at the earliest stage, compared to 3 in 10 surviving when diagnosed at the latest stage.

### MYTH: Chemotherapy is the only treatment for cancer

**TRUTH** Your healthcare professional may suggest other treatments, such as radiotherapy, immunotherapy or hormone therapy (amongst many others) tailored to you. Many other factors play a part in overcoming cancer, such as diet, exercise and mental wellbeing. Spending time with loved ones, eating healthy food and moving your body go a long way in improving our immune system and ability to heal.

### MYTH: You always have to come to a hospital or healthcare centre to get screened for cancer

**TRUTH** Not all cancers require you to go to a healthcare centre for testing. For example, bowel screening tests are now available via the NHS to do at home and can be sent back in the post.

## About Sirona care & health Health Links

Sirona care & health is the provider of NHS and Local Authority funded adult and children's community healthcare across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG). Sirona's Health Links service is for people BNSSG who have English as a second language and have difficulty in accessing health services due to language and cultural barriers. Services that work within Sirona, as well as other healthcare professionals, are encouraged to contact them regarding any interpreting or cultural support needs they may have.

Health Links in-house Health Links Workers speak the following languages: Arabic, Bengali, Sylheti, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu.

**Get in touch with Health Links 9am – 5pm,  
Monday to Friday:**

**Phone: 0117 902 7115 / 07768773751**

**Email: [healthlinks@nhs.net](mailto:healthlinks@nhs.net)**

**Website: [sirona-cic.org.uk/nhsservices/  
services/health-links](http://sirona-cic.org.uk/nhsservices/services/health-links)**

## About CAAFI Health

CAAFI Health is a community-based organisation, working in and around Bristol, that helps communities access their right to good health by making it easier for everyone to get health and care services. They run healthcare clinics that are easy for people to get to, make sure people get their health worries heard by services, offer activities and events that show everyone how to be healthy, make sure professionals and researchers work with all people, not just some people, help people translate and understand languages, as well as offer care at home, if someone needs help with daily life.

**Phone: 0117 9247442**

**Email: [info@caafihealth.com](mailto:info@caafihealth.com)**

**Website: [caafihealth.com](http://caafihealth.com)**

## Resources

**Bristol Macmillan Wellbeing Centre**  
**[nbt.nhs.uk/our-services/a-z-services/  
ngs-macmillan-wellbeing-centre](http://nbt.nhs.uk/our-services/a-z-services/ngs-macmillan-wellbeing-centre)**

Offers information and advice about cancer, finances and benefits, diet, exercise, and emotional support.

**Cancer Care Map**  
**[cancercaormap.org](http://cancercaormap.org)**

Online resource that aims to help you find cancer support services in your local area.

**Charlie's**  
**[charlies.org.uk](http://charlies.org.uk)**

Community cancer support and therapy centre based in Gloucestershire.

**LGBT+ Experiences of Cancer**  
**[lgbcancer.wordpress.com](http://lgbcancer.wordpress.com)**  
**[livethroughthis.co.uk](http://livethroughthis.co.uk)**

Personal stories and helpful resources about living with or beyond cancer.

**Macmillan Helpline**  
**[macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)**

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00

**Macmillan Cancer Information Hub at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital**  
**[gloshospitals.nhs.uk/our-services/  
services-we-offer/cancer/macmillan-  
cancer-support-information-hub](http://gloshospitals.nhs.uk/our-services/services-we-offer/cancer/macmillan-cancer-support-information-hub)**

Located in the main Outpatients Unit, just past the Main Atrium. A place to get information, support and signposting with the help of staff and trained volunteers.

**Wigwam and Yes to Life**  
**[yestolife.org.uk/cancer-support-groups](http://yestolife.org.uk/cancer-support-groups)**

Yes to Life's online and Gloucestershire-based cancer support groups, plus links to other resources.