

VOICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

The COVID19 lockdown of 2020 called for new ways of working for VOICE but the CORE group continued to be active all through the pandemic by using Zoom and Team meetings. This ensured that the CORE group could continue to meet monthly with the SGH clinical staff and contribute their patient input to improve Cancer services. Emails tried to keep the wider membership informed of activities and invite involvement.

The new ways of virtual working for Outpatients called for new literature and guides for patients. The members were asked to both review and revise these from a patient point of view, and this work was done via email very promptly to support a successful transition.

The web pages of both the Macmillan Information Centre and VOICE also needed revision and again the members contributed to this work which was completed by Estelle Le Galliot, the Macmillan Information Centre manager.

As fewer patients were visiting the hospital and the Centre, there was a worry about how they would have access to the valuable and helpful information distributed by the Centre. Posters were designed in collaboration with VOICE and they were put up in every appropriate clinic with QR codes to access the Macmillan booklets.

The impact on patients by the move to Virtual Outpatient Clinics was a major concern of the clinical staff and VOICE was asked to hold a Listening Event to consult the patients and learn how the experience could be improved. This was a new challenge for VOICE as it had to be a Virtual Event and the major attraction of their previous events had been the opportunity to meet with other patients.

With some trepidation, invitations to the members were sent out with joining instructions and helpful notes provided by a CORE member who is our very valuable IT consultant, Neil Dennis.

Dr Muireann Kelleher, Clinical Director for Cancer, gave an overview of Cancer services during lockdown and the new way of working. This was followed by the experiences of a few patients presented by Bruce Johnston, vice chair of VOICE. Then an open discussion gave a valuable insight to how the changes were working and could be improved. A Chat room facilitated a lively Q & A session.

The event was considered to be a great success and prompted many complimentary emails from the patients. It was a steep learning curve for the VOICE Core group who put in a lot of work to get it right, but it provided valuable information which the clinical staff were quick to act upon.

A new initiative at SGH is to develop a Chemotherapy school similar to the Get Set 4 Surgery school and VOICE has already helped to identify some of the issues and will further help with its development by holding another Listening Event early 2022.

Whilst Ejiro Ejoh was on maternity leave Estelle le Galliot managed the Macmillan Information Centre and gave VOICE great support and involvement in all the new initiatives. Estelle has moved into a new role as a Health and Wellbeing Coordinator but we will continue to work with her on her portfolio of projects. We welcomed Ejiro back in August and she will again co-chair the monthly CORE meetings.

It was with great sadness that we learned in April of the death of our CORE member Nicky Horton. Nicky was a very enthusiastic supporter of VOICE and played an important role in the development of the Cancer Treatment Comfort Kits.

One other member of the CORE group had to resign recently and we have a vacancy. If any member would be interested in the role please email Sue Fox or Ejiro Ejoh for more information on patient.voice@stgeorges.nhs.uk