

# BREAST MATES

## CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

### Trustees' Annual Report

1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023



*This award was made by The High Sheriff of Merseyside to Breast Mates in recognition of great and valuable services to the community.*

**Registered Charity Number 1171678**

Patron: Noreen Kershaw



**The Annual General Meeting  
took place on  
24th September 2024  
at Robert Foulkes Centre**

**Breast Mates Trustees**

Linda Carmichael	(Elected Sept 2023)
Tracey Carmichael	(Elected Oct 2021)
Anne Maguire	(Elected Sept 2022)
Jenny Gerrard	(Elected Sept 2022)
Carolyn Hanley	(Elected Oct 2021)
Jackie Lucock	(Elected Oct 2021)
Eileen McGovern	(Elected Sept 2022)
Donna Sanders	(Elected Sept 2023)

## **BREAST MATES LEGAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE**

The charity is governed by its Constitution, which will be reviewed annually and revised, if necessary, in line with the Charity Commission's guidance and approval.

The charity is incorporated through legal status of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which means that if the CIO is wound up, the trustees of the CIO have no liability to contribute to its assets and no personal responsibility for settling its debts and liabilities.

No serious incident or other matter that trustees need to report to the charity commission has occurred during this reporting period.

The charity will continue to purchase Public Liability insurance.

At every annual general meeting one third of the charity trustees shall retire from office. The vacancies arising may be filled by the decision of the members at the annual general meeting. If the vacancies are not filled the trustees may at any time decide to appoint a new charity trustee.

The charity is administered by a committee of up to nine trustees, who meet monthly.

## **OBJECTS OF THE CHARITY AS SET OUT IN THE CONSTITUTION**

The relief of persons suffering from breast cancer and to further advance the education of the public on the subject of breast cancer.

## **BREAST MATES**

Breast Mates Cancer Support Group offers support, information and friendship to people diagnosed with breast cancer in Knowsley and the surrounding area. We currently lease an office from Al's Arc, a local Community Interest Company based at 40 Eccleston Street, Prescott L34 5QJ.

We are a non-medical self-help group run by local people; most of our trustees and volunteers have had breast cancer and understand the affect it can have on people.

A breast cancer diagnosis can lead to people feeling very alone; meeting with others who are going through a similar experience and sharing information can really help.

## **PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES**

Breast Mates offers practical and emotional support, information, a telephone help-line, social and group activities and exercise classes.

## **PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF FUNDS**

In early January 2023 we were granted £6,920 from The Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance. This included funding to support our Breast Screening and Breast Awareness Project, hub rental for six months and volunteer expenses.

We were unsuccessful in our bid to the Pink Ribbon Foundation for our dance classes. Fortunately, these expenses were included in the Winter Warmer grant from Knowsley Council.

In November our application for the Winter Wellness Fund from Knowsley Council was successful. The £5,680.75 covered running costs to the end of March 2024 for our dance classes and our weekly walk and talk meetings.

During 2023, we have been very grateful for the many donations and sponsorships we have received from our members, their families, friends and from our many supporters in the community.

Our cash reserves have been retained at £6,000 and we aim to increase this amount in the near future. We hold cash reserves in order to protect the charity's activities from future variations in its income streams.

# BREAST SCREENING AND BREAST CANCER AWARENESS PROJECT

Thanks to the Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance grant funding we have been able to continue to work with Alicia Shipperlee, Improving Breast Screening Uptake Officer. The screening unit was in Huyton from the beginning of the year until May. We put up leaflets and distributed flyers to health and community centres and to shows and businesses in the Huyton area.



Our volunteers have also put together packs with information regarding breast screening and breast awareness enclosing a letter offering to visit with a stand and/or do a talk for local groups and organisations.

Visits have included The Drumming Workshop Prescott, Northwood Community Centre, Kirkby, Whiston Town Council AGM, FLOW Group (For Ladies of Widnes), Beyond New Materials Community Art Group and many more groups and organisations.

A chance for our volunteers and members to work in the community and make a difference.



## WALK AND TALK

We meet up at the Robert Foulkes Centre, in Whiston on Tuesday afternoons. This has proven to be very popular with 25-30 members attending each week. We are often visited by guest speakers and other charity support groups.

Some of our members, along with volunteers take a walk around the local park which is very popular come rain or shine.

Breast Mates has also set aside an hour before the meeting begins, for members who would like extra support to talk about anything that is worrying or concerning them. A good chat and a coffee with their fellow members usually solve most problems and answers most questions. We had a tea party in honour of the coronation of King Charles III which our members enjoyed thoroughly.



### Some quotes from our members: -



*The Walk and Talk is a fantastic support group for women to meet and socialise with other members It is great to be able to chat and join in with the raffle and the guest speakers who enlighten us on various subjects.*  
**Karen Owen**

*Everyone meets at the Robert Foulkes Centre. We can go for a walk in the park weather permitting, I enjoy the natter and catch up and there is plenty of support, fun and laughter. I look forward to meeting everyone each week.*  
**Mo Quigley**

## SECONDARY BREAST CANCER SUPPORT MEETINGS

We are so fortunate to have such a great venue for this group at the Cedarwood Centre, Willowbrook Hospice. We have continued with our monthly meetings and have had a wide range of guest speakers. We get amazing support from Dr Innes and Dr Sripadam and their team at St Helens Hospital. They are always on hand to answer any queries we may have.

*"Quite simply Breast Mates makes an enormous, often life-changing, difference to our patients who have breast cancer. For all patients a diagnosis of breast cancer is shocking and many struggle with feelings of despair, confusion and loneliness. The Breast Mates team offer a comprehensive support service - both one to one and group meetings. Every Breast Mates volunteer goes "above and beyond", treating them with outstanding kindness and compassion, providing a lifeline for so many. We greatly appreciate all of the work that you do."*

**(Dr Helen Innes, Consultant in Medical Oncology)**



Two of our volunteers and a member representative have been involved with a new Macmillan project based at Whiston and St Helens Hospital. The TBNC (treatable but not curable) project aims to improve the care of patients with secondary cancers.

Left to right  
Laura Swift, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Becky Hesketh, Macmillan Data Analyst, Hayley McCaffrey, Macmillan Project Manager.



## DANCE

Over the past year the dance classes have been well attended with much enjoyment, fun and giggles. We were unsuccessful in our bid to the Pink Ribbon Foundation for funding for our dance fitness classes but fortunately later in the year these expenses were covered in the Winter Warmer grant from Knowsley Council. These classes are held on Monday evenings at Whiston Town Hall. The funding covers the fees of our excellent (very patient) teacher and the hire of the hall.

Our classes are providing a safe place where our members can enjoy themselves, have a chat at the start of the class, or in the break and know they are with people who understand what they are going through. The class maintains the confidentiality required by Breast Mates which helps our ladies enormously. There are a number of volunteers who attend the class too, so there is always someone to talk to if our members are having any problems. The feedback we have from our members is that they all feel better both mentally and physically after the class.



We have even been persuaded to perform with another dance group at Knowsley Council promotional events, but this is left to the preference of our members if they wish to join in.



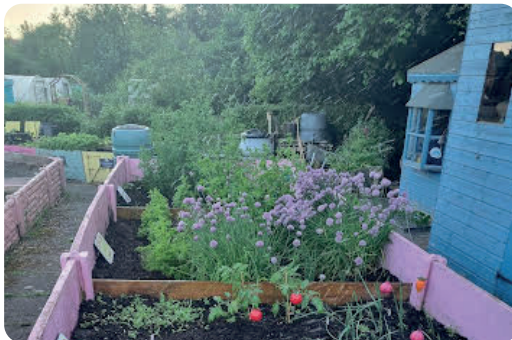
## WINTER WELLNESS

We applied to Knowsley Council and we were awarded £5,680.75 which was to be used for a Winter Wellness project, to enable us to pay the rent and refreshments for a weekly dance class and a weekly walk and talk group. To help to keep our members warm during the winter we purchased hoodies, scarves and gloves for all of our members.

## ALLOTMENT

Breast Mates have use of an allotment on Molyneux Drive, Prescott. The soil for the allotment is getting much better and next year will most probably be a good year for crops.

The past year has been quite wet so this has made it difficult to go to the allotment. Considering this, we still had sweetcorn, tomatoes, herbs, red onions, rhubarb, potatoes and lavender growing at a good rate.



The feeling of being at the allotment gives a good sense of achievement and it is very relaxing, calming and very good for your mental health. You can choose to talk to others or just get on with your own thing. It's all very worthwhile and you will love the calmness in the middle of Prescott. You can take a packed lunch, sit and relax in the lovely shed which looks out on our allotment where you can think up lots of ideas and make plans about everything and anything.



We have recently got a Breast Mates plaque on our plot courtesy of Green Fingers allotment. It looks great, I have also put signs in the plot to identify things that are growing.

If you are wishing to go down to the allotment, then please be in contact and it can be arranged so that you can benefit from what it offers.

Any ideas for what you would like to grow next year would be greatly appreciated.

***Donna Steele, Member***

## SOCIAL EVENT

It was a great pleasure to accompany 29 Breast Mates for a weekend on 20.10.23 to celebrate Breast Cancer Awareness Month, at Alverston Hall a stunning country house in Cheshire.



Our members enjoyed every minute of our stay, supporting each other in their individual choice of activities which included quizzes, archery, spa, swimming and trips into Nantwich to experience the historic landmarks and of course shopping!

Evenings were taken up with the chance to dress up for entertainment, dancing, laughter and a few tipples.

All members gained support, confidence, friendship and the opportunity to be involved with other guests.

The weekend was a great success.

## KINGS AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE (KAVS)

In September 2023, two of our members supported by Nikki Jamieson, Governance Manager, Al's Arc, nominated Breast Mates for the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.

Following the successful nomination, a group of volunteers and trustees worked extremely hard to put together the relevant information and evidence of the work we do as a charity. This would be presented at a visit from two Vice Lieutenants from the Kings Award team.

On 24th January 2024. We went through a rigorous interview process with the Vice Lieutenants. We really appreciated the support of some of our lovely members who agreed to attend the meeting, where they eloquently told their stories to KAVS, and spoke passionately about the work Breast Mates do within the community.

We will find out on the Kings birthday on 14th November if we have been successful. KAVS is equivalent to an MBE, and is the highest Award given to local voluntary groups in the U.K. They are awarded for life.



## CULTURE VULTURES

### Trip to Port Sunlight



Thirty-nine volunteers and members enjoyed a summer day out at Port Sunlight.

Travelling by coach we picked up our tour guide when we got there, who gave us an hour of very informative information on the history of the village, pointing out the key landmarks along the way.

A buffet lunch was served at the pub on site and then all had free time to visit the Lady Lever Art Gallery, the garden centre or just a stroll looking at the beautiful houses before our return journey.

The weather was perfect, bright and sunny and all those who attended said they had a thoroughly good time.

### Trip to the Ice Show

Twenty-six volunteers and members enjoyed a fabulous evening at the Ice Show in Blackpool in July funded by the Co-op Community Fund.



Travelling by coach we were dropped off near the Pleasure Beach for an evening meal at Wetherspoons before a short walk to the show. The staff were very attentive, especially as a couple of our members have mobility issues. The show was first class. We had excellent premium seats, with the skating taking place directly in front of us. Such talent on the ice, some of the figure skaters had even competed in previous Olympics and Dancing on Ice. So many different costume changes and all accompanied by great atmospheric music.

All enjoyed the evening immensely, with several members asking when we could do it again. Another Culture Vulture success!

We would also like to thank the many individuals and organisations who have supported us. We have once again been amazed at the generosity, kindness and goodwill of those who share their time, expertise, skills and energy supporting our cause.

Thank you to all who organised fundraising events and to the individuals and organisations who have made such generous donations.

Trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Carmichael". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Linda Carmichael**  
*Secretary*





Charity's Principal Address  
40 Eccleston Street  
Prescot  
L34 5QJ

**Contact - 07835 982879**

**Email: [contact@breastmates.org](mailto:contact@breastmates.org)**

**Website: [www.breastmates.org](http://www.breastmates.org)**