# Press Release | 22 September 2023

## ‘Keep-Calm and Brew- Up’ new cancer support group for Armed Forces

Tea, cake, a warm welcome and a friendly ear were all on offer last week as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital King’s Lynn NHS Foundation Trust (QEH) hosted the inaugural ‘Keep-Calm and Brew-Up’ cancer support group.

The group welcomed anyone with Armed Forces experience as well as cancer themselves, or those who are supporting a loved one with cancer.

A cancer diagnosis, either for yourself or a family member, can be extremely daunting and often patients with cancer can feel like they are alone. This is exactly why Jacqui Wilson, voluntary services co-ordinator at QEH, spearheaded setting up this group in collaboration with Cancer Care Services.

Jacqui, age 42 who lives at RAF Marham, is herself a veteran, spouse of a serving soldier and has experienced cancer. Jacqui said: “I know from experience how private those who have worked in the Armed Forces tend to be when it comes to illness and especially cancer. When I was diagnosed with cancer other than speaking to my GP and friends, I had no support network. No one that could relate to what I was going through. It was important to set up this support group for not only those with cancer, but for their friends and family to be able to spend time with others that understand how they think and feel.

“It was a pleasure to welcome so many people to this first group with an Armed Forces affiliation and have experienced cancer whether it be them personally or their loved ones. The group provides more holistic and personalised support for patients and their families, and it’s not only about sharing stories about cancer but also about reminiscing about past Armed Forces experiences.”

Paul Burdick, age 86, is an ex-Navy combat medic. His wife Sheila sadly died of bowel cancer last year. Paul and Shelia were married for 64 years and have two children.

Paul said: “Groups like this are so important and provide a great opportunity to talk and meet other people with similar experiences. If this was available during Sheila’s treatment it would have been a God send.”

Another attendee was Jane Longmore. Jane, age 57, is a front of house receptionist at QEH and has three children with her late husband Rob who was an ex-RAF aircraft engineer. Rob died of lung cancer in 2012 just one year after being diagnosed.

Jane said: “When Rob was diagnosed, we felt like it was us in this on our own with no support. A group like this would have been so helpful. The beauty of this being dedicated for the Armed Forces community means the group already have something in common and a shared interest other than cancer, so the ice is already broken so to speak. You can put a group of Armed Forces people in a room, and they will just talk all day.”

The Armed Forces Community ‘Keep-Calm and Brew-Up’ support group takes place on the second Thursday of the month between 10am and 11.30am. The group is supported [Bridge for Heroes](https://www.thebridgeforheroes.org/) as well as [Defence Medical Welfare Service](https://dmws.org.uk/), who are on hand at the group to offer additional support.

If you would like to speak to someone about attending a cancer support group please call the Cancer Wellbeing and Support Centre at QEH on 01553 613985 Monday – Friday 9am-5pm. Or email [wellbeing@qehkl.nhs.uk](mailto:wellbeing@qehkl.nhs.uk)

**Ends.**

For further information, please contact Communications Team, [media.enquiries@qehkl.nhs.uk](mailto:media.enquiries@qehkl.nhs.uk) or 01553 613216.

**Notes to editors**

The QEH has other cancer support groups including;

Grab a cuppa – first Thursday of each month from 10am – 11.30am

Head and neck cancer support group – second Thursday of the month between 2pm -3.30pm

Lung cancer support group – last Monday of the month from 2pm to 3pm

Eastern European cancer support group – last Thursday of the month from 6pm – 7.30pm

Upper GI (Gastrointestinal) Nutrition support group – last Friday of the month from 2.30pm – 4.00pm

Out of hours support group – last Monday of the month 5.30pm – 6.30pm from September