



**MILTON KEYNES  
STOMA SUPPORT GROUP  
(MKSSG)**

**Newsletter number 9  
September 2020**

Dear Member

We had hoped that by now we may have a feel for when the full effects of Covid-19 might be subsiding, but they are of course still very much with us. With the recent government restrictions, it is unlikely that we can meet up any time soon but we do value all the friendships made over the years and want to stay in touch.

Instead of our usual quarterly newsletter, we plan to send out a monthly one, which we hope will include lots of your news and views. We will have particular features for you to contribute to each month – you'll see the kind of thing and get lots of ideas from this first monthly newsletter.

In addition, we are planning to organise Zoom meetings on the third Monday morning of each month as a substitute for our Dobbies get-togethers. For this we would like as many as possible of our members to join in. If you use the internet but are not familiar with how to do this, please Google for instructions (they are relatively straightforward to follow). We will start the first Zoom meeting on Monday, 19 October, at 10.30am. Login details will be provided nearer the time.

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**March to September**

Life has been so different for us all over the last six months and it would be interesting to hear your stories of this difficult time. Let me, Tim, start the ball rolling by telling you about my summer.

*A couple of months ago I started to find it difficult to keep my balance while walking (and I hadn't touched a drop!). Unfortunately I was diagnosed with a brain tumour, four centimetres long and more than two centimetres wide, that had to be removed immediately. Within a week I was in hospital and it had been removed.*

*It's been a slow recovery but a solid one nonetheless. In myself I'm feeling fine although, unsurprisingly, I'm finding I need more sleep just now to help my recovery but in the current climate of restrictions I guess I'm not really losing out a great deal on everyday life!*

Your turn now, please tell us briefly how you have been coping over the last six months, here or by making a contribution to one of the features below.

**Stoma team news**

Their time is precious so we were delighted when Karen and her team (left to right in the photo, Grainne, Karen, Elena) agreed to let us know how they had coped and what was happening in their department.



*Hello from your Stoma Care Team!*

*Thank you for inviting us to participate in your newsletter, it's a lovely way of keeping in touch while we are not able to get together in person. In this edition we have been asked to update you on how we coped during the peak of the pandemic at the hospital.*

*Although it has been a hugely challenging time for everyone we feel that the hospital has coped very well, there were lots of ward movement and redeployment of staff to accommodate the rapidly changing situation but our patients were very well cared for and the Trust communicated regularly with us to ensure we were updated.*

*Within the stoma care department we had to adapt our working to ensure both our patients and ourselves were kept as safe as possible. As Elena has a background of intensive care nursing she was redeployed to our intensive care unit for six weeks. Grainne and I continued to care for both the stoma care inpatients and community patients. We had to close our clinics for a few weeks but all patients that were booked into clinic received a telephone assessment and if they required a face-to-face appointment we assessed if it was safe to bring them to the hospital or arrange a home visit depending on their individual situation.*

*We have used email as a way of assessing problematic stomas by encouraging our patients to email us a photograph of their stoma so we could make an initial assessment and decide if a face-to-face appointment was required. This has been very effective and is something we will continue to do. Our telephone helpline has continued as normal and we have done our best to prevent unnecessary admissions by offering advice and support over the phone.*

*The companies have coped fantastically especially in the initial period when they received an unprecedented amount of orders for home delivery. We have managed to keep in touch with our company representatives using virtual meetings which means we have kept ourselves up to date with product changes. The companies have ensured that we received all stock that we ordered in a timely fashion so we haven't been short of any products.*

*We would like to thank the MKSSSG for all their support over the last few months. Your kind words have meant a huge amount to us.*

*Finally, we would like to reassure you all that, whatever the next few months brings, we are always at the end of the phone so please do contact us if you have any concerns (01908 996951).*

Thank you Karen, Grainne and Elena!

### **A laugh a month**

*A British doctor says: 'In Britain, medicine is so advanced that we cut off a man's liver, put it in another man, and in six weeks he is looking for a job.'*

*The German doctor says: 'That's nothing. In Germany we took part of a brain, put it in another man, and in four weeks he is looking for a job.'*

*The Russian doctor says: 'Comrades, in Russia we took half a heart from a man, put it in another's chest, and in two weeks he is looking for a job.'*

*The American doctor laughs: 'You are all behind us. A few years ago, we took a man with no brain, no heart and no liver and made him President. Now the whole country is looking for a job!'*

Contributed by Jenny. You have a funnier joke? Tell us!

### **Relaxation**

Each one of us should be able to contribute to this feature! What do you do when you put your feet up and relax at home? What is your favourite TV programme, for instance are you a sports fan? Do you have a book you've particularly enjoyed, or item you've made – perhaps knitted or sewn? Morag is an avid reader and recommends *Free Country* by George Mahood. Here is her review.

*It's a memoir of George and Ben, two young lads who decide to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats. To make it a real challenge, they set off with no experience, no food, no money, no accommodation and even no bikes. They set off with no clothing apart from a pair of Union Jack boxer shorts (that's a pair each, not for sharing). They relied on the kindness and generosity of the people they met along the way. They certainly met some characters.*



*I just couldn't put this book down. It made me laugh out loud in places, much to the annoyance of my husband who was trying to get to sleep! It's written in such a way that I felt I was listening to an old friend telling me a story. It was a heart-warming read that restored my faith in humanity.*

*Available on Amazon – Kindle edition £2.99, Paperback £9.99, 319 pages.*

Please let us know what you do to relax and why it appeals to you. Do you follow football or the Grand Prix, for example, and have any predictions about the winners and losers?

## Active home life

Are you a passionate woodworker, decorator, model rail enthusiast, dressmaker, gardener, ...? Are there any regular exercisers or keep fit enthusiasts out there? Tell us what routines work for you in the confines of your own home and garden. We asked Jenny to write about her passion for gardening.

*I think gardening is a bit like Marmite – either you love it or you hate it! Fortunately I love it and one of the benefits of lockdown was that one could spend hours in the garden without feeling guilty! Those early efforts have rewarded me many times over as those plants that started off in April as seeds or corms have reached their flowering splendour, giving me and others much pleasure.*

*Hope you like the pictures.*



*It's difficult to see from these small photos but, to the gardeners among you, do you recognise the most numerous flowers in these images?*

*You may just be able to make out that the deep pink plants are begonias grown from corm. The smaller white and pink flowers are bedding begonias. You may also be able to spot red geraniums and pink cosmos (grown from seed).*

Do you have a favourite flower/plant? If so, please send us a photo – and remember to tell us what the plants/shrubs/trees are!

Do you have a favourite hobby you could tell us about?

## Getting out

We haven't been able to get out and about as much as we otherwise would. Here's what Lynne does.



*Once a week a friend and I take a walk along the canal in Milton Keynes. From her place near CMK we enter Campbell Park and take one of the many paths downhill to the canal. Before we get to the Canal Broadwalk, we pass the 'Head' (see the photo on the left), one of the famous Campbell Park Art sculptures. Along our route, apart from the beauty of the canal and its immediate natural surroundings, there are majestic colonnades of poplar trees and a shady boardwalk.*

*Our walk gives us a great sense of wellbeing, ready for anything we may face in the week to come, especially now in this Covid-ridden world.*



*There is a Campbell Park Art trail with sculptures of all kinds of materials, from the steel 'Head' to the carved wooden frog in the picture here. Campbell Park Broadwalk runs from Linford Manor Park to Woughton on the Green and is suitable for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. It can be checked out on the Parks Trust website, where you will also find details about parking.*

*I think almost all of you will have heard of Campbell Park but did you know that in August this year it was registered by Historic England as a Park of Special Historic Interest and is now Grade II listed?*

Do you have a place you love to go or walk to get some fresh air? Did you take any photos and if so would you be happy to share them with our members? Many of us have happy memories of experiences with various organisations. Perhaps you are a member of, for instance The National Trust, Men in Sheds or U3A, and could tell us what you have enjoyed about these activities in the past and what you look forward to doing again in the future.

## Tip of the month

*For almost all of us the restrictions due to Covid-19 mean that we will spend much of our time in our own homes. What better – safer – time to try out those pouches and other ostomy samples you've received from suppliers? Yes, we do mean those you tucked away in the cupboard or put by unopened to hand over to Lynne!*

Suggested by Lynne. Have you found a special way of applying/using your ostomy items that you feel would be helpful for other members to know about? Your tip may be invaluable to someone else!

## News about the suppliers

We have many samples from our suppliers, but here's a rather unusual one that was sent to Jenny.



*One of the most uplifting items I received during that first grim month of total lockdown was an envelope that was inside my box of regular supplies from Amcare. Inside the envelope was a packet of sunflower seeds and a card that began with the phrase 'A little Ray of sunshine from us to you'. It was such an unexpected gift but it really raised the spirits at a difficult time – so 'Thank you' to Amcare and now I (and the bees) are enjoying the fully grown sunflower.*

Did anyone else receive anything special from their suppliers? If so, why not write and tell us.

## Items for future newsletters

Here are a few ideas. One item may be 'Recipe of the month' so if you have a recipe you can recommend please let us know. You could also think about what queries/issues you liked to raise with other members when we were able to meet – they could be aired in our newsletters.

What other topics would you like included?

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We hope we've got you thinking. We know nothing could replace all that lovely gossip we exchange in Dobbies get-togethers, but your contributions will all help us to keep our members in touch with each other. If we can we would like to build a bank of contributions. If you would like to have a little photo of yourself alongside your contribution do send it and we will include it if we have space. If you would prefer *not* to be named in the newsletter itself please let us know.

The deadline for you to send in your contributions for our October issue is Saturday, 10 October. We would prefer you to send your contributions by email or text if you can, or you can use our phone number but please bear in mind that we can't always reply immediately and you may be asked to leave a message for us to call back. If you want to pass on any articles or recipes on paper please get in touch. Our contact details are given below.

This first monthly newsletter is almost all written by members of the committee but we expect in the ones to come we will be able to include much more from our members. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Jenny, Lynne, Morag, Tim, Tony

MKSSG Committee

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