

Hazelton, Laura

From: Claire McCormack <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 23 October 2018 20:13
To: Hazelton, Laura; Planning
Subject: Fwd: 2018/3956/P

Dear Laura,

Name is Claire McCormack and I'm now eighteen months clear of breast cancer having recently had my six month check-up since my mastectomy in April 2017. Working in a busy role in a corporate media company, when I was diagnosed my life changed overnight from an emotional point of view as did the way I ran my home and work life. I was not at all prepared and needed a great deal of support to navigate my way amongst appointments, work as well as the huge emotional impact the news has on not only you but friends and family.

My diagnosis in October 2016 was truly a shock as no-one in my family had a history of the disease and I was 44 when diagnosed, statistically, very young. I had grade three cancer, the most aggressive and two kinds - Oestrogen sensitive and HERII. My tumour was 10.5cm on diagnosis. I was treated at Cancer Centre London in Wimbledon for my chemotherapy and immunotherapy for 14 months.

I continued to work through the first five rounds of my chemotherapy then it became clear that I wouldn't be able to continue to do so and needed to take time off work. I was very distressed by this and felt quite isolated. My breast nurse suggested I visit the Haven, which has an excellent reputation for supporting women with breast cancer as well as their friends and family.

The first course of ten therapy sessions at the Haven gave me the opportunity to see what best I felt would support me through treatment and recovery. I have since discovered the wonders of cranial sacral therapy and acupuncture. I would never have known their power and potency and completely believe they helped to receive the all-clear in April 2017, as did my consultants. I've also continued to receive treatment at the Haven while returning to work and feel it's absolutely essential to my well-being and recovery.

Another life-changing offering at the Haven was the Mindfulness and Self-compassion course run by Dr Caroline Hoffman. Not only did I meet a superb group of women with whom I've kept in touch, the powerful nature of the techniques and practices I learned have helped me through operations, MRI scans, intrusive investigations and through my father's death this year. I'm calmer and happier as a result of taking this course and again, attribute my recovery, in part, to the techniques so brilliantly taught in the course.

The Haven also offered a very special kind of place to go and to rest; where there no funny looks at your bald head and an immediate understanding of your chemo-driven forgetfulness. What a blessing it has been still continues to be.

I wish it were as simple as to pop round the corner and have a neck and back massage or do a yoga class; that's no longer the case after major surgery. The Haven provides a range of classes and therapies with highly trained, specialised practitioners many of whom are simply to accessible or easy to find. I would be lost with out their support.

It's quite simply unthinkable that with Breast Cancer Haven closing in 2019, that there wouldn't be a suitable alternative for the thousands of women who are diagnosed each year across London. The Fulham Breast Cancer Haven has been a total Godsend and I'm lucky enough to live relatively nearby. However, there are many breast cancer sufferers and survivors who live in other parts of London for whom Fulham is not very convenient. It makes far more sense to relocate Breast Cancer Haven to a central London venue on a major tube line. From work, it would probably take me just over half an hour to get to the Haven, which is still convenient for me.

The impact of a cancer diagnosis stays with not only the patient but also friends and family. Allowing them to be part of the support network they so desperately need means not only does the patient feel empowered, but their loved ones feel supported.

For me, the calm, kindness and care is what sums up Breast Cancer Haven. If we can bottle that essence and bring it to Future Dreams House, this will ensure that that many more women feel the benefit of a unique resource they can rely on to carry them through the many moments on their journey with breast cancer.

For me the communal spaces which are both open and intimate allow you both to breathe and feel supported at the same time. Cancer treatment can be brutal and you can feel physically vulnerable and exhausted in a way you never have before. Soft furnishings, soft light, easy access, lifts, places to flop and possibly have a nap, these are key. Also, many of use become more sensitive to noise during treatment as your sense go haywire, so a peaceful calm environment is key.

The treatment rooms in Fulham are lovely as you can see the sky; light is very important as is a calm yet inspirational environment. The beautiful stained glass I Fulham is wonderful as the light shines through it - it would be lovely to take an element of that and bring it to Kings Cross. I love the small kitchen in Fulham however to have a more open cafe environment would encourage more people to mix (should they wish) and have more space if they need alone time. The library at Fulham is a great resource, long may it continue.

I hope that my view will be taken into account when considering the new location of Breast Cancer Haven, Future Dreams House, a vital resource for London women with breast cancer.

Yours sincerely,

Claire McCormack