

WELCOME!

South Essex Network

Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of the Crohn's & Colitis UK South Essex Network newsletter

After a few years since our last one, we are delighted to welcome you to the latest newsletter from the South Essex Network of Crohn's & Colitis UK.

The past few years have brought many challenges and changes for us all. For our local network, as with so many community organisations, staying connected looked a little different for a while. But what has never changed is our shared commitment to supporting people affected by Crohn's and Colitis across South Essex – offering understanding, information, and a reminder that no one faces these conditions alone.

As part of Crohn's & Colitis UK, our Network exists to provide local support alongside the national charity's vital work in campaigning, research, and raising awareness. This newsletter marks an important step in reconnecting with our community – whether you are

living with Crohn's or Colitis, supporting a loved one, volunteering your time, or simply wanting to learn more.

Inside, you will find updates from our Network, information about upcoming events, helpful resources, personal stories, and news from the wider charity. We hope this newsletter becomes a more regular way for us to share, inform, and strengthen our local network.

On a more personal note, we pay tribute to one of our team who we sadly lost last year, a number of events are being organised over the course of this year by friends and family, we are supporting their efforts and ask, if you can, that you do so also.

Thank you for being part of our community. We look forward to the year ahead – together.

Anthea

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We would like to welcome Vikki Carter and Suzie Rider as new members of the Organising Team.

Read later an article by Vikki on her own experience and reasons for joining our team.

YOUR NEWS

We would love to hear from anybody who would like to share their own personal Crohn's or Colitis story with us, so that we may include these accounts in future issues of the newsletter, to inspire and inform others living with the conditions and their supporters.

Also, we would be delighted to hear about any fundraising events that you may have taken part in in the past, or plan to in the future, so that we may also highlight these amazing fundraising feats in future issues.

To provide any stories or fundraising news, please do get in touch through our network email address se@networks.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!

NICKY BARTLETT - IN MEMORY

It is with deep sadness that we remember our much-loved member and friend, Nicky, who recently passed away. Nicky was a valued part of our South Essex Crohn's & Colitis UK community.

She faced the daily challenges of living with Ulcerative Colitis with remarkable strength, honesty, and warmth. Those who knew her will remember not only her resilience, but also her humour, kindness, and unwavering support for others navigating similar journeys. She understood firsthand how isolating these conditions can feel – and she quietly made sure others felt less alone.

In the midst of loss, something truly inspiring has emerged.

In Nicky's memory, an incredible amount of money (over £4,000) has been raised and generously donated to support research into Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis. These funds will contribute to the vital work of Crohn's & Colitis UK – advancing research, improving treatments, and bringing us closer to better outcomes for everyone affected by these lifelong conditions. It is a powerful tribute: turning grief into hope, and remembrance into progress.

At the heart of this effort has been Nicky's best friend, Michelle, whose dedication and energy have been nothing short of extraordinary. Alongside Michelle, Nicky's family and a close circle of friends have come together with determination and love, actively organising fundraising events to honour her life and continue her legacy. And they have started already as evidenced by this picture 😊



Upcoming fundraising events in Nicky's memory will include:

- Quiz night 24th April 7.30pm start
- Macrame craft workshop 8th May 6.30pm
- Candle making workshop 20th May 7.00pm
- Sound bath relaxation workshop TBC
- Afternoon tea 26th June 2.30pm-4.30pm
- Christmas Shopping Event 12th Nov 7.00pm
- Plus many more ideas to be announced.



Each event reflects the spirit Nicky embodied – community, compassion, and courage.

Looking ahead, we are proud to share plans to establish an annual medical event in her honour: **The Nicky Bartlett Medical Meeting**. This meeting will focus on key medical issues associated with Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis, bringing together healthcare professionals, researchers, and members of our community. It will provide an opportunity to share knowledge, discuss emerging treatments, and address the real-life challenges faced by those living with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD).

Through this annual meeting, Nicky's name will be linked not only with friendship and generosity, but also with progress, education, and hope for the future.

While we miss her deeply, Nicky's legacy is already making a meaningful difference. Her memory lives on – in the research being funded, in the events bringing people together, and in the ongoing commitment to improving the lives of those affected by Crohn's and Colitis.

With gratitude and remembrance, we honour Nicky.

Azam Baccus Takes on “The Big Winter Workout”

We are proud to celebrate Azam Baccus, who recently took on The Big Winter Workout in support of Crohn's & Colitis UK – raising funds and awareness while managing the daily realities of living with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). For many, committing to a winter fitness challenge requires determination. For someone living with Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis, it demands even more – resilience, careful planning, and the courage to push forward while respecting the body's limits. Azam embraced that challenge head-on.

“The Big Winter Workout” is designed to encourage people to stay active during the colder months while raising vital funds for research, support services, and campaigning work. By stepping up, Azam not only contributed financially to the charity's mission but also demonstrated what is possible when personal experience is transformed into positive action.

Living with IBD can mean navigating fatigue, unpredictable flare-ups, hospital appointments, and the emotional toll that often accompanies chronic illness. Despite these challenges, Azam committed his time and energy to training, fundraising, and sharing his story – helping to raise awareness of conditions that are often misunderstood and invisible to others. His efforts highlight an important truth: fundraising is not just about the money raised (though every pound makes a difference). It is about visibility, solidarity, and hope. By taking part in The Big Winter Workout, Azam showed others living with IBD that they are not defined by their condition – and that even small steps, taken consistently, can lead to meaningful change.

We are incredibly grateful for Azam's commitment, courage, and generosity. His actions embody the spirit of our South Essex community: supporting one another, raising awareness, and working towards better treatments and, one day, a cure.

Thank you, Azam, a member of our organising team – for your determination, your advocacy, and for turning personal challenge into powerful support for others.



John Trussell Raises His Voice – and Awareness

We would like to recognise John Trussell, a valued member of our South Essex Network, who has recently shown tremendous courage in sharing his story publicly. John lives with Ulcerative Colitis and is currently undergoing treatment for cancer – a journey that demands extraordinary strength and resilience. In a recent interview on BBC Radio 2, the focus was primarily on his cancer diagnosis and treatment, and the realities of navigating that experience.

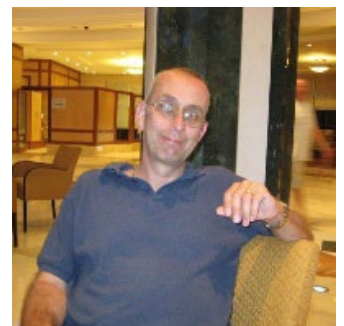
Speaking openly on BBC Radio 2, John shared the emotional and physical challenges that come with a cancer diagnosis, offering honesty, perspective, and hope to listeners across the country.

While the interview centred on cancer, John's wider health journey – including living with Ulcerative Colitis – reflects the complex realities many people manage simultaneously. His willingness to speak publicly, especially while in treatment, demonstrates remarkable courage and generosity.

Following the broadcast, John experienced an unexpected social media fame connecting invertedly with famous peoples as a result. What began as a conversation on the radio quickly became a powerful moment of connection and community.

At a time when he could understandably focus solely on his own recovery, John has helped foster greater understanding and compassion through his openness. We are incredibly proud of him and grateful for the awareness he has raised.

From all of us in the South Essex Network, we send John our continued support and very best wishes.



THE ROLE OF THE IBD NURSE SPECIALIST

Before, During and After Diagnosis

For anyone living with Crohn's or Ulcerative Colitis, the IBD Nurse Specialist is often one of the most important and reassuring figures in their care.

Before Diagnosis - Support During Uncertainty

The period leading up to a diagnosis can be confusing and stressful. Symptoms may be unpredictable, tests can feel daunting, and waiting for answers can be emotionally draining.

IBD nurses help by:

- Explaining what tests involve and what patients can expect
- Offering advice on managing symptoms while awaiting results
- Providing reassurance and helping people understand the possible pathways ahead

Even before a formal diagnosis is confirmed, having someone knowledgeable to speak to can reduce anxiety and ensure concerns are addressed promptly.

Living with IBD - Ongoing Care and Rapid Advice

After diagnosis, the IBD nurse often becomes the main point of contact within the hospital team.

Many NHS hospital trusts provide:

- **Nurse-led advice lines or email services** for flare-ups and urgent concerns
- **Nurse-led clinics** for monitoring and education
- **Support with biologic therapies and ongoing treatment management**
- **Coordination between consultants, surgeons, dietitians and other specialists**

Having access to specialist advice quickly can help prevent complications and reduce hospital admissions. It also gives patients confidence that expert support is only a phone call or message away.

For many people, the IBD nurse is more than a healthcare professional – they are an advocate, educator, and steady source of reassurance throughout the IBD journey.

If you are under the care of a hospital IBD team and are unsure how to contact your IBD nurse, check your clinic letters or your hospital's gastroenterology webpage for advice line details.

COLLECTING USED STAMPS TO RAISE MONEY!

One of our members, Diane H, coordinates and collects used postage stamps to raise money for Crohn's & Colitis UK. If anybody would like to help us to raise funds this way, we would be very happy to receive any stamp donations you may be able to provide us with 😊

For more information, please email us at our network email address se@networks.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk, and one of our team members will get back to you asap

MAKING CHARITY DONATIONS THROUGH PAYPAL

Did you know that you can make donations to chosen charities, including Crohn's & Colitis UK, through PayPal? Payments can be made either as a one-off donation, or you can even set a particular charity as your 'favourite charity' which allows you to 'conveniently support the charity every time you check out and at other donation opportunities'.

For more information about the scheme, and/or to set Crohn's & Colitis UK as your favourite charity visit www.paypal.com/uk/fundraiser/charity/3191094 for more details.

MEET THE TEAM - VIKKI CARTER

“We Were Told It Was Just Piles” - A Family’s Fight for a Diagnosis

When Vikki Carter’s son Jack first became ill in April 2023, he was a typical sixth form student—just 17 years old. Within months, everything changed.

Jack began experiencing severe symptoms: persistent pain, bleeding, weight loss, and extreme fatigue. Despite this, his concerns were repeatedly dismissed. “We were told it was just piles,” Vikki recalls.

Over the next four months, Jack’s condition worsened significantly. He became so unwell he was sometimes unable to move, at one point lying in the back of his parents’ car in agony. Yet referrals for further investigation were not made. The family were told to go to A&E, only to be sent back to the GP for a referral—leaving them stuck in a cycle while Jack continued to deteriorate.

Desperate, Vikki and her husband Mick made the decision to pay privately for a colonoscopy. That decision proved critical. The results confirmed Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), initially diagnosed as Ulcerative Pan Colitis. More recently, following a biopsy, there is a possibility it may instead be Crohn’s Disease.

Once armed with evidence, the family pushed again for NHS care. A paediatrician immediately recognised the severity of Jack’s condition and referred him to a specialist. The gastroenterologist later described it as one of the worst cases he had seen, even returning from planned leave to ensure Jack received urgent care. Jack was eventually admitted to hospital for eight days, though the family faced further confusion over whether he should be treated as a child or an adult due to his age.

Vikki has since made a formal complaint, part of which has been upheld. Her question remains: why, when a young person presents with bleeding, pain, sickness and weight loss, are they not taken seriously? She also questions why more appropriate diagnostic procedures are not offered sooner to under-18s when symptoms clearly warrant them.

During this time, Vikki turned to Crohn’s & Colitis UK (CCUK), having been directed there by hospital staff who explained it was a reliable and accurate source of information. While exploring this Vikki found out about the local team and through its support network, she and her family have found reassurance and perspective—meeting others living with IBD has helped her see a future for Jack.

Reflecting on their experience, Vikki says, “I wish we had listened to Jack more. He knew something wasn’t right.”

Now, the family is determined to raise awareness so that no other young person is dismissed or left to suffer unnecessarily. Their story is a reminder that early diagnosis matters—and that listening, especially to young people, can make all the difference.

JOIN US

We are always looking for new volunteers for our friendly team and would love to hear from anybody who may be interested in helping within the South Essex Network.

If you think this may be something for you, please fill in the Crohn’s & Colitis UK enquiry form to learn more www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/volunteering-enquiry-form

CONTACT US

**CROHN'S &
COLITIS UK**

SOUTH ESSEX NETWORK

Lead Volunteer: Dave Gregory

Website: www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/se

Email: se@networks.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk



Crohn's and
Colitis UK –
South Essex
Group



@CrohnsColitisUK

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Crohn's & Colitis UK

1 Bishops Square, Hatfield Business Park, AL10 9NE

www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/contact

Volunteer Enquires: 01727 734 475

Crohn's & Colitis UK - a registered charity in England & Wales (1117148) and Scotland (SC038632). Registered as a company limited by guarantee in England & Wales (5973370).

HELPLINE

Our helpline team can help by:

- Providing information about Crohn's and Colitis.
- Listening and talking through your situation.
- Helping you to find support from others in the Crohn's and Colitis community.
- Providing details of other specialist organisations.

Please be aware we're not medically or legally trained. We cannot provide detailed financial or benefits advice or specialist emotional support. If you need individual medical advice about your condition, your GP or IBD team will be best placed to help.

CONTACT US BY:

Telephone: 0300 222 5700

Our lines are open 10am to 3pm, Monday to Friday (except English bank holidays).

Email: helpline@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk

Live Chat: www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/helpline

You can email us anytime and we will aim to respond to your email within three working days.

DID YOU KNOW?

For anybody who would like to help out at events within our network, without the commitment of joining the committee, Crohn's & Colitis UK has created a new role, specifically designed for these volunteers. The role, which is called 'Local Network Event volunteer' would not require attendance at regular meetings, but would allow volunteers to register with Crohn's & Colitis UK to help the Network at events on an ad-hoc basis.

More information about the new role can be found at -

www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/local-networks

To make an enquiry about volunteering please complete the following form on the Crohn's & Colitis website

www.crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/volunteering-enquiry-form

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

COFFEE MORNINGS

**Community Room
Hornchurch Fire Station
42 North Street
Hornchurch
RM11 1SH**

(the entrance is on the left hand side of the fire station, next to the library)

10.30am - 12.00 Midday

Informal coffee mornings are held on the 2nd Saturday of every month.

The South Essex Network has made every reasonable effort to ensure the content of this newsletter is accurate but accepts no responsibility for any errors or omission. The views of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Crohn's & Colitis UK and no reference in this newsletter to any product or service is intended as a recommendation.