

## **Support Group Information**

Sjögren's UK is proud to have several support groups across the UK but we are always looking for more! Our group co-ordinators, all dedicated volunteers, provide an invaluable service by organising meetings for fellow members in their area. We are incredibly grateful to all our co-ordinators and thank them for their continued effort and hard work!

Since our establishment in 1986, we have grown into a thriving charity with approximately 2300 members. An integral part of the support we offer to patients and carers is carried out throughout our regional support group network. Sjögren's UK could not possibly reach as many people as it does without the help of all the regional groups throughout the UK.

Support groups are important for many reasons. They give the opportunity for our members to share experiences and tips with each other, which is incredibly reassuring and helpful for them. They also allow people the chance to establish friendships and increase their social circle. Groups are a vital source of information on Sjögren's, through guest speakers, allowing people to keep up to date with any developments regarding the condition. They also help reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness via mutual help and support. Speaking to other sufferers reduces the feeling of anxiety and fear, groups also help make people feel in control of their illness and allows them to take an active role in their own health and well-being.

### **What does running a group involve?**

It is important that the support groups are clearly seen to be a part of Sjögren's UK, but these meetings can be as informal as you like with our current groups ranging from just 2-15 people. The key role of the co-ordinator is to arrange the date, time and venue of the meeting. Some groups meet just once a year and others more often, but it really is up to you! The meeting can be anything from a coffee and an informal chat to a guest speaker, a bring and buy sale or even a Christmas lunch. Meetings are often held at local cafes, coffee shops, pubs or community halls and some are even held at member's homes. All that we ask is that you always welcome new members and introduce them to others!

### **We will support you**

Sjögren's UK office (Latoya Woodburn - Regional Group Contact) will provide support to you as a regional group co-ordinator. If you provide us with meeting details such as dates, times and venues, we can include them in our newsletter and on our website.

We will send information packs for you to issue as you see fit and you can always email or call to request more.

### **What details will we give out?**

As the regional co-ordinator and a current member of the Sjögren's UK, we will already have all your details on file. Your communication with members is entirely up to you and we will only make public the details you authorise us to do so. Some members prefer email only whilst others are happy for email, telephone and mobile numbers to be given out.

### **How we keep in touch**

- Attend coordinator meetings via zoom
- Provide and update about your group for quarterly newsletters. This could include what you have gotten up to since your last group meeting. You can include pictures and as much information as you can but please ask members permission to publish this publicly.

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