

# Life is Full of Ups and Downs

Diane reflects on a traumatic year for her and her family, and also the benefits available to members of our schemes. She plans to introduce a cancer support group for members in the near future.



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It is nice to be back in work and back to normality once again.

As you will know my primary role in the Federation is offering support and looking after the welfare of colleagues who are suffering from any illness or an injury. As you can imagine over the last twelve months I have had contact with many officers including some who are seriously ill suffering from a life threatening illness such as cancer.

Ironically in November last year I was diagnosed with breast cancer and one week later I was in hospital having a mastectomy. What a blow that was! It was an important reminder to me that no one is invincible and that illness is indiscriminate. Believe me there are no guarantees in life. That said I consider myself one of the lucky ones; it was not necessary to put my body through gruelling chemotherapy treatment and my prognosis for the future is good. I also consider myself to be very fortunate as I have since the inception of the Group Insurance Scheme been a fully paid up member—what a blessing that has been.

After diagnosis I duly completed my claim form for critical illness benefit and I thought that, as this was just on the Christmas period I would have to wait

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some time. How wrong I was! there was no argument or the expected letters of clarification winging themselves to and fro. I was paid the £10,000 benefit in only a matter of a couple of weeks. Whilst no one would choose to receive this benefit it was most welcome when it arrived. My family and I could immediately look to the future and we started planning a much longed for trip to New York.

I was also contacted by one of the Red Arc nurses, Shelley, and she has been absolutely lovely. She has kept in regular phone contact with me and she has offered much needed advice and support during my recovery. I have often referred members to Red Arc and always believed the service was good but as I now have been on the receiving end of it I can say without reservation that the Red Arc team are fabulous. And as if that wasn't enough

they have also referred me for a course of complimentary therapies. So far I have had two treatments of reflexology and reiki and I can honestly say I am hooked. The therapist has also spent time with me discussing nutrition and diet and I have learnt so much about how the right foods can assist recovery and overall well-being.

I am also a member of the Benevolent Fund and I know that there is still much more support I have not yet accessed by way of the Police Treatment Centres, physiotherapy in house at the OHU at HQ and respite and recuperation breaks at the lodges in Carnforth and Windermere. I have a couple more operations that are due to take place later this year so I am sure will also be accessing those services.

My own situation and my dealings with other officers and their families who are living with cancer has made me look at the overall ongoing support provided. I believe that our job is unique and now that most of us are surviving cancer and carrying on with our careers we may face a number of challenges along the way. I am exploring the opportunity along with the assistance from Macmillan nurses for us to have our own Merseyside Police support group. I realise that this is not for everyone but if this is something you would be interested in I would love to hear from you. I can be contacted via the Federation offices in Green Lane.

Whilst I have had the worst few months of my life it has in some respect been the best and as the saying goes I do believe that every cloud has a silver lining.