

News...

[2019](#)

[2018](#)

[2017](#)

[News](#)

[2016](#)

[2015](#)

[2014](#)

[December](#)

[November](#)

[October](#)

[September](#)

[August](#)

[July](#)

[CQC report praises hardworking staff at North Cumbria's hospitals](#)

[Innovative equipment arrives at the Cumberland Infirmary for breast cancer patients](#)

[Local head and neck cancer support group donate new equipment to the Cumberland Infirmary](#)

[June](#)

[May](#)

[April](#)

[March](#)

[February](#)

[January](#)

[2013](#)

[2012](#)

[2011](#)

[Home](#) > [News](#) > Local head and neck cancer support group donate new equipment to the Cumberland Infirmary

Local head and neck cancer support group donate new equipment to the Cumberland Infirmary

Posted on Monday 21st July 2014

A support group for head and neck cancer patients and carers in north Cumbria has generously donated new equipment for radiotherapy patients at the Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle.

The 'Heads Up' group decided to use funds they had to buy something which they felt would benefit head and neck cancer patients. They purchased three clinical immobilisation devices which are a type of cushion designed to keep a patient in a fixed position from treatment to treatment over a course of radiotherapy. The cushion is 'moulded' to a patient during their first appointment and it is then kept for that patient for the duration of their treatment.

Howard French, clinical technologist at the Cumberland Infirmary, said: "The device is used to limit patient movement during treatment and brings with it many benefits including reducing the time it takes to set the patient up for each session and most importantly, allowing the patient to feel more comfortable and reducing their anxiety about holding their body in the same position for a prolonged length of time.

"We would all like to thank the Heads Up group for their kind donation. The devices are reusable and can last for a few years so these will benefit many patients."

The Heads Up support group was established in May 2012 and meets on the first Wednesday of every month at various venues around north Cumbria in Carlisle, Penrith and Workington. Speakers on topics relevant to patients undergoing and following treatment for head and neck cancer are invited to talk to the group and it also allows patients and carers to talk with others in their situation for mutual support. Health professionals involved in the group produce a monthly newsletter which is sent to patients to keep them up-to-date with news and events.

Lorna Gamberini, Macmillan Speech and Language Therapist, said: "Recovery from head and neck cancer can be a long process, and requires the ongoing support of a multidisciplinary team. The cancer itself or the effects of the treatment can impact on speech, voice and swallowing, which as a result can affect patients' confidence, social life and ability to work.

"Heads Up as a group is a fantastic opportunity to meet fellow patients and carers who understand the impact of head and neck cancer and can offer support and help rebuild confidence."



L-R: Judy Lightfoot (Macmillan speech & language therapy assistant), Maureen McGuckin (Pre-treatment superintendent radiographer), Aileen Scorer (member of the Heads Up group), David Ashworth (senior radiographer) and Howard French (clinical technologist)

For more information about the Heads Up group, please email headsup.northcumbria@gmail.com

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