

## **The Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Centre at North Manchester General Hospital**

Being told you have cancer can leave people feeling devastated and confused – not just the person with cancer but also those around them. The service provided at the Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Centre at North Manchester General aims to help people affected by cancer to make sense of the situation. The centre provides a service for anyone in the Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust area, including Oldham, and opened in April 2010.

As well as supporting people affected by cancer, the service can provide information about all aspects of cancer. This includes information about how to reduce your risk of cancer, information for people diagnosed with cancer, and signposting to services for people affected by cancer. People are generally living much longer following a diagnosis of cancer, and the centre also aims to help support people who are living beyond a cancer diagnosis.

Says centre manager Felicity Keeling “The centre provides a calming, welcoming environment where people can talk in confidence, with a quiet room for anyone who needs more privacy. People diagnosed with cancer often find it difficult to absorb all the information given to them by their doctors – we are here as back-up as we are detached from the clinical side of things. People talk to us about how their illness and treatment are affecting them and we can offer advice and support to help them cope with the practical and emotional effects.

Crossing over the threshold into the centre can be a big step for anyone affected by cancer. A straightforward request for information often turns into much more, where people open up and tell us how they really feel. People often have real fears about what might happen to them or their loved one, but often don't want to discuss them with people involved in their care, in case they think they're not coping or because they don't want to upset them. Often it is enough to be able to vent these feelings and for them to be acknowledged, without worrying about the repercussions. The centre provides a 'safe' place where people can do this, and often say they feel so much better as a result. Just to hear that the thoughts they have been having are quite common can help keep people on an even keel.”

The centre, which is open between 10am and 3pm Monday to Friday, is staffed by specially trained staff and volunteers, some of whom have been affected by cancer. The service is available for anyone wanting information about cancer, or affected by cancer, whether they are patients, family members, carers or friends. As well as dropping in to the Centre, anyone wishing to access the service can telephone the centre on 0161 604 5244 during opening hours to speak to a member of staff, or to leave a message at other times.