

South Warwickshire Prostate Cancer Support Group

2024 Annual Report

1 Introduction

Our eleventh year as a local support group and we have continued a pattern of bimonthly plenary meetings at the Old Leamingtonians Rugby Club that are also available online, and local meetings in the other months. The plan this year was to increase our visibility, availability and impact on those in South Warwickshire affected by prostate cancer.

2 How are we doing?

a) Numbers

69 people (58 men and 11 women) attended at least one of our meetings in 2024 compared with 50 (44 men and 6 women) in 2023. 47 of those people attended local groups compared with 31 last year. Of these 47 some 22 only attended local groups. Our numbers at the six plenary meetings ranged from 26 to 14. These numbers included both online and in-club attendance. Online figures averaged about 2, down from 2023. This was probably due to our having technical issues on at least two occasions. Our active membership has increased from 52 in 2023 to 69 in 2024. I have had inquiries from or on behalf of 27 men in 2024 (the same as 2023!) and of these 19 (17 in 2023) have gone on to attend at least one meeting. It is disappointing that we do not seem to have increased the number of referrals at all.

b) Local groups

We started the year with two longstanding groups, Shipston and Stratford, and new groups serving Alcester and Leamington. Shipston and Stratford have continued to be our larger groups. Stratford had to leave the Crowne Plaza due to a fire that closed the hotel. However, the move to Stratford Sports Club has been well received and the Committee Room that we use provides much more privacy. As Doug is a member of the Club there is no charge for the use of the room. Our new groups have met regularly, and numbers are slowly growing. Possibly we should have a WhatsApp group for each of the local groups?

c) Plenary meetings

We had 6 large meetings at the Old Leamingtonians Club this year. We very much appreciate the generosity of the Club in providing this facility free of charge. Parking is also free and apart from milk and biscuits so are all refreshments. Apart from our AGM in March we have had speakers at all meetings. In January Mr Kaba, Consultant Urologist at Warwick Hospital, provided a wide-ranging talk and took a lot of time to answer questions which was much appreciated. In May Nicola Mulkern, physiotherapist at Warwick Hospital, spoke about Pelvic Floor Exercises with infectious enthusiasm! David Hadley-Smith was our speaker in July and he helped us to understand his role as an Ambassador for Prostate Cancer UK. In September the topic was Clinical Trials and Davina Hewitt and Sian McKee gave an overview of all the trials currently available at Coventry and Warwickshire University Hospital Trust. They also spoke about upcoming trials that they will soon be recruiting for. Our November meeting was addressed by Mohit Mitra from iMedicare on the topic of Erectile Dysfunction and the important role that the pump can play in physiotherapy after surgery or radiotherapy for prostate cancer.

d) Finances

We now have a business account with NatWest and thanks to all your contributions we have £558.25 in the account. All our bills, including the catering for our meeting in January 2025 with Manuela Perteghella MP, have been paid. Our only regular bill is for maintenance of the website which is £15 per month. As soon as we have agreed an Action Plan for this year, we can identify the relevant costs and draw up a budget. Out of that exercise will come a consideration about how we raise whatever money we think we shall need.

f) Supporting local PSA testing events

The focus of this activity continues to be the monthly PSA testing at The Nelson Club in Warwick. Derek Ford has taken the lead on this activity with a number of others volunteering including Paul and Cassie Cooper, Paul Burtonshaw, Lloyd Beesley, Ray Tanner and myself. We have had one or two volunteers at most meetings this year and now have a strong relationship with the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust (GFCT). Derek has also responded to other local PSA events in Balsall Common, Stratford, Kenilworth and Wellesbourne, and is very committed to increasing the impact of our group in this way. In total Derek and his team have supported 20 PSA testing events this year and handed out about 2,000 leaflets!

g) Other outreach activities

In the autumn the Shipston group responded to an invitation to give a talk at a Well Man event held at the Meon Vale community Centre. This was very well attended and their talk on Prostate Cancer was particularly popular. The most common question was about getting a PSA test, and Frank Cooper and Malcolm Pendery were able to point men in the direction of their GP's and, failing that, to the GFCT.

Though our meeting with Manuela Perteghella, our local MP, fell in 2025 I will report briefly on it here as it will have some bearing on what activities we would like to develop as a support group in 2025. The meeting took place at Stratford Sports Club on Friday 10th January 2025 at 4 pm. About 35 people attended including 10 partners or wives, a record turnout! We had about an hour in which members shared their concerns and Manuela listened. At the end she responded enthusiastically, and it was clear that she had an excellent grasp of the issues raised. In summary she gave her support to the current national campaign for targeted screening for prostate cancer and for the local campaign to encourage the fitting of sanitary disposal units in men's public conveniences. She clearly heard the concerns raised about how varied local GPs are in responding to request for PSA tests for men over 50. I did not expect to be reporting that Manuela had put down an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons naming our group and identifying the range of issues summarised above! SWaPS has made it into Hansard even if there was no debate on the motion proposed.

h) Committee report.

I would like to thank everyone who has been on the committee this year. We have met five times and have sought to do as much business in these meetings as possible, thus freeing time in plenary meetings for the speaker and for the Round. The committee agreed expenditure on a couple of banners and on a webcam to improve the experience of online attendees. Other important issues included the adoption of a Confidentiality Statement to be used in all our group meetings and the inclusion of a My Story section on our website. We did debate printing our own leaflets but decided against this and will continue to rely on stick on labels with our website details that can be attached to Tackle and/or Prostate Cancer UK (PCUK) leaflets. We considered setting up a Partners group but the

feedback from partners was that they preferred attending the meetings with their men!

3 Thanks

The Publicity group which ensures that invitations to join our meetings get out to as wide an audience as possible has continued to do an excellent job. In addition to posters on boards we are now on many local and specialist national websites and increasingly in GP surgeries on their digital displays. This is essential work which is invisible to everyone except those doing the work! I would particularly like to thank Paul Cooper who has taken over from Jill Meddins the important task of liaising with local free papers to get us into their pages.

Thanks also to those who have organised the local groups: Paul B in Leamington; Frank in Shipston, and me in Alcester and Stratford. It is great to see that attendance at these groups is growing and for many this is the main way that they get group support.

The staff of the Urology Department at Warwick Hospital have supported us as a group throughout our history and this has continued this year with two of our five speakers coming from Warwick Hospital. This support has included referring men, attendance at our meetings and responding to our emails as and when members get lost in or confused by the system! Ann and Emma continue to be an active part of our group and are key to us being an effective support to men with prostate cancer.

As always, my special thanks go to all of you who turn up and contribute to meetings, whether online or face2face, by sharing your experiences and knowledge, offering support and advice to each other. I have been impressed by the way that you reach out to each other in meetings, and it has been great to note that people are contacting each other outside of meetings where they have some particular concern to discuss. Long may it last!

Doug Badger

March 2025

Action Plan for 2025

The following 4 point action plan is proposed for 2025:

- Business as usual, with a focus on local work activities.
- Regular bi-monthly Plenary Meetings
- Focus on improving local contacts and impacts with a view to improving our referral rate
- Campaign locally for more consistency in PSA testing by GPs and for the installation of Bins for Boys.

