# Mother advocates for sarcoma awareness after son's cancer diagnosis



Alexandra Hams, a 40-year-old mother from Sidcup in Kent, has been advocating for greater awareness of sarcoma after her two-year-old son, Rafferty, fought a prolonged battle to receive a diagnosis for a rare form of cancer. The ordeal began in January 2023 when Alexandra discovered a small lump on her son’s skin while applying moisturiser after a bath. Concerned by this finding, she sought medical advice.

After an initial visit to a GP, Rafferty was referred for an ultrasound, but Alexandra felt the process was not progressing quickly enough. “Rafferty was sent for a two-week referral, following his ultrasound, and this appointment wasn’t coming through quick enough,” she explained. After contacting the hospital for updates, she discovered that the referral letter was still pending under review by a consultant. Subsequently, Alexandra decided to pursue private healthcare options in hopes of accelerating the process. A consultant advised her to take Rafferty to A&E for what they hoped would be quicker answers.

During this period, while awaiting results, another scan at A&E confirmed that the lump was benign but did not include a biopsy. Despite being reassured that it was benign, the lump continued to grow, reaching the size of a grape, prompting Alexandra and her family to seek further answers. Over the course of several months, they encountered a series of appointments, scans, and tests, all while receiving assurances that the lump was non-cancerous.

Alexandra’s instinct, however, persisted, leading her to continue advocating for her son. In November, Rafferty underwent another ultrasound, eventually followed by an MRI and biopsy in December. It was only at the end of December 2023 that they received a definitive diagnosis of fibromyxoid sarcoma, a malignant tumour arising from connective tissues such as bone, muscle, and fat. “I didn’t know what sarcoma was at the time,” Alexandra stated. “It took a whole year to get a confirmed diagnosis. I just felt like I couldn’t rest because I knew something wasn't right.”

The family experienced a mixture of relief and heartache upon receiving the news that required surgical intervention. In January 2024, Rafferty underwent surgery at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore to remove the tumour. Thankfully, the operation was successful, and further treatment was deemed unnecessary. Rafferty, now four years old, continues to receive routine check-ups at The Royal Marsden Hospital.

In the wake of her son’s diagnosis and recovery, Alexandra has become committed to raising awareness about sarcoma, expressing concern that a lack of public knowledge may have contributed to the delays in Rafferty's diagnosis. She is participating in the London Marathon to raise funds for Sarcoma UK, targeting a goal of £5,000. “I want to raise awareness because family members, friends, none of us had heard of sarcoma, and I just really don’t think the word is out there enough,” remarked Alexandra, who sees the marathon as a personal mission intertwined with her hopes for Rafferty and other families facing similar challenges.

In support of Alexandra’s campaign, Kerry Reeves-Kneip, Director of Fundraising and Communications at Sarcoma UK, highlighted the need for improved diagnostic processes for rare cancers. “Rafferty's rare cancer journey serves as a stark reminder of the importance of ongoing research and investment in sarcoma,” stated Reeves-Kneip. “His experience underscores the critical need for faster, more precise diagnoses.”

As Alexandra prepares for the marathon, she shares advice with other parents: “Trust your gut, and check your children for lumps and things. If you're unsure, don’t hesitate.” Her journey reflects not only a battle against a rare cancer but also serves as a powerful call for enhanced awareness and understanding of such conditions within the broader community.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.rnoh.nhs.uk/> - This is the website of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, where Rafferty underwent surgery, supporting the aspect of the story involving Rafferty’s surgical treatment.
* <https://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/> - This is the website of The Royal Marsden Hospital, where Rafferty continues to receive routine check-ups, providing further context on his ongoing care.
* <https://www.sarcoma.org.uk/> - This is the website of Sarcoma UK, the organization Alexandra is raising funds for through the London Marathon, highlighting her efforts to raise awareness about sarcoma.
* <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/sarcoma/about/types/fibromyxoid-sarcoma> - This webpage provides information about fibromyxoid sarcoma, which is the type of cancer Rafferty was diagnosed with, supporting the claim about the specific condition he faced.
* <https://www.londonmarathon.com> - This is the website for the London Marathon, which Alexandra is participating in to raise funds for Sarcoma UK, corroborating her charitable endeavour.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/ultrasound-scan/> - This NHS webpage provides information on ultrasound scans, which were part of Rafferty’s diagnostic process, supporting the explanation of medical procedures involved in his diagnosis.
* <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/mum-found-lump-giving-son-31358425> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/mum-found-lump-giving-son-10082955> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/health/i-found-lump-bathing-son-34999809> - Please view link - unable to able to access data