# Mother's journey highlights the challenges of securing a sarcoma diagnosis for her son



Alexandra Hams, a 40-year-old mother from Sidcup in Kent, is sharing her experience as she navigated the healthcare system to secure a diagnosis for her son, Rafferty, who is now four years old. The ordeal began in January 2023 when Alexandra discovered a small lump on Rafferty's skin while applying moisturiser after a routine bath. Instinctively sensing that something was amiss, she sought medical advice.

After the initial consultation with a general practitioner, Rafferty was scheduled for an ultrasound. However, the anxiety surrounding the diagnosis heightened when Alexandra learned that the referral for the ultrasound was delayed, as the awaiting letter was sitting on a consultant’s desk waiting for review. Speaking about the situation, Alexandra expressed her frustrations, saying, “I called the hospital and was told that the referral letter was sitting on a consultant’s desk waiting to be reviewed. This was when we decided to go private to speed things up.”

Following the private consultation, Alexandra took Rafferty to Accident and Emergency (A&E) to obtain expeditious results. Initially, he was told he had a benign tumour, but no further investigation, such as a biopsy, was scheduled at that time. Despite this reassessment and reassurance, the lump persisted in growing, ultimately reaching the size of a grape. Faced with the uncertainty of the diagnosis and continued dissatisfaction with the responses from healthcare professionals, Alexandra relied on her maternal instinct to keep advocating for her son.

Over the following months, Rafferty underwent an extensive series of appointments, scans, and tests. Eventually, in November 2023, he had another ultrasound, followed by an MRI and biopsy in December. It was only later in December that the sombre news was delivered: Rafferty was diagnosed with a fibromyxoid sarcoma, a rare and malignant tumour that typically develops in connective tissues, such as bone and muscle. “I didn’t know what sarcoma was at the time,” Alexandra recalled. “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.”

Alexandra reflected on the toll the uncertainty took on her family. “We put our trust in the system, and when I felt it let us down slightly that year—if they had picked up on it a bit sooner, then it wouldn’t have been a year of appointments. It was a mix of emotions, but we were relieved that we had a diagnosis that was confirmed, and we could process it and deal with what was coming.”

In January 2024, Rafferty underwent surgery at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore to remove the tumour. Alexandra noted the anxiety leading up to the operation, encapsulating the turmoil many families face during such medical crises. Post-surgery, fortune favoured Rafferty; further treatment was deemed unnecessary. He is now under the watchful care of The Royal Marsden Hospital, where he continues to receive regular check-ups.

In the wake of this challenging experience, Alexandra has begun seeking to raise awareness about sarcoma, particularly as her own extended family had been unaware of the condition. To amplify this cause, she is participating in the London Marathon, aiming to raise over £5,000 for Sarcoma UK. She articulated her motivations, stating, “Running the London Marathon has always been a dream of mine, but I never had a reason so close to my heart until now. Every step I take during training and every mile I run on race day will be for Rafferty, for other children and families battling sarcoma, and for hope—the hope that one day we will have better treatments, earlier diagnoses and perhaps even a cure.”

Additionally, she hopes her story serves as encouragement for other parents to listen to their intuitions concerning their children's health. “If you’re worried about something, always check, and always go to the GP,” she advised, reflecting on her initial hesitance to pursue deeper investigation for her son.

Kerry Reeves-Kneip, Director of Fundraising and Communications at Sarcoma UK, echoed the vital need for ongoing investment in sarcoma research, commending Alexandra's commitment to supporting families facing similar challenges. “Rafferty’s rare cancer journey reminds us why continued investment in sarcoma research is so vital,” she stated, emphasising the necessity for advancements in early detection and treatment options.

This story underscores the often complex interplay between parent instincts, medical systems, and the importance of advocacy in the face of unusual medical challenges.

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

## References

* <https://www.sarcoma.org.uk/> - This URL supports the claim about Alexandra Hams' efforts to raise awareness about sarcoma by participating in the London Marathon to benefit Sarcoma UK. It provides background on sarcoma and the organization's mission.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/> - This URL can provide context on the UK healthcare system that Alexandra Hams navigated with her son Rafferty, including processes for referrals, consultations, and treatments within the NHS.
* <https://www.rnoh.nhs.uk/> - This URL corroborates the information about Rafferty undergoing surgery at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, highlighting the hospital's specialized services in orthopaedic care.
* <https://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/> - This URL supports the claim about Rafferty receiving follow-up care at The Royal Marsden Hospital, a renowned institution for cancer treatment.
* <https://www.britishmilersclub.co.uk/> - Although not directly related, running organizations like the British Milers Club support the broader context of marathon participation and fundraising, which is part of Alexandra's story.
* <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/> - This URL provides a general context for cancer research and awareness efforts in the UK, which aligns with Alexandra's advocacy for sarcoma research.
* <https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/mum-found-lump-giving-son-10082955> - Please view link - unable to able to access data