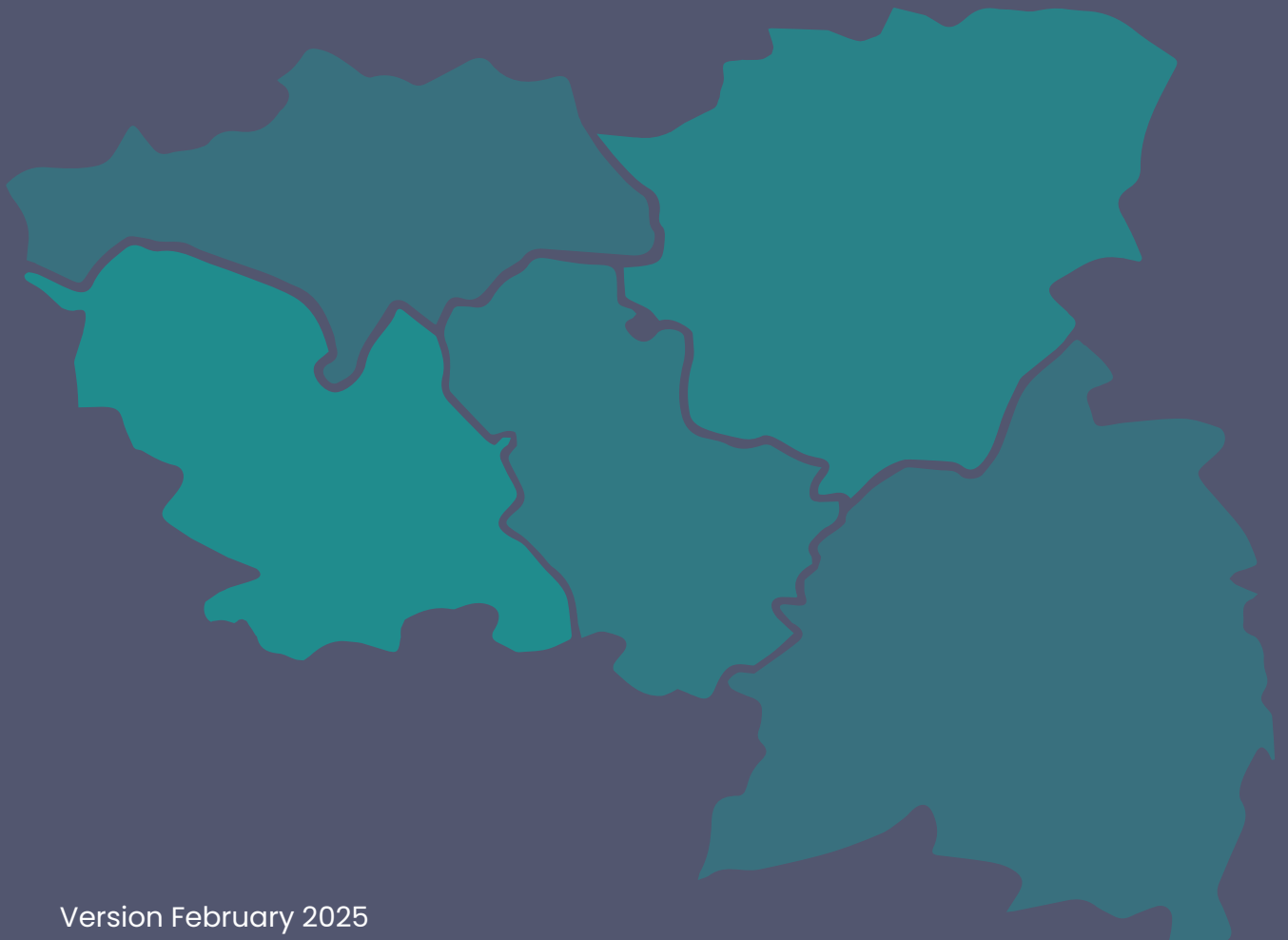


# Earlier detection of cancer in the workplace

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Steps you can take to show up for the people you work with.



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# Why we need to talk about cancer in the workplace.

Almost one million people of working age are living with cancer in the UK. It is estimated that half of new cancer diagnoses across South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw will be amongst working age people (18 to 64).

Unfortunately, we have one of the highest rates of cancer in England, with the lowest proportion of people diagnosed at an early stage.

Finding cancer early means less treatment and an easier recovery. Earlier detection significantly increases someone's chances of making a recovery and living beyond treatment. This means that understanding more about early signs and symptoms, and how you can speak with someone to encourage them to get whatever symptoms they are displaying checked out – **you might be able to reduce some worry, you might even save someone's life.**

There are lots of different types of jobs and for many people work is a consistent part of life, whether out on site, in a fixed place of work, or through remote working calls. The people we work with see and hear us regularly, so they might notice changes in our mood or physical health over time.

For cancer we are looking for physical warning signs. Many of the early symptoms of cancer are common, and could be caused by other conditions, though the message from GPs, NHS and health professional is that the normal and expected thing to do is to go to your GP to get checked. **Chances are it's nothing serious however, if you do need treatment, the sooner the better.**

## Getting checked early is a good thing

Some people say it is hard to get an appointment with their GP. This is sometimes true however, it is important to book whatever is available, so it is in the calendar. If someone has opportunity to describe their symptoms on a call, they could be given an appointment sooner.

Some people try to avoid getting checked out of fear of bad news. This is understandable however, the longer someone leaves it, the more worry and stress this causes, and as we said earlier: **if they do need treatment the sooner the better.**

## Signs and symptoms we might spot in someone else

It's important to remember that many early signs of cancer are common and often caused by less serious conditions that can be treated with simple medication or go away on their own.

If it is cancer, it needs treatment. Discovering it early, when it isn't too large and hasn't spread, improves the chances of successful treatment – and for a lot of people they can live healthily for many more years.

This section provides an overview of the common signs associated with the five cancers most frequently diagnosed late or with high case numbers in South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw. These are: ovarian cancer, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, oesophageal cancer and womb cancer.

Although some of the symptoms are not noticeable by someone else, someone might mention discomfort or display non-verbal signs that something isn't right. This is just an introduction. If you want more details, please check out the **Peace of Mind Campaign** on the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Cancer Alliance website.



Peace of Mind Campaign

## General signs and symptoms

Keep your eyes and ears open for things such as:

- Having a persistent cough,
- Obvious weight loss, or
- Loss of appetite, such as not eating their pack ups!

For workers spending time outside where sun protection is an issue, you might notice skin lesions on the back of people's body / scalp.

These should be checked out by a GP.

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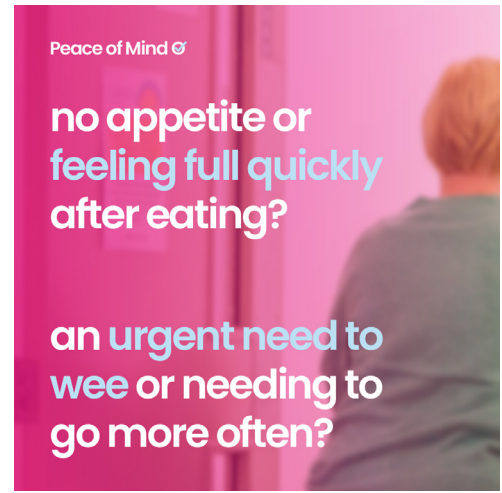
The following pages show signs and symptoms that could be linked to the most common forms of cancer in South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw.



swollen tummy  
or feeling bloated?



pain or tenderness in  
your stomach or the  
area between your  
hips?



no appetite or  
feeling full quickly  
after eating?

an urgent need to  
wee or needing to  
go more often?

## Ovarian cancer

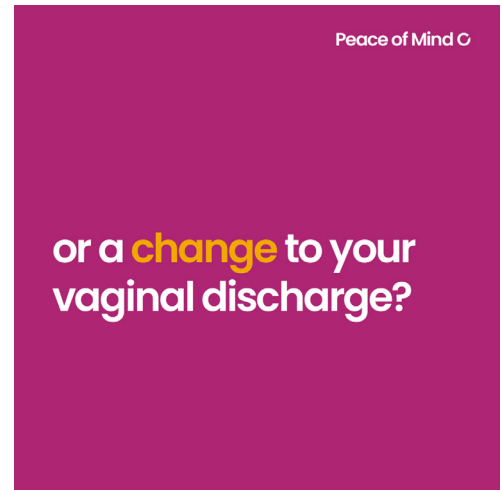
Symptoms of ovarian cancer include frequently (roughly 12 or more times a month) having:

- a swollen tummy or feeling bloated
- pain or tenderness in your tummy or the area between the hips (pelvis)
- no appetite or feeling full quickly after eating
- an urgent need to pee or needing to pee more often

Other symptoms of ovarian cancer can include:

- indigestion
- constipation or diarrhoea
- back pain
- feeling tired all the time
- losing weight without trying, and
- bleeding from the vagina after the menopause

The message here is that it's important to go and get any symptoms checked with your GP, even if you have had surgery to remove your ovaries. You may have another condition with similar symptoms.



## Womb cancer

The main symptoms of womb cancer can include:

- starting with bleeding or spotting from the vagina after the menopause (after your periods have finished for more than 12 months)
- changes to your periods such as becoming much heavier or occurring more often
- vaginal bleeding between your periods
- a change to your vaginal discharge

If you are taking hormone replacement therapy (HRT), this can commonly cause bleeding and unlikely to be sinister. However, persistent or new bleeding should be discussed with your GP as you may benefit from a change to your HRT regime or need a scan to reassure things are fine.

Other symptoms of womb cancer can include:

- a lump or swelling in your tummy or between your hip bones (pelvis)
- pain in your lower back or between your hip bones (pelvis)
- pain during sex,
- blood in your pee



## Bladder cancer

Blood in your urine is the most common symptom of bladder cancer. It is usually painless. You may notice streaks of blood in your urine, or the blood may turn your urine brown. The blood isn't always noticeable, and it may come and go.

Less common symptoms of bladder cancer include:

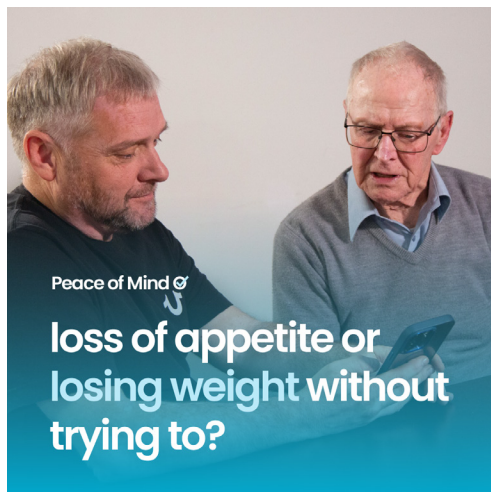
- a need to urinate on a more frequent basis
- sudden urges to urinate
- a burning sensation when passing urine

If bladder cancer reaches an advanced stage and has spread, symptoms can include:

- pelvic pain
- bone pain
- unintentional weight loss
- swelling of the legs

If you have blood in your urine – even if it comes and goes – you should visit your GP so the cause can be investigated.

Having blood in your urine doesn't mean you have bladder cancer. There are other, more common causes.



## Pancreatic cancer

**Pancreatic cancer doesn't usually cause symptoms in the early stages.**

**As the cancer grows it can start to cause symptoms. These can include:**

- pain at the top part of your tummy and your back, which may feel worse when you're eating or lying down and better when you lean forward
- yellowing of the skin or whites of your eyes (jaundice)
- unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite
- changes to your poo (stools) such as diarrhoea or constipation
- symptoms of indigestion, such as feeling bloated

**If you have another condition like irritable bowel syndrome, you may get symptoms like these regularly.**

**You might get used to the symptoms, but it's important to see a GP if they change, get worse, or don't feel normal for you.**

## Lung cancer

Lung cancer is often linked with smoking, but it can affect anyone, whether you've smoked or not.

Symptoms don't usually start to appear until it's progressed to a later stage, but, if you experience any of the following regardless of whether you have ever smoked, please speak with a healthcare professional:

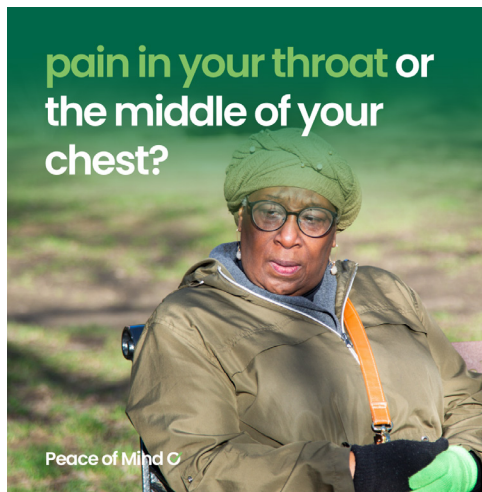
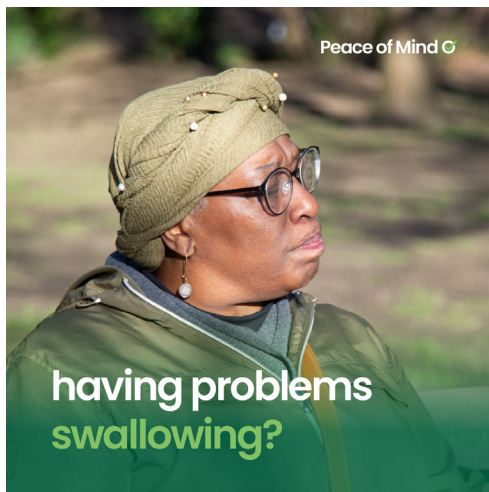
- A cough lasting three weeks or more
- Changes to an existing cough
- Recurrent chest infections
- Breathlessness or wheeziness when there wasn't before
- Unexplained weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Coughing up blood

Less common symptoms may include:

- Finger clubbing
- A hoarse voice
- Swelling of the face or neck
- Inflammation of the bones and joints in the wrists and ankles
- Unexplained shoulder pain that occurs when resting or hasn't led to loss of movement
- Persistent, unexplained chest pain

More people die from lung cancer than from any other cancer, and around 70% of lung cancers are caused by direct smoking. This is why the best thing someone can do to improve their health is stop smoking and there is help available for people who would like support with this.

You know what's normal for you and your body, so if you do have any concerns, please don't ignore or dismiss them. speak with a healthcare professional.



## Oesophageal cancer

There are many possible symptoms of oesophageal cancer, however they might be hard to spot.

They can affect your digestion, such as:

- having problems swallowing
- feeling or being sick
- heartburn or acid reflux
- symptoms of indigestion, such as burping a lot

Other symptoms include:

- a cough that is not getting better
- a hoarse voice
- loss of appetite or losing weight without trying to
- feeling tired or having no energy
- pain in your throat / middle of your chest, especially when swallowing
- black poo or coughing up blood (although these are uncommon)

If you have another condition, such as gastro-oesophageal reflux disease, you may get symptoms like these regularly.

Again, if the symptoms change, worsen or do not feel normal make sure you see your GP for a check-up.

# Step-by-step guide

## Encourage someone you know to get their symptoms checked by their GP.

Knowing some of the signs and symptoms is the first step, but then what do we do next? If we experience signs or symptoms ourselves, we need to see our GP. If we see or hear about them in someone else, we need to encourage them to see their GP but here's how to do that in the right way.

### 1. Bring up the subject in private.

Find a quiet, private moment to speak with the person one-on-one.

### 2. Be specific about what you've noticed.

Mention the specific symptom you've observed, using neutral language, e.g. I've noticed that you've had a hoarse voice for 3 or 4 weeks.

You can mention that you've had this training, so they understand where your concerns are coming from.

### 3. Encourage them to make a GP appointment.

Suggest they contact their GP to discuss the symptom. Emphasise that it's better to get checked, even if it's likely to be nothing serious. Mention that this is normally what people do, and it is encouraged by health professionals.





## Step-by-step guide Encourage someone you know to get their symptoms checked by their GP.

### 4. Share resources.

Suggest that if they want more information, that [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) is an accurate and trusted website.

### 5. Reassure them that it will at least give them some peace of mind.

Tell them the chances are it'll be all right, and if they do need treatment, the sooner the better. Early detection can mean you have more options on treatment. It is likely that they or someone they know will have been affected by cancer before, so it is important to be sensitive.

If you know someone who has had cancer who has passed away or is seriously ill, unless you know the person well, now is not the time to mention this. At this stage the message is that it is normal and expected to get a GP check and not to scare them with the what the worst possible outcomes might be.

### 6. Offer practical support.

In some cases, you might want to offer helping them to make an appointment with their GP by calling or through the NHS App. If they mention that it can be hard to get an appointment at their GP, suggest it is best to book the soonest one now, and if their symptoms clear up and they feel fine they can just cancel the appointment.

continues >>

# Step-by-step guide Encourage someone you know to get their symptoms checked by their GP.

## 7. Respect their decision.

Remember that the final choice is theirs. If they're hesitant, don't push too hard or criticise them if they don't do as you suggest. Check in with them after a few days but avoid being pushy. Simply ask how they're doing and perhaps if they managed to get an appointment at their GP.

## 8. Keep this matter private.

Keep the conversation and your concerns between the two of you and respect their privacy.

## 9. Offer ongoing support.

Let them know you're there to listen or help if they need it, regardless of their decision.

## 10. Actively check in.

If you haven't discussed again for 2-weeks we suggest asking how they are doing with the symptom(s). Ensure ongoing confidentiality and show that you care how they are doing.



Remember, your role is to be supportive and encouraging, not to diagnose. The goal is to encourage the person you are helping to take charge of their health by seeking professional medical advice when needed.

## Contacting your GP

You may be able to contact your GP surgery using NHS App, or by logging in through the NHS website.

**App:** Search 'NHS' | **Website:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

If this is available through your surgery, you will see one or both of the following options on the 'Services' page:

- contact your GP about a health problem
- contact your GP surgery for a document or update



## Contact your GP about a health problem

You can use this service to tell your GP surgery about non-urgent health symptoms. Your surgery may then offer you an appointment or another type of support that best meets your needs.

Most GP surgeries use an online form or questionnaire. Once you have submitted the details, a GP will review them and you will get a response from your surgery.

## Replies from your GP surgery

Your GP surgery may respond by phone, email or a message on the NHS App.

Depending on your GP surgery, on the **Messages** page of the NHS App, you may have an inbox with the title **Replies to your GP requests**. Your GP surgery may send a response there.

## Symptoms that are harder to see or hear.

There are other signs and symptoms that people experience that suggest they should make a GP appointment. We probably won't see them, but they might be mentioned.

**For example:** An ulcer in the mouth for more than 3 weeks, red or white patches in the mouth, a lump in the neck, on the lip or inside the mouth, a sore tongue or throat, or problems swallowing.

These could be a sign of mouth and neck cancer and like all cancer types, the sooner you are checked the better.

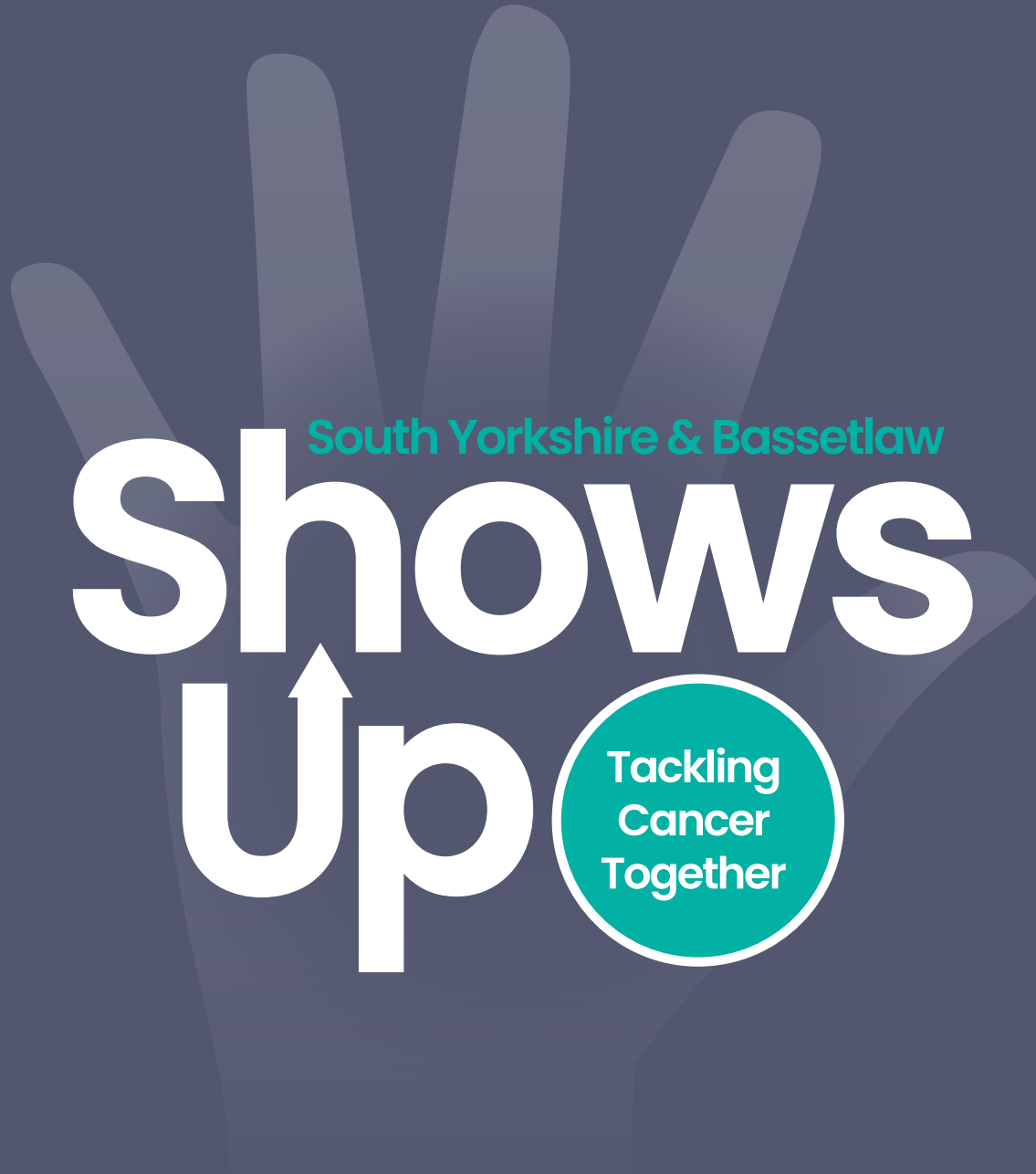
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### Further information

This has been an introductory session to cancer signs and symptoms. More information is available at [employers.sybshowsup.com](https://employers.sybshowsup.com) and at [www.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

Thank you for being proactive on cancer and showing up for the people you work with.

By having the knowledge and speaking up when you spot signs and symptoms, you might be able to reduce someone's worry, and you might even save their life.



South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw

# Shows Up

Tackling  
Cancer  
Together

[www.sybshowsup.com](http://www.sybshowsup.com)