

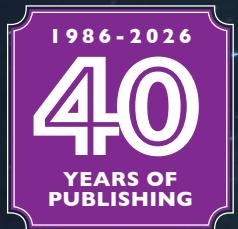
Northside

THE QUALITY MAGAZINE FOR LEEDS, HARROGATE & SURROUNDING AREAS

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Courage & charity
Sarah's Pink Events' fundraising goals

Step on
Happy Mondays' Shaun Ryder heads for Yorkshire

The wonders of space
At Sherwood Observatory and Planetarium



Courage, strength and **CHARITY**

Sarah's Pink Events has raised over £500,000 for breast cancer-related charities. We spoke to co-founder Kim O'Rourke about honouring her sister's legacy as well as continuing their good work.

It is often in the most difficult of circumstances that amazing things happen and that is certainly the case with Pink Events, a Leeds-based charity that was founded in 2012 by Sarah Pattinson and her sister Kim O'Rourke.

After Kim was diagnosed with breast cancer Sarah was inspired to organise a ball, not only as a fundraiser but as a way to give her sister something to focus on while she was having her treatment. It was a huge success and led to Sarah setting up the charity.

But in the midst of such success misfortune struck again. Within a short space of time both Sarah and her mum, Maureen, were diagnosed with breast cancer and Kim faced another battle with cardiomyopathy. All three ladies accepted their diagnosis with a courage and a strength they didn't know they possessed.

Pink Events continued to fundraise during this challenging time through events such as wine tastings, black tie balls, golf days, cinema events – there was even a trek along the Great Wall of China.

To date, the charity has raised in excess of £500,000 for breast cancer care by supporting research and providing treatments and resources for patients.

But sadly, in 2023, Sarah lost her fight and now Kim, along with her family, are continuing her fantastic legacy, raising funds for many amazing and necessary groups and causes.

We spoke to Kim to find out more about the charity and the work they are doing today.

A 'Pink Ball' kicked things off for the charity – what do you remember about the event, given everything you were going through at the time?

I remember being overwhelmed at the amount of people who had attended to support us and their generosity, their glamorous outfits and sparkles. It was the first event that Sarah had organised and I remember it being very professional, Sarah was a meticulous planner! She had thought of everything and the attention to detail paid off massively – this forms part of her internal legacy at Sarah's Pink Events and if we find ourselves at an impasse we often ask ourselves "what would Sarah do?"

And that became a springboard for more charitable endeavours?

It did, in 2007 I took part in a sponsored climb of the Great Wall of China along



ABOVE: 2015 Pink Ball, Sarah, Bob Dixon & Kimberley

LEFT: Pink Ball 2005 - the first event (L-R): Steve & Caroline LeFevre, Maureen & Michael Young, Sarah & Steven Pattinson, Kimberley & Julian O'Rourke

BETWEEN: Kim on the Great Wall of China, 2007



2025 Sarah's Pink Ball - Full committee (L-R):
James O'Rourke, Kimberley O'Rourke, Maureen Young, Mandy Bellfield, Michael Young



with other breast cancer survivors from the UK, at this point we started to gain momentum organising a variety of events such as fashion shows, wine tastings and course another Pink Ball to raise money for Breast Cancer Now (formerly Breast Cancer Care). These events had become a team effort and the Pink Events committee was formed, we soon realised that we had a real knack for creating fun events that people really enjoyed and enabled us to fundraise substantial amounts for a cause that had become very close to our hearts.

But then your mum and sister (Sarah) were both diagnosed as well – that must have been heart-breaking?

It really was, it was a heart-breaking shock. Sarah was diagnosed in November 2009 followed by Mum in January 2010. I had never questioned why I had been diagnosed myself, I hadn't come across many ladies

who had suffered breast cancer by that point in my life either as I was only 41 years old. I justified my diagnosis by telling myself that because I had gone through this that Mum or Sarah wouldn't have to do it in their lifetime because surely it couldn't happen to us all? Sadly I was wrong.

But that must have brought you closer together as well?

We were already a very close family (we all live within a mile of each other!) and so in that sense it didn't make us any more close-knit, it did become hard to talk to each other about our diagnoses, treatments and the after effects and I suppose this was because of the fear for the future – we all had our own thoughts and fears about what our futures might be as individuals but we all worried about each other too in exactly the same way which is hard to verbalise to one another.

Sadly, Sarah lost her fight in 2023, that must have been even more devastating given what you were going through as well?

In 2019 I was re-diagnosed and we subsequently found out that this was a genetic form of cancer which affected both Sarah and I – a relatively new gene named PALB2. I had chemotherapy and surgeries during the COVID 19 pandemic and just as I was on the road to recovery and putting everything behind me Sarah discovered she had a secondary breast cancer in 2021 which broke our hearts all over again as we knew that Sarah couldn't be saved this time. She died surrounded by her family in October 2023 at Wheatfields Hospice in Headingley and left behind her husband Steven, daughter Lucy-Jayne, Son Mitchell and her grandson Luca.

How are yourself and your mum doing?

Physically Mum is very well, her treatment 15 years ago hasn't left any major lasting effects, which we're very grateful for. I have suffered some knock-on effects from treatments such as lymphedema and cardiomyopathy (an enlarged heart) which we think could've been genetic and made worse by the chemotherapy. I am fitted with a defibrillator and due to my ongoing heart problems have regular check-ups. Both Mum and I miss Sarah every day and we are trying to learn to live without her in our lives which is a struggle. Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries each year are very hard for the whole family but we all make a point of being together and supporting one another.

How important was it to honour Sarah's legacy and keep the charity going?

It is hugely important to us but with that being said we did think long and hard as a committee about whether we could continue without Sarah as we had lost our sparkle. It was my son, James, who stepped in and told us that we should all carry on Sarah's legacy as we had all worked too hard to let it slip away. After Sarah's passing James volunteered to take over as Chairman of the newly renamed Sarah's Pink Events and we are now more determined than ever to make every event more successful than the last.

And the charity was 20 last year? That's an amazing achievement.

It is, it's been made even more special by the fact that this year we have hit our £500,000 fundraising milestone which we are all so proud of and I know Sarah will be too. We have set ourselves the target of reaching £1 million by the end of 2035!

How did the monies get distributed?

Our funds are primarily donated towards the Breast Care Unit at St. James', we work closely with the team and assess where the gaps are at their end and how we can improve patient quality of care and treatment. We have funded at each end of the scale from equipment worth tens of thousands of pounds to smaller amounts funding books helping children deal with their parents' diagnosis. It is really important to us to continue working with the team at St. James' as we know first-hand about the amazing work they do and want to ensure that they can continue this for others in need. We also donate to Cancer Research UK and our money is restricted to breast cancer research. We recently began funding our second research project through the University Of Leeds which we expect to take two years, this is



also an extremely important relationship to us.

What about research?

Research has come on leaps and bounds in the 20 years since my diagnosis and the knowledge gap has become smaller however we aren't there yet. It is through research that treatments evolve and become more effective and so for Sarah's Pink Events we feel it is important to support this. As of November 2025 our funding is in research regarding triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), an aggressive type of breast cancer that is often difficult to treat due to resistance to chemotherapy. Hamza Ikram at the University of Leeds is looking at ways to make the cancer cells more receptive to treatment making the treatment more effective and less toxic for sufferers of TNBC. It is research like this which will advance the way we assess and treat various types of breast cancer and, I hope, will ultimately increase survival rates and patient quality of life.

What events do you have coming up in 2026?

We have our schedule largely planned out on an annual basis so the year will consist of a Quiz Night, Sarah's Pink Ball, Wine Tasting, Summer Garden Party, an ABBA

Afternoon Tea, a Michael Bublé Christmas Afternoon Tea and the Harrogate Christmas Fair. These are the events that we organise as a committee but we are so lucky to have a such a supportive group of followers who also fundraise on our behalf – our supporters have organised their own events, sponsored challenges such as marathons, swims, triathlons and climbs and we are really grateful for everyone who thinks of us when they take on these events and challenges.

How can our readers get involved?

Come to our events! We hold a lot of events over the year which we post on our social media pages and we love to see new faces come along. If you're feeling brave and want to run a marathon, swim a lake or climb a mountain then please think of us if you're planning to be sponsored. If you want to support us through something less physically challenging then you could organise a sponsored walk, bake sale or a dress down day either as an individual, with friends or through your workplace.

If you'd like to get involved you can contact Sarah's Pink Events via their social media pages on Facebook (Pink Events) and Instagram (@pinkeventsld). They would love your support!