

TIRELESS VOLUNTEER AWARDED WITH MBE

A GRANDMOTHER who has worked for nearly 30 years to raise awareness of a condition which changes skin colour has been made a Member of the British Empire.

Maxine Whitton, 72, of Warren Road, Wanstead, has suffered from vitiligo, which affects skin pigmentation, since she was a young girl growing up in Jamaica.

She has suffered from depression caused by the disease, which affects one in 100 people, and she says it was her experience of living with the stigma associated with it that drove her to try and help others.

Mrs Whitton joined the Vitiligo Society in 1985, becoming chairwoman in 1993. She is now a patron of the charity and a member of an all-party parliamentary group on skin.

The retired academic librarian said: "I discovered that there was very little research into the condition or treatments and began to get very angry about it.

"My summers are mostly spent covering up, to hide the condition and to protect the affected areas from the sun.

"I remember there were some summers where all I had in my wardrobe

By **MELANIE ATTLESEY**

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were tops with long-sleeves to hide it.

"My condition has worsened over the past year because of stress. I had a cataract operation in 2011 which went wrong and two or three operations to correct it and now it has affected my Glaucoma, worsening my sight."

Apart from fundraising and campaigning, Mrs Whitton has worked with the Cochrane Collaboration, a not-for-profit organisation which looks into the advancement of treatments.

She has had two papers published on skin conditions, with a third being published later this year.

Describing the moment she discovered she had been made an MBE, Mrs Whitton said: "I was amazed and shocked when I heard I had been awarded an MBE.

"My cleaner was downstairs and heard a massive shriek and asked if I was alright."

The New Year's Honours List also saw Theresa Drowley, principal of Redbridge College, receive an OBE.

Haringey headteacher Joan McVittie, from Woodford Green, was made a Dame for services to education.



Maxine Whitton, patron of the Vitiligo Society, has been made an MBE

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