

Communities against Cancer IMPACT REPORT

May 2019 to Feb 2020

What is Communities against Cancer about?

Communities against Cancer supports communities to improve their health and reduce their cancer risk by: increasing awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer; encouraging people to take-up screening and seek help at an early stage; and helping people to live more healthily.

Who does the project support?

The project supports people who are less likely to know how to look after their health, or are less able to do so. We refer to these people as ‘seldom-heard’.

For example:

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups
- People struggling financially
- People with mental health problems
- Informal carers
- People with learning difficulties or brain injuries
- People who are socially isolated
- British Sign Language users

The project focusses on the Wessex coastal band from Portsmouth across to Weymouth/Portland. (including the Isle of Wight)

What does success look like?

Communities against Cancer reaches the people who are least likely to know how to look after their health, or least likely to do so. They are invariably the people most likely to have poor cancer health outcomes.

Success for this project means:



Seldom-heard people are **more willing to talk about/acknowledge cancer** with their friends/family/community



Seldom-heard people are aware of how they can **reduce their risk** of cancer & live healthier lifestyles.



Seldom-heard people have an improved awareness of the **signs and symptoms** of cancer



Seldom-heard people are **more likely to visit their GP** if they are concerned



Seldom-heard people are more likely to **attend/participate in screening**



Seldom-heard people are **more empowered to take action** within their communities

Impact

Communities against Cancer has 3 separate elements: Cancer Champion **training**, provision of **large grants**, and provision of **small grants**.

Cancer Champion training

This element of the project is about community development. Engaging with communities to provide accessible information; and empowering people to support their own communities in the most appropriate way.

- **18 sessions** provided
- **118 people** from seldom-heard communities trained
- Volunteers and staff from **59 community groups** attended

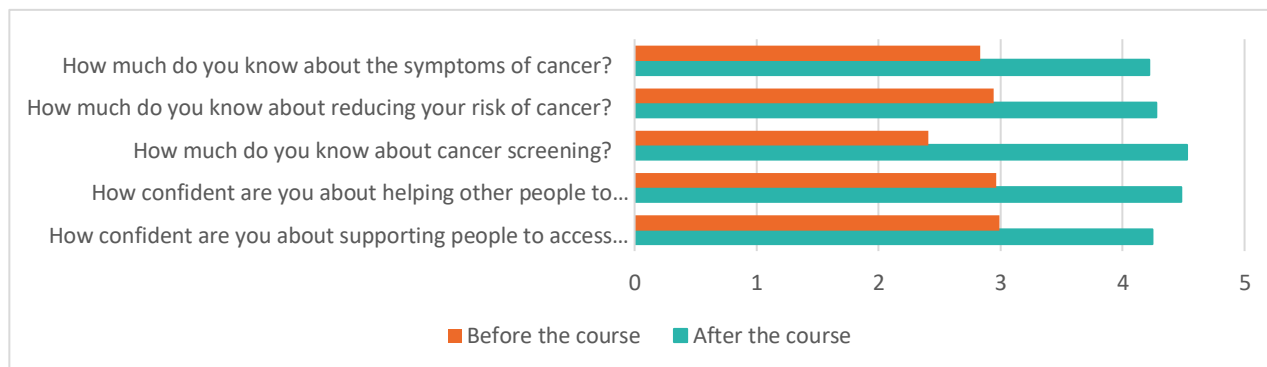


Women from Southampton's Afghani community did not understand the cervical screening invitation they had received, and didn't think the test was relevant to them.

After attending Cancer Champion training, an Afghani woman phoned and booked her first cervical screening test, having thrown previous invitations in the bin.

The training sessions allow individuals from different communities to start having cancer conversations in a safe place, and take away reliable information to share with others.

All participants are asked to tell us how the course has helped them, and answer 5 questions both before and after the course. These scores have been averaged to show the 'distance travelled'.



- The highly accessible (and fun) training is **starting conversations** within the target communities. Attendees are **sharing their learning** with friends, family and wider community. Messages are **reaching communities** that were previous unwilling to even acknowledge cancer.
- **Building relationships** within local communities has led to people attending training sessions, despite having no prior knowledge of the project. They have attended because **trusted people** within their own community have invited them. The eagerness and enthusiasm of participants to **learn more** and **help their communities** has been remarkable.
- **Relationships are cemented** during the training session, and our project worker can then provide the necessary **support and encouragement** to enable communities to apply for a small grant (to **cascade awareness**). Literacy, knowledge and confidence levels are often low, so the **investment of time and support** is invaluable.



Headway Portsmouth (people with brain injuries)

Cancer Champion training was delivered to a group of people living with brain injuries. Feedback was subsequently received from Headway staff.

“We found to our surprise that amongst a client group where memory is a big issue this [cancer] was a topic that was discussed for several weeks after the training had been given. One person had ignored their bowel cancer screening when invited to take part and was then sent another and she came in and told everyone that this time she had been good and done it and everyone spontaneously cheered! She also told everyone when it came back clear!”

“Several people said that they would definitely make an appointment to see a doctor as they had cancer related symptoms. People did so and one had a battery of tests as a result.”

“The message about knowing your own body was well received with a lot of laughter about trying to take a selfie to check for mole changes. One woman reported that because she has a very bad memory her doctor checks her moles for changes annually. Several people responded by making pledges to reduce smoking or junk food or increase water or healthy foods”.

Large Grants

We’ve awarded grants of up to £10,000 to 12 organisations from Portland to Portsmouth. These are aimed at formal voluntary sector organisations that work with a significant number of the target beneficiaries.



Mustard Seed Ministries (older people in Portsmouth)

“The project is increasingly attracting people with learning difficulties, mental health issues and asylum seekers who are benefitting and particularly enjoyed the healthy cooking demonstration”.

“During the quiz in Computer Club, a discussion developed about food and nutrition and Lyn was shocked to discover that ready meals/processed meat as a major part of her diet could be harmful. Lyn and her partner use ready meals every day as she thought they were nutritious, but now realises she needs to balance their diet, and is going to start cooking rather than relying on ready meals”.

“Service users have told us that they enjoy the way the information is shared in a non-pressurised way and as a result we have seen a number of people who were previously on the periphery becoming very engaged, drawing up their seats to be more involved, answering and asking questions and wanting to apply the information and advice to their personal situation and health”.

Do you feel your awareness of cancer-related issues has improved?

75% answered “a lot”.

Are you now more likely to go to your GP with cancer-related concerns?

61% answered “a lot”.

Are you now more likely to attend a cancer screening appointment, if offered to you?

75% answered “a lot”.

Will you share what you have found out with friends and family?

73% answered “probably” or “definitely”.



People First Dorset (adults with learning disabilities)

People First Dorset have been organising talks and visits focused on cancer, and in January took a group of their members to the Poundbury Cancer Institute.

- **19 people** with learning disabilities attended. Most have moderate learning disabilities. All have said they need support to look after their health because of their learning disability. **10 participants** filled in an evaluation form.
- All participants felt that their awareness of cancer-related illness has improved. **9 people** said they would be more likely to visit their GP if they had concerns, and attend a screening appointment.

All said that they wanted to go back and learn more, and a further visit is planned for the spring.'

People First Dorset got a story in their county newspaper following this visit:

<https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/18173880.view-happened-visited-cancer-lab/>



Friendly Food Club (low income adults)

The Friendly Food Club are organising cooking demonstrations and workshops to help people on low incomes to eat more healthily. They have received feedback from 64 participants in their 'Eat a Rainbow' workshops:

How do you feel your awareness of cancer-related issues has improved?

93% answered a fair amount or a lot

Are you now more likely to go to your GP with cancer-related concerns?

85% answered a fair amount or a lot.

Are you now more likely to attend a cancer screening appointment, if offered to you?

75% answered a fair amount or a lot.

Will you share what you have found out with friends and family?

47% answered probably or definitely.



Awaaz FM (Southampton)

Awaaz (Asian radio broadcaster) made a series of programmes about cancer, aimed at the Asian community. The programmes were a great success:

- We had **35 callers** who discussed their cancer awareness issues with us and how their perception has changed following the transmission of the programme.
- **7 people** were signposted to specialist cancer resources
- **2 of our presenters** thought the programmes were 'extremely useful' to them as they were/are going through cancer related issues at this present time
- **500 people** were contacted for feedback via various channels. At least **85%** said that the programmes were worth listening to and that the information was useful to them.
- The recordings and information are now available via our website and our stats show there were over **300 hits** in the first two days!

Small Grants

We have awarded **32** smaller grants totalling **£20,567** (with 7 pending approval). These grants are targeted towards less formal groups - generally volunteer led. The grants support small scale activities that are formulated and delivered **by the community, for the community**.



St Denys Activity Group (Southampton)

This Southampton group was the first to receive a grant and run their activities.

80 people (predominantly older BME) attended a health awareness day on 29 June.

- Presentation very good, content relevant and many questions answered
- Wonderful speaker- she gave a feeling of hope
- Very helpful, and queries and fears sorted
- Good delivery and instructions on new [bowel cancer] tester kit. Good slides, well-pitched
- Good information particularly high risk to afro Caribbean men



Carers Isle of Wight

This group for informal carers ran **12 drop-in sessions** offering carers a chance to have soup and bread, an open discussion about cancer checks, and (optionally) a gym session. **76 people** participated, and we are delighted that they are continuing the work even though the grant has been spent.

“It has given us such a good basis for the future gym sessions that we have decided to continue as they are so successful in getting carers to think about their well-being. And we will have the healthy eating and more difficult conversations at our monthly Self-Care Café. It feels like the grant really ‘kick started’ this work and we have decided to continue it, thank you.”



Let's Make It (Weymouth)

This group organised a series of social and discussion sessions at a town centre church building. 37 people attended the sessions, including several homeless people.

‘I loved the quiz and I was surprised just how much I had learnt.’

‘When I get home I am going to order a bowel cancer test for my husband—he has not done it and now I am going to keep on until he does it!’

‘The signs and symptoms of cancer leaflet from Macmillan was excellent and I asked Julie [from Let's Make It] to order some more so that I can give out to some of my friends.’

Summary

Is the project a success? YES! The project has by far exceeded our expectations

It has become clear that many people from our target communities are unaware of some very basic cancer messages. “Most did not realise being overweight was a major cause of cancer”, “people thought that once you had cancer, that was it”, “most people thought that cancer was just genetic”. Whilst this is of course alarming, it also underlines the value of this very grass roots approach.

The project is not just educating and supporting the direct beneficiaries, but empowering communities to take responsibility for their own health outcomes into the future. Evidence from the project is showing us that communities themselves are the best placed people to devise and implement initiatives to reduce their cancer risk.