

Early diagnosis: Communities Against Cancer

Communities themselves have raised cancer awareness to millions of people who most need to know this information

What is Communities Against Cancer

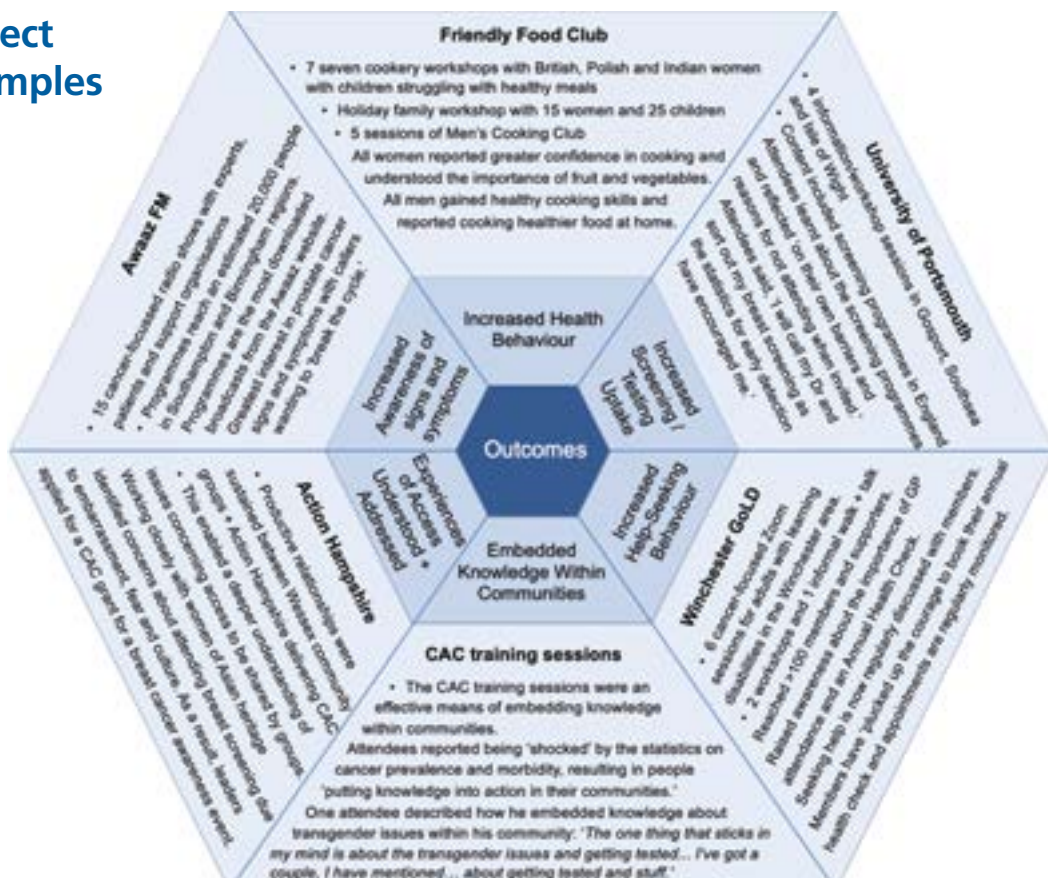
Communities Against Cancer (CAC) supports communities to improve their health and reduce their cancer risk by:

- 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.

The project 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. CAC do this by offering training and/or grants that enable communities to undertake activities to talk about cancer in ways that work for them.

Since 2019 till now over 100 grants have been given out to the value of more than £300,000. An estimate of the total reach of the activities is over 7.2 million people across Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Project examples



A wide range of people have benefitted from the programme: from racially minoritised groups; people with learning difficulties; those who experience loneliness; carers; people who live in food poverty; vulnerable and at risk women; Trans, non-binary and questioning people; people with mental health issues; those living in insecure housing; and more.

People's feedback

“ This is not a grant scheme; this is actually about giving people the confidence and the knowledge and the tools to go out and make that difference.”

“ I thought it was really helpful, useful and informative. When I did the training, it was a small group... actually, it meant that they were personalised sessions, so you got to ask questions... the knowledge was important and I will be using that as a resource and reference when I create my own materials.”

“ We're really trying to encourage women to be advocates for themselves because no-one else is going to do it. And to teach them also to be strong and to keep pushing... when we do these day retreats, people open up and say they would never have talked about that before and, 'Right, I'm going to go back to my doctor.'”

How people have shaped Communities Against Cancer

In 2018/19, [Wessex Cancer Alliance](#) was considering how it could address the prevention and early diagnosis of cancer for people experiencing health inequalities across Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight. Being aware of community engagement models in other areas that were doing this, we engaged with a wide range of local people, patients, care-givers and the voluntary sector in areas of deprivation to design this initiative.

The feedback showed low levels of awareness and stigma in talking about cancer; that to raise awareness of cancer in the communities we needed to reach it would be best to do it through trusted 'leaders'; and that they would need resourcing to do this. In May 2019, this led to the creation of 'Communities Against Cancer', a voluntary sector led project funded by the Alliance, with existing links to a wide range of community groups.

Since then the CAC team have gathered participants' feedback and information about the impact of the projects, and analysis of this has shaped the project further. The latest independent [project evaluation](#), by Southampton University, states that the project is successful in delivering a tailored, adaptive approach, supporting seldom-heard communities to raise awareness about cancer, early signs and prevention. Many projects have built people's confidence to seek medical help for concerns and, for certain projects, has resulted in changed practice and behaviour. CAC has established trust and strong connections with Wessex-based communities, and community advocates are an important resource in reaching diverse communities. CAC makes a valuable contribution to the knowledge base.

For further information

- [Communities Against Cancer - Action Hampshire](#)
- [Communities Against Cancer - Wessex Cancer Alliance](#)
- Email: Sue.Newell@wca.uhs.nhs.uk