

tackling cancer together



Reaching marginalised communities

Investing in People and Culture

As an incorporated community organisation since 2010 and a registered charity since February 2015, IPC promotes the social and economic inclusion of marginalised communities, including promoting health issues through a range of community based activities. We specialise in working with new and emerging communities in Middlesbrough.

Issues

New and emerging communities include migrant workers, international students, refugees and people seeking asylum. Many of these communities have no experience or awareness of cancer: some do not believe it exists at all and others hold deep seated ideas or believe myths about the causes of cancer and how to prevent it, based on a lack of factual information and awareness.

What we did

We held a daytime event in Middlesbrough to raise awareness of cancer and provide a platform to discuss the facts and the myths around it. 38 men and women aged between 19 to 63 years attended the event from nine countries, predominantly from the African continent.



Over 2014/15 MVDA ran a project to increase awareness and early detection of cancer among Middlesbrough communities likely not to have been reached by public health information.

Grass roots community groups were targeted and asked to propose small-scale initiatives to spread key messages about cancer, including the link between healthy living and reducing the risk of developing cancer.

Groups considering proposals received cancer awareness training from a Macmillan professional from the the Tees Valley Public Health shared service.

The successful groups received grants of up to £500 to implement their proposals. They were responsible for managing, advertising, running and evaluating their work. This case-study is supplemental to the evaluation of the work of the group.



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Challenges

- The absence of cancer-focussed charities working in their countries of origin or tradition of awareness raising or discussion about cancer means that people have different levels of awareness and some strongly held beliefs in myths about cancer
- The fact that some people do not believe that certain cancers exist or lack awareness around causes (such as the sun causing skin cancer and smoking causing lung cancer)
- Translating from English into three other languages (Arabic, Amharic and Tigrinya) was time consuming and there was no written information in these languages
- Some people face significant challenges in their personal circumstances (e.g. homelessness, asylum status) and health issues may not be a top priority for them

Added value

- Participants and volunteers are spreading the health messages learned at the event within their communities
- The event has presented a wider opportunity for people to take responsibility for their own health
- There is increasing interest from these groups in other health topics

Future considerations

We believe that more work is required to develop a more sustainable approach to engage new and emerging communities in discussion about cancer and provide support to access services for prevention and treatment.

Building on the approaches that have proved successful around safeguarding children and healthy eating, we suggest specially trained volunteers to act as community champions. These should be from the countries or communities in question, speak the language and understand the culture. They would be able to engage communities more effectively on a longer term basis. They could share factual information and give practical advice around health and how to access support and help people take responsibility for their health around cancer.

The network of champions could work together to share learning and experience and maximise the benefit of the initiative.

What worked well

- Advertising the event by word of mouth through our projects, drop in activities and community hub
- Talking to people in advance about what the session would be about and what a serious topic cancer is
- Having six volunteers trained by Macmillan on cancer and its effects
- Having input from a charity volunteer with experience of cancer to respond to queries
- Enabling people to ask anything about cancer and discuss openly their concerns, issues and beliefs
- Opening up opportunities for people to hear and consider scientific and medical facts about cancer to increase awareness and challenge myths
- Having leaflets and online information and resources to back up the discussion (although these would be more effective in people's own languages)