

CASE STUDY: CANCER AWARENESS CHAMPIONS PROMOTING CANCER AWARENESS AND EARLY DIAGNOSIS

Wigan Council's Cancer Champion programme initially started as part of The 'Be Clear on Cancer' Campaign instigated and initially led by Greater Manchester and Cheshire Cancer Network (GMCCN), in partnership with local Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), following the network successfully securing National Awareness and Early Diagnosis Initiative (NAEDI) funding to promote cancer awareness and early diagnosis.

The programme ran across eleven PCTs across Greater Manchester and Cheshire commencing in May 2011. It incorporated a social marketing campaign and community engagement programme with four elements; training and brief intervention, GP engagement, campaign evaluation and cancer champion training.

Outcomes were measured by effects on cancer referrals using cancer awareness measures (CAM) and feedback from cancer awareness session using evaluation forms. Cancer champions were trained locally, as part of this programme and promotional activity ran in line with the remit given. Champions were drawn from people in roles already in contact with the age group stated. Positive but limited outcomes were noted. It became apparent that by linking this work to the Making Health Everyone's Business and the Health Champion programme that supports it Wigan borough could embed the work and potentially improve results. To do this the team needed to create a bespoke training package for Wigan borough. This training pack has been created which includes all of the Be Clear on Cancer messages as before, additional cancer information, as well as local intelligence around the particular challenges faced by the borough.

Wigan Council was one of the first organisations involved in rolling out this programme, with GMCCN training its first cohort of champions in 2011. To date around 175 champions have been trained with this number ever growing. Champions have been drawn from a wide range of settings, and include; health care assistants from GP practices, pharmacy assistants, children's centre staff, screening team members as well as community and voluntary groups (staff and volunteers) and members of the public who have a passion for improving early detection. Many are cancer survivors, and some are individuals who have been affected by cancer in people close to them.

Key Outcomes

- **Increased referrals** - local referrals have increased over the time period of this work and whilst this cannot be attributed directly to the programme it is generally thought that cancer champions have had a contributing effect.
- **Improved public awareness** -public engagement with champions has taken place across various settings in Wigan, with some of the borough's smallest and largest employers taking part. The workforce have had the opportunity to improve their skills around cancer awareness and early detection, with employers gaining access to information and support on health and wellbeing issues which relate to cancer.



- **Wider audience** - the cancer awareness and early detection session has been delivered to strategic partners, for example all watches from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) Wigan borough division. This provides key people with the skills and knowledge needed to pass on the messages to a wider audience.
- **Peer support** - one cancer survivor, after attending the training, decided to set up a breast cancer support group in her local area; successfully helping people to support each other and to build community resilience to cancer and its potentially devastating consequences

Background

The GMCCN published a strategy in February 2010 which looked to reduce the incidence of preventable cancer cases, increase the number of new cases diagnosed at an earlier stage, reduce cancer inequalities at the stage of presentation, and reduce the incidence of cancer cases.

The challenge for the network was to achieve the national target of saving an additional 5,000 lives in England by 2014/2015. This equates to saving 546 lives a year in Greater Manchester and Cheshire (which is about one life per practice).

The current work also helps to achieve Wigan council's corporate strategy. This aims to reduce early deaths and to keep people healthy for longer through helping them to monitor and manage their own long-term health conditions, get early diagnosis and timely interventions. Furthermore the champions help people to make positive changes to their lifestyle so they can make the most of timely and effective rehabilitation. Through being helped and encouraged to lead an independent and active life the gaps health and wellbeing of the general population and those most vulnerable groups are narrowed.

The public health outcome indicators that this work contributes towards include:

1. Cancer diagnosis at stage one and two
2. Cancer screening coverage
3. Prevalence of cancer deaths
4. Social connectedness

Key Aims

- Train and develop a network of cancer awareness champions to work within the local community settings of the borough of Wigan
- Raise awareness of the importance of early detection and treatment for a range of cancers, in order to improve mortality and morbidity outcomes
- Signpost to appropriate referral/support services.
- Make the link between lifestyle choices and some cancers and signpost people to local healthy lifestyle services

Key Stages of Setup



How It Works

Training is delivered by the health improvement team, in various community settings around the borough. It is widely advertised through partners, agencies and community networks as well as by word-of-mouth.

Champions have been drawn from partners, voluntary and third sector agencies as well as members of the public, including cancer survivors, all of whom are encouraged to be creative in the way they pass on the early detection and awareness messages to others.

Champions are encouraged to pass on the messages to people within their circle of influence, this may be through the nature of the work they do, the social groups they attend, their team meetings or as a workplace champion to name a few.

They also receive on-going support from the health improvement team via regular contact and updates, additional training, support in delivering of awareness sessions and practical help with accessing resources and information as required.

Resources

Initially funding came from National Awareness and Early Diagnosis (NAEDI) via the Greater Manchester and Cheshire Cancer network.

The Wigan borough specific work was funded by Ashton Leigh and Wigan PCT until April 2013 when the public health department transferred to the Local authority.

The work is now funded by Wigan Council.

Key Challenges

- **Local engagement** - it was difficult to gain local engagement when a generic training pack was used, however engagement and buy in became more effective when a local training pack was created
- **Recruitment of Cancer Champions** - the criteria for recruiting champions in Wigan was very specific, being based on people having contact with those over 50 years old. When the criteria became less stringent and open access this created scope for the recruitment of those who work or talk with a wider demographic allowing the messages to be shared on a wider basis
- **Accessing key partners** - changes in the structure of both the NHS and local government has meant a shifting landscape against which to build relationships, but by working alongside the newly formed clinical commissioning groups (CCG's) this enabled Wigan council's public health team to maintain relationships already in existence and to build new ones so that the work can be more effective in accessing key partners
- **Maintaining interest and commitment from Champions** - regular, but not constant, contact has been made with all champions who now receive monthly updates, additional training and encouragement via a variety of means

Key Learning

- By aligning this work with Making Health Everyone's Business, and the Health Champion programme that supports it, Wigan borough could embed the work and potentially improve results
- Exploring new ways of recruiting champions has helped to build relationships which reach wider than this piece of work and champions are now accessing other training programmes delivered by the health improvement team and therefore up-skilling
- On-going support is crucial in maintaining practice and for continuing quality assurance

Sustainability

The cancer champion programme has now been embedded in to the work of Wigan council's public health team and is part of the 'Making Health Everyone's Business'

The health improvement team now deliver messages around cancer awareness and early detection to partner staff as part of their in-house training package

Next Steps

- A cancer champion training session will be delivered for 100 more champions by July 2014
- Cancer specific top-up sessions and support via monthly updates will continue
- Monitoring of outcomes and effectiveness of the training is also on-going



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