

Humber and North Yorkshire Cancer Alliance Bridlington Health Forum – Engagement Report 2024

Overview of activity

Bridlington Health Forum are an organisation made up of volunteers who represent local residents. Bridlington Health Forum listen to local residents to understand their concerns about local health care provision.

We have partnered with Bridlington Health Forum on several occasions throughout 2024 on events to speak with residents about access to cancer services, as well as to raise awareness about cancer signs and symptoms.

The events have all been located at The Hinge Centre, Bridlington and took place in March and May 2024.

The events have brought together health and care organisations in the region to provide free, expert health advice to support residents and their families. Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations were also in attendance offering their services to the community.

Objectives of activity

The objectives of each event were to:

- Complete the Cancer Alliance's Cancer Attitudes and Understanding Survey with as many members of the public as possible. These events were used as test events for the survey and has since been amended to reflect feedback on the survey from members of the public.
- Raise awareness / have conversations with members of the public to address their fears about a cancer diagnosis, which might serve as a barrier to them speaking to their GP about concerning symptoms
- Encourage attendees to sign up to:
 - 1) Cancer Alliance patient and public representative group
 - 2) Cancer Champions training
- Raise profile of the Cancer Alliance among VCSE stakeholders and members of the public attending this event



Audiences

The events were open to all residents of Bridlington registered with a GP practice in the area. Attendees of each event were predominantly over 50 years old, which is representative of the region's demographic.

The Cancer Alliance aimed to engage with attendees who have been affected by cancer, those interested in understanding more about the signs and symptoms of cancer, and those who may not seek help from a medical professional or attend a screening appointment when invited.

Activity

The Cancer Alliance had a stand at each of the events to aid discussion with the public. The stand consisted of:

- Cancer Alliance branded materials
- Cancer Alliance merchandise giveaways (pens, trolley token key rings)
- Cancer Alliance Cancer Attitudes and Understanding Survey
- Cancer Champions sign-up leaflets
- Help Us Help You & Macmillan cancer info leaflets and other partner materials

Activity at each event included:

- Completion of the Cancer Alliances Cancer Attitudes and Understanding Survey with members of the public – 8 surveys were completed in March and 19 in May. Analysis of the survey results and further discussions is available below.
- Speaking with members of the public about:
 - The signs and symptoms of cancer
 - Addressing their fears about a cancer diagnosis
 - Understanding the public's barriers to speaking to medical professionals about any concerns over their health
- Handing out takeaway leaflets with further information on cancer signs and symptoms (Help Us Help You leaflets and partner materials, including Bowel Cancer UK and Macmillan Cancer Support leaflets, distributed)
- Encourage attendees to sign up to Cancer Champions training
- Encourage attendees to sign up to the Patient and Public Representative Group – 5 members of the public with lived experience of cancer expressed an interest in sharing their experiences of cancer with the Cancer Alliance. Emily Johnson followed up with each individual, and as a result, one individual has since joined the Patient and Public Representative Group.
- Networking with VCSE organisations and raise the profile of the Cancer Alliance.



Cancer Attitudes and Understanding Survey Analysis

Summary of survey responses

The majority of respondents recognised many of the signs and symptoms of various cancers and stated they would try to speak to a medical professional if they had any concerns over cancer.

More than half of respondents stated they found it difficult to get an appointment at a convenient time or with a certain health professional the last time they tried to speak to a medical professional. Around 33% of respondents said they did not delay or were not put off attending a screening appointment.

Most respondents believed that cancer screening saves lives, cancer screening can help detect cancer early and that cancer screening can detect cancer at a stage when it's easier to treat successfully.

Most respondents stated they were comfortable speaking to loved ones about cancer or encouraging them to attend a screening appointment when invited to do so.

Breakdown of survey responses

1. Which of the following best describes you?	
Past smoker	19
Current smoker	2
Never smoked	4
Prefer not to say	2
2. Which of the following, if any, do you think could be warning signs and symptoms of cancer?	
An unexplained lump or swelling	24
Persistent unexplained pain	20
Unexplained bleeding	24
A persistent cough or hoarseness	17
A persistent change in bowel habits	19



A persistent change in bladder habits	12
A persistent difficulty swallowing	12
A sore that does not heal	10
Unexplained weight loss	15
3. Which of the following, if any, do you think could increase a person's chance of developing cancer?	
Using mobile phones	2
Smoking or exposure to another person's smoking	27
Not eating enough fruit or vegetables	18
Being overweight or obese	22
Having a close relative with cancer	25
Drinking alcohol	20
Not doing enough physical activity	12
Getting sunburnt	24
Eating processed meat	12
Being older	23
Infection with HPV	17
Not eating enough fibre	4
4. If you were experiencing any signs or symptoms of cancer, or had concerns that you may have cancer, would you try to speak to a medical professional about your concerns?	
Yes	17
No (and reasons why)	6 Fear – not wanting to know what's wrong Scared of possible treatment and side effects Don't think they'd be taken seriously by medical professionals
Not sure	4



5. When you last considered seeing or speaking to a medical professional about your health, did any of the following put you off, or make you delay doing so?	
I found it embarrassing or uncomfortable talking about my symptoms	5
I worried about wasting the healthcare professionals time	7
I found it difficult to get an appointment at a convenient time or with a certain health professional	17
I worried about what they might find wrong with me, what tests they may want to do or what treatment I may need	8
I, or a loved one, have had a bad experience with a health care professional in the past	17
I worried my symptoms and concerns wouldn't be taken seriously	12
I didn't want to talk to a receptionist/ administrative person about my symptoms	10
Nothing put me off or delayed me going	10
6. Thinking about the last time you were invited for cancer screening (bowel, breast or cervical), did any of the following put you off going?	
I was worried that screening might be painful	8
I didn't have any symptoms of cancer	11
I had other more important things to worry about	9
I was too busy to go for screening	9
I don't think I am at risk of cancer	11
I was too embarrassed to go for screening	3
I was too frightened of what the test might find	4
I have had a bad experience of screening in the past	2
After thinking about the screening, I decided the risks of taking part outweigh the benefits	4
I was too afraid of having treatment if I was found to have cancer	9
I have never been invited for screening	2
Nothing put me off going	9



7. Please indicate if you think each of the following statements about cancer screening are true or false	
Cancer screening saves lives	True – 25 False – 0 Don't know - 2
Cancer screening can help detect cancer early	True – 22 False – 1 Don't know - 4
Cancer screening can detect cancer at a stage when it's easier to treat successfully	True – 22 False – 1 Don't know – 4
8. Do you feel comfortable speaking to family, friends or colleagues about cancer?	
Yes	20
No	7
9. Would you feel comfortable encouraging family, friends or colleagues to attend a cancer screening appointment if they are invited to do so?	
Yes	21
No	6
10. If you have looked for, or were to look for, information about cancer, where would you look or try to find information?	
Cancer charity websites (e.g. Macmillan Cancer Support)	25
NHS website	22
Other health and care provider websites	4
Primary care (e.g. via your GP practice)	12
Cancer charity helplines	2
Online forums	0
Support groups	0
Through a loved one who has experienced cancer	7



Conversations with the public had the following themes:

- Many people believe if they have a family history of cancer, they are likely to develop cancer at some point
- Several people stated they believe if you have cancer, you have it, and there is very little you can do to change this
- The majority of people invited to cancer screening programmes have attended but did have worries or concerns prior to attending. These worries included:
 - Concerns over what the screenings may find and subsequent diagnosis or treatment
 - Being able to carry on working if they were diagnosed with cancer
 - Concerns that a screening appointment may be painful or embarrassing
- Many people struggled to access GP appointments, and when they were able to, some occasionally felt they were not taken seriously or in some cases, treated quickly enough

Event learnings

- Those with lived experience of cancer are happy to share their story if it will help others in the future
- People like to have takeaway materials to read and digest in their own time. Materials such as branded merchandise are good prompts for discussion.
- Some people found the Cancer Attitudes and Understanding Survey too long, with some of the questions being repetitive. These events were used a test for our Cancer Barriers, Attitudes and Understanding Survey. Since completing the series of events with Bridlington Health Forum, the questions have been adapted slightly based on feedback from those who have completed the survey. We have also created a second survey, Cancer Experience of Care, to further capture insight from people who have lived experience of cancer.
 - The amended [Cancer Barriers, Attitudes and Understanding Survey](#) and [Cancer Experience of Care survey](#) have been used throughout Humber and North Yorkshire Cancer Alliance's [summer roadshow series](#).
- At these types of events, much of the public like to have conversations about their health in general. It is important to ensure the conversation sticks to the signs and symptoms of cancer and related discussions in order to gather insight which will help to improve cancer outcomes in Humber and North Yorkshire.

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