

# Improving Migrant Health

## Migrant Access Project: Cancer Prevention, Awareness and Screening Programme

**Context:** Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals from deprived areas or non-white backgrounds are less likely to engage with UK national cancer screening programmes, resulting in later diagnosis and worse outcomes if cancer is diagnosed (1). In addition, evidence indicates many specific barriers faced by migrant communities accessing the healthcare system such as; misconceptions linked to cultural/religious beliefs, language barriers, limited understanding of NHS/local services, concerns around access/payment for services based on their immigration status (2).

### Background:

The Leeds Cancer and Culturally Diverse Communities Task Group successful bid for NHS Health Inequalities Funding for a bespoke project between September 2022 – May 2023 to improve cancer outcomes for migrant communities with a collaboration between The Migrant Access Project (MAP) and Leeds Health Awareness Service (LHAS).

MAP is a Leeds City Council led project, providing training for migrant communities to help them understand local services and navigate the city. Once trained, they become Migrant Community Networkers (MCNs) and can get involved in local community projects.

LHAS is a Leeds City Council Public Health commissioned service, working with target communities to promote cancer prevention messages, raise awareness of signs and symptoms of cancer and encourage screening/seeking support for concerns as required.

### Approach:

The 'MAP Cancer Prevention, Awareness and Screening Programme' was set up to promote key cancer messages to migrant communities with a focus on breast, bowel, cervical, lung and prostate cancer.

LHAS delivered training for interested MCNs regarding key cancer prevention, awareness and screening/seeking support messages and provided an opportunity for attendees to ask questions.

MCNs were then able to apply for community grants of up to £500 to deliver targeted engagement events with their local communities to share the information.

This approach meant that the MCNs acted as trusted messengers of accurate, reliable health promotion messages and effectively shared their learning with their communities in a way that was engaging and meaningful to them.

### Delivery:

18 MCNs from 11 different communities (Eritrean, Jamaica, Libya, Iraq, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Lebanon, East Africa [Swahili], Syria, Singapore, Afghanistan), were trained by LHAS regarding key cancer prevention, awareness and screening/seeking support messages.

Of these, 14 accessed community grants to deliver 25 events with their community.

The events reached 243 people face to face representing at least 18 communities (including Zimbabwe, Angola, Pakistan, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Jordan, Iraq, Kurdistan, Palestine, Syria, India, Kashmir, Caribbean, Nigerian, Somali, Ethiopian and Sudanese).

One of the sessions was held on a radio show, which was later posted online and reached over 3,000 people.

**Outcome:** Positive feedback was received regarding the training and the community events, with attendees reporting increased cancer awareness and intentions to attend their screening appointments/seek support if needed.

"There were some signs and symptoms I was not aware of before."

"I've had 2 letters about my breast cancer screening...I'm going to book the appointment."



"I have decided to attend. I will ask my mother to be with me."

"These sessions have been really useful because they are in our own language, and we can ask questions and get answers we can easily understand."



"I always bin the letter for my cervical screening, but now I will go."

"African people don't talk about this...we need to do more sessions."

"There are some people who have misconceptions about cancer, so it is better that they hear this session."



**Next steps:** Following an evaluation session, the MCNs and event attendees expressed interest in further sessions, highlighting the benefits of working with communities to share key health messages. Further funding has been secured to continue the great work.

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