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| **Statutory Guidance on Working with People and Communities 2022**  **Case study** | |
| **Details** | |
| **Title of the case study** | Involving our communities in the recovery of urgent cancer referrals |
| **Organisation** | Northern Cancer Alliance |
| **Synopsis** | This case study will describe how the Northern Cancer Alliance put local people at the heart of their Help Us Help You (HUHY) campaign by involving them in the design, production and delivery of the campaign resources. This local campaign focussed on health inequalities by focussing on specific tumour groups and communities where recovery levels were slowest. |
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| **Content** | |
| **Background** | The Covid-19 pandemic had a dramatic effect on the rate of cancer referrals across England. At the start of the pandemic the Northern Cancer Alliance saw referral rates across the region drop to 40.9% of pre pandemic levels (April 2020). This situation was reflected across England in all other Cancer Alliances.  In April 2020, NHS England launched the “Help us help you” national campaign to encourage the public to get care when they need it. This campaign was launched in response to the falling numbers of patients accessing health services during the pandemic, more specifically in relation to cancer, a drop in the number of people presenting at GP practices with suspected cancer signs and symptoms and people attending for pre- planned hospital investigations. |
| **The need** | To support the recovery of urgent cancer referrals in the North East & North Cumbria and build on the work of the national “Help us help you” campaign. The Northern Cancer Alliance made the decision to develop a locally focussed campaign to encourage early presentation at the GP with potential signs and symptoms of cancer and restore public confidence when visiting a health care setting during the pandemic. |
| **The solution** | Key to all aspects of the Northern Cancer Alliance work plan is the effective involvement of the public. The Alliance value to *“always involve the right people at the right time”* was a fundamental aspect of the design and delivery of the campaign. With a focus on health inequalities, the Cancer Alliance brought together the Alliance Lay Representatives, people with lived experience, the [Be Cancer Aware](https://northerncanceralliance.nhs.uk/campaigns/helpushelpyou/resources-information/patient-information-our-communities/be-cancer-aware/) team and community groups (e.g. [NUR fitness](https://www.nur-fitness.co.uk/) in Middlesbrough) to coproduce the campaign.  As well as promoting general signs and symptoms, the campaign focussed on the tumour groups e.g. lung and urological cancers and local communities where recovery was slowest. These were identified using the equity data packs from the National Cancer Programme.  Involvement activities were facilitated online using WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or via telephone discussions. These were carried out by the Alliance directly or in partnership with community organisations who utilised their own communication channels e.g. WhatsApp groups to work with community members.  Involvement activities included:   1. Peer to peer messaging;    1. the development of short films promoting the campaign messages made by people with lived experience and people with a learning disability.    2. the development of short films made by people from our BAME communities, produced in variety of different languages and dialects.   (the short films are available from the link in the [resources section](#filmresources))   1. Development of hard copy [patient information](https://northerncanceralliance.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/spotting_cancer_A5.pdf) by the Northern Cancer Alliance Lay Representatives, raising awareness of the potential signs and symptoms of cancer and the importance of taking up screening invitations. 2. Involvement of a Northern Cancer Alliance Lay Representative in the communications group who oversaw the development and implementation of the campaign, produced the communications plan and developed [HUHY campaign webpages](https://northerncanceralliance.nhs.uk/campaigns/helpushelpyou/resources-information/).   The accessibility of information was a very important element of the campaign, in particular the issue of digital poverty and language barriers. In order to reach as many people as possible, the Alliance wanted to ensure that the campaign resources did not rely wholly on digital communication channels. To address this issue 48,000 of the printed patient information leaflets produced by the Alliance Lay representatives and [magazines](https://northerncanceralliance.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FINAL-BIOM-special-summer-2020.pdf) were distributed via food banks, food box delivery programmes and other key locations in our most deprived areas across the region. This element of the campaign was supported by local third sector organisations and the Alliance Cancer Community Awareness Workers who also distributed 350 posters raising awareness of head and neck cancer signs and symptoms. |
| **Challenges** | The main challenges to involvement for this particular piece of work were the restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. An inability to work in partnership with people on a face to face basis meant that all of the involvement work was facilitated via digital channels. Working with community organisations who had pre or newly established communication channels with people in their homes also allowed the Alliance to reach out and involve a wider group of people in this work. |
| **Impact** | Overall impact:  The NCA now has a wide range of HUHY coproduced resources whose messaging and scripts have been produced, written and shared by members of our communities across the North East and North Cumbria - all of which are now used on an ongoing basis to support recovery and encourage earlier diagnosis.  Although difficult to attribute to the various campaigns, the Alliance has seen a good rate of recovery of urgent cancer referrals.  All versions of the local HUHY campaigns have seen excellent levels of engagement with campaign messages and resources being shared by a range of community organisations via their own communication channels, including the North Tyneside Age UK website, Darlington Healthwatch e newsletter and Newcastle Healthworks Facebook account.  Cancer Community Awareness Workers have been able to share additional cancer related information via food banks after developing relationships during the first run of the HUHY campaign.  Some of the patient films have been shared internationally via WhatsApp groups to as far as Pakistan! |
| **Next steps, sustainability and scaling** | The approach adopted by the Northern Cancer Alliance to develop the local HUHY campaign has provided a blueprint for the ongoing involvement of the public in development of early diagnosis and prevention focussed campaigns. |
| **Find out more** | Joanne Mackintosh – Delivery Manager – Communications & Engagement  [Joannemackintosh@nhs.net](mailto:Joannemackintosh@nhs.net) |
| **Resources** | |
| Add files |  |
|  | Example of a social media evaluation report: <https://northerncanceralliance.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NCA-Help-Us-Help-You-social-media-report-January-2019-v1-July-2020-1.pdf>  View the range of coproduced campaign resources: [Resources and Information - Northern Cancer Alliance Northern Cancer Alliance](https://northerncanceralliance.nhs.uk/campaigns/helpushelpyou/resources-information/) |
| **Media**  How do you think this case study could be presented? | |
| Text | No |
| Video | Yes |
| Audio file / podcast | Yes |