



Improving Early Cancer Awareness Among Newly Arrived Asylum Seekers

This project was led by Ilyas Najib, a highly experienced community practitioner with deep roots in the local area. Now in his sixth year at Halifax Opportunities Trust, Ilyas brings a unique, trusted approach to engagement, alongside an extensive reach across diverse communities. A general men's cancer awareness session was delivered to a group of asylum seekers who had newly arrived in the UK.

Summary

- **Delivery Area: Community and Wellbeing - Calderdale Cancer Aware**
- **Partner:** Macmillan
- **Values:** We are Committed, We Care, We Collaborate.

The group included men who were completely new to the country, as well as some who had recently moved from other towns and cities across the UK as part of the asylum dispersal process.

Many were still learning how health services work and were unfamiliar with the NHS, screening programmes, and how to access support.

Creating an Inclusive and Empowering Space for Diverse Communities

The session brought together men from a wide range of backgrounds, including participants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, India, Sudan, Eritrea and South Africa.

These men have never had chance to talk about this before and now they feel empowered to despite cultural, language and personal differences. Every individual engaged positively with the session and took part in group discussions.



Raising Awareness of Men's Cancers and the Importance of Early Detection

The aim of the session was to raise awareness of men's cancers, including prostate, testicular and bowel cancer, and to help participants understand common signs and symptoms.

We also explored the importance of early detection and discussed the various cancer screening programmes available in the UK, explaining who is eligible and how people are invited to take part.

Overcoming Language Barriers Through Simple and Accessible Communication

Due to varying levels of English, the session was delivered using basic, clear language. To support understanding, we used Google Translate where needed, alongside hand gestures, visual explanations and repetition of key messages. This approach helped break down language barriers and ensured that everyone could follow the discussion and feel included.

Encouraging Open Dialogue and Peer Support Around Sensitive Health Issues

The session was highly interactive. The men supported one another by sharing experiences, translating informally for peers, and asking thoughtful questions about symptoms, GP registration, confidentiality and accessing healthcare as asylum seekers. Creating a relaxed and respectful space allowed participants to feel comfortable discussing sensitive health topics, some of which are rarely spoken about openly in their home cultures.



Building Confidence and Improving Access to Healthcare Information

By the end of the session, participants reported feeling more confident in recognising cancer warning signs and had a clearer understanding of how to seek help in the UK.

The session demonstrated that with the right approach, using simple communication tools and cultural sensitivity, vital health information can be effectively shared with newly arrived communities, helping to reduce fear, confusion and barriers to accessing healthcare.