



MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Removing Language and Cultural Barriers to Men's Cancer Awareness

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.

Summary

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

Drawing on this experience, Ilyas delivered a general men's cancer awareness session to a group of asylum seekers who had only very recently arrived in the UK. His leadership ensured the session was accessible, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the needs of participants from the outset, laying the foundation for meaningful engagement and impact.

Responding to Immediate Language Barriers in a Newly Arrived Community

Early in the session, it became clear that many participants spoke little to no English, creating a significant communication challenge—particularly when discussing complex and sensitive topics such as cancer symptoms, screening, and accessing healthcare.

Identifying a Practical, Participant-Led Solution

Rather than allowing this barrier to limit the effectiveness of the session, we worked collaboratively to identify a practical solution. Through observation and discussion, it became apparent that many of the men were confident smartphone users and already relied on translation apps in their daily lives.

We introduced Google Translate's camera scan function, enabling participants to scan an easy-to-read cancer awareness guide and view the information instantly in their own language.



Improving Understanding Through Visual and Translated Information

Once this approach was introduced, engagement increased immediately. By scanning the guide, participants were able to clearly understand key messages, including common cancer signs and symptoms, when and how to seek medical help, and the cancer screening programmes available in the UK.

The combination of visual images and translated text reinforced understanding, reduced confusion, and ensured that vital health information was accessible to everyone.

Encouraging Interaction, Independence, and Peer Support

The session quickly became interactive, with participants asking questions through the translation app, pointing to images, and discussing the information together. This approach empowered the men to take control of their own learning rather than relying solely on verbal explanations. It also respected their dignity, independence, and varied communication needs while effectively overcoming language barriers.

Embedding Sustainable Change Within the Accommodation Setting



As a direct outcome of the session, the asylum hotel agreed to provide every new arrival with an easy-to-read cancer awareness guide. Staff will actively encourage residents to use translation apps to scan and understand the information in their own language, ensuring that essential health messages are accessible from the moment someone arrives, regardless of their level of English.

Creating Lasting Access to Life-Saving Health Information

Importantly, the guide clearly explains who to contact if support is needed, helping asylum seekers understand where to go for advice, appointments, and further information.

This approach has created a sustainable, inclusive model for sharing life-saving health information—improving awareness, confidence, and access to cancer services among newly arrived asylum seekers.