

Summary Report for Tower Hamlets Community Outreach Participants – April 2025

1. Introduction

In April a Community Outreach event was held in Tower Hamlets by the Cancer Theme of the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences (NDPCHS), Oxford University, in partnership with the Carers Centre Tower Hamlets (CCTH).

The aim of the events was to explore views and experiences of the public about cancer testing in NHS General Practice. This report provides a summary of the event, the views participants shared and our future planned work with local communities.

2. Partnership Building

Initial promotions and networking were undertaken with local voluntary and statutory sector organisations to promote the event and to identify a local organisation to co-host. The CCTH made contact with the Cancer Theme Community Liaison Manager, and discussions resulted in co-hosting an event at the CCTH venue in Stepney Green. The CCTH were responsible for promoting the event to their members, whilst the Cancer Theme Community Liaison Manager promoted the event more widely.

Organisations that provided health and wellbeing information on the day included:

- Tower Hamlets Healthy Workplaces - provided blood pressure and BMI tests.
- North East London Cancer Alliance - provided insight into current work of the Cancer Alliance.
- QuitRight (Smoking cessation) – provided advice and resources on quitting smoking.
- Carers Centre Tower Hamlets – provided information on services available to carers and presented “The Unpaid carers guide to cancer services in north east London”, leaflet.
- Community Navigator – provided information on local services and signposted participants to local health services.

Tower Hamlets Carers Centre showed a video they had produced with North East London Cancer Alliance highlighting the experiences of carers accessing cancer services and living with cancer. We screened the public information video from Pancreatic Cancer UK to assist with discussions. Research GP Brian Nicholson discussed early detection of cancer research plans in primary care, which opened up discussion about the particular difficulties faced by carers to see a GP (due to their caring responsibilities). Malachi, the Community Navigator delivered a presentation on how the Community Navigators role worked in the local area to support local people to access health services.

3. Findings from Participants

Participants strongly felt that services are not joined up, e.g. between primary and secondary care – referrals can get lost, people with multiple diseases/disabilities particularly struggle to navigate system.

- Difficulties getting appointments to see GP or undergo tests (e.g. blood tests, scans) and may face waiting lists for non-invasive cancer tests if introduced in to standard practice.
- Carers face difficulty when accessing health services for themselves as they often need to arrange someone else to care for their “cared for”, whilst attending appointments. It was felt that some level of flexibility was needed within health systems for carers.
- Carers not always identified on health records of the person they care for, which leads to difficulties in being able to access help for that person.
- Ongoing frustrations regarding having to repeat information to healthcare services, even to own local GP whom is seen more frequently than other health professionals,
- Tests may not be accessible to everyone and reasonable adjustments/alternatives are not always offered, “some people can’t stand to have mammogram done or told they won’t tolerate endoscopy.”



Tony, from the Carers Centre, Tower Hamlets, outlining issues carers and the people they care for experience accessing health services.

4. Next Steps from the Cancer Theme

By reviewing the feed-back gathered from Tower Hamlets and the other locations we have committed to the following to try and address some of the concerns expressed above:

- Producing a video explaining what cancer is, what metastases is and why it spreads.
- Engage with local GPs to attend our future events, to advise patients of commonly used terms to communicate effectively with health professionals.
- Producing a glossary of commonly used terms in cancer testing i.e. positive, negative test results, and terminology on health body literacy (being aware of own body and any changes).
- Arrange future events in each location to promote ongoing research studies, such as the ARMADILO study (study of effectiveness of multi-cancer tests in primary care). These follow up events will take place between October 2025 – April 2026.
- Delivering a carer education session to Nuffield Primary Care Health Sciences department, led by Tower Hamlets Carers Centre.

For further information or for a copy of the full report, please contact Haleema Aslam (Cancer Theme, Community Liaison Manager, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences (NDPCHS), Oxford University) via: haleema.aslam@phc.ox.ac.uk