



# Cancer SMART

## 5 year celebration

Helping to share the Cancer SMART message to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer, and promote the benefits of early diagnosis in West Yorkshire and Harrogate

[www.yorkshirecancercommunity.co.uk](http://www.yorkshirecancercommunity.co.uk)

## Welcome to this special edition celebrating 5 years of Cancer SMART

### Dr Stewart Manning

#### Trustee and Chairman Yorkshire Cancer Community

Since the Summer of 2000, I have been involved with Yorkshire Cancer Community as a Trustee, and then Chairman.

I am extremely proud of the advances we have made, especially as we were limited by the Pandemic in setting up events and meetings.

This year we have set up training for groups so they can deliver the Cancer SMART talk. This will ultimately increase the range of people and organisations we can reach.

I am often asked “How can your organisation measure your success?”

The answer is that we cannot. However, I can tell many stories of direct feedback.

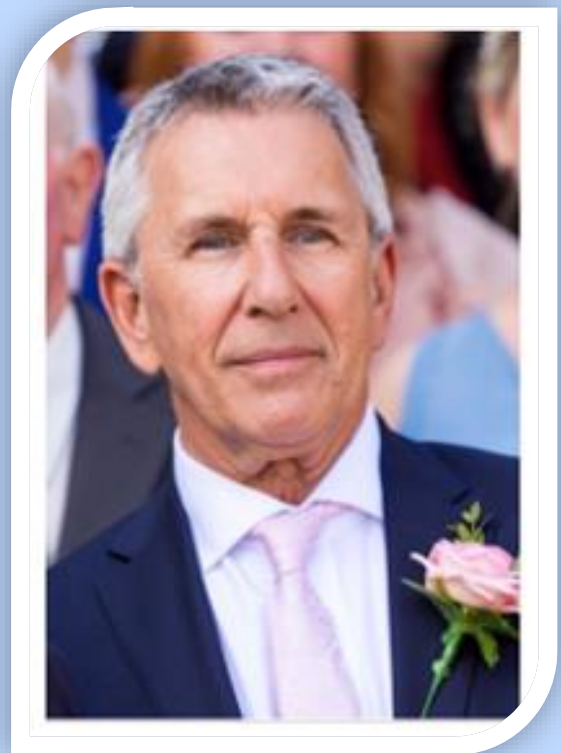
I recently gave our talk to a group, and I went back six weeks later to discuss setting up a training programme. The head of the organisation told me that two people had sent back their ‘poo tests’ and one lady had booked her smear test following my talk!

My position with YCC has enabled me to work with other charities including St Gemma’s Hospice in Leeds, Macmillan, Pancreatic Cancer UK and The Ella Dawson Foundation. I believe this helps our position as “The Voice of Cancer Patients”.

So many people have been part of our success that I cannot thank all of you personally, but to let you know I appreciate everyone’s contribution.

However, I want to give special mention to The West Yorkshire and Harrogate Cancer Alliance for not only their financial support, but also for their guidance and belief in our work.

Finally, Jill Long deserves our utmost thanks. She has been our lead member of staff since she joined in March 2017 to work for the Macmillan-funded project which eventually became Yorkshire Cancer Community. Her commitment has been total, and we stand where we are today because of this.



## Background

*Until March 2020, the Yorkshire Cancer Community was a support and information network for patients, carers and people working in cancer services in the Yorkshire and Humber region, funded by Macmillan Cancer Support. Our focus was on people affected by cancer, helping to signpost to support particularly offered by peer support groups.*

*The idea to promote cancer awareness building upon our established networks became the Cancer SMART initiative, which proved a good fit with our existing work. As a partnership between ourselves and West Yorkshire and Harrogate Cancer Alliance, we were clear from the start we wanted the project to have a simple and straight forward message, easily understood by volunteers and intended audiences.*

*People from local communities would be empowered to become cancer champions to share health messages which promote prevention and early diagnosis.*

*The global coronavirus pandemic threw a spanner in the works, delaying the launch of cancer champion recruitment and any possibility of attending events and running information stalls. Instead, we initially focused on recruiting digital champions, who could share positive health messages on social media.*

*Cancer champion recruitment was launched in September 2020.*

A “Cancer Champion” project was proposed to meet the Healthy Communities Programme objectives:

- Reduce variation of cancer screening uptake in local places and across the Cancer Alliance footprint, and increase the proportion of cancers diagnosed at earlier stages
- Prioritise evidence-based interventions and the role of wider stakeholders in increasing the uptake of non-responders
- Work with stakeholders to promote healthy lifestyles within communities by addressing wider health improvement
- Prevention of cancer and promotion of protective factors
- Enhance wider health improvement indicators e.g. smoking cessation, healthy weight, physical activity and alcohol consumption throughout the cancer pathway, with a focus on addressing inequality

More information on the Healthy Communities programme can be found here

<https://canceralliance.wyhpартnership.co.uk/>

Cancer SMART was launched as an exciting programme to help tackle cancer, with the potential to save lives through more effective prevention advice and improved early diagnosis. It has proved a strong and effective partnership between West Yorkshire and Harrogate Cancer Alliance (WY&HCA) and patient-led charity, the Yorkshire Cancer Community (YCC).

## The Cancer SMART message

Every week, **225** people in West Yorkshire are diagnosed with cancer and **108** people will lose their lives each week.

Screening uptake for breast and cervical cancers is decreasing and only bowel screening is showing an increase.

Nearly one in two of us will get cancer at some time in our lives. We also know that around **four in ten** cancer cases in the UK each year could be **prevented** \*Cancer Research UK.

It's a powerful argument for helping to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer – so people are better informed, attend screening and know where to go for help.

Our aim is to give people the information to catch cancer at an earlier stage, greatly improving the chances of survival.

### Cancer

**S**creening saves lives by prevention & early detection

**M**aking cancer an everyday conversation

**A**wareness of unusual & persistent changes

**R**educe risk with a healthy active lifestyle

**T**ake action NOW against cancer





## Screening saves lives by prevention and early detection

**There are currently only three national cancer screening programmes, with a fourth under development. You must be registered with a GP to get an invite.**

Screening can not only pick up cancer before it invades, but can also pick up cells that have started changing before they become cancer, or can identify types of tissue that are more likely to become cancer eg bowel polyps. It is estimated that the three national screening programmes save around \*10,000 lives each year (\*Source: Nuffield Trust).

**Bowel** – A small kit (called a FIT test) is sent by post every two years to anyone aged between 50 – 74. If you're 75 or over, you can request a kit every two years by contacting the bowel cancer screening programme on 0800 707 6060. The FIT test is easy to do and requires one tiny sample of poo sending in the enclosed envelope. Cancer Research UK have created a short animation to show you how to do it. You can watch the video here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il6VSceMWfM>.

**Breast** – The test, called a mammogram, involves taking an x-ray of the breast. An invitation is sent out to women/anyone with breasts aged between 50 – 70 every three years. You can still request an invitation after you turn 70, by contacting your GP or local screening centre. If you're transgender or non-binary, check with your GP or gender identity clinic if you have not received an invitation and think you should.

**Cervical** – This test is for anyone with a cervix, between 25-64 years old. Samples are taken and tested for the HPV virus. If high risk HPV is found, the lab will test the sample for cell changes. If eligible, you will be invited three yearly for 25 – 49 year olds and five yearly for 50 – 64 year olds. If you're transgender or non-binary, check with your GP or gender identity clinic if you have not received an invitation and think you should. It's not compulsory but could save your life. Cancer Research UK have created a short animation to help you decide. You can watch it here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etyMF-ENlr0>. Here's a video that our cancer champion Emily Lunn worked on to encourage Romanian and Polish women living in the UK to attend their cervical screening appointments – Is That It? <https://www.artlinkhull.co.uk/is-that-it>

**Lung** – A targeted lung cancer screening programme is being developed, but it will take some time to be fully introduced. It will be offered to smokers and ex-smokers between the ages of 55 and 74, but full details aren't currently available.



## Making cancer an everyday conversation

**Talking about cancer is much more acceptable than it was 10 years ago, and the cancer diagnoses of King Charles III, the Princess of Wales, and Olympic champion cyclist Sir Chris Hoy have brought cancer into the spotlight and started conversations, whilst highlighting the fact that absolutely anyone can develop cancer.**

Some cultures don't like to talk about cancer though, and believe by doing so, it is 'opening the door' to cancer. But not talking about something doesn't help to get it diagnosed or cured, or make the problem go away.

If your roof was leaking but you ignored it, would the leak improve on its own? It's likely that by delaying and ignoring the leak, you would face a bigger and more expensive problem to put right. How much more important is your health? If you know something is wrong, it is best to get it checked out with your GP.

Early diagnosis is important – when a tumour is smaller, and the cancer is in fewer places, treatment is more likely to be successful.

If more cancers were diagnosed in the early stages, 27 lives could be saved each day – 10,000 per year.

**So, let's end the taboo and start talking about cancer.**





## Awareness of unusual and persistent changes

**You can't possibly know the signs and symptoms of all cancers, but you can know how your body usually feels. Listen to your body, and if something doesn't feel quite right, or won't go away, go and talk to your doctor. If you can't get to see your doctor, talk to the receptionist about the signs you think may indicate cancer. It may not be cancer, but it is wise to get it checked out.**

Some signs are definitely NOT normal such as:

- An unexplained lump anywhere on the body
- A mole that changes colour or shape, or starts itching, crusting, flaking or bleeding
- Blood in your poo
- Blood in your pee – even just once
- Blood when you cough
- Blood after sex, after the menopause or between periods
- A cough or a change in an existing cough lasting more than three weeks
- A sore or ulcer in the mouth that does not heal
- Tummy trouble, such as discomfort or diarrhoea
- Feeling tired and unwell and not sure <sup>if</sup> why
- Heartburn or indigestion
- Unusual, pale or greasy poo
- Unexplained pain or discomfort
- Being bloated most days
- Breathlessness
- Frequent infections
- Unexplained night sweats
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unexpected bruising

**So, make an appointment to see your GP if you experience any of these symptoms.**

Even if you don't have any symptoms, you should check your body regularly for things that don't feel right. Get into the habit of checking your breasts, or testicles every month. You can even sign up to get reminders sent to your phone, such as from **Coppafeel** - <https://coppafeel.org/> or **It's On The Ball** - <https://itsontheball.org/>



## Reduce risk with a healthy active lifestyle

**According to Cancer Research UK, four in ten cancer cases can be prevented.**

Here are some of the things we can aim to do to reduce our risk:



### **Be smoke free**

(You can get free help from Yorkshire Smokefree on 0330 660 1166)



**Keep a healthy weight** – reduce the risk of 13 different types of cancer



**Be safe in the sun** – and avoid sunbeds



**Drink less alcohol** - alcohol causes seven types of cancer



**Eat a high fibre diet** – eating foods such as wholegrains can reduce the risk of bowel cancer



**Cut down on processed food** – the less processed and red meat you eat, the lower your risk



**Be more active** – brisk walking, cycling and even housework can all count as ways to be active

**By leading a healthy and active lifestyle, not only will you reduce your risk of cancer, but you will also feel better, improve your mental health and reduce your risk of many other illnesses too.**





## Take action NOW against cancer

We often put things off that we don't want to deal with now. Putting things off until after the holidays or after a weekend.

### Don't put off prioritising your health

If you are the main caregiver, don't feel guilty about putting your health needs first. If you are poorly, who will look after your family? After all, you can't pour from an empty cup.



### You can help us help people in your community by spreading the word.

Join us as a Cancer Champion or Digital Champion. We would love to hear from you. Contact [info@yorkshirecancercommunity.co.uk](mailto:info@yorkshirecancercommunity.co.uk)

## Our impact

In the five years since Cancer SMART began, we have grown from strength to strength, spreading the Cancer SMART message far and wide, with particular focus paid on reaching diverse groups who are often harder to reach. Here's a few statistics from our most recent annual impact report for 2024.

- We have **263** Digital Champions - an increase of 62 (30%) on last year
- We have **30** Cancer Champions – an increase of 50% on last year
- We have held **7** Cancer Champion online meetings with Cancer Alliance colleagues
- We have held **3** face to face Cancer Champion meetings, one in Huddersfield and two in Leeds including an Away Day in October at the Thackray Medical Museum which was attended by **20** people
- **25** different Cancer Champions were involved in information stalls, talks, podcasts/webinars, compared to **15** volunteers the previous year
- We have taken part in **120** events including galas, cancer awareness events and coffee mornings where we've given talks, presentations or run information stalls
- This is a **28%** increase on events attended in the previous calendar year
- Volunteers have donated a total of **847** hours (not including travel) to deliver Cancer SMART and to attend training or networking sessions in the last year
- We've talked to more than **3000** people at the above events and given away hundreds of leaflets in the last year alone

## Cancer SMART – in a nutshell

When we first came up with the idea of a cancer awareness programme, we wanted to create a simple and clear brand which would be recognisable and understandable.

Back in 2020, Yorkshire Cancer Community trustees at the time, Zoe Bounds and the late Sheila Smith, helped us to find the wording that would sum up all our key messages in one handy phrase – Cancer SMART.

With branded goods such as shopping bags, T shirts, leaflets and tablecloths, we have been able to constantly reinforce the aims and objectives of the project. It's an easy concept to deliver to members of the public either on an information stall or talk and is colourful and memorable.



## It's an organic programme but the core principles remain the same

The project is flexible and responsive to need. However, the objectives of the programme remained unchanged, with the Cancer Alliance and YCC working together to develop a network of committed and enthusiastic volunteers based on the key principles:

- Co-design. All volunteers will have the opportunity to engage and influence the shape of the project from the outset, should they wish to do so. The model will evolve, rather than be pre-determined
- Success isn't about numbers – one meaningful conversation is just as important as reaching a large group who then decline to take their involvement further
- It's about making cancer an everyday conversation
- Messages should be kept clear, simple, 'light' in tone
- Focus on the positive – this is about the good things that can be achieved through prevention and early detection
- Be flexible – be open to allowing the project to evolve
- Build relationships – with volunteers, groups and individuals

## Cancer SMART Volunteers

### Cancer SMART cannot work without one of the key ingredients – volunteers!

We have two groups of volunteers who are recruited to help take the Cancer SMART messages into the community in West Yorkshire and Harrogate.

- 1) **Digital Champions:** - seen as a light touch volunteer role, for anyone active on social media to share positive health messages with their friends and followers
- 2) **Cancer Champions:** volunteers, who may have had a cancer diagnosis themselves, are recruited as Cancer Champions. There are a number of different roles, and volunteers opt for the role which suits them best.
  - to steer and help develop Cancer SMART - the group meet online every six weeks with patient chair Ric Myers
  - to deliver presentations either face to face or via zoom
  - to assist with information stalls at community events
  - to take a lead on working with specific groups such as young people, people with a learning disability, local employers; focusing on the networks which the Champions already have and are able to access easily

### Who are our Digital Champions?

We currently have 295 people who are either individuals or from organisations who wish to share positive health messages on their own social media platforms.

### Who are our Cancer Champions?

We currently have 30 who include 8 YCC trustees - Debs, Ric, Stewart, David, Louise, Helen, Stephen and Bev, who all ensure strong links between the Board and Cancer SMART.

Twenty Champions have had cancer themselves and two have been carers. Two of the Champions work in cancer research; one works within a Primary Care Network; two Champions lead a voluntary sector charity and one works within breast screening.

### Training Programme

A training programme was devised using the Cancer Alliance and charities such as Cancer Research UK to support all volunteers in delivering the Cancer SMART messages consistently and with confidence.

Cancer Champions evaluated the training programme to ensure it gave all volunteers the skills and knowledge they need. We also access additional training from Cancer Research UK, Prostate Cancer UK and Macmillan.

## Meet some of our Cancer Champions



**Michael**, one of our newer Champions is a 64-year-old retired bus driver, originally from Bradford, who was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2023. His late wife sadly died from lung cancer eight years ago. Michael is keen to support our charity in any way he can, and is also attending Board meetings with the intention of becoming a Trustee; and also volunteers for our project, Patient VIEW.

As part of his Cancer Champion role, Michael is also our 'logistics' volunteer and helps to get stall supplies out to other Champions.

**“ I wanted to be a Cancer Champion to make a difference and I enjoy being a Cancer Champion as we do make a difference and I enjoy being part of the team ”**

**Bev** from Leeds is studying for a BA in Professional Studies and joined as a Cancer Champion, before successfully applying to become a trustee. She is particularly interested in ensuring services are representative of the communities they serve and wants to work with us in helping us to become more inclusive. Being a member of an inner city community, whose views are not often sought, she is keen to help us access Leeds Chapeltown with the Cancer SMART message.

**“ I wanted to get involved in Yorkshire Cancer Community to delve deeper into the African Caribbean community to bridge the gap in earlier diagnosis of both breast and prostate cancer. I want to take the Yorkshire Cancer Community to more diverse communities ”**







**Ric**, (pictured left) who chairs Cancer Champion meetings, is a trustee for Yorkshire Cancer Community and was the very first volunteer to be recruited to the Cancer SMART project. Ric, a retired welding engineer from Leeds, was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2016, and feels fortunate that his cancer was detected early. Ric attends events and gives talks all over the region talking about the benefits of early detection, and the value of knowing your own body, so you are aware if something feels different.

**“ I’ve met lots of new friends and it’s enabled me to have new experiences. It also allows me to achieve my aims to spread the word about early diagnosis ”**

**Stewart** (on the right), a retired Leeds GP, is the chairman of Yorkshire Cancer Community, but quickly became involved in the Cancer SMART project. He and Ric often run information stalls or give talks together and this double act has been praised for combining Ric’s lived experience, with Stewart’s perspective as a retired GP, and also as a carer for his late parents who both had cancer.

**“ Committees, policies and procedures are not my thing, but I love talking to people and it makes me feel I am doing something positive ”**

New trustee **Stephen** lives near Huddersfield and helped to spearhead a campaign to raise awareness that black men are at twice the risk of prostate cancer. Don’t Be The One was launched in Huddersfield in Black History Month (October) 2024. Stephen who was diagnosed with prostate cancer in Autumn 2022, also volunteers for Prostate Cancer UK.

**“ Living with prostate cancer has made me review my life priorities, inspiring me to raise awareness and support others affected by cancer. Being part of Cancer SMART has offered a meaningful way to do this while also looking after my own well-being ”**







**Lauren** (left) seen with Wakefield Mayor Cllr Darren Byford and Jill (YCC) at Silver Sunday at the Ridings Centre, Wakefield. Lauren initially joined us as a Cancer Champion while she looked for work after moving back to her home town of Wakefield. When we had a vacancy for a coordinator to facilitate Patient VIEW, the Community Panel of patients and carers, on behalf of the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Cancer Alliance, Lauren successfully applied for that role and is now a great addition to the team.

**Sue** has been a Cancer Champion since 2020, and has decided she would like to serve as a YCC trustee at the next Annual General Meeting. In her working life, she is Dr Sue Hartup, RGN, PhD Consultant Nurse in Breast Cancer Research at St James's University Hospital, Leeds. Sue has a wealth of knowledge and has recently joined expert panels and run awareness stalls at a Leeds synagogue and The Old Fire Station, Gipton.

**“ I volunteered as a Cancer Champion as I am passionate about helping anyone & everyone to increase their awareness of cancer and how to reduce risks alongside supporting those with a cancer diagnosis and their friends and families. I feel that Cancer Champions is a very supportive and friendly group that make this role not feel like work and that we are making a difference ”**



**“ I became a Cancer Champion because my Mum died from cancer as did two very close friends. ”** Cancer Champion Louise

Thanks to these and all our other wonderful Cancer Champions; Debs, Claire, Helen, Kathy, Gill, Linda, Emily, Caroline, Gordon, Paul, Farida, Katarina, Iveta, Phil, Barbara, Catherine O, Catherine B, Bob, Louise, Julie, Mariam, David and Carol. We couldn't do it without all of you.

## What our partners think about us

**'Our Cancer Champions, supported by colleagues at Yorkshire Cancer Community, continue to do a fantastic job – visible out and about in communities across West Yorkshire, talking with local people and having those 'everyday conversations' that are key to our Cancer SMART programme. The enthusiasm, dedication and positivity that our Champions bring is making a real difference to people's understanding of cancer and the importance of prevention and early diagnosis. Huge thanks to them all.'**

**Tracy Holmes Communications and Engagement Lead, West Yorkshire & Harrogate Cancer Alliance**

**'Cancer Smart is a brilliant example of collaboration where 'pinching with pride' existing good practice and moulding that into a bespoke model has created a really valuable resource'**

**Zoe Bounds Project Delivery Manager, Treatment Pathways and Personalised Care Team, Humber and North Yorkshire Cancer Alliance**

**"Established in the Summer of 2020, the Cancer SMART programme, delivered by Yorkshire Cancer Community, has grown from strength to strength with almost 300 volunteers dedicating their time either face to face or digitally to make cancer an everyday conversation and raise awareness of signs and symptoms of cancer across West Yorkshire and Harrogate. Delivered through events, stalls, and a successful podcast, the aim of the programme is to raise awareness of the importance of early detection of cancer, promote healthy lifestyles as a risk reduction measure for early cancer diagnosis and to encourage people to act against cancer now!**

**Over the past 5 years Cancer SMART has engaged with, and impacted, thousands of people's lives and continues to do so year on year; over the past 12 months they have delivered almost 850 volunteer hours, engaged with over 150,000 people on social media and developed trusting, key relationships with 80 stakeholders across the professional and voluntary sector. The work that Cancer SMART does is at the centre of our work, engaging and involving patients is at the heart of what we do at the Cancer Alliance. It's a real jewel in our crown, and we are very proud to support them as they continue to develop over the coming years."**

**Hayley Snowden – Programme Manager Health Inequalities at West Yorkshire & Harrogate Cancer Alliance**

## Looking ahead

We are always looking at ways that we can reach more people, to spread the Cancer SMART message as far and wide as possible. We have developed a new Cancer SMART talk, where our chairman Stewart and Jill will deliver our Cancer SMART presentation via a webinar.

This will help us to reach more people whilst having significant cost and time savings.

Of course, we will continue to be out and about in the community as well. It is just another string to our bow.



**NEW DATES ARE COMING SOON**

If you would like to join us and help us to share the important Cancer SMART message, please get in touch at [info@yorkshirecancercommunity.co.uk](mailto:info@yorkshirecancercommunity.co.uk) or visit our website at <https://www.yorkshirecancercommunity.co.uk/cancersmart/> to find out more

West Yorkshire and Harrogate  
Cancer Alliance



Charity Number 1185838