

WE CAN TALK ABOUT CANCER

APRIL 2025 – DECEMBER 2025

We CAN Talk About Cancer

A collaborative initiative led by Community Action Network with NHS Dorset, Wessex Cancer Alliance and Cancer Research UK, to raise awareness of cancer signs, risks, and screening among carers and care workers.

Through volunteer-led sessions, we equipped carers with the confidence and practical knowledge to act early, seek reliable information, and support those they care for.

Between July 2025 and December 2025, volunteers reached 649 carers (75% paid care workers and 25% unpaid carers) and recorded gains in confidence and knowledge on key measures.

This report shares outcomes, learning, and a compelling case for continuation into 2026.

Reach & participation

649 carers engaged in 84 sessions across 51 settings in Dorset.

Areas of deprivation

33% of sessions delivered in the selected areas of deprivation.

See appendix 1 for full details.

Confidence growth

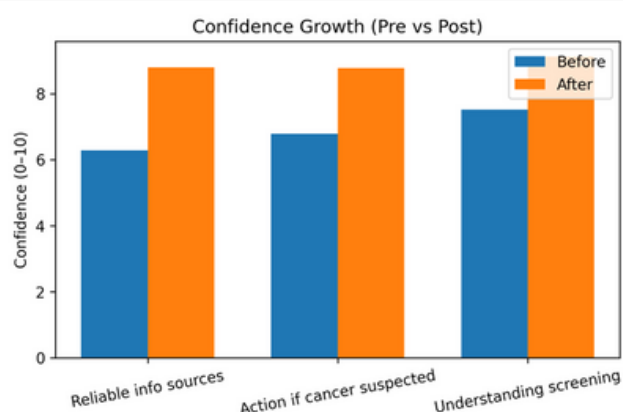
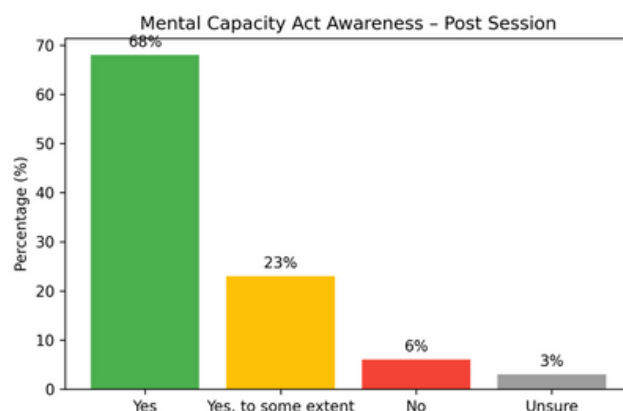
+ 2.51 point increase in identifying reliable cancer information.

Mental Capacity Act awareness

91% of participants reported improved awareness.

Pre and post session increased confidence and knowledge

- + 2.51 point increase in identifying reliable cancer information (from 6.29 to 8.80/10)
- + 1.99 point increase in knowing what to do if cancer is suspected (6.79 to 8.78/10)
- + 1.61 point increase in understanding screening programmes (7.52 to 9.13/10).
- 85% reported increased confidence and knowledge regarding reliable sources of cancer information.
- 83% reported increased confidence and knowledge regarding what action to take if cancer is suspected.
- 57% reported increased confidence and knowledge in screening programmes. (Many scored 10/10 before and after, explaining this lower overall %.)
- 91% reported improved awareness of how the Mental Capacity Act might be important to cancer care.
- Overall increase in confidence in 75% of carers (target of 70%).



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Carer feedback

"I learnt a lot from the session and hope all carers join to upgrade their knowledge."

"I find it difficult to hear and talk about cancer so it was a good session and shows the benefits of raising awareness and normalising talking about it."

"I definitely learned new things about cancer and how to recognise signs early. Was a pleasure, thank you."

Volunteer presenter feedback

"I am most grateful for the 'self-management' element – e.g. booking myself in to lead sessions when and where I could. I wouldn't have been able to commit, alongside working and raising a family, without this flexible approach otherwise."

"Just enjoyed the experience of dealing directly with carers and satisfaction from communicating about cancer. Training was also enlightening, so I learnt quite a bit about cancer myself."

"It's great to feel as though you are giving back, but also you gain so much from the role in turn."

"The chance to promote the most recent work done by Cancer Research UK and the associated positive messages has been personally uplifting and rewarding."

Volunteer Engagement & Capacity

Retained 10 Volunteer Presenters during the six months of presentation delivery. They reported average enjoyment 4.8/5, with 100% who would recommend the role to others.

Support from CAN included weekly email updates, flexible scheduling, and online and in-person check-ins.

Challenges & learning

- Session scheduling often required 8–10 weeks of lead time, and illness-related postponements affected delivery.
- Carer organisations were offered opportunities to have the training across BCP and Dorset, and we aimed to cover all requests, not just those in the identified Areas of Deprivation.
- Post-session feedback collection from care managers was time-intensive, with variability across settings.
- Despite these constraints, demand remained strong, and flexible volunteer coordination helped maintain coverage.

Case for project extension

The programme meets a clear, ongoing need among both paid care workers and unpaid carers.

Volunteer insights highlight training gaps resulting from shift patterns and workforce turnover, while carers' feedback reveals tangible benefits to confidence and early action.

Extending would:

- Reach additional carers.
- Sustain increased confidence through refresher sessions and updated content.
- Enhance volunteer capacity and retention with continued training and flexible scheduling.
- Deepen partnerships with care providers to integrate cancer awareness into routine induction and CPD.



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Proposed objectives and KPIs (2026)

Objective	KPI	Targets
Deliver accessible cancer awareness sessions across Dorset	Number of sessions & carers reached	
Improve confidence in reliable information and early action	Mean post-session confidence (0–10)	
Maintain a skilled volunteer network	Volunteer retention and satisfaction	

Care Home Manager feedback:

"It was a pleasure to have you join us. The carers found the presentation very informative ... the project is a fantastic initiative with a great purpose. We're grateful to have had the opportunity to take part."

Volunteer insight

"Because of shift working, there are lots of carers who have not been captured. There is also an active turnover in the profession. With continuing advancements in research and the increasing occurrence of cancer diagnoses, there is still a need to keep communicating and to get as many of the 9 million who are eligible for screening and have yet to be seen."

Conclusion

Carers report that the sessions are easy to understand, informative, and confidence-building. Volunteers stand ready to continue, and partners remain engaged. Extending the project will consolidate hard-won gains and reach those yet to benefit.