



# Macmillan Torbay Community Engagement Project

November 2022 - November 2024



## Project overview

The Macmillan Torbay community engagement project took a place-based approach to engaging with Torbay residents. The project worked to understand more about health inequalities experienced in the local area, barriers to accessing the current support offer around cancer and issues with community-based support.

The project was delivered by Engaging Communities Southwest in partnership with Torbay Communities and funded by Macmillan Cancer Support.

The project ran for two years between November 2022 and November 2024.



## Project aims

The project's main aims were to:

- Understand more about health inequalities in the local area by carrying out engagement with Torbay residents and local community groups.
- Develop a better understanding of the barriers to cancer diagnosis and local people's needs and issues in relation to cancer.
- Co-produce interventions with local communities to improve access to information for Torbay communities and support for those living with cancer in Torbay.
- Collaborate with organisations and individuals involved in community engagement and development locally.

## Background information

- At project inception Torbay had a population of 134,500, a large proportion of whom were over 65 years old (35,600 – 26.5% - over 65 compared to 18.1% across England).
- Cancer waiting times data provided by NHS England indicated that 2032 cancer patients were treated by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, with Fingertips Public Health data indicating that an average of 2,745 people per year received a cancer diagnosis following a 2-week wait referral from Torbay based GPs.
- The number of people diagnosed with cancer in Torbay and South Devon had increased 11% in the last 3 years (2017-2020) and numbers were expected to continue to increase.

## Project approach

The project engagement was targeted at four specific communities in Torbay, where national research suggests that people are more likely to experience health inequalities in relation to cancer:

- People living in deprived areas
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Learning disabled adults
- LGBTQ+ community



A wide range of methods were used to engage with different audiences/communities in Torbay, including focus groups, surveys, drop-in sessions, interviews and co-designed workshops.

## Project questions

We wanted to understand how cancer outcomes could be improved in Torbay, so we based our engagement on the following questions:

- What do people do and where do they go for information and/or support when they have a sign and/or symptom that is causing concern?
- How do different communities within Torbay understand and deal with concerning symptoms? How do they define concerning?
- What would improve early diagnosis within: areas of socio-economic deprivation, black and ethnic minority communities, LGBTQ+ communities, and adults with a learning disability?
- And for those who had experienced or been impacted by cancer, what sort of support did they receive, what was missing, and what would have helped?

## Project findings

1. Access to primary healthcare services is an overarching issue affecting all Torbay communities - both the target groups and the wider public.
2. Engagement fatigue around health is prevalent in Torbay. Individuals and groups expressed concerns around the worth of sharing their healthcare experiences. This overall feeling of apathy made engagement difficult across all communities in Torbay.
3. There is a lack of community-based cancer support services in Torbay. Both individuals and groups told us they struggle to find cancer support for themselves and family members.
4. For those who had experienced a cancer diagnosis there is a clear want for peer-based in-person cancer support.
5. Accessible information and healthcare are issues for people whose first language is not English and for adults with a learning disability.

## Key recommendations

1. A more sustainable model of engagement is needed to avoid exasperating local engagement fatigue.
2. All communities in Torbay would benefit from cancer-focused community-based support. There was a clear want for in-person peer-based support.
3. Raise awareness of the impact primary care issues are having on Torbay residents, particularly on those more likely to experience health inequalities.
4. Material which raises awareness of cancer signs and symptoms needs to be accessible in multiple ways.



## Next steps

One of the key aims of this project was for Torbay Communities to co-design and co-produce some solutions to the issues raised through engagement with local communities.

The co-designed resources are available to local community groups and organisations.

Suggested next steps, taken from the co-design element of this project, include:

- Return to the co-design groups in a year to gauge impact
- Develop ways for Macmillan to continue to develop those co-design relationships with users in the community
- Continue to strengthen the engagement and co-design process
- Monitor the ripple effect of this work
- Reprint the calendars yearly
- Share the learning from this project with key stakeholders

# Thank you - Any questions?



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