

Name of the project	Macmillan Mental Health Cancer Care Project
Aim of the project	To understand and improve the experiences of people living with a mental health condition and affected by cancer
Who was involved	<p>The project is being delivered in partnership between Macmillan and Middlesbrough and Stockton Mind. Representatives of Mental Health Services delivered by Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Cancer Services in South Tees and North Tees NHS Foundation Trusts. Middlesbrough CCG, Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees CCG, Public Health departments, voluntary organisations and people with experiences of mental health conditions and / or cancer were also involved.</p>
Project approach adopted	<p>The approach adopted for the project was action research. There were three phases to the project – desktop research, gathering information and development of recommendations. A key element of the project was to collect information from people with lived experience of mental health conditions and / or affected by cancer. This included people with direct experience, carers and professionals.</p> <p>People were offered the opportunities to take part in one to one semi-structured interviews, focus groups and workshops.</p> <p>To support the development of the recommendations, a co-production group was formed whose members had taken part in the research or had relevant experiences that they wanted to share.</p>
The impact of having people involved in this project	<p>By recruiting people to “tell their stories, the project was able to gather first hand experiences from personal and professional perspectives. Analysis of the information revealed several themes that supported the development of the recommendations.</p> <p>By offering people the opportunity to join the co-production group and therefore remain involved in the project, it has given them chance to find meaning in their experience. In co-designing the recommendations, the members have used their experiences in a positive way and this has had the added benefit of also supporting their mental health recovery.</p> <p>One member described going through his cancer journey on his own as he had no family or support networks. He had lived with a mental health condition since he was a teenager. He now attends the co-production group regularly and other opportunities that have arisen from this. He says “I feel like I am making a difference especially</p>

when I have been able to contribute to the Northern Cancer Alliance framework sessions. I have been part of something bigger that means a lot to me.”

Another member who found coming to terms with the lasting impact of her cancer treatment very difficult has found her voice and shared her experience with student nurses at their annual conference at the local university. She also attends the co-production group and co-facilitates workshops. “I don’t want anyone else to go through the same awful experience that I went through.”

By listening to and involving people who live with or support people who live with mental health conditions, the recommendations developed reflect the actual need of people not what services and professionals need.

In 2019 the project will be focusing on developing a number of the recommendations and will be looking for people who would like to get involved in these workstreams:

- Development of a hand held record for people to use when accessing a cancer pathway
- Reducing barriers between mental health and cancer services through a joint action planning event
- Developing information about coping with a mental health condition when diagnosed with cancer.

For further information about this project

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