

# Breast Health Awareness in the BAME Community - "Know Your Lemons"

## What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is here to *demonstrably influence commissioning, service provision or strategic decision making...* and this report outlines the work we have done collaboratively with North Bristol NHS Trust, MacMillan Cancer, Cancer Research UK, Bristol Black Carers, Rethink, Nilaari and Community Access Support Services (CASS). Healthwatch will make use of our statutory powers and the information shared with us, to help to set the commissioning agenda for the future, putting local people at the heart of decision-making.

### Background

Healthwatch Bristol received an email earlier in the summer from North Bristol NHS Trust Breast Reconstruction team. The idea for running a breast health awareness event came about after Healthwatch met staff from North Bristol NHS Trust at a collaborative meeting in August this year.



They told Healthwatch that black and minority ethnic women are less likely to attend their breast screening appointments and when they do get a breast cancer diagnosis it is often at an advanced stage of the disease. In partnership with the trust, Macmillan Cancer Support and Cancer Research UK, we thought this was a fantastic

opportunity to use our collective expertise and community links to invite women around the city to a day of learning around breast health. The main aim of the day was to promote the importance for women to be checking their breasts regularly.

### The Event

The day started with an introduction from Andrea Young, Chief Executive of North Bristol NHS Trust who spoke about the trust being able to provide end-to-end care - meaning that women will get their diagnosis and treatment under one roof, therefore removing the stress of having to go to different hospitals.

"I know how to 'Check My Lemons' that includes looking and checking in the mirror" Attendee

"I really appreciated being able to listen to the Chief Executive of North Bristol NHS Trust and the consultant, we wouldn't normally get to ask questions in that way. Thank you for the team giving up their time to come and talk to us. "

Attendee

"Very Intense learning, love what Healthwatch does, I want to be a volunteer! Attendee

"Increased knowledge of genetics/family risk of cancer." Attendee

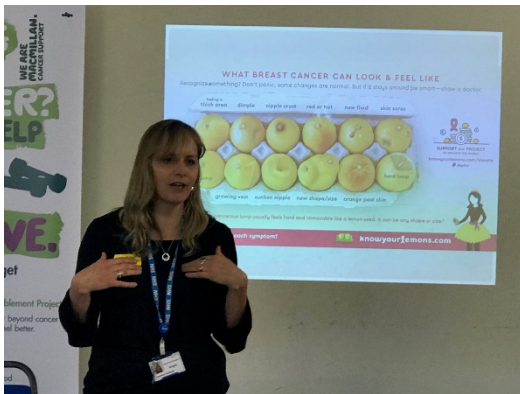


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## "Know Your Lemons"

Caroline Redford, Avon breast screening at Southmead Hospital was up next to speak to the women about checking for lumps and bumps and spoke about risk factors. Having a healthy lifestyle reduces the risk of getting cancer, such as eating healthy food, not smoking, not drinking too much alcohol and regularly exercising. She encouraged women to check their breasts every month advocating that this was the best way to pick up any issues early and how to do this as thoroughly as possible. More information on checking breasts and the warning signs to look for can be found on the brilliant [Know Your Lemons](#) website. She went on to talk about what to expect when attending mammogram appointments, demystified the process and debunked myths about 'catching cancer'.



## Living Well After Cancer

A breast cancer survivor spoke about her experience of being diagnosed twice with the disease. Attendees marvelled at her positive attitude. This was one of the main take-aways of the day - to remain positive. All of the professionals stressed the point that more often than not they were in a position to speak to patients about positive outcomes. This was either because lumps found were not cancerous or because women had come to them at an early stage of the disease.

The day was well-attended and the atmosphere relaxed, informal and in a non-

clinical setting. The speakers took questions from the women throughout presentations so it was very much like a conversation that everyone felt able to participate in.

## Outcomes - What have we learned?

Initially we had booked the meeting at the Vassall Centre, but we learned that the venue was not community friendly and that the BAME community would not attend. We therefore decided to change the venue to St Paul's Learning Centre. We valued the importance of ensuring the venue was comfortable for those attending.



## What were the barriers and enablers to accessing breast screening?

It was important with such a new event to identify the key enablers and barriers experienced by the community in accessing services.

Everyone agreed during the workshop sessions that having met the breast team, how friendly and informative they had been, they felt less scared in attending their breast screening/mammogram.

*"I was scared of attending I suppose, I didn't know that a mammogram was so important, now I realise that a bit of discomfort is far easier than not getting checked and run the risk of getting cancer."* Attendee

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It was noted in the workshop sessions that a key enabler to accessing breast screening is to go to where Black women are. This would be churches, hairdressers, children's centres, within

the local communities of St Paul's, Barton Hill, Easton and Eastville.

The group also suggested to go out to different groups in the city, such as Golden Agers, Evergreen and Dhek Bhal.

Representatives from Bristol Chinese Women said that they would also like to have a session, and also to recognise that "grouping together" different BAME groups may not always work, as Chinese people tend to be more reserved, less interactive and like more learning on slides/presentations.

This was echoed by the Afro-Caribbean representatives, "not all of us need to be lumped together in one group, and you need to be ensuring all BAME groups are met, and that probably means going to where these people are."

Attendees asked if we would consider offering childcare so that parents of young children could attend, as well as offering transport for older people in the community.

**"Healthwatch Bristol Challenged us to tell 6-10 of our friends, tell them what we have**

**learned and spread the word of learning. Well I am going to tell over 300 people about this!" Attendee**

**"Know Your Lemons. Knowledge is Power" Event Organisers**

**"It's your life, your health, your body so go to your GP and get checked out" Attendee**

## What Next? Recommendations

Healthwatch Bristol was pleased to note that all prosthetic breasts are offered in a diverse range of colours and available to all skin types. However, the audience said it would be good to see what breast abnormalities look like on darker skin. The breast team have said that more of their leaflets and promotional material would also be more diverse, based on advice from partners at MacMillan and Cancer Research UK, who also have leaflets and publicity which reflect the diversity of the general population.

Attendees suggested other venues and community spaces where similar events could be run, to ensure as many parts of Bristol as possible are reached. Another attendee thought having a mixed group with men and women would be a good idea. This would tie in well with the work Healthwatch has done on prostate cancer. We learnt from Public Health earlier in the year that if there is a history of breast cancer in the family this could also mean that it is more likely for a man to get prostate cancer.

It was said that more women are likely to attend screenings if these are taken into community areas - it's less clinical and therefore less scary.

Healthwatch and our partners will take this information and inform our stakeholders including NHS England, Healthwatch England, Local Authority and Bristol North Somerset and South Glos Clinical Commissioning Group.

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