



Hastings Voluntary Action Macmillan Cancer Support Champions Project

From Pain to Power

Stakeholder Report
September 2024 to March 2026

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>Engagement and Outreach</u>	3
<u>Raising awareness of the project in the relevant communities</u>	3
<u>Hastings and Rother Cancer Support Network (H&RCSN)</u>	5
<u>Becoming known to leaders in local authorities, health sector bodies, and Shared Prosperity Fund Projects</u>	6
<u>Work with local businesses</u>	7
<u>Recruitment of Champions</u>	8
<u>First champions cohort</u>	9
<u>Second champions cohort</u>	9
<u>Training & Workshops</u>	10
<u>Cancer Awareness</u>	10
<u>Making Every Contact Count Level 2</u>	11
<u>Motivational Interviewing</u>	11
<u>Loneliness Matters Workshop</u>	12
<u>Bluebell Walk</u>	13
<u>Mental Health First Aid</u>	13
<u>Creative Writing</u>	14
<u>Nutrition Drop-in</u>	15
<u>External Communications</u>	16
<u>Website and social media</u>	16
<u>Project Launch</u>	17
<u>Feedback on the launch</u>	17
<u>World Cancer Day and Shaping the National Cancer Plan</u>	18
<u>Impact Measurement and Evaluation</u>	19
<u>Learning and reflections</u>	22
<u>Sustainability</u>	22
<u>Conclusion</u>	24
<u>Contact details</u>	25

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Introduction

Hastings Voluntary Action is working with Macmillan Cancer Support to help people to access local services and break down barriers.

The Macmillan Cancer Support Champions Project is one of eleven such projects across the country and is funded for three years by Macmillan. Community Development Worker Yasmine Kamel and project manager Jane Dodson are delivering the work, Monday – Thursday (at 0.8 FTE) each, hosted by Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA).

The key aim is to increase uptake of cancer services, particularly in underserved areas of Hastings, such as Broomgrove and Hollington. The project will work with both those who have received a cancer diagnosis and those who may be at risk of cancer, and who are less likely to access support or screenings. The project uses the power of conversation to support people into services and uses an asset-based community development approach.

Macmillan approached HVA to consider this project, building on the success of existing asset-based projects such as Making it Happen and the Men’s Health and Wellbeing work (Mr Hastings and St Leonards).

The volunteer cancer champions are supported to have conversations about cancer, general health and wellbeing and signpost people to support. They are also supported by receiving training around cancer awareness, making every contact count, loneliness matters, motivational interviewing and mental health first aid. In addition, a programme of support ‘drop-ins’ is being co-designed with the champions, including a range of activities and topics such as nutrition, creative writing and woodland walks.

This report covers the first half of the project, from September 2024 to end of March 2026, and is divided into sections that link to the overall project plan.

Engagement and Outreach

Raising awareness of the project in the relevant communities

One of the first events the team attended was an Active Hastings Age-Friendly activity day at Broomgrove Community Centre, offering a creative, conversational space at a Macmillan Cancer Champions stall. We took along a joint branded HVA/Macmillan banner, colouring books, jigsaws, and offered nail painting to encourage conversations, which worked well.

The team also attended the HVA social supermarket at Broomgrove, a discounted groceries scheme, and spoke to some of the volunteers about the project. People responded positively to the idea, and the Macmillan/HVA brand engendered a trust that enabled people to share their stories.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



In the town centre, a Unity in the Community event organised by Hastings Voluntary Action and St Michael's Hospice, was held where the team made teas & coffees and handed out postcards.

On a wider scale, we staged a takeover of the HVA socials for World Cancer Day, showcasing two of our champions stories, with posts throughout the day with fantastic reach.



Age-friendly network event at Central Hall



Tesco Extra stall in Hollington

A podcast series is under way, produced by Nadine Searle on her You Tube channel, one of our champions showcasing the project and members of the wider cancer support network locally.

We have also held our own events, the project launch was hugely popular and attracted over 60 people plus a marketplace of providers, and we are currently planning Cancer Connections, an event to raise awareness of local services, and look at the future of cancer care following the publication of the National Cancer Plan and it's focus on neighbourhood health.

We attended the Links Project Refugee Week celebration day with around 100 attendees. We had a table and offered nail painting, had conversations about the project with some of the attendees including representatives from the Lotus Flower Charity, East Sussex County Council and Arts on Prescription and distributed signposting cards.

We held an information day at the Tesco Extra, in Hollington, one of our target areas, where we spoke to 35 people, and raised awareness in a very prominent spot near the entrance. We were introduced to the Tesco community worker by one of our champions. The picture on the right shows Yasmine with the stall.

Jane attended the Wellbeing at Work Awards conference, where we held a stall and passed out cards – it was attended by over 80 people from businesses across Hastings.

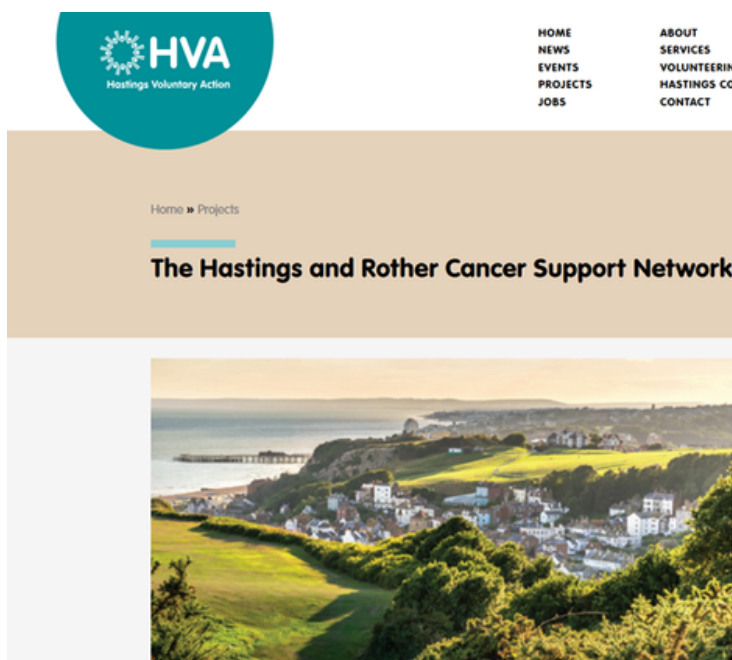
Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Hastings and Rother Cancer Support Network (H&RCSN)

Hastings Voluntary Action is a founder member of this network, along with Macmillan and the Sara Lee Trust. The aim is to bring together organisations and teams from across Hastings and Rother that are supporting people living with and affected by cancer to:

- Improve joint working, integration and shared learning
- Improve pathways to care and support activities
- Increase awareness and ease of access in areas of high need
- Reduce inequalities in support, care and access



[Link to the project page](#)

We have co-produced a new A5 leaflet listing local services, a [Padlet](#) of support services which is on the HVA website, and a card with a QRcode that links to this, that champions can hand out as they are having conversations in their community.

We host one of the four quarterly meetings of this network at HVA per year, and Jane was nominated chair of the network in December 2026, after facilitating a strategy session that resulted in a 'Strategic Plan on a Page'.

Cancer Support Champions Project

Stakeholder Report



As the focus for the third meeting was on men's health, Teresa Flower presented on Mr Hastings & St Leonards, the Rye Cancer Café, and PCaSO (a prostate cancer charity) also presented.

HVA now host an on-line presence for the Network. This includes the information above with any resources produced, such as [the leaflet](#).

Network members include: HVA, Hastings & Bexhill PCN Cancer Care Coordinators, Macmillan Cancer Support, Sussex Cancer Fund, NHS Integrated Care Board, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, Sara Lee Trust and We Only Live Once (WOLO) Foundation

Also, 1066 Pink Ladies, Active Hastings, Age UK East Sussex, Care for the Carers, Cancer Care Map, Friends Altogether in Rother, Hastings Heart, Hastings Library, Horizon Cancer Centre (Brighton), Macmillan Counselling Services, Macmillan lead cancer nurses at Conquest, Money Advice Plus, PCaSO, Public Health East Sussex, Rye Memorial Hospital, Shine, St Michael's Hospice, The Hill Surgery and Willow Tree

The project team brought H&RCSN members together with cancer champions and others with lived experience, and facilitated a response to the national consultation, 'Shaping the National Cancer Plan'. This report was cascaded to senior professionals at the Integrated Care Board and fed into the UK Government's Plan. The Plan was launched 4th February 2026.

More recent agenda items have included responding to increased demand for services in languages other than English, considering a pooled fund for this, and collaborating on Cancer Connections, a planned event to bring together statutory and voluntary services, and look at future trends in cancer care following the publication of the National Cancer Plan.

Becoming known to leaders in local authorities, and health sector bodies

The project manager attended UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Panel held at Broomgrove, coordinated and chaired by Hastings Borough Council, and presented the project. HVA hosted a follow up workshop to discuss proposals for healthcare priorities for North East Hastings.

Cancer Support Champions Project

Stakeholder Report



The team has connected with Anna Merla, Public Health Consultant who has conducted research into barriers to healthcare in Broomgrove. Anna is participating in the external evaluation. Also with Andrea Potter, ICT programme manager.

Jane has been co-opted onto the Screening Inequalities Section 7a steering group, which has over 60 members, from across Sussex and Surrey healthcare professionals. This meets quarterly and exchanges good practice.

The team has linked with lead Macmillan nurses at the Conquest and connected with Graham Evans, Head of Public Health Intelligence, at ESCC. We have also linked to the East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust research team, who are preparing a Science Cafe, as part of Cancer Connections, sharing news on clinical trials and the latest research at the Conquest and beyond.

The project team attended two 'Bridging the Gap' study days created with Surrey and Sussex Cancer Alliance, which were very useful to connect with NHS and PCN colleagues. Cross-signposting is now regularly occurring.

Through links with One You East Sussex, we have created slides to be shown in GP surgeries on screens in waiting rooms, and they deliver our MECC training module, with a focus on signposting to cancer support services.

The team attends monthly online webinars for Cancer Care Coordinators, which are excellent for information sharing and becoming further known within that community.

A local GP, Dr Lisa Sansom, has connected with us in the course of her work to help promote cervical screening and is taking part in the external evaluation. We are hosting the Surrey and Sussex screening team at Cancer Connections, complete with their inflatable bowel!

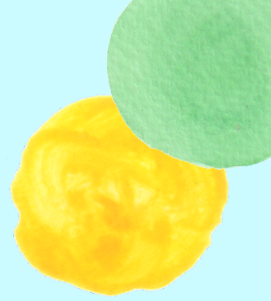
Work with local businesses

Connected with the chair of the Business Improvement District in Hastings Town Centre, Let's Do Business, and the local Chamber of Commerce. One of our champions (Dee Flower) presented the work to a Chamber breakfast, held at Hastings United Football Club, resulting in the club offering to dedicate a match to the project next season.

Lorna, who works at the Club, has since become a cancer champion herself. We have also made connections with Hastings Direct, a large local employer, and are planning a business area at Cancer Connections where we can share resources such as the Top Ten Tips for Line Managers, and employee and employer packs.

Cancer Support Champions Project

Stakeholder Report



One of our champions, Clare, is connecting with local College and Jobcentre, to try to address the issues around many cancer patients feeling they have to give up work, exacerbating financial issues for the employee, and creating a problem for employers too.

A strong relationship has been built with a hairdressing salon in Queen's Road that has supported our launch event with one of our community anchor champions, Kim at HVA. We are working up ideas to engage taxi drivers who take patients to cancer appointments.

Jane attended the East Sussex Wellbeing at Work Conference and awards ceremony. Signposted employers to the Macmillan employers' toolkit with advice on how to support employees who present with cancer.

The team have met with Let's Do Business, HR lead, to share information about the project and our aspiration to recruit champions within the workplace.

The team has also created two new postcards, one for employers and one for potential workplace champions.

Recruitment of Champions

We have designed a postcard that summarises the champion's role, with contact details of the team to express an interest. We also announced the project through HVA socials.

A light-touch application form, with an emphasis on existing skills and what brings candidates joy in their everyday lives, is in use. Our preferred method of completing these is in person, having a conversation with the prospective champion, which we find brings out much more information, using open, appreciative inquiry style questions.

We have developed an induction questionnaire that measures the champions' knowledge and awareness of cancer, available support services, and confidence to have conversations, pre embarking on the training. This can be checked back to create a data set measuring confidence to have conversations at intervals, and post training.

The skills and knowledge and interests that they mention then feeds directly into the design of activities for regular 'drop-ins', where again, we find offering 'shoulder to shoulder' creative activities, helping to create a safe, environment where people can talk about cancer and its effects easily and confidentially.

Cancer Support Champions Project

Stakeholder Report



These discussions often lead to ideas to progress the projects, for example connecting us with their contacts, and spreading the word at events they are attending, and through social media.

An 'easy-read' role profile, has been produced, to be inclusive when people express an interest in the role.

We developed some short, social media pieces, introducing the project, and the project team, in the HVA bulletin that goes out to the membership and wider stakeholders across the town, with a circulation of approximately 2000 people.

The project has also featured in the Hastings Borough Council bulletin, that goes out to all residents with a My Hastings account, around 7,500 households.

First champions cohort

The first twelve champions have trialled the training, and helping us co-design the programme, with the support drop-ins. Their backgrounds range from social prescribing, former pharmacy technicians, a former hairdresser, a former project manager, community hub managers, business marketing, counselling, teaching and working with children and young families.

One champion, based in the NHS works with people with learning disabilities and autism. The majority of the champions have lived experience of cancer themselves, or of caring for a loved one with cancer.

There is a rich range of knowledge, skills and experiences and they have given some very positive feedback so far, as well as connecting us with their valuable networks.

First cohort: Sabi Mahabir, Nadine Searle, Kirsty Treadwell, Jackie Guant, Dee Flower, Mikaela Berridge, Jonathon Dolding, Hazel Newton, Kim Kelly, Isabelle Endreo, Emma Morris, Clare Marten-White. Shreyans Iyer and Clive Hancocks are also collaborating with the project, using community music, and raising awareness of Prostate Cancer respectively.

Second champions cohort

A further six people have come forward, including Lorna White at Hastings United, Paul Huggett, of the Paul Huggett band, who has been playing benefit gigs and having cancer conversations in venues across the town, Alac Pengelly, who has also become a Macmillan buddy, Douglas Barren who is also part of PCaSO, Joanna Mackinnon, who will be facilitating some drawing workshops for us, and Bee, Head Barista at the Cornish Bakery in the Old Town who has offered barista training the use of upstairs space of the café for drop-ins and conversation sessions.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Training & Workshops

The training programme is being co-designed with the champions themselves, and Macmillan. There is a 'core' offer of cancer awareness, and Making Every Contact Count, supplemented by other topics as suggested by participants, or linking in with other projects.

Cancer Awareness

The project team have undergone Macmillan Train the Trainer in Cancer Awareness, with Julian Backhouse, the Macmillan Champions implementation lead, and reviewed this module with Kim, HVA champion with lived experience, who suggested we make some small amendments to the pathways slides to be more inclusive.

The first session was delivered, with Kate Regan, Macmillan Engagement & Quality lead and our first three champions, in February 2025. Participants Jonathan, Sabi and Nadine provided feedback on the process, and the content of the materials.

During the session, which was held at the White Rock Hotel, one participant bumped into an acquaintance during the tea break, and spoke to them about the project, and why he was taking part. It was a powerful example of putting the skills into practice.

A second workshop was delivered by Matt Jarvis, of the Macmillan Horizon Centre in Brighton, who came to Hastings to facilitate a Cancer Explained session, and hosted by HVA. A train the trainer session hosted by Matt was delivered to increase the capacity locally to deliver this.

Delivered 12th February & 10th March '25, 24th Sept '25, 30th March 2026



Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Making Every Contact Count Level 2

The team are liaising with One You East Sussex to deliver (MECC) training, quarterly, specifically tailored to the cancer community and using the mini directory of local services we co-created with the Hastings and Rother Cancer Support Network.

Delivered: January 2025, May 2025, July 2025, Sept 2025, March 2026



Motivational Interviewing

Through Yasmine's connection at Brighton University, Jamie Cooper, delivered a Motivational Interviewing module, where he used music (specifically a Ukelele!) to put everyone at ease, and is also interested in potentially linking the project to some wider research, via the theory of change model developed by NPC.



Delivery Date: 30th April 2025.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Loneliness Matters Workshop

This was developed in response to one of our cancer champions, who described the sense of loneliness and isolation he felt on receiving his cancer diagnosis as a young man.

Co-designed with Gillian Reynolds who brought the learnings from the East Sussex Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation project. This was delivered in January 2025 with some excellent feedback from participants, who reported a more extensive knowledge of the impacts of loneliness, after attending, and were given tools to spot the signs and support those who present with these.



A follow up workshop explored how the participants are using the learning in their conversations and how the champions are applying the techniques.

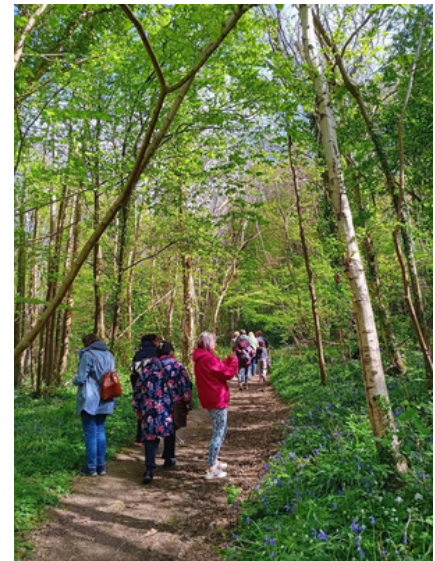
Delivered: 22nd January 2025. Follow up 'refresher' delivered: 22nd May 2025

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Bluebell Walk & Wildlife Tours

A bluebell walk/meditation was held by Nadine, one of our champions, at Church in the Wood, Hollington, one of our target areas, which was very well attended. We are now working with the Sussex Wildlife Trust to create a walk around Alexandra Park focussing on birdsong.



Mental Health First Aid

Commissioned from Soundcastle in partnership with the Baton of Hope project (brought to Hastings by the Mr Hastings & St Leonards project) and the HVA Cancer Champions.



Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Creative Writing

We are working with Writing Well, the duo behind 'Words from the Waiting Room', a creative writing project, that aims to capture the emotions that people feel when in an oncology waiting room, where they may be given life-changing news, to design a collage and writing workshop.

The work was initially a collaboration with the Sussex Cancer Fund and the University of Brighton. A workshop design drop-in was held in July 2025, and two sessions were delivered in January 2026, which were very well attended. One focused on creative writing/poetry and the other on collage.



Below is one of the anaphoric poems the group wrote together, we also discussed morning pages, using journals, and in a second session, created collage.

I lost my heart to a stray cat in my garden
I lost no time with your love
I lost myself
I lost my way but found it again
I lost some of my angst and opened my heart
I lost my sense of security
I lost my confidence
I lost my dad
I lost my sense of purpose

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Nutrition

Champions had mentioned the loss of a sense of taste and lack of energy that can impact on their nutrition, creating meals with family, or the challenges of being alone and summoning strength to cook from scratch.

So, we linked with Isabelle Endreo, founder of [Rainbow Kitchen Magic](#) in Bexhill, who provides food workshops with the Sara Lee Trust (and is known to the HVA projects Mr Hastings and St Leonards, and Hastings Food Network) and explored links and possible activities linked to their work with qualified dietician and nutritionist Nathalie Sansonetti at New Leaf Nutrition, who has worked with many clients who have undergone cancer treatment. A drop in on the topic was held in February 2025.



Delicious lunch at our launch event with Isabelle and Yasmine

The wide ranging conversation that took place with our champions, was very moving, and took on board the communities we are aiming to reach, emotional relationships to food, planning meals, equipment and facilities that people may have available, and unpacking the motivations around diet/behaviours and nutrition, that apply in general and when someone is living with cancer.

A nutrition workshop pack, focussing on trying spices and flavours, has been developed with St Michael's Hospice, and demonstrations will take place at Cancer Connections, and developing a wider project is under discussion. Isabelle catered for our project launch, see picture above, and people are still talking about the wonderful spread. The brief was 'healthy afternoon tea' with delicious treats to keep energy levels high throughout the event.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



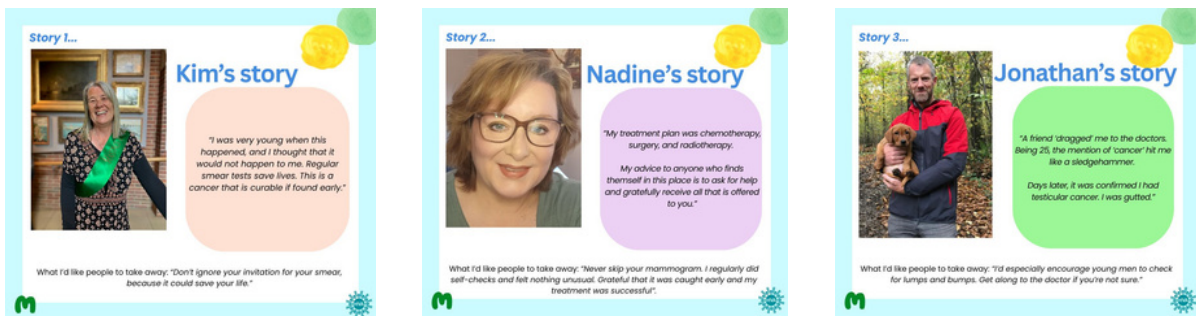
External Communications Website and social media

A project web page has been set up with a description of the project, the champions role description and the directory, and some social media posts introducing the project have been posted on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

A holding Facebook and Instagram account has been set up for the champions project, to enable us to amplify what the champions and HVA and Macmillan are posting. These will be developed further if the champions think it would be useful.

LinkedIn is a useful source of information sharing and links with the other champions projects, and other professionals working in this space, including the South East community network run by Macmillan.

The HVA social media channels, training programmes, and e-bulletins are trusted sources that have been invaluable in spreading the word about the project, and the volunteer coordinator can promote the champions' opportunity alongside her other work. The social media takeover for World Cancer Day alone created thousands of interactions and shares, centred on three champion's personal stories. Yasmine also shared these stories on her personal Instagram account in the hopes of reaching a different demographic of people.



Presentations to the HVA team in January and to the HVA board in March to ensure that the messaging is on track internally, so we can all accurately present the project externally.

A project Facebook page and profile have been set up to help monitor social media, and the project manager is using her own LinkedIn profile to help amplify messages and key reflections.

The project launch was featured on Sussex World, and a printed article appeared in the Hastings Observer, the Macmillan South East Cancer Network newsletter, Hastings Borough Council e-bulletin to residents, and an interview with one of the champions was held on BBC Sussex Radio.

A podcast series has now been produced by Nadine, all about the project and the impacts on people involved. Jane has also written a blog on the Cancer Care Map site, to help raise awareness alongside the project listing.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Project Launch

The project launch happened on Tuesday, 10th June at the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, Durbar Hall. A series of launch ideas meetings were held in Spring 2025.

It included a pledge wall and a focus on the next recruitment campaign for champions. We stated our aim of making Hastings a town where anyone needing cancer support knows how and where to access it.

The March drop-in for champions focused on ideas for the launch, including an outdoor meditation, champions sharing stories, and a marketplace for those offering services.

One of the cancer champions approached local jazz pianist and singer Liane Carroll, who agreed to play alongside an afternoon tea as part of the event, which was wonderful.

The day exemplified the atmosphere and environment of the project, with the champions' storytelling being particularly powerful, along with the marketplace of support services that was held on the upper gallery floor.

The presentations from the champions were recorded and shared with the evaluators, and were very well received on the day.



Feedback on the launch

“What a brilliant event on Tuesday, it was fantastic to be part of it. There was such a strong sense of purpose in the room, it was genuinely inspiring to see such a diverse group of individuals, all working towards a common goal. I’m really looking forward to being part of and seeing how the project shapes and evolves over the coming years.”

Emma Morris, Learning Disabilities and Autism Liaison and Health Facilitation, NHS.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



“Congratulations on your event! It was brilliant, so heartfelt and a great way to showcase local services, but also local talents and skills.”

Rebecca Trussler, Macmillan Primary Care Nurse Facilitator.

“I just wanted to extend my thanks and congratulations to all involved. It was a lovely and memorable event. Please also pass on my thanks to your lovely champions, sitting and chatting with them as the afternoon went on was both enjoyable and humbling. I’m sure the planning and preparation was a mighty task, but the result was very special, and the venue, food and entertainment worked so well too.”

Julian Backhouse, Macmillan Cancer Champions Implementation Lead



World Cancer Day and Shaping the National Cancer Plan

Jane attended a Macmillan event, an interview with Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and Nick Robinson, BBC journalist, at Westminster for World Cancer Day, 4th February 2025. This opportunity led to the chance to feed into the call for evidence, feeding into the National Cancer Plan.



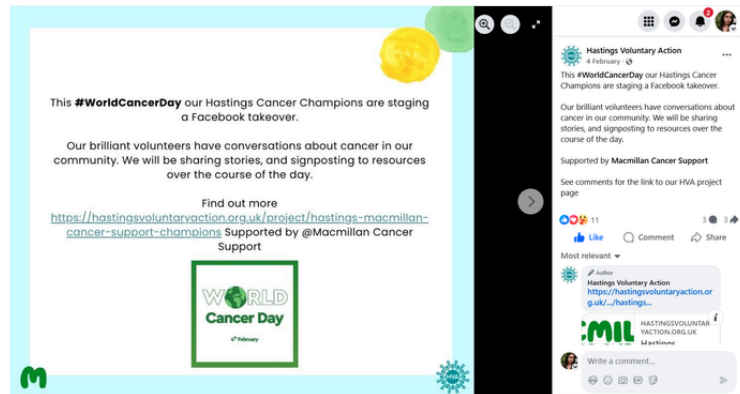
https://youtu.be/pZ6_AhVuVbY

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



The event led to the project manager creating a Shaping the National Cancer Plan workshop and [report](#), bringing together voices of lived experience, with Primary Care Network, pulling together a consultation response.

In 2026, we marked the day by staging a takeover of the Hastings Voluntary Action socials.



Impact Measurement and Evaluation

External evaluation partners New Philanthropy Capital have co-designed an interview structure and a platform to capture Most Significant Change stories and speak to wider stakeholders about the project’s impact. There are clearly defined checkpoints for data collection.

An initial ripple effect monitoring exercise has been held, and this will be revisited and updated. This builds on work done by the other asset-based community development projects at HVA, specifically Making it Happen and Mr Hastings and St Leonards.

We have developed a tool, a ‘Bingo Card’ that has boxes containing the activities that a champion may do, e.g. have a conversation with friend, or signpost to a service, or being kind to oneself after having a difficult conversation.

This will show progress, act as a prompt for champions to have support conversations with Jane and Yasmine and provide clarity on what actions count as part of the programme.

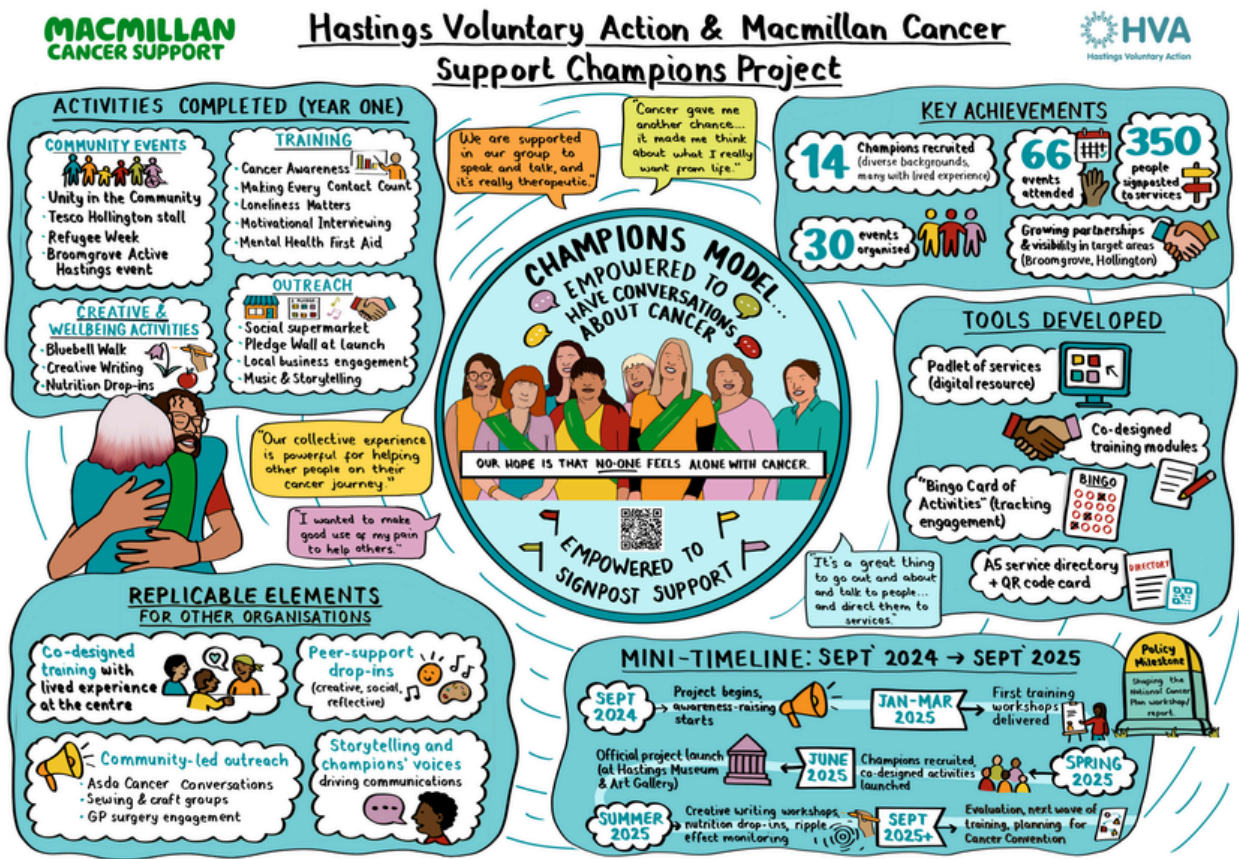
Macmillan Cancer Support Champion Bingo Card

I have had a conversation around cancer with a friend Number:	I have had a conversation around cancer with a family member Number:	I have signposted someone to a cancer support service Number:
I have signposted someone to the MacMillan website Number:	I have signposted someone to the MacMillan service at the Community Info Hub Number:	I have attended a relevant training session to support my work as a Champion Number:
I have had a conversation with someone about some of the barriers they face to access screening Number:	I have had a conversation with someone about some of the barriers they face to access cancer support services Number:	I have spoken to either Jane or Yasmine for some support after having a difficult conversation with someone around cancer Number:

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report

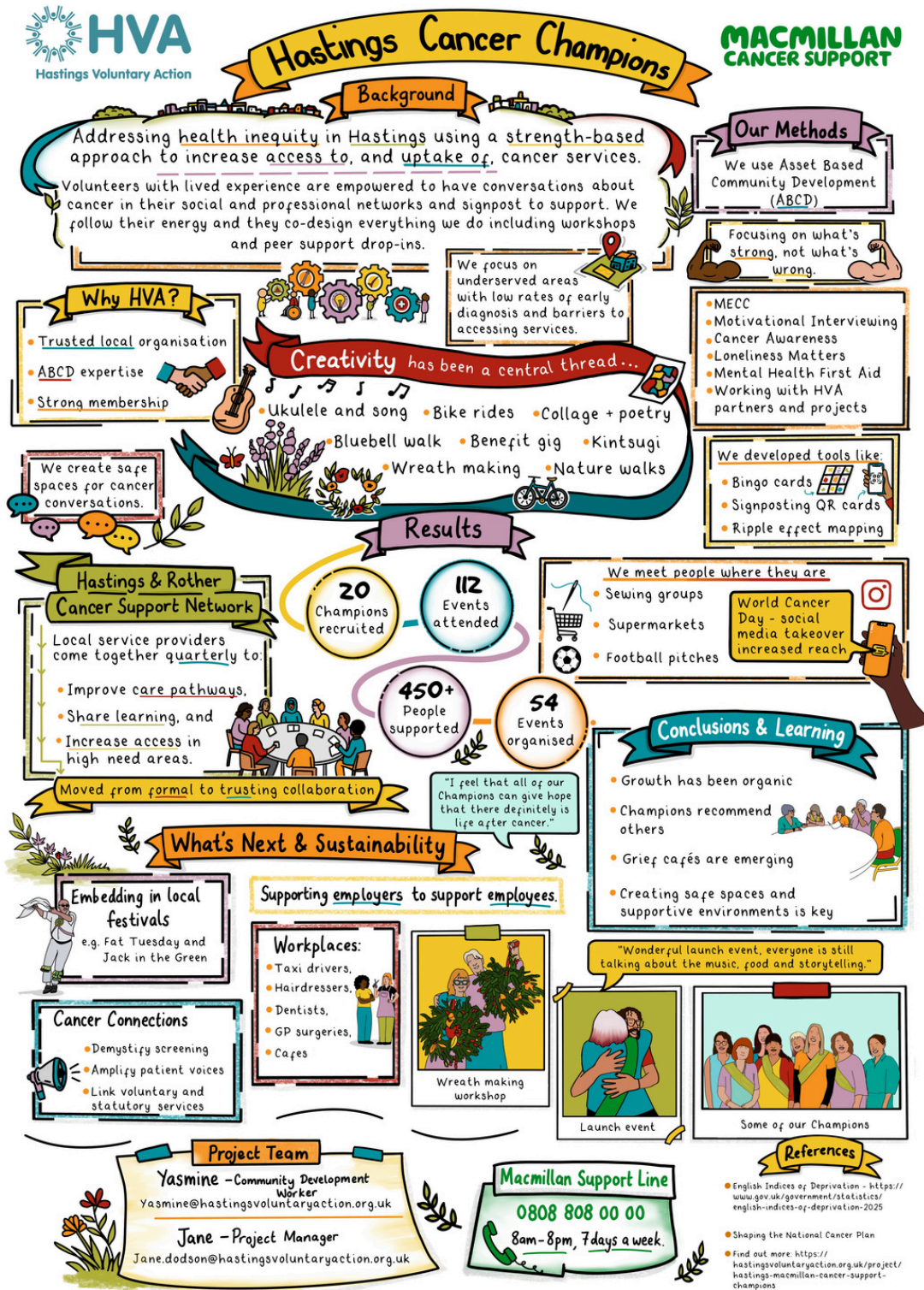
We will revisit our champions' induction questionnaires later in the programme to measure progress, alongside our baseline data taken at application stage. We have also collected presentations made at the launch, and post event feedback, which has been universally positive, with champions reporting that the process is giving them confidence, empowering and enabling them. Some are finding that it is becoming part of the healing process, with the training helping them to make sense of some past experiences and look forward to the future with hope.

We worked with an artist to produce a sketchnote to show the first year's achievements



Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report

We have been invited to share a poster, showcasing the project, at the Macmillan Professionals Conference in April 2026.



Cancer Support Champions Project

Stakeholder Report



Learning and reflections

Cancer can be an emotive and difficult topic to address, however, we as a team have found so much positivity, and joy in this work. The contributions have been hopeful, passionate, honest, and heartfelt. This emanates from within, our champions, and their experiences, and is also reflected in the reactions of others to the project, the wider stakeholders, potential collaborators, and colleagues.

Much of this work has been about creating an environment where champions feel able to speak freely, and creatively, and to help us to co-design this project with them at the absolute centre of things. The asset-based community development approach we have adopted centres the skills, knowledge and experiences of our champions, and their communities.

We have adopted a person-centred approach to the role of champion and have presented the role description as more of a menu of things that champions might choose to do. This is perfect for some; however, others appreciate more structure and clarity – so we have developed the bingo card to help with this. It provides a simple structure that acts as a reminder of tasks/conversations, a sense of achievement and accomplishment, and acts as a prompt for support conversations with the project team.

The support drop-ins, in between the training workshops, where we have creative activities, refreshments and sometimes a theme are working well, and providing a space/environment is proving enough for meaningful discussions to take place. The aims of these drop-ins were initially group and peer support, however they are also turning into explorations of topics to include in the programme, and co-design of our events.

Sustainability

We aim for the cancer champions to deliver activities themselves embedded in their communities.

Nadine has established Cancer Conversations in a local Asda, directly in one of our target areas, on the third Thursday of each month. She also produces the podcast and holds interviews with local radio. She has established a grief cafe in a local care home and was recognised in the HVA volunteer awards for her outstanding contribution to the project.

Another award-winning champion, Hazel has started a sewing and craft group at her local church, alongside having conversations everywhere, from the bus stop to her pop-ins session for families with young children. In telling her story publicly at the launch, she has spoken of the impacts of the project, enabling her to turn her 'pain into power'.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Emma, who is delivering training for GP surgery staff, is spreading the word through her NHS work, and delivering real change for people with learning disabilities and autism, including lowering the screening age for groups for certain cancers, and including education for carers on cancer risks.



Clare has been attending the Breast Cancer Now Moving Forward course, connecting them to services locally, and to an oncology scar specialist, and setting up a WhatsApp group for participants to stay connected. She is also liaising with the East Sussex Level Up team, who have been helping her navigate returning to work via self-employment, and is discussing more about support for those who are struggling to find work following cancer treatment. She is currently advocating for lower waiting times for GP appointments to implement oncology recommendations.

Paul has brought together a band to help take his mind off his upcoming treatment for a second bout of prostate cancer. He is playing in a variety of venues, sharing his powerful story, and encouraging cancer conversations during the intervals and following his band's performances in Hastings.

Dee is active in the business community, connecting us to large employers, and her wide networks, including with Hastings United who have pledged to dedicate an upcoming fixture to our project.

Bee, at the Cornish Bakery, has offered space for a regular cancer conversations drop-in, and is creating a Barista training offer for champions. They hold our cards and leaflets on the counter at their popular premises.

Alac is keen to develop bike rides around Rye Harbour, and has become a Macmillan buddy.

Cancer Support Champions Project

Stakeholder Report



Joanna will be facilitating some drawing workshops for the champions as part of the programme. The workshops are designed to train the eye, brain, and hand to work together in a more connected way, encouraging looking and seeing, and developing hand/eye coordination, as well as pencil control.

Nearly all the communications about the project come from the champions themselves, and we then amplify their voices. Our further aim, as we expand the number of champions in workplaces, community centres, and within primary care, is to ensure that they have all the tools and resources they need to continue their work and feel connected to each other to continue with the peer support sessions and guidance.

Conclusion and next steps

Our experiences so far have far exceeded our expectations when we began this project a year and a half ago.

Our activities are starting to embed in local traditions, with an umbrella workshop as part of the Fat Tuesday celebrations, and helping to tie bunches of greenery and ribbons for the Jack in the Green May Day parade.

We will continue to develop activities with our champions, the kintsugi workshop in particular was emotional and symbolic, musical evenings, and outings to facilitate peer support, and deepen relationships.

We are looking forward to our next steps, which include delivering Cancer Connections, recruiting more champions, and delivering more training. As we uncover barriers to uptake of support, we will report those back into the system to influence change.

Cancer Connections will be a showcase of local support services, including speakers on topics such as clinical trials, screening programmes, and patient voices. As well as demonstrations that span cookery/nutrition and complementary therapies.

We are also planning a train-the-trainer event on the Asset-Based Community Development approach, in conjunction with the renowned Jeder Institute, to increase capacity and community leadership in this approach.

Watch this space as we follow the energy, and look forward to seeing what will come next.

Together, our vision is that no one needs to feel alone when they have a cancer diagnosis or are caring for someone with cancer, and that they know where to go for help and support. We feel that we are starting to realise that vision now. With heart, with strength, with ambition.

Cancer Support Champions Project Stakeholder Report



Thank you to Hastings Voluntary Action colleagues, all our champions, the members of the Hastings and Rother Cancer Support Network, and to our wider stakeholders, who continue to welcome us into the space, and are so generous with all their support.

The team:

Jane Dodson (Project Manager):

Phone number: 07521 426570

Email: jane.dodson@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk

Yasmine Kamel (Community Development Worker):

Phone number: 07394 804423

Email: yasmine@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk