

'Painting Stroud Pink' – Breast awareness in Gloucestershire

A NAEDI funded project, commissioned by NHS Gloucestershire, delivered with support from the University of the West of England, Uscreates, the Cobalt Unit and the Stroud community

Summary

The project team worked with volunteers across Stroud to pioneer a co-created, community-led approach to promoting breast awareness.



Introduction

Breast cancer rates in Gloucestershire are above the national average. Our campaign targeted Stroud, the district with the highest incidence rate in the county.

We wanted to combine a social marketing approach with ideas from Asset Based Community Development and co-creation to test whether a collaborative approach was more effective in engaging the local community and making the campaign sustainable.

The programme is being evaluated using a combination of the BCAM, volunteer feedback, two week wait data and surveys in GP waiting rooms.

Aims of the initiative or service

- To raise awareness of the signs, symptoms and risk factors for breast cancer
- To get women talking about breast awareness with their peers
- To involve the community in designing and delivering the campaign
- To mobilise social networks to disseminate messages
- To make the campaign sustainable

What we did

- Held "Ladies' Lounge" pop-up beauty salons across Stroud to get to know the local community, recruit volunteers and create a buzz about the project!
- Recruited 32 volunteers through the Ladies' Lounge and word of mouth, and provided training run by a local cancer prevention charity
- The volunteers held workshops to develop action plans for their local area, and hit the streets in May to build support for the campaign through their social networks
- In June, they launched 'Painting Stroud Pink' – high street events aimed at spreading the breast awareness message
- Project costs: approx. £35k

Progress and outcomes

In May and June the volunteers:

- Spent over 600 hours on the project
- Held at least 800 conversations passing on key messages to the public
- Ran three half day 'awareness' events, and one talk for over 50 people
- Secured the support of over 150 traders plus a number of pharmacies and GP surgeries
- Distributed over 3,050 leaflets and posters

Most importantly, our volunteers are still meeting and planning what to do next! At the post stage of the BCAM, a third of respondents in Stroud (32%) said they had seen or heard something about breast cancer via a community event, stall or talk, representing a significant increase from the pre stage (5%).

Conclusions, recommendations and learnings for commissioners and providers

- Spend time with the community. Community engagement initiatives are only as successful as the relationships you create.
- Find out what's already working well in the community. Where do people go? Who do they listen to? Find out what works and build on it.
- Be prepared to give up control. If you want the community to get behind the project, you need to trust them to take control. After all, you're asking them to give up their time

Further information:

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