

# ANNUAL REPORT

## CAN YOU ME?

JANUARY 2025 - DECEMBER 2025



Delivered by Croydon BME Forum  
Funded by Macmillan Cancer Support

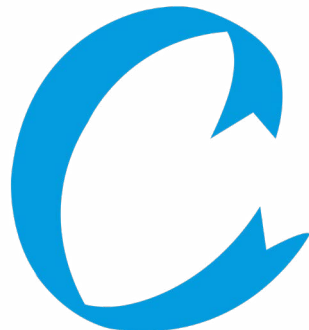
In partnership with

**MACMILLAN**  
CANCER SUPPORT

  
CROYDON BME FORUM

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 ● Executive Summary
  - Foreword from the Chief Executive Officer
- 4 ● Sarah Taylor and Anton Morgan-Thorne
- 5 ● Annual Impact Dashboard (Data & Demographics)
- 6 ● Headline Impact 2025
- 7 ● Flagship Event of the Year
  - Kingston Cancer Conference 2025
- 8 ● Case Study
- 10 ● Community Outreach
- 11 ● Partnership
- 12 ● Photos (Kingston Cancer Conference 2025)
- 14 ● Learning, Challenges and Impact 2025
- 16 ● Strategic Priorities For 2026
- 18 | Acknowledgements



# Executive Summary

The Can You C Me? programme, led by Croydon BME Forum in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, is a community-based initiative tackling cancer inequalities in Black and minority ethnic communities across South West London.

In 2025, it delivered workshops, outreach, and events across six boroughs, working with local organisations, faith groups, and health professionals to improve awareness of cancer prevention, early detection, and support services. A key highlight was the Kingston Cancer Conference, which strengthened collaboration between communities and healthcare partners.

Through trusted, community-led engagement, the programme has helped address misconceptions, encourage screening, and inform improvements in how cancer services reach and support diverse populations.



## Foreword from **The CEO** DR ANDREW BROWN

**2025 has been a defining year for the Can You C Me? programme.**

Over the past year, we have moved beyond awareness into meaningful system influence.

This work has been about building trust ensuring Black and ethnically diverse communities feel seen, heard, and supported within cancer services, while challenging stigma, addressing myths, and strengthening early diagnosis.

### **Through our partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, we have:**

- Engaged hundreds of residents in trusted community spaces
- Strengthened collaboration with Primary Care Networks and hospital teams
- Co-produced culturally responsive training with St George's Hospital
- Supported hospice providers to reach underserved communities

We have also seen real behaviour change, with more residents accessing GP appointments and screening, leading to earlier diagnosis. Powered by community voices and lived experience, the programme now acts as a bridge between communities and clinical systems.

### **Our commitment remains clear:**

reducing inequalities, strengthening early diagnosis, building trust, and ensuring no one feels invisible.



## SARAH TAYLOR

### **Programme Lead at Macmillan Cancer Support programme.**

As Programme Lead for the wider portfolio of EDI work, the partnership between Macmillan and Can You C Me (Hosted by Croydon BME) has been a key project in strengthening equity in cancer care. The Project has expanded activity across six boroughs, engaging thousands of residents - helping us deliver

on Macmillan's commitment to working with and alongside communities.

The programme has focused on reducing health inequities, particularly for people living in the 20% most deprived areas and ethnically diverse communities and strengthening referral pathways between community groups and primary care to help reduce unwarranted variation in cancer treatment and care.

We are delighted that the programme co-produced NHS training to address cultural barriers and worked with hospices to challenge stigma around palliative and end of life services. This community engagement led to genuine behaviour change, with residents taking proactive steps to access clinical, emotional and financial support.

Across my wider EDI work, this partnership is a great example of what can be achieved when communities and system partners come together. Macmillan is proud to work alongside this organisation to help create fairer cancer care for everyone.



## ANTON MORGAN-THORNE

### **Communities Manager at Macmillan Cancer Support**

“ For me, the partnership between Croydon BME Forum and Macmillan Cancer Support is about delivering real, measurable impact for communities that experience the greatest inequalities in cancer care. I have seen how this work is reaching people who are too often missed by traditional services supporting

earlier conversations about cancer, improving understanding of symptoms and screening, and helping people access the practical, emotional and financial support they need. By working through trusted community networks, this partnership is building confidence, reducing fear and ensuring that people affected by cancer feel supported, informed and less alone.”

“The strength of this work lies in its collective approach and its focus on long term change. By centring lived experience and working alongside community organisations, health services and local leaders, we are strengthening pathways into support and influencing how cancer services respond to the needs of diverse communities. This is about more than improving individual experiences it is about reducing inequalities and creating sustainable change. Together, we are sparking a revolution in cancer care: one that is community led, equity focused and grounded in Macmillan's commitment to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or postcode, can access the support they need to live with and beyond cancer.”

# Annual Impact Dashboard (Data & Demographics)

## 6 Boroughs Reached

Delivering cancer awareness and engagement across South West London communities.

Richmond

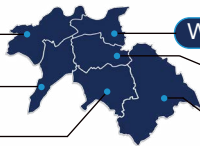
Wandsworth

Kingston

Merton

Sutton

Croydon



**3,500+**  
Residents Engaged

Thousands of residents reached through community workshops, outreach sessions, conferences and local events.



**60+**  
Community Cancer Awareness Events

Community-led engagement sessions held in trusted spaces such as churches, community centres, libraries and local venues.



**120+**  
Community Organisations Engaged

Working with voluntary groups, faith organisations, charities and local networks to extend the reach of cancer awareness.



**3**  
Major Cancer Conferences  
Including the landmark Kingston Cancer Conference.

Large-scale conferences bringing together community members, health professionals and partners.



**40+**  
Community Champions & Volunteers

Dedicated volunteers helping deliver engagement activities across the six boroughs.



**50+**  
Community Venues Used

Cancer awareness delivered in accessible, familiar locations across South West London.



**15+**  
Community Conversations on Cancer

Safe and open discussions helping break stigma around cancer, screening and early detection.



**100s**  
Reached Through Targeted Outreach

Direct engagement with residents through local events, community networks and partnerships.

# Headline Impact 2025

## Throughout 2025, the programme:

- Engaged thousands of residents across six boroughs
- Delivered structured workshops, focus groups, drop-in sessions and large-scale conferences
- Strengthened referral pathways between community and primary care
- Co-produced NHS training resources addressing cultural barriers in cancer care
- Partnered with hospices to challenge stigma surrounding palliative and end-of-life services
- Contributed to research efforts addressing under-representation in clinical studies

Importantly, engagement translated into action. Residents who attended awareness sessions went on to:

- Book GP appointments
- Request PSA tests
- Seek clarification on symptoms
- Access financial and emotional support services

In at least two documented cases, early prostate cancer diagnoses were linked directly to attendance at community awareness events.



## Who We Reached

The programme engaged a diverse cross-section of residents, including:

- Individuals undergoing active cancer treatment
- People newly diagnosed
- Carers and family members
- Residents experiencing symptoms
- Individuals affected emotionally or financially by cancer

Demographic data indicates strong reach among Black Caribbean, Black African and South Asian communities, with representation across a broad age range and a balanced gender profile.



## Systems Influence

- Embedding lived experience narratives into professional training environments
- Working alongside Primary Care Networks to improve culturally responsive early diagnosis pathways
- Supporting hospice providers to build trust with communities previously underrepresented in palliative care

This shift marks a significant evolution from outreach delivery to system-level partnership.

# Flagship Event of the Year

## Kingston Cancer Conference 2025

The **Kingston Cancer Conference** was the defining milestone of the Can You C Me? programme in **2025**.

Held in partnership with health professionals, community leaders and lived experience advocates, the conference brought together residents, clinicians and system partners in a powerful, solutions-focused space.

This was more than a conference.  
**It was a turning point.**

### The event:

- Created open dialogue around prostate, breast and bowel cancer within Black and ethnically diverse communities
- Brought community voice directly into clinical conversations
- Strengthened collaboration between Primary Care Networks and community organisations
- Increased immediate screening signposting and follow-up action
- Demonstrated the maturity of the programme as a regional convening platform

For many attendees, it was the first time they had felt that cancer conversations reflected their culture, language and lived experience.

### Feedback described the conference as:

- “Transformational”
- “Long overdue”
- “A space where we finally felt seen”

The **Can You C Me Cancer Conference** has now positioned itself as an anchor event within the annual programme calendar and a model for culturally responsive system engagement.



# Case Study

## “I Was Told I Was Too Young” Sophie’s Story

At just 42 years old, Sophie was diagnosed with **Stage 4 colorectal cancer with liver metastasis**.

Her diagnosis did not come quickly.

For months, she experienced clear bowel cancer symptoms. She repeatedly sought help from her GP but was told it was IBS, gastro issues, or gynaecological problems. As her weight dropped to under six stone, she was even asked whether she might have an eating disorder.

“I was told many times that I was too young for bowel cancer.”

As a mixed-race woman with a strong family history of cancer -including bowel cancer -Sophie felt her concerns were not taken seriously. She describes feeling dismissed and unheard.

By the time she was diagnosed, the cancer had progressed to Stage 4.

### The Barriers She Faced

Sophie’s experience highlights key inequalities that continue to impact ethnically diverse communities:

- Symptoms dismissed despite clear warning signs
- Assumptions based on age and gender
- Cultural insensitivity and unconscious bias
- Limited explanation of scans and test results
- Financial stress after stopping work five months before diagnosis
- Two colonoscopies were cancelled because she had become too frail. On one occasion, she reached the procedure room but was deemed too unwell to proceed.

### The Impact Beyond Diagnosis

The emotional toll was profound. While she was offered counselling, it did not feel aligned with her lived experience. Financial advice only came later, through a Macmillan-linked benefits adviser and Citizens Advice, after months of anxiety.

Despite everything, Sophie found strength.

### She now advocates for:

- Better cancer awareness training for GPs and A&E staff
- Clear, jargon-free communication
- Culturally sensitive care
- Recognition that cancer does not only affect “older people”
- Greater awareness and representation for mixed-race and ethnically diverse patients



**She reflects:**

“Being diagnosed with cancer twice has been deeply challenging. As a mixed-race woman, I faced barriers to equitable care. Despite this, I found resilience and determination to advocate for myself.”

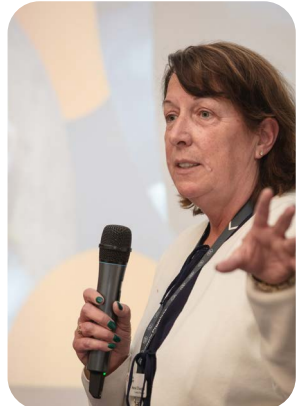


**Why Her Story Matters** Sophie’s journey reinforces why early awareness, culturally competent communication, and targeted engagement within diverse communities are critical.

No one should be told they are “too young” to be taken seriously.

Through initiatives like **Can You C Me?**, we continue working to reduce late diagnoses, build trust, and ensure that every voice is heard the first time.

## Pictures from Kingston Cancer Conference



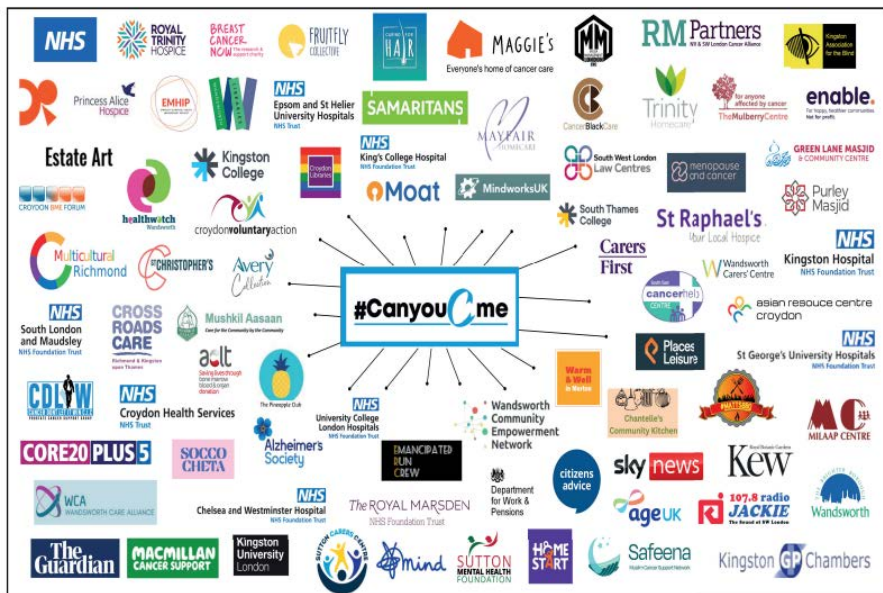
# CAN YOU C ME?

## Community Outreach

Over 2025 we continued to partner with local trusts, GP surgeries, community partners, and other organisations. This has allowed us to build further awareness of the Can You C Me initiative, helping us to identify gaps and new knowledge to better inform healthcare professionals and exchange key information when it comes to cancer care and support for those from BAME communities.

These connections have led to more opportunities to host organisations at our conferences and vice versa, creating more chances for us to speak with healthcare professionals and community members to share resources which can make a change.

This has allowed us to signpost more people and inform them of the support available to them within their borough and through Macmillan.



# Partnership

## Doddington & Rollo Community, Battersea SW11

The Doddington and Rollo partnership was established after the area was identified as having a high population of people from Black, Asian and Global Majority communities. These groups are often underrepresented when accessing support from Macmillan Cancer Support. The partnership aims to build trust, raise awareness and create culturally sensitive spaces where open conversations about cancer and wellbeing can take place.

During the year, the partnership supported several community-led activities that brought residents, healthcare professionals and local organisations together. A key highlight was a vibrant community Coffee Morning hosted by Global Women of Today in collaboration with the Can You C Me? project at the Community Hub, Cromwell House in Battersea. The event welcomed special guests including Gemma Peters, CEO of Macmillan Cancer Support, and George Plumpton, CEO of the National Garden Scheme.

Before the event, guests visited the Doddington Estate Community Garden, a half-acre green space cared for by local residents. The garden includes herb beds, vegetable plots, fruit trees and a thriving fig tree, reflecting the pride and commitment of the community.

The Macmillan Coffee Morning itself was warm and welcoming, filled with music, home-baked food and lively conversation that celebrated Caribbean hospitality and community spirit. The gathering raised funds for Macmillan while highlighting the importance of culturally inclusive support for people affected by cancer.

Adding a creative element, local artist Felicity Prazak led a community stencilling workshop where participants created a collaborative artwork symbolising unity and hope. The finished piece was unveiled at Battersea Park Library in October 2025, celebrating the community's creativity and resilience.

The events demonstrated how community connection, culture and conversation can help break down barriers and strengthen access to cancer support.







# Learning, Challenges and Impact 2025

During 2025, the **Can You C Me** programme delivered work across the six boroughs with a focus on improving culturally responsive cancer awareness, professional learning and community engagement. Through community listening sessions, partnership working and reflective learning informed by the Evaluating Work-Based Learning programme at the University of the West of England, valuable insights were gathered about how cancer services can better respond to the needs of diverse communities.

Community conversations played an important role in shaping the programme. Listening sessions highlighted that myths and misunderstandings about cancer and treatment still exist in some communities. These insights helped shape a series of community-focused myth-busting videos based on lived experience, helping to present cancer information in a clearer and more culturally relevant way.



Learning from work in Wandsworth, particularly with the Doddington and Rollo community, reinforced the importance of relationship-based engagement. Trust developed through working alongside local leaders and holding activities in familiar community spaces where residents already felt comfortable. By co-producing activities with the community, support felt more relevant and respectful, encouraging people to speak more openly about cancer and the stigma that can sometimes surround it. Creative and social activities also proved helpful in creating safe spaces for conversation and connection.

A key highlight of the year was the **Kingston Cancer Conference**, delivered in partnership with Places Leisure. The conference brought together community members, healthcare professionals and local partners to explore practical ways to reduce cancer inequalities. One important outcome was the development of a pilot initiative exploring how leisure centres could support people before and after cancer treatment through prehabilitation and rehabilitation activities.



# Professional Learning Programme Culturally Sensitive Cancer Care

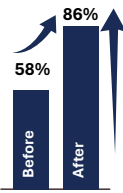
In Collaboration with St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

## Programme Design



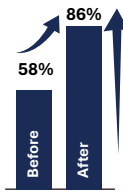
Co-Designed Training  
Includes Patient voice  
Lived Experience

## Key Results: Knowledge



Increased Knowledge

## Key Results: Confidence



Increased Confidence

## Key Results: Confidence

150+



Healthcare Professionals Completed Training

Professional learning was another important part of the programme. Working with St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, the team co-designed culturally sensitive cancer care training that included patient voice and lived experience. The training showed clear improvements in confidence and knowledge among healthcare professionals. Knowledge increased from 58% to 86%, and confidence increased from 52% to 84%, with around 150 healthcare professionals completing the training so far. Interest is now growing from other NHS teams who are exploring how this approach could be used more widely.

Alongside these achievements, the programme also generated useful learning. Feedback from communities helped strengthen the authenticity of training materials and videos, ensuring lived experience was represented in a meaningful way. Early feedback from the leisure-centre pilot also highlighted that some wellbeing guidance relied mainly on Western food examples. Materials were therefore updated to include a wider range of culturally diverse foods and practices so that guidance better reflects the communities involved.

Overall, the work across South West London shows the value of a community-led approach built on listening, partnership and co-design. With continued collaboration from partners such as St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Places Leisure, there is strong potential to continue developing these initiatives in 2026 and to ensure that community voices remain central to how cancer support services are designed and delivered.

# Strategic Priorities For 2026

As we enter the final year of the Can You C Me? Programme, our focus is on sustaining delivery, strengthening partnerships, and creating a long-lasting legacy. This is a pivotal year to consolidate the trust built over the past three years with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, while ensuring that the system-level change achieved through the programme continues beyond its formal conclusion.

## KEY PRINCIPLES FOR THE FINAL YEAR



**CONSOLIDATE  
TRUST**



**DEMONSTRATE  
IMPACT**



**ENSURE  
CONTINUITY**

2026 will see the delivery of three of our flagship conferences across South West London, taking place in Merton, Sutton and Richmond. The first conference will be held in Merton on **21st April 2026 at Everyday Church Wimbledon**, focusing on Advancing Equity: Innovations in Cancer Research and Treatment for BME Individuals. These events will bring together communities, healthcare professionals and system partners to share learning, amplify lived experience and drive action on cancer inequalities.

## Three Flagship Conferences



**Merton**



**Sutton**



**Richmond**

This year also represents an important milestone in our partnership with St George's, which has been nominated for the Macmillan Professionals Excellence Awards. Through this collaboration, the voices and experiences of BME communities have been brought to the forefront of conversations about health inequalities. Real-life stories have been used to support the training of current and future healthcare professionals, helping to build cultural competence and improve the quality of care delivered throughout clinical practice.



Alongside this, we will continue to expand our work in workforce development. The St George's educational films will be embedded within NHS education frameworks, supporting the training of healthcare professionals and university students. We will also continue our collaboration with South West London NHS Trusts and hospice partners to address barriers to access, challenge stigma and improve equitable cancer care.

## Our priorities for the year ahead include:



Upskilling healthcare professionals and students through culturally informed education and training



Supporting lived-experience advocates to continue influencing practice and service delivery



Strengthening collaboration with NHS Trusts, hospices and system partners across South West London



Updating the programme website to serve as a sustainable, long-term community resource



Developing community-informed recommendations for system partners



Creating a practical toolkit for communities and healthcare professionals to support culturally competent care

2026 represents a defining year for the Can You C Me? programme. Our strategic focus is Embed, Evidence and Legacy. By consolidating partnerships, amplifying lived experience and embedding learning within health systems and communities, we aim to ensure that the impact of this work continues long after the programme formally concludes.



# Acknowledgements

The success of the Can You C Me? programme has been made possible through strong partnerships, shared leadership, and a collective commitment to tackling cancer inequalities across South West London.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the following organisations who have worked alongside us throughout the year — as funders, commissioners, clinical partners, hosts, community connectors, media supporters, and advocates for change.

## **Strategic & Funding Partners**

- Macmillan Cancer Support
- NHS South West London Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- RM Partners – South West London Cancer Alliance

## **NHS & Clinical Partners**

- Croydon Health Services NHS Trust
- Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust
- King’s College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
- St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust
- University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

## **Hospice & Cancer Support Organisations**

- Breast Cancer Now
- Cancer Black Care
- Cancer Help Centre
- Fruitfully Collective
- Maggie’s
- Princess Alice Hospice
- Royal Trinity Hospice
- St Raphael’s Hospice
- The Mulberry Centre
- Community & Voluntary Sector Partners
- Alzheimer’s Society
- Asian Resource Centre Croydon
- Carers First

# Acknowledgements



- Chantelle's Community Kitchen
- Croydon Voluntary Action
- Emancipated Run Crew
- Enable
- Green Lane Masjid & Community Centre
- Healthwatch Wandsworth
- Home-Start
- Kingston Association for the Blind
- Mind
- Multicultural Richmond
- Mushkil Aasaan
- Safeena Muslim Cancer Support Network
- Saving Souls (Blood Donation)
- Sutton Mental Health Foundation
- The Pineapple Club
- Wandsworth Care Alliance
- Wandsworth Carers Centre
- Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network
- Education, Media & Public Sector Partners
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Kingston College
- Kingston GP Chambers
- Kingston University London
- London Borough of Wandsworth
- Places Leisure
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
- South Thames College
- The Guardian
- 107.8 Radio Jackie

We also thank the many **community champions, volunteers, faith leaders, GP practices, and residents** who have supported outreach, hosted conversations, and amplified our message across boroughs.

Together, we are building a more equitable cancer pathway ensuring our communities are seen, heard, and supported.

# ABOUT

Croydon BME Forum is the umbrella organisation for Croydon's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community sector, working to engage people, build capacity, and promote equality and cohesion. We are a registered company limited by guarantee.

Our projects focus on various areas, including mental health, general health, family support, financial assistance, and overall well-being. The Forum was established to maximise the engagement of BME communities in all aspects of living and working in Croydon.

We represent Croydon's Black and minority communities to public sector agencies and other statutory and non-statutory organisations.

Get in touch with the Croydon BME Forum by calling us or dropping in:  
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For more information about the Can You C Me Project or to contact the team, please visit [www.canyoucme.org](http://www.canyoucme.org) or email [macmillanteam@bmeforum.org](mailto:macmillanteam@bmeforum.org)

You may also contact Macmillan Cancer Support on

0808 808 0000 or visit their website [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

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