

Beauty of Support 1-Hour Training Pack (Community Version)

For use in barbershops, salons and community spaces

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Session Overview

Duration: 60 minutes.

Audience: Barbers, hairdressers, stylists, grassroots groups, community organisations, workplaces, local services, and everyday settings where people talk and connect.

Facilitator: Internal lead, trained volunteer, or community representative.

Session Format: In-person group discussion (can also be delivered online).

1. Welcome & Purpose of the Training

This short training session introduces the Beauty of Support project. It helps barbers, hairdressers, and community groups explore how to support people affected by cancer in safe, culturally sensitive ways. It does not turn anyone into a clinician; it builds on what you already do best: listening, creating trust, and connecting with people in your chair or space.

While the training was developed in collaboration with barbers, hairdressers, and salon owners, it is not limited to the beauty sector. It can be used by anyone working in community-facing or people-centred spaces, including workplaces, community organisations, local services, and everyday settings where people talk and connect.

2. Creating a Safe, Culturally Respectful Space

Start the session by establishing:

- Ground rules (no judgement, no pressure to share personal info, respect confidentiality).
- A Taboo-Free Zone: all questions are welcome, we don't shy away from difficult topics.
- A reminder that this space is not about "fixing" people, but understanding and supporting them.

Facilitators' note: Pause to allow participants to reflect on what a safe space feels like to them.

3. Why This Work Matters

Black and Brown communities often face:

- Later cancer diagnoses.
- Fewer culturally safe spaces to talk about health.
- Mistrust or fear of the medical system.
- A need to protect family or avoid stigma.

Barbers and stylists are often the first people someone confides in. You are trusted. You are seen. That's why this work matters.

4. Know Your Normal

We're not asking anyone to diagnose cancer, but we can encourage people to know their bodies, spot changes, and feel confident to speak to a health professional.

Common messages to share:

- *"If something doesn't feel right, don't ignore it."*
- *"You know your body best."*
- *"Early doesn't mean easy, but it can mean options."*

You can also point people to Macmillan's signs and symptoms information at:

www.macmillan.org.uk/signs-and-symptoms-of-cancer



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Things that help:

- Listening without interrupting.
- Letting someone share at their own pace.
- Reassuring them that it's okay to feel angry, scared, or unsure.
- Gently signposting, not forcing.
- Asking: "Would you like to take this leaflet with you?" rather than pushing information.

Things to avoid:

- Saying "You'll be fine" or "Stay positive".
- Asking personal medical questions.
- Pressuring someone to open up.

6. Real-Life Scenarios & Discussion Activities

Instructions for facilitators:

These scenarios are based on real experiences shared by people affected by cancer and those working in barbershops and hair salons. Use them to encourage open discussion, reflection, and problem-solving. There are no right or wrong answers; the aim is to explore feelings, challenges, and ways to offer support.

Facilitator guidance is provided to support discussion. These are not model answers but prompts to help facilitators explore the conversation, encourage reflection and reinforce the key learning points.

Adapting the scenarios

Although these scenarios are based on real experiences shared by barbers, hairdressers, salon professionals and people affected by cancer, they can easily be adapted for other community settings.

The same conversations may take place in community organisations, workplaces, faith groups, sports clubs, support groups, local services, voluntary organisations or any trusted space where people feel comfortable talking.

Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the scenarios to reflect the audience they are working with while keeping the core learning points the same.

Scenario 1

A client seems withdrawn after losing her hair.

A long-standing client comes in looking visibly tired. She's lost a lot of hair and seems withdrawn. When asked how she is, she says, "I'm fine," but you can sense she's not.

What do you do?

A supportive response could include:

- Gently checking in without pressuring her to talk.
- Listening calmly if she chooses to share something.
- Respecting her privacy if she says she is "fine."
- Avoiding assumptions about illness or treatment.
- Offering reassurance and kindness through normal conversation.
- Letting her know support is available if she ever wants information or someone to talk to.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Empathy.
- Giving the client space to talk.
- Not making assumptions.
- Respecting silence.

Key learning points

- Listening can be more powerful than talking.
- Don't pressure someone to disclose more than they want to.
- If appropriate, gently offer information or signposting.

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Scenario 2

Family history and mistrust of doctors.

A young man tells his barber that his uncle passed away from prostate cancer. He's scared it might run in the family but says he "doesn't trust doctors" and "doesn't want to know."

What could the barber say or do?

A supportive response could include:

- Listening without judgement or dismissing his fears.
- Acknowledging that fear and mistrust can be real for many people.
- Encouraging him to speak to a trusted health professional when he feels ready.
- Sharing simple awareness information without overwhelming him.
- Avoiding pressure or scare tactics.
- Reminding him that asking questions and seeking support is a strength, not a weakness.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Acknowledging fears.
- Avoiding judgement.
- Respecting personal choice.

Key learning points

- Family history can be important.
- Encourage the client to discuss concerns with their GP.
- The aim is to support informed choices, not persuade or pressure.

Scenario 3

Client cries while having her head shaved.

A stylist is asked to shave a woman's head because her hair is falling out from chemotherapy. She bursts into tears mid-appointment. The salon is busy, and other clients are watching.

How should the stylist handle this?

A supportive response could include:

- Pausing the appointment calmly and compassionately.
- Giving her time and space to feel emotional without embarrassment.
- Helping create privacy if possible.
- Reassuring her that emotional reactions are completely understandable.
- Avoiding rushing the conversation or trying to "fix" the situation.
- Offering information about support services if appropriate.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Compassion.
- Privacy.
- Dignity.

Key learning points

- Pause the appointment if appropriate.
- Offer tissues and time.
- Protect the client's privacy where possible.
- Let the client lead the conversation.



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Scenario 4

Concern about wigs and identity.

A client with breast cancer wants advice about wigs and styling. She's concerned that her hair won't grow back the same and feels like she's "losing part of her identity."

What could the stylist offer in terms of reassurance and support?

A supportive response could include:

- Acknowledging how closely hair can be linked to identity and confidence.
- Avoiding minimising comments such as "It's only hair."
- Exploring practical options gently if the person wants to discuss them.
- Offering reassurance without making promises.
- Helping the person feel seen, respected and comfortable.
- Encouraging self-expression and choice during recovery.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

Body image.

Confidence.

Practical support.

Key learning points

- Validate feelings.
- Offer practical styling advice where appropriate.
- Signpost to specialist organisations such as Cancer Hair Care, Look Good Feel Better and the Beauty of Support Toolkit.

Scenario 5

Cancer myths in the community.

A barber has heard myths in the community about cancer being contagious or a punishment. A client repeats one of these myths while chatting in the shop.

How could this be challenged respectfully?

A supportive response could include:

- Challenging misinformation calmly and respectfully.
- Avoiding arguments or shaming people.
- Encouraging fact-based conversations using trusted information.
- Saying something like: "There are lots of myths out there — it might help to look at trusted information together."
- Keeping the atmosphere open and respectful.
- Redirecting people toward accurate support organisations if needed.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Respectful challenge.
- Accurate information.
- Avoiding confrontation.

Key learning points

- Challenge myths kindly.
- Encourage evidence-based information.
- Remember that cultural beliefs may influence people's understanding of cancer.



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Scenario 6

Smear test concerns.

A client quietly asks a stylist whether she should still have her smear test. She says she's heard it "hurts more for Black women" and is unsure whether it's necessary.

How might the stylist respond supportively?

A supportive response could include:

- Listening to her concerns without judgement.
- Acknowledging that fear and mistrust can affect confidence in screening.
- Encouraging her to seek information from trusted health professionals.
- Avoiding giving medical advice or personal opinions.
- Sharing trusted awareness resources if available.
- Reassuring her that asking questions about her health is important.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Fear.
- Misinformation.
- Encouragement.

Key learning points

- Listen first.
- Encourage questions.
- Signpost to reliable NHS or Macmillan information.
- Avoid giving clinical advice.

Scenario 7

A father and son are in the barbershop. The father starts a conversation about health, but the teenage son rolls his eyes and changes the subject.

How can the barber encourage health awareness without embarrassing the son?

A supportive response could include:

- Keeping the conversation relaxed and natural.
- Avoiding embarrassing or pressuring the teenager.
- Using everyday language around health awareness.
- Encouraging openness without forcing participation.
- Helping normalise conversations about health within families.
- Recognising that small conversations can plant important seeds for the future.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Different communication styles.
- Building trust.
- Age-appropriate conversations.

Key learning points

- Young people may respond differently.
- Keep the conversation relaxed.
- Use everyday opportunities to encourage awareness.



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Scenario 8

A client discloses that she's been diagnosed with cancer but hasn't told her family. She says, "They wouldn't understand — they'll just think I'm being punished."

What can the stylist do or say?

A supportive response could include:

- Listening compassionately without dismissing cultural or religious beliefs.
- Reassuring the person they are not alone.
- Avoiding debates about faith or blame.
- Encouraging supportive conversations at the person's own pace.
- Helping reduce shame and isolation through empathy.
- Signposting to culturally sensitive support where possible.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Fear.
- Isolation.
- Cultural beliefs.

Key learning points

- Respect confidentiality.
- Don't pressure someone to tell others.
- Explore what support they already have.
- Signpost where appropriate.

Scenario 9

A stylist is unsure whether to bring up the topic of cancer because they don't want to offend or overstep. But they have Macmillan leaflets on the table and can see someone reading them.

What should they do?

A supportive response could include:

- Remembering that gentle awareness conversations can still be respectful.
- Using visible materials such as posters or leaflets to open a conversation naturally.
- Avoiding forcing sensitive discussions.
- Starting with general awareness rather than personal questions.
- Respecting boundaries if someone does not want to engage.
- Understanding that creating a welcoming environment can be enough.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Confidence.
- Permission.
- Timing.

Key learning points

- Don't force conversations.
- Sometimes simply making resources visible starts the conversation.
- Follow the client's lead.



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Scenario 10

A Black male client tells his barber he has trouble talking to his partner about sex since his prostate cancer diagnosis. He says, "I just don't feel like a man anymore."

What could the barber say, and when is it appropriate to signpost?

A supportive response could include:

- Responding without embarrassment or judgement.
- Acknowledging that intimacy and relationships can be difficult topics.
- Avoiding jokes or dismissive comments.
- Letting the person know these experiences are more common than many people realise.
- Encouraging them to seek specialist support if needed.
- Respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- Signposting if the person wants additional emotional or relationship support.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Masculinity.
- Relationships.
- Emotional wellbeing.

Key learning points

- Acknowledge the client's feelings.
- Reassure them that these experiences are common.
- Signpost to specialist support where appropriate.
- Remember this is about listening, not counselling.

Scenario 11

During a pop-up barbershop event, a man walks by and shouts, "You lot doing finger-up-the-bum checks now?" — laughing loudly and walking off. Some people nearby laugh, others look uncomfortable.

How could the team respond without shutting down humour, but also not reinforcing stigma?

A supportive response could include:

- Keeping the atmosphere friendly while challenging harmful stigma.
- Avoiding humiliating or shaming anyone in the group.
- Redirecting humour in a more respectful way.
- Encouraging open conversations about men's health.
- Recognising that jokes can sometimes stop people from seeking help.
- Helping create a safer and more supportive environment for discussion.

Facilitator Notes

Listen out for:

- Humour.
- Embarrassment.
- Group dynamics.
- Stigma.

Key learning points

- Humour is often used to avoid uncomfortable conversations.
- Avoid shaming or confronting the individual aggressively.
- Respond calmly and respectfully.
- Use the opportunity to normalise conversations about cancer and men's health.
- Focus on creating a safe, welcoming environment where questions can be asked without fear of embarrassment.

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7. Signposting Support (Non-Clinical)

Facilitators, please remind participants that they are not expected to give medical advice.

You can:

- Offer Macmillan's Support Line, free, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm: **0808 808 00 00**.
- Share local support group details.
- Direct people to speak with their GP if they're worried.
- Use our Beauty of Support leaflets and QR codes.
- Signpost to organisations such as: Cancer Black Care, Black Women Rising, Prostate Cancer UK, Future Dreams and Cancer Don't Let It Win.

8. Closing Reflection (Facilitator Script)

"Thank you for everything you've shared and listened to today. These conversations aren't always easy, but they're powerful. What you do every day in your shops, your salons, and your communities already makes a difference. This training is just about recognising that power and giving you extra tools to support your clients."

Please take away whatever feels useful: the stickers, the leaflets, the toolkit. We want this to work for you, in your language, in your space. Thank you again."

9. Resources & Next Steps

Beauty of Support Toolkit:

- Available online with all links and videos.
- A Brief Guide for Hairdressers and Barbers.
- Cancer Does Not Discriminate Flyer.
- Breast Cancer Awareness leaflet.
- Taboo-Free Zone Sticker.
- Macmillan Support Line: **0808 808 00 00**.
- Website: www.macmillan.org.uk



Scan here for resources:

