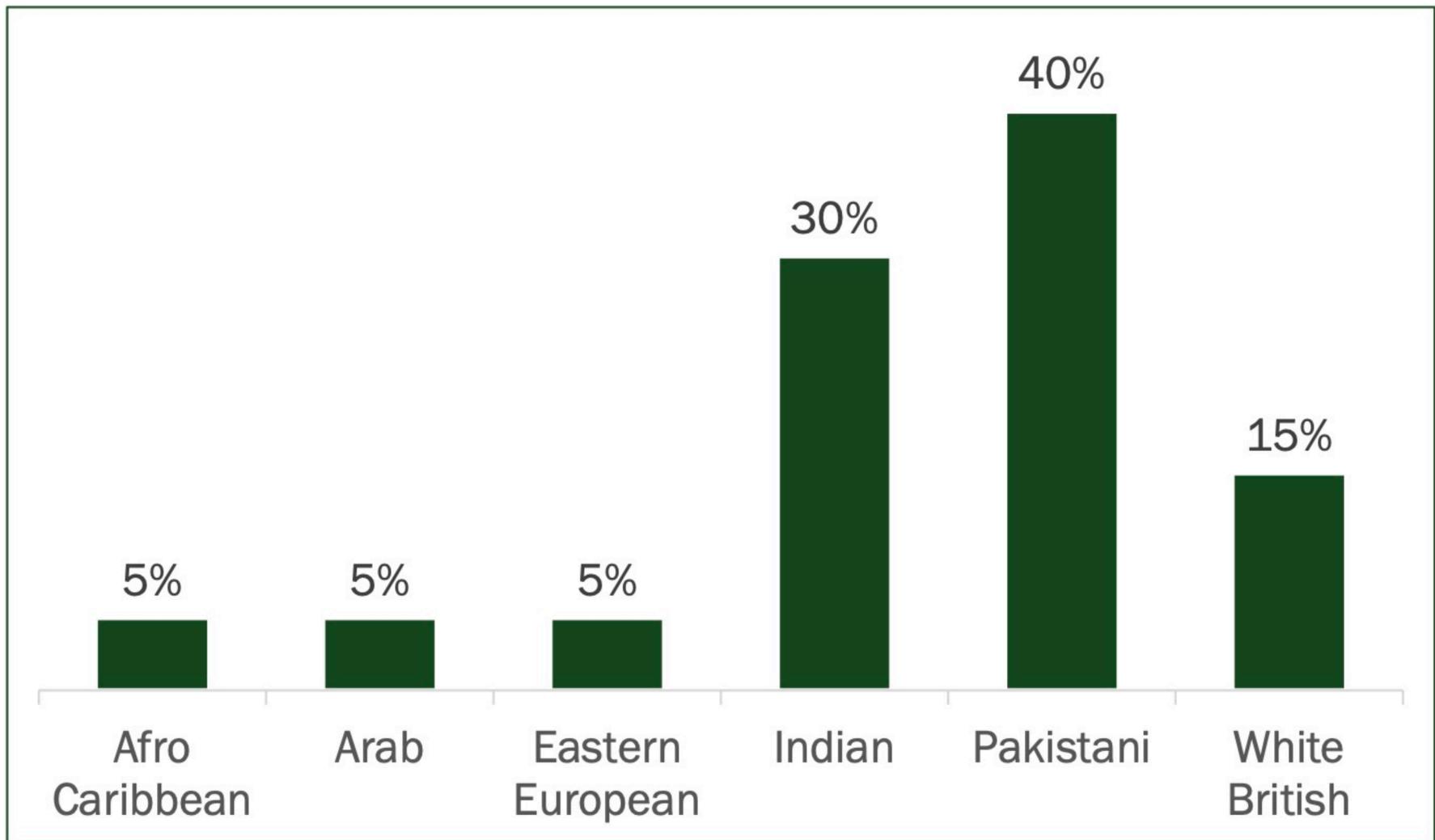


**RAISING AWARENESS OF
DEMENTIA
UNDERSTANDING AND
SUPPORTING A PERSON
WITH DEMENTIA**

NOVEMBER 2024

Ethnicity of Participants



Event Overview

On 4th November 2024 we held a Tea and Chat session at Pearls Tearoom, a powerful and informative dementia awareness session led by Crissi Arrowsuch, a seasoned mental health professional with deep roots in the Bradford community. With over three decades of experience in mental health nursing, care management, and NHS research, Crissi brought both professional expertise and personal insight to the discussion.

The session aimed to raise awareness about dementia, its symptoms, progression, and the impact it has on individuals and their families, particularly within South Asian and minority communities.

Many of the women attending were carers, daughters, or granddaughters of elderly relatives.

Key Topics Covered



- Understanding Dementia:**
 Crissi explained that dementia is not a normal part of aging but a progressive neurological condition with over 200 types. Alzheimer's is the most common, and early onset is more prevalent in Black and Asian communities due to health risk factors like diabetes and hypertension.
- Symptoms and Stages:**
 The seven stages of dementia were outlined, from mild forgetfulness to severe cognitive and physical decline. Crissi highlighted how symptoms such as aggression, confusion, and memory loss can deeply affect both the individual and their caregivers.
- Cultural and Community Impact:**
 The session emphasized the emotional and physical toll on families, especially in cultures where caregiving is expected to remain within the home. Crissi discussed the importance of culturally sensitive care options, including halal food and multilingual staff in care homes.
- Legal and Financial Planning:**
 Attendees were advised on the importance of making wills and advanced directives while the individual still has capacity. Crissi also touched on asset planning and the role of social services in providing support.
- Medical Interventions and Research:**
 While there is no cure, Crissi shared updates on current treatments, including a new injection costing £700 with limited benefits. She

stressed the importance of early diagnosis, healthy lifestyle choices, and ongoing research.

- **Prevention and Community Support:**
Activities that stimulate the brain, like learning new skills or music, can help reduce risk. Crissi encouraged community involvement in supporting caregivers and raising awareness.

Audience Engagement and Feedback

The session was highly interactive, with attendees asking thoughtful and practical questions. Some of the key questions included:

- “How can I make a will for someone with dementia?”

Crissi explained that as long as the person has capacity, they can make a will through a solicitor or organizations like Age UK.

- “What happens in the end stages of dementia?”

She discussed living wills and advanced directives, emphasizing that only the individual can make decisions about their care preferences.

- “Why isn’t the NHS doing more?”

Crissi acknowledged the strain on NHS resources and stressed the importance of personal health monitoring and education.

- “Is there a special diet for dementia?”

She recommended avoiding processed foods and returning to traditional diets rich in fresh vegetables and organic produce.

- “Is there a cure?”

Crissi was clear: there is currently no cure, but research is ongoing.



Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many women saying it was the first time they'd heard dementia explained in a way that felt relevant to their lives.

"This was the first time I truly understood what dementia does to a person. Crissi explained it in a way that really hit home."

"I appreciated how culturally relevant the session was. It felt like it was made for us."

"I now know what to ask my GP and how to plan ahead for my mum."

"I've been caring for my mum for five years and never knew there were services that could help. I thought it was just our responsibility."

"Crissi spoke with so much understanding. It felt like she really knew what we go through as Asian women."

"I didn't even know what a living will was. I'm going to speak to my dad about it now while he's still well."

Conclusion

The dementia awareness session at Pearls Tearoom was a resounding success, providing vital education and emotional support to a diverse group of women. Crissi Arrowsuch's compassionate and culturally sensitive approach resonated deeply with attendees, many of whom expressed a desire for follow-up sessions and more community-based support.

The event highlighted the urgent need for continued awareness, early intervention, and culturally appropriate care solutions. It also reinforced the importance of empowering families with knowledge and resources to navigate the challenges of dementia with dignity and resilience.

The key take aways were for the community:

- **Start the Conversation Early:** Talk to elders about their wishes while they still have capacity. Discuss wills, power of attorney, and care preferences.

- **Break the Stigma:** Dementia is a medical condition, not a punishment or shame. Encourage open conversations in families and community spaces.
- **Support Carers:** Recognise the emotional toll on daughters, daughters-in-law, and wives who often carry the burden alone. Create support groups and safe spaces for them.
- **Healthy Living as Prevention:** Promote traditional diets rich in fresh vegetables and home-cooked meals. Encourage walking, social activities, and learning new skills to keep the brain active.
- **Faith and Care:** Use Islamic teachings to support compassionate care. Remind families that seeking help is not a failure, it's part of doing your duty with Ihsan (excellence).

For local services:

- **Culturally Sensitive Outreach:** Work with the community to deliver dementia education in familiar, trusted spaces.
- **Training for Healthcare Staff:** They need more cultural competence, especially around family dynamics and stigma in Muslim communities.
- **Accessible Support Services:** work with the community to increase awareness of respite care, day centres, and dementia-friendly services that cater to dietary and religious needs (e.g. halal food, prayer spaces).



- **Community-Based Clinics:** Offer drop-in memory checks and advice sessions in local community hubs, especially in areas with high South Asian populations.

Faith-Inclusive Care Planning: Recognise the role of imams and faith leaders in end-of-life care discussions. Provide training so they can support families navigating dementia.

**Report created by the Tea & Chat participants
supported by the MWC Team**

