

# AMAZING STORIES

## FACTFILE

### NAME

Mashud Haque

### ALTOGETHER BETTER PROJECT

Seniors Show The Way

### WHAT HE DID

Trained as a Community Health Champion and passed on health messages informally in Bradford's Bangladeshi community. Played a key role as an ambassador for the project and the Altogether Better programme. Spoke at the National Conference and met the Prime Minister.

### WHAT DIFFERENCE DID HE MAKE?

Spoke to over 500 people, raising awareness of a range of health issues, including encouraging people to use less oil when cooking and promoting a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables. He has also raised the profile of the project and the Altogether Better programme at a regional level.

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Seniors Show the Way is an initiative, running in Bradford and the surrounding district, which aims to improve the health of communities by empowering older people (aged 50+) with the knowledge they need to promote positive health messages to family, friends and other people in their local community.

**“THE TRAINING  
ENORMOUSLY  
INCREASED MY  
AWARENESS. I WAS  
EXCITED ABOUT  
SHARING MY  
NEWLY ACQUIRED  
KNOWLEDGE”**

# COMMUNITY HEALTH CHAMPION

“SENIORS SHOW THE WAY HAS OPENED UP SO MANY DOORS FOR ME. I CAN COMMUNICATE BETTER. IT’S BEEN A VERY LIBERATING EXPERIENCE”

When Mashud Haque was looking for something worthwhile to do in his retirement, he can hardly be imagined that his chosen path would lead to 10 Downing Street.

But that’s exactly what happened when the Bradford-based Community Health Champion met Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011 to accept a Big Society Award on behalf of 13,000 other champions for their work in promoting the health and well-being of their communities.

Mashud, who previously worked as a Careers Advisor, was on the look-out for new activities when he saw an advert for the Seniors Show the Way project, which aims to empower older people to promote positive health messages to family and friends.

“I wanted to get back into people-oriented activities and it seemed a good way to keep positive,” he said.

He was particularly interested in healthy eating and the ways in which a better lifestyle can prevent health conditions from developing. After attending a number of workshop days with the project’s team of Community Health Activators, his eyes were opened to the many different ways in which a Community Health Champion could contribute.



“The training made me aware of how important it is to stay healthy, and of the advantages of healthy eating, being physically active and looking after your mental well-being,” he said.

“It enormously increased my awareness. I started to talk to friends and family. I was excited about sharing my newly acquired knowledge with them and it just rolled on from there. Three of these people even went on to become Community Health Champions themselves!”

In his role as a Community Health Champion, Mashud uses his extensive community contacts to get health messages across to older people, within the Bangladeshi community, which is one of the most deprived and under-represented in Bradford. Meeting people at his local mosque, he is able to talk to them informally and openly about health issues and report back to the project on the sort of health needs he comes across.

“It’s by far the best way of doing it,” he said. “It’s far more effective if they don’t think someone’s trying to pump their brain with information.”

“I feel the message is sinking in. If someone says they have put on weight, I can say: maybe you should look at what you’ve been eating or suggest they call the GP or NHS Direct. It’s put health on the radar for them.”

But, from the outset, Mashud has also had a wider influence. His specialist knowledge about the issues faced by the Asian community, his passion about health inequalities and his formidable public speaking skills have made him an ideal ambassador for the project and for the Altogether Better programme as a whole.

From sitting on a variety of local steering groups to attending network meetings and playing key roles in organisations such as the Bradford Older People’s Alliance, Mashud has

consistently broken down barriers and spoken up for others.

At the 2010 National Community Health Conference in Leeds, he helped deliver a project workshop before taking his place among a distinguished panel of consultants and community health specialists to field questions from the audience.

But his audience with Prime Minister, David Cameron, to receive the Big Society award, has probably been his most prestigious to date.

“I told him we were the Big Society,” he said. “As Seniors Show the Way, we were doing our bit to make it a reality.”

From the corridors of power to the streets of Bradford, Mashud’s commitment to promoting healthy living is as strong as ever.

Community Health Activator, Amina Rehman, paid tribute to his contribution.

“I’ve learnt from his experience and knowledge of services and contacts within organisations,” she said. “He is very in touch with what is happening and this information is always appreciated. I admire him, he’s bold and confident, a very good representative, who is not afraid to voice opinions. He’s been immensely supportive of the project as well as individuals and staff members.”

Mashud added: “Seniors Show the Way has opened up so many doors for me. I feel I can influence people and politics now. I also feel like I’ve become more trusting of people since my involvement with the project. People have sometimes given me negative vibes, but Seniors Show the Way has taken that away. I feel like I can communicate with and interpret people better. It’s been a very liberating experience.”

## CONTACT

Catherine Pitts

seniors@bdct.nhs.uk

01274 321911

Using evidenced based community engagement approaches and our community health champion model, Altogether Better works with others to unlock the full potential of people, patients and communities to improve their health and wellbeing and that of the people they live and work with.

We work with the NHS, Department of Health and national partners to prototype models which support Foundation Trusts, CCGs and General Practice to engage local people. We have models to support people with the self management of long term conditions, birth and parenting; LifeCheck, local needs assessment, relationship support and Roma health.

**Altogether Better Team:**

0113 295 2164

altogether.better@yorksandhumber.nhs.uk

<http://twitter.com/altogetherbeter>

[www.altogetherbetter.org.uk](http://www.altogetherbetter.org.uk)