Better aftercare for cancer patients rolled out across the Borders

August 2017

About the pilot project

A pilot project that highlighted the need for better care and support for patients in Hawick after treatment for cancer, has now been rolled out across NHS Borders.

The NHS Borders Transforming Care After Treatment (TCAT) Project found there were gaps in care after treatment for cancer, with patients often not knowing what to expect, what to look out for or who to contact. The project met their needs by carrying out a Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA) – a questionnaire that asks about their emotional, practical, financial and medical needs, and drew up a care plan for each patient. It also held Health & Wellbeing Events and created a service directory.

As a result of the project, work is underway to ensure everyone completing cancer treatment in NHSB has the opportunity to complete an HNA, discuss a care plan and is invited to a Health & Wellbeing Event.

To complete delivery of the Recovery Package, NHSB is now evaluating the use of End-of-Treatment summaries which aim to improve communication between a GP and a patient, as well as giving people the tools they need to self-manage.

Hawick
Population of 14,500
105 new cancer diagnoses a year
Rural area with high rate of social deprivation and poor health outcomes

‘Not knowing who or where to turn to made getting back into a ‘normal’ life difficult. The whole experience would have been better if I could have had support much quicker.’

Quote from a service user (prior to the TCAT project)

- Between October 2014 to March 2015, 61 patients were given a chance to fill in an HNA. Of these, 32 completed one.
- A care plan tailored to their needs was created.
- They were invited to attend Health & Wellbeing events.
- A website and directory listing relevant services in the Borders was created to help promote healthy lifestyle choices.
Holistic Needs Assessment

All patients were offered an HNA at two key points in the cancer journey:

• within two weeks of receiving a treatment plan for a new or recurrent cancer diagnosis
• around four weeks after completion of cancer treatment

149 concerns were identified from 32 patients (including 33 from one patient and 23 from another). Excluding these two, the average number of concerns per patient were 3.1.

The six most frequently identified concerns were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiredness, exhausted, fatigue</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness or depression</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore/dry mouth</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathing difficulties</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with partner</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Health & Wellbeing Events - “Moving On”

Three Health & Wellbeing Events were held to provide education sessions on the practical and emotional support available for people affected by cancer. 31 people attended an event (including 24 patients and 7 carers) and 16 people completed an evaluation form and said the event helped them:

- 88% Access new information to move on after cancer treatment
- 93% Identify who to contact in the community about their needs
- 93% Regain control over their wellbeing
- 93% Understand health care follow up and improved their confidence after cancer treatment

1:1 interviews were offered to all patients who had completed at least one HNA and been invited to a Health & Wellbeing Event. Of the 13 people who took part: 12 had completed an HNA and reported breathing difficulties, fatigue, appetite issues and concentration issues as being of most concern; 8 had attended a Health & Wellbeing Event and accessed at least one non-health care service. Patients identified lack of information around treatment outcomes, short and long term side effects, what to look out for cancer recurrence and expected follow up.

What happened next?

This pilot found that offering people with cancer aftercare that is built around what they need, rather than the current one-size-fits-all approach, led to better experiences for people with cancer.

The project has now been rolled out across the Borders with attempts being made to ensure everyone completing cancer treatment is offered a Holistic Needs Assessment and care plan, and is invited to Health & Wellbeing events.

A web page and service directory have been created to share information with patients, healthcare professionals and the public about services available in the Borders. This has helped improve links with community services and prevent the duplication of work.

This work has also resulted in stronger links with oncology teams, ensuring everyone completing cancer treatment is referred to a local point of contact, resulting in a better patient experience and greater confidence to self-manage. The project is now delivering End-of-Treatment summaries for all patients completing cancer treatment in Borders Macmillan Centre. This provides a summary of their treatment, advice about what symptoms to look out for, and who to contact with any concerns or for follow-up. Feedback from patients and GPs has shown this document is very informative and helpful.

Why is a new approach to care after treatment needed?

TCAT was set up to improve the way people with cancer are supported during and after treatment. It’s a partnership between the Scottish Government, Macmillan Cancer Support, NHS Scotland and local authorities. It tests and spreads new models of care and support built around what people with cancer need.