A new approach to help people manage the effects of their cancer diagnosis is being piloted in Tayside. The Transforming Care After Treatment (TCAT) project tested three key interventions designed to improve outcomes for people living with and beyond cancer. This pilot made significant progress in raising the awareness of the need for individualised care after treatment, and has successfully engaged face to face with over 1,000 people (patients, carers and staff) over the course of the project.

How the Pilot Worked

The project began in May 2015 and ended in May 2017. The main aim was to improve the aftercare of people with cancer in Tayside by offering them three core elements of the Macmillan Recovery Package. These were the:

- Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA), which asks people about all their support needs.
- A care plan, which sets out the support the person will receive.
- An invite to a health and well-being event in their community where they could access a range of support.

The project was developed in consultation with people affected by cancer. Their feedback and support was invaluable.

Holistic Needs Assessments

People who had previously been diagnosed with colorectal, prostate and head and neck cancer were offered a HNA carried out by clinical nurse specialists in clinics.

The majority of patients (85%) were no longer receiving treatment with the time since diagnosis ranging from three months until five years.

474 people completed 566 HNAs, with some completing them multiple times.

138 patients reported no concerns
291 patients reported 1,333 concerns

70% of these were physical concerns, 13% emotional, 7% practical, 6% relationship concerns, 2% of people identified information needs and 1% highlighted spiritual concerns.

An essential part of the project was training nurses to implement HNA. Despite some initial reservations, the nurses feedback that they felt using the HNA, helped them put the patients’ agenda at the centre of care.
8 events were held between March and November 2016

Presentations, workshops and information stands were available on a wide range of subjects, including common side effects after treatment, exercise and healthy eating, and advice on finance.

Initially the events were offered to patients with colorectal, head and neck and prostate cancers, but following patient feedback they were opened out to all cancer patients.

Following the wellbeing events, 25 patients self-referred to Macmillan’s Move More service

People who attended said they highly valued meeting other people with cancer.

173 questionnaires were sent out to patients to ask about their experience of attending the health and well-being clinic and completing an HNA. 49% of them (85) returned the questionnaire.

43 patients (51%) said afterwards they felt very confident to manage their condition.

61 patients (72%) said that their needs were completely met to confidently manage the consequences of their treatment.

“I feel that carrying out the HNAs are helping us to assist patients prioritise their concerns after cancer treatment. Working with the TCAT team has enabled us to act on such concerns promptly as we become more aware of the varied help and community support available.”

– Specialist nurse

What next?

This project shows how person-centred cancer care, set out as the ambition in the Scottish Government’s Cancer Plan, can be delivered in practice. This project has changed the way services are delivered, benefiting patients, carers, staff and local organisations. Considerable progress has been made in successfully embedding the HNA in clinical practice. The project has also raised awareness of the diverse concerns and needs after treatment experienced by people who’ve had a cancer diagnosis. Wellbeing events have also helped to share learning. This work will now be built on so that it continues to positively influence patient care and support after treatment throughout Tayside and across Scotland.

About TCAT

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.