

Dudley is an urban area in the heart of the Black Country to the northwest of Birmingham with a population of around 312,000 people<sup>1</sup>. It has a mixed population with large variations in deprivation, some wards are among the highest 10% deprived areas in England<sup>2</sup>. Between the more affluent areas and the most deprived of the borough there is a significant difference in morbidity and mortality. The average age of death varies as much as 7 years between these areas<sup>3</sup>. Primary care services are the remit of Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group and secondary care services are provided by The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust. There is a small overlap with bordering areas of Sandwell, Worcestershire & South Staffordshire.

The Macmillan Educator post is new to Dudley and started in October 2012. It is fully funded by Macmillan for three years and is a full time post across both primary and secondary care sectors. The remit of education provision is deliberately broad, to reach as many staff as possible across both settings who provide end of life care and care to patients with cancer. The vision of this role was to embed an educational strategy for health professionals delivering end of life care for patients and their carers living in Dudley. Part of the original scoping for the post identified that health care professionals themselves felt they wanted and needed more education in the field of palliative care, but as with every service in the NHS in the 21st century they found themselves with little time to spend on this. The post holder was also tasked with identifying creative ways of delivering education and support to the health professionals who are so time-poor. To make the vision a reality, it was important to gather information on what was needed, establish a clear framework of what professionals should be expected to know and be able to deliver to patients, and to enthuse and enable professionals to deliver high quality palliative care to patients and their loved ones across the health economy.

### Knowledge Framework

**Background**  
 There are several services across Dudley both in health and social care settings that are providing palliative care for patients and their families. Dudley has a wide variation in health inequality, and there is inequity of care provision as well as support for patients across the borough. This part of the Macmillan Educator's role is to try and identify, define and apply standards of knowledge and skills, to all professionals providing care for patients.

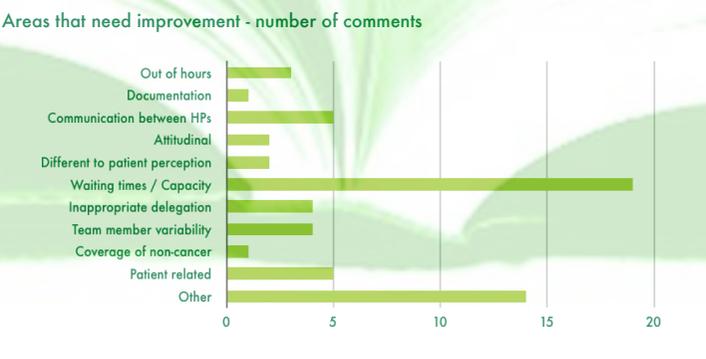
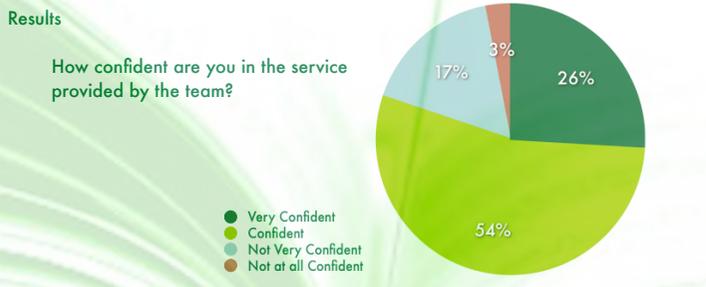
**Tools**  
**Competencies**  
 A competency framework was developed which has the following purposes; to set out the minimum requirements for nursing and social care posts in all non-specialist palliative care environments where people die - hospitals, care homes and the community, to inform the aims and objectives of workforce training and development, to support assessment of an individual's ability to do the job at four different levels. Level 1 for health and social carers and health care support workers, Level 2 for registered nurses and practitioners, Level 3 for nurse managers and senior registered practitioners and Level 4 to cover palliative clinical nurse specialists and non-medical prescribers in palliative medicine. The competencies encompass four core dimensions, clinical practice and leadership, communication, education and training, and management and quality.

**e-ELCA (End of Life Care for All)**  
 The electronic learning package e-ELCA is commissioned by the Department of Health and delivered by e-Learning for Healthcare (e-LfH) in partnership with the Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland to support the implementation of the Department of Health's national End of Life Care Strategy (June 2008). The package contains over 150 sessions, all highly interactive, some with video content and discussion material, based around the four core modules.

All staff working in the specialist teams have been encouraged to sign up and undertake some of the sessions themselves for personal development and maintaining their knowledge and skills. Some key sessions have been identified to share with all personnel to help them navigate the web-based resource, for those who have limited computer skills or who find e-learning a challenge. Staff who are working at Level 4 competencies have been allocated e-ELCA sessions to study in detail, and design education sessions for generalist staff, which are then kept in a resource database for use by the team when delivering education in any setting.

### Gathering Information

**Method**  
 At the beginning of the post one of the initial problems for the Community Macmillan Specialist Team was having problems with capacity to see new patients and the ability to deliver the service to patients in a timely fashion. There was a clear need to establish the perceptions of all users of the current team and use this to inform strategy and operational changes. A simple online survey was designed and sent to service users including patients, carers, hospital, hospice and community health care professionals who currently use the service.



**Action taken**  
 This survey indicated that indeed the capacity of the service was one of the most pressing issues for patients, carers and health professionals. This informed a service redesign to free up capacity, and make space in the timetable for education.

### Enthusing and Enabling

**Background**  
 Macmillan's key message is nationally well known through their high profile branding and marketing strategy. To be associated with the Macmillan name and brand carries credibility and enthusiasm for the aims of the charity. With this in mind the Macmillan Educator has developed the 'Macmillan Champion' role. This role also spans both health and social care, and primary and secondary care settings.

**Process**  
 Each hospital ward and community team nominates a Macmillan palliative care champion, more than one from each team can be nominated. The champions attend a series of training sessions - usually with a 'lunch and learn' format, where different speakers have presented topics on all aspects concerning death, dying and care of patients at the end of life. Topics include: Macmillan philosophy, roles of the voluntary sector (hospice and local cancer support service), psychology in palliative care, the role of the police in a sudden death, legal aspects of advance care planning, tissue and organ donation, rehabilitation in palliative care, end of life care in COPD, and communication skills

The theory of this format is that it enables the champions to feel part of the Macmillan family, familiarise themselves with their aims and objectives, to learn how to use the e-ELCA tool and work towards their competencies. They are learning new skills and consolidating others, gaining confidence as they go. They then feel empowered and enthused and to go back to their teams and disseminate this learning. In addition they are inspired to show leadership to their teams and influence practice by their example.

**Progress**  
 60 champions are currently being trained. Evaluation of the training so far has been particularly positive, but the challenge remains to show how this really does affect day to day practice, and how it impacts on patient care. This will be the next phase of the project, and it will complement the planned 'Transforming End of Life Care' pilot about to begin within the hospital trust.

**The future**  
 Practice nurses have been identified as a group who often know patients in the last year of life due to their involvement in many of the chronic disease management clinics in Primary Care. They have also been shown to rate themselves as feeling unconfident in managing both patients with cancer, and in dealing with end of life issues<sup>4</sup>. This could be a target group for roll out of the champions scheme, which would also capture practices who are having difficulty with, or are poor engagers with, or who would like support with their Gold Standards Framework and Advance Care Planning work.