

# Does it do what it says on the tin?

Using a licensed communication skills training package to increase capability and capacity in end of life care

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## Introduction and method

SAGE & THYME, a licensed communication skills package, has been used across the South Central region of England to enable staff to listen and respond to people in distress. Over the last 2 years we have trained and supported 45 trainers and they have trained over 2500 health and social care staff. To assess the impact of the training on individual practitioners, and the conditions needed to achieve this impact, we undertook an evaluation using questionnaires from a cross sample of participants (n=511) and focus groups with trainers.

## Consistent high quality of training

- Experienced trainers expressed reservations about the prescriptive nature of the training, but after experience delivering it described it as 'well-crafted'.
- The prescriptive nature of the training however, provided security for less experienced trainers and prevented procrastinations previously experienced when planning training with colleagues. This 'kick started the roll out of training.
- The quality of the training is consistently evaluated positively. Strikingly, the coaching model of the training is highly rated – participants value the focus on enabling people who are distressed to work out their own solutions and draw on their own resources to address their concerns before offering to solve the problem for them.
- Achieving the high quality of training provided and the consistent use of the training package has required well co-ordinated governance. Whilst time consuming, this has had the benefit of providing a point of contact and support for trainers and a means of assessing the impact of the training a whole.



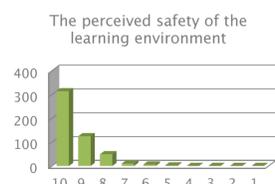
## Results key points

A standardised training package (SAGE & THYME) has helped us to:

- Achieve a consistently high quality of training across a large geographical area and workforce.
- Develop our capacity to provide communication skills training by developing the capability of practitioners to facilitate such training. This is important the sustainability of eolc education.
- Enhance the confidence of a range of practitioners and ancillary staff to approach and talk to people who are distressed and more importantly to do this in a way that fosters the use of the individual's resources.

## Safe and skilled community of trainers

- Using SAGE & THYME has enabled us to develop a community of trainers through the shared enterprise that this has entailed.
- For example trainers have worked together across organisational boundaries, coming into contact with colleagues that they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to work with.
- This has enabled cross-fertilisation of skills and this has been influential in our ability to build our training capacity.
- We have drawn on this community to collectively develop other communication skills training – foundation communication skills in end of life care and advance care planning which have been delivered across the area.
- The evaluation questionnaires demonstrate that the trainers have provided an excellent standard of safety in the training sessions: 488/511 participants rated this as excellent (96%).



Key to charts:  
Horizontal axis  
10: Strongly agree  
1 Strongly disagree  
Vertical axis = n

## Confident staff

- Training has been provided to over 2500 members of staff.
- Participants have ranged from care assistants and administrators to consultants and senior mental health practitioners.
- All have agreed training transferable to their everyday practice.
- The training therefore has demonstrated universal applicability.
- The evaluations consistently demonstrate the positive impact of the training. 434/512 participants (85%) strongly agreed that the training had increased their confidence to approach people who were distressed. 435/511 (85%) strongly agreed that they would be willing to talk to distressed people and address emotional concerns. 444/501 (87%) strongly agreed that the training would make an impact on their practice.



## Conclusion

**So does the training package, SAGE & THYME, do what it says on the tin? Yes it does!**

Using a licensed package has ensured a consistent quality of provision over a large workforce and built capability and capacity in end of life care. However, these results rest on several important factors which are outside of the tin: contracting pedagogically appropriate terms for the license (which in our experience was a lengthy process); skilled facilitation; meticulous co-ordination, communication and governance; and adequate resources – 3 trainers are needed per session, that whilst ensuring safety also has organisational implications.

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