

CASE STUDY

Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

About Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust:

- Employs about 8,000 staff
- About 147,000 A&E attendances and 713,000 outpatient attendances per year
- Operates across two main hospital sites
- Provides major medical and surgical specialties, routine and specialist diagnostic services and other clinical support services, plus some specialist and tertiary services
- Designated Cancer Centre, Cardiac Centre, Vascular Centre and a Major Trauma Centre
- Teaches medical students from the Hull York Medical School

How was the training adopted?

Initially, not all the people on the end of life care (EOLC) steering group, at which the SAGE & THYME training was discussed, were convinced that it was worth adopting. Their view was that, having received training in advanced communication skills (which happens over several days), it would not be possible to change communication skills with only a 3 hour workshop. However, Kirsten was persistent, as she really felt that SAGE & THYME could be beneficial. In 2016 the hospital received funding from Health Education England in Yorkshire and Humber for end of life care training. Once this funding was awarded and armed with more information on the benefits of SAGE & THYME, Kirsten went back to the EOLC steering group. Almost 18 months after the initial discussion, their support was secured to release staff to become trained as SAGE & THYME facilitators and then to subsequently run the workshops.

What was the business challenge?

As palliative care staff working across the whole Trust, they noticed that there was a gap in communication skills amongst the general staff. One of the consultants in palliative medicine, Dr Kirsten Saharia, wanted to empower them to feel more confident when talking with people who were upset. At a regional meeting, she heard that another Trust was running the SAGE & THYME training and decided that this could be the answer.



Both palliative care staff and staff from other departments were recruited to become SAGE & THYME facilitators, and they were asked to confirm that they could commit to running 3-4 workshops per year. Seven of the eight people who attended the facilitator training passed, including four consultants (two in palliative care and two in elderly medicine) and three clinical nurse specialists. There was also a member of staff who had previously been a SAGE & THYME facilitator, and she attended the Reflect and Refresh course to revise her skills. In addition, some of the newly trained facilitators attended the Reflect & Refresh workshop a few months after their SATFAC training to enhance their skills. At least one facilitator also attends the annual SAGE & THYME study day. The training is supported by 4 hours per week of administrator time.

How has the training been evaluated?

The Trust has been running the training for about 2 years. The facilitators enjoy running the workshops and find them fun. So far 442 delegates (including nurses, healthcare assistants, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, doctors, complaints staff and volunteers) have attended with 99.8% of those saying that they would recommend the training to others. The training has received very positive feedback from delegates:

"Shows how simple it can be to talk to patients and get to the source of the problem."

"Excellent training, I can relate this to my role every day."

"Helpful training, will help me do my job more effectively."

An online survey sent to staff between 2 months and 1 year after they had attended the training with 120 responses (response rate of 43%) found that:

- >80% said that their skills had improved
- >90% were more confident about talking to patients about emotional concerns
- ~80% had used the SAGE & THYME structure in their practice
- They liked the 'credit cards' that provide a reminder of the SAGE & THYME structure

Comments included:

"The training gave me a really good insight into patient perspectives. I feel that I am better able to empathise with patients now as well as being able to deliver the model of care that I was taught."

"Found it compliments other communication training: the structure of getting into and then out of conversations very helpful, and contributes to greater understanding of patient needs and their holistic care in many encounters I find, not just when distressed or concerned."

What tips do you have for others wishing to run the SAGE & THYME Foundation Level workshop?

1. Be proactive in advertising the training – use posters on every ward, send emails, and mention the training constantly with ongoing adverts to maintain momentum.
2. Invite key senior people to attend the training – if they feel it is worthwhile, they will become good advocates.
3. Use an electronic booking system if possible, to reduce admin time.
4. Have a box with everything ready for the training (e.g. delegate packs, clock, pens, paper etc.) for SAGE & THYME facilitators to use.
5. Consider overbooking places slightly (perhaps 3 extra places) to allow for 'did not attend' on the day.
6. Be clear when the workshop starts and inform people that late-comers will not be permitted (as they have missed key information about the training).
7. Always have a back-up facilitator in case someone is ill or held up (the back-up has been used 3 times in the last 2 years).
8. Facilitators should arrive 1 hour before the workshop starts and should alternate the roles each time to ensure that all facilitators are competent and confident in the different roles
9. Facilitators should have an honest and constructive debrief at the end of the workshop.
10. Understand that the workshop normally works best when it is attended by staff from multiple professions from a variety of working environments rather than a whole group who know each other well.

About SAGE & THYME

The SAGE & THYME Foundation Level workshop was created by staff and a patient at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, to teach anyone how to notice distress, listen carefully and respond helpfully to patients, clients, carers and others who are concerned. It places published research evidence about effective communication skills within a memorable structure using the mnemonic 'SAGE & THYME'.

To discuss how SAGE & THYME could benefit your organisation, please contact Rachael/Mandy on:

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