

Delivering excellent psychosocial support for adults affected by cancer: An integrated approach co-designed with service users and stakeholders across London

Dr Philippa Hyman, Macmillan Mental Health Clinical Lead

Cancer and its treatments have the potential to significantly impact on mental health affecting clinical outcomes, service user experience and quality of life. Identifying psychosocial factors and providing high quality support is essential from diagnosis, through treatment, living with and beyond cancer and end of life care. Service users, families and carers report gaps in service provision at vital points along the pathway.

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In primary care I was seen within an IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service, there was sympathy about cancer but a lack of understanding.

There's a disconnect between services in the hospital between physical/medical side and the psychological side.

During treatment I was told I could see a psychologist, which was so helpful, but after treatment it doesn't feel like it's offered.

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Aim

To develop an integrated pathway which was flexible, responsive, user-centred and that would make sense to service users, service providers and commissioners to improve psychosocial support for all Londoners.

Methodology

Consideration of key national drivers, the literature and mapping of current service provision in London, including psycho-oncology services was undertaken.

Three stakeholder events were held including service users, health professionals/service providers, the third sector and commissioners to identify gaps in service provision and how to address these.

Additionally, focus groups and qualitative interviews with adults affected by cancer were conducted.

Results

Thematic analysis from focus groups, interviews and stakeholder events identified key themes to be incorporated into the pathway:

- *How to prevent distress and promote adjustment*
- *The gap in specialist cancer psychological support post-treatment*
- *The expert role of psycho-oncology teams which should be available across the whole pathway*
- *The education and training needs of the wider workforce*
- *The wider impact on mental health of financial difficulties or fertility concerns*

Conclusions

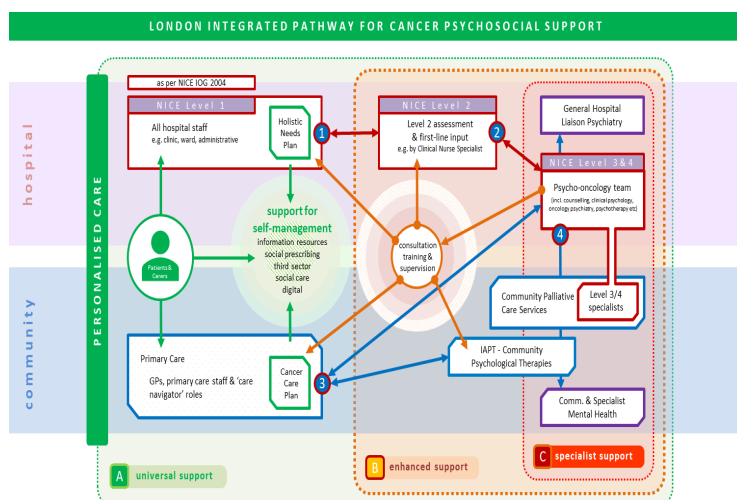
An integrated pathway for cancer psychosocial support had been developed for London. Stakeholder engagement has resulted in examples of successful implementation across London which will have a direct impact on service users.

Impact

The London Integrated Pathway for Cancer Psychosocial Support has been designed and now been localised across several CCGs in London. Funding has been agreed across two STPs in London to develop psycho-oncology teams which will benefit thousands of Londoners affected by cancer.

“For a good while, cancer psychological services has been an area of ongoing debate in South West London. However, in recent times, there has been a rejuvenated focus which has resulted in positive developments .. the local debate has finally turned into long overdue action”.

South West London Health and Care Partnership



Key features of the integrated pathway:

- ◆ **Integrated and personalised pathway approach**
- ◆ Whole pathway, from diagnosis, through treatment, cancer rehabilitation, recovery and living with and beyond cancer, and end of life care
- ◆ Distinction between **universal, enhanced and specialist support**
- ◆ Majority of people cope with support from family/friends, self-management, third sector, information and sign-posting
- ◆ Different services have key roles at different points along the pathway—no single service alone is sufficient
- ◆ Pathway needs both Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Services (IAPT) and Psycho-oncology teams—**not either/or**
- ◆ Psycho-oncology teams will **share expertise** across the whole pathway, including consultation and training with primary care and IAPT services