

Evaluation of the Practice Nurse Development Course

What our client wanted

Macmillan wanted to evaluate the delivery and impact of their Practice Nurse Development Course (PNDC). The course aims to increase the confidence, skills, awareness and competence of practice nurses to engage with people affected by cancer and to support them in primary care through their diagnosis, treatment and recovery. The course also aims to upskills practice nurses to support non-curative patients by taking an active role in the delivery of the Gold Standard Framework for End of Life support in primary care.

What Frontline did

Our work included a desk review of existing course delivery and evaluation, and a national (UK wide) survey of practice nurses who had attended the course. The survey focused on identifying and quantifying the changes in practice nurses:

- Awareness of the support needs of people affected by cancer
- Confidence in their ability to engage with and support patients affected by cancer
- Skills to effectively meet patients' needs
- Changes that practice nurses made in their practice to work more effectively with people affected by cancer

12 case study site visits were also undertaken. These were designed to engage staff across the practice (GPs, practice managers, practice nurses) to explore in more detail the impact attending the course had across the practice, and the enablers and challenges of making these changes.

What difference we made

Our report robustly demonstrated that the PNDC was very successful in increasing the knowledge, skills, awareness and confidence of practice nurses to support people affected by cancer in primary care. It also identified the significant challenges that course attendees faced in making these changes when they returned to their practice. These challenges were a result of pressure across primary care, the lack of meaningful resources and a clearly identified role for primary care in supporting these patients, and entrenched views amongst GPs of the role of practice nurses and limited the courses impact.

The recommendations contained in our report enabled the projects steering group to change their focus on developing the course content (which is working well) to increasing change and influencing skills amongst future course participants.