

Growing Your Own Developing Clinical Nurse Specialists



Background

Birmingham St Mary's Hospice Community Team is a large urban Community Palliative Service in Birmingham, supporting local people living with life limiting illness across the city and Sandwell. The Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) team are Band 7 nurses with responsibility for; caseload management, clinical effectiveness and leadership. They support a 24 hour on call service and deliver the hospice education programme.

In recent years recruitment to these roles has been difficult; this aligns with the national picture of a current shortfall of 10% in the nursing workforce.

The Hospice specifies at least degree level education, 2 years at Band 7 in palliative care or relevant specialty experience and post graduate education as core to the role.

However, the role is changing; not only do we need advanced practice skills such as non-medical prescribing, we need to understand palliative care beyond cancer to work within a changing health care landscape.

When recruiting, we were seeing nurses with the right value base and some relevant experience, but without the experience and qualifications to fulfil the role.

Method

The Hospice developed a Band 6 to 7 competency programme based broadly on the Macmillan competency programme¹ for nurses, but tailored to a broad palliative care approach. This included:

- A 6 month programme of mentored support, education and experiential learning
- Sage and Thyme certification
- European Certificate in Palliative Care
- A competency and reflection programme; expert practice, leadership and consultancy, education and clinical effectiveness. This can then be utilised for re-validation

Outcomes

- 9 nurses were recruited to the programme over a 5 year period
- All from a broad range of backgrounds including: ITU, District Nursing and internally. This has enabled a positive approach to integration with primary and secondary care and supported positive cultural change
- 8 have completed the programme and were successful in transition to Band 7. 7 of those are still in post

What next?

- After the programme's success, the team are considering ways of replicating this model to retain and develop Band 5 to 6 and 2 to 3
- The team will continue to support internal welfare by taking practical steps to address education needs and retain more nurses

¹ A competence framework for Nurses caring for patients living with and beyond cancer (2014)