

Macmillan Cancer Support



The design and development of a Patient Leader development programme for Macmillan Cancer Support, aimed to develop the capability of local leadership to improve patient care.

What was the issue?

The NHS Five Year Forward View says that ‘we need to engage with communities and citizens in new ways, involving them directly in decisions about the future of health and care services’ (5YFV, 2014). The concept of patient leadership is emerging as one important new way of working collaboratively with patients and carers.

The establishment of Healthwatch as the independent consumer champion, provided an opportunity for patient representatives to have a strong voice of influence and a genuine leadership attitude and capability in order to adequately serve their local communities. Healthskills were commissioned by Macmillan to develop and facilitate a programme to support patient leadership, recognising the need to develop these individuals, many of who were recovering from cancer and often in challenging and pivotal roles, to become the system influencers and community enablers who will truly make a difference to those using and receiving cancer services in their localities.

What did Healthskills do?

We designed a programme that incorporated different elements, different experiences and different levels of a blended approach to meet the diverse needs of the disparate cohort of individuals we were working with. The programme design consisted of the following interventions:

- **Programme launch** workshop: designed primarily as an engagement event with an emphasis on both what the programme can provide for participants and to explore specific needs and aims of participants from the programme;
- **Masterclasses** exploring leadership issues and the application of theory into practice;
- **Action learning set** sessions to reflect and consider how they are applying new skills and developing their leadership behaviours;
- **Individual coaching sessions** to reinforce the learning and unpack the challenges ahead. The sessions provided opportunities to consider next steps and focus on developing goals to enable them to realise their aspirations;
- **Leadership Conference** to share learning, achievements and challenges and future plans

What is different as a result?

The programme has provided a significant improvement in the confidence and capability of the participants. Patient leaders report that they felt more equipped and confident in their skills around leadership and management, better able to act as an advocate for their conditions and more effective at influencing peers and stakeholders.

What our client said

I currently work for Macmillan Cancer Support and invited Healthskills to submit a tender to design and deliver a pilot patient leadership programme. The programme launched in May and evaluations and feedback so far have been excellent. I would wholeheartedly recommend Healthskills as a quality provider of management and leadership programmes for the health and social care sector.

Angela Cleary, Leadership and Support Lead, Macmillan Cancer Support

The programme equipped me with the skills to distinguish between a leader and a manager and I learned to identify the areas I needed to work on. The one-to-one coaching sessions were probably the most valuable hours I have spent since restarting my career. I developed a great rapport with my coach and I was able to be frank and honest about my own personal fears and insecurities. These sessions have formed a huge part of my personal growth over the last few months.

As a direct result of this course, I had the confidence to apply for a job I may not have

considered before and am now in a leadership role that I love. It's early days but I'm putting into practice the things I learned and achieving brilliant results so far. Through work and self-improvement, I feel like a different person from when I was just out of recovery. I feel empowered and on top of my game and so much of that's attributable to the Patient Leadership Course. I'm forever glad I took the opportunity.

Participant, Developing Patient Leaders Programme