

The Facilitator Programme

The Cancer Research UK Facilitator Programme works directly with the NHS to help the prevention and early diagnosis of cancer. Across the UK, our team of 88 facilitators work directly with GPs, dentists, pharmacists and healthcare organisations. They provide locally-tailored, practical support that is helping to save lives right now. Our facilitators ensure that GPs and other health care professionals know about the latest tools, advice and guidelines for preventing and spotting cancer, and they also help deliver and drive improvement.

Why is the programme needed?

Prevention

- 4 in 10 cancers can be prevented through lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking, drinking less alcohol and eating a healthy diet

Early Diagnosis

- Diagnosing cancer early triples the rate of survival for 8 of the most common cancers
- International comparisons show that UK cancer survival lags behind that of comparable countries
- Wide variation still exists across the UK, with one year survival ranging from 73% to 65% in England

Pressures on the Health Service

- The average GP sees around 8,000 patients a year but, on average, only 7 new cases of cancer
- GPs in the UK are facing a significant increase in workload, with nearly 2.5% annual growth on the 400 million consultations they undertake
- These pressures make it hard for GPs to engage in quality improvement

The Cancer Research UK Facilitator Programme works with the NHS to bridge the gap to frontline clinical practice. The need to communicate effectively with GPs and their teams about early diagnosis and prevention of cancer is the central motivation behind our health professional engagement activity.

The key stats

In October 2017 we conducted an evaluation of the programme which explored the extent and impact of the programme, and how and why it has added value.

- We work with over 5,700 GP practices across England and urban areas of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- 199 local planning/commission organisations were engaged (Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health Boards)
- 61% of Clinical Commissioning Groups/Health Board areas are fully engaged by the programme. In these areas the programme works to influence strategic decision-making and deliver practice visits
- Facilitators have around 700 engagements every month, equating to 8,500 a year
- Facilitators deliver training to groups of health professionals, with around 200 professionals taking part in training each month
- Practices attributed increases of up to 17% in bowel screening uptake as a result of working with facilitators

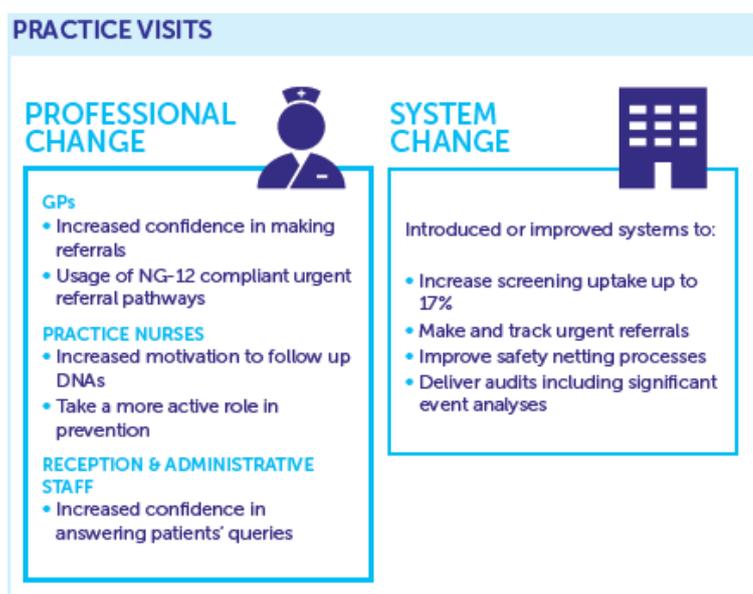
The Impact

- The programme evaluation found that Cancer Research UK facilitators have played a significant role in introducing and embedding improvement in cancer screening and referral.
- 99% of practices would recommend a practice visit to other practices in their area and 96% plan to take action as a result of it.
- Frontline engagements via practice visits and training events form the majority of the programme's work. Practice engagement was highly valued by both practices and commissioners, and at a strategic level.

"It's a very difficult thing to do on your own, when you're sitting in your surgery and think 'I'd like to try and tackle cancer'. It's just too big. But I would encourage anyone to invite them in [CRUK facilitators]. Their approach is educational, not telling us what we should do but discussing it with us, and what might be helpful in our practice." GP

"It's enormously valuable having the CRUK facilitators. It's incredibly valuable as a more strategic organisation that works across such a large area. It's fantastic to be able to work in collaboration with them so that we're reaching clinicians on the front line and impacting patient care in that way. I find that that's incredibly valuable, so they are a really important resource in helping us to put policy into practice." NHS Strategic Lead

- Practice visits had significant impact on individuals and practice systems. At an individual level, facilitators impact on knowledge, attitudes, confidence, motivation and behaviour.



- Without the programme, NHS stakeholders perceived that plans would be less well informed by 'on the ground' intelligence, national developments and emerging evidence, and the pace of improvements in cancer prevention and early diagnosis would be significantly slower.

The Impact

Case study: Improving bowel screening participation at a practice in South East England

The national bowel screening programme can help spot bowel cancers at a point when they are much easier to treat (and sometimes before cancer even develops), but a significant issue the programme faces is that many people don't send in their testing kit. The Facilitators work with the NHS to increase the response rate and, in doing so, have had some fantastic results. **41%** of all the contacts they have involve talking about improving bowel screening uptake. As mentioned earlier, practices attributed increases of up to **17%** in bowel screening uptake as a result of working with Facilitators to introduce and improve practice processes.

In one example, our Facilitators were working with a practice that had been rated as 'inadequate' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and told they must improve their bowel screening rate. In response, the supporting facilitator developed a bespoke action plan, including provision of a range of Cancer Research UK resources, and encouraged the practice to implement specific processes, such as evidence-based ways to contact non-responders and pop-up alerts on practice systems.

As a result, the whole practice team became involved in implementing the interventions, including GPs, reception and administration staff. They took the following measures:

- Sent letters to 60 year old patients due to receive their first bowel screening testing kit
- Sent GP endorsement letters to identified non-responders, with a Cancer Research UK bowel screening card enclosed
- Introduced a system for sending text reminders to non-responders with mobile phones
- Used IT pop-up alerts to remind non-responders during their GP appointments
- Included bowel screening reminder messages on printed prescriptions
- Provided disposable gloves for patients to complete their bowel screening test
- Liaised with probation service regarding patients aged 60–74 years in the criminal justice system

The practice said: "We're now up to 73% participation and rising weekly. At this rate we should hit 85% uptake within the next 6 months! Thanks for all your help".

As a result of the changes, the CQC removed the practice from special measures and gave it a 'good' judgement. In their report CQC said "we noted that recent data demonstrated considerable improvements to the bowel cancer screening uptake, which had increased from 55% to 73%".

Case study: Spotting oral cancer earlier in Scotland

With around 850 new cases diagnosed each year, oral cancer incidence in Scotland is increasing at a faster rate than the rest of the UK. A consultant in Dental Public Health was keen to explore how the CRUK Facilitators in Scotland could raise awareness of oral cancer among dentists and promote CRUK's oral cancer recognition toolkit and guide.

Working together, they developed a bespoke oral cancer training session, which provided an overview of diagnosis within primary care dental services, and highlighted the tools and resources available to support cancer prevention and early diagnosis.

In total, 175 delegates attended the sessions, including dentists, dental nurses, hygienists, practice managers and oral health educators. Feedback from the events was excellent, with attendees reporting that they felt more knowledgeable and confident working with patients who may have signs of oral cancer.

Building on the success of these training sessions, a national oral cancer webinar was then delivered in partnership with NHS Education Scotland. Across the country, 440 professionals registered, with 242 participating in the live interactive session and more logging in later to watch the webinar offline.

As a result of the webinar, many dentists have said they will improve their screening for oral cancer and there have been numerous requests from practices for more patient information to raise awareness of prevention.

“The course was very informative and a valuable use of my time. I now have more confidence about oral cancer detection and I think the leaflets and toolkit will be extremely useful in daily practice. I would recommend this course to others and look forward to more webinars”

- Oral cancer training session participant

Thank you

Thanks to supporters like you, the CRUK Facilitators are helping to drive cancer prevention and make sure that more people with cancer are diagnosed as early as possible, when treatment is more likely to be successful.

Together we will beat cancer