

Courageous Conversations – Delivering expert level communication skills on a digital platform.

¹Evelyn Paterson ²Suzanne Nimmo ³ Michael Shelmerdine ⁴Rebecca Hepworth-Sims
Macmillan PDK Leads

This poster will outline the successful adaptation of communication skills training, initially designed for in-person delivery to a Primary Care Audience into a course that could be delivered on a digital platform to the wider cancer workforce. Offered to professionals who regularly have conversations with people living with cancer and other life limiting illnesses and learning outcomes to increase confidence and competence required to have these conversations that explore hopes, fears, worries and concerns.

Courses are advertised in [Macmillan Education and Development Opportunities Prospectus](#) and on Events page of [Learning and Communication Hub\(LCH\)](#).

Courageous Conversations - Adapting to the pandemic world

Pandemic resulted in loss of opportunities to deliver in-person teaching. But there was an ongoing demand for communication skills training.

New technologies explored to engage with professional audiences through virtual classrooms.

Collaboration with Dr Charles Champion-Smith and Dr Anthony Cunliffe to adapt communication skills training for online delivery to Primary Care Professionals.

Evidenced based and peer reviewed.

Pilot event in March 2022 with 5 further events delivered.

Reflecting and learning from facilitator/delegate experiences.

Course delivery will continue for 2023.

Challenges

Technology issues - microphones, cameras.

Delegate access to quiet, uninterrupted space within busy work environments.

Delegates lack time to complete pre-work.

Engagement with the target audience.

Delegate management when not meeting previous experience and training criteria.

On the day changes e.g. if fewer delegates attend - ensuring all learning outcomes met.

Adapting facilitation skills to an online forum – engagement, interaction, managing emotions and inclusivity.

Courageous Conversations course structure

Simple registration process via LCH. Once registered, access to all courses and content available. Free and accessible on MS Teams and could be made available in Zoom or Adobe.

Expectation of previous communication skills training & experience of having difficult conversations as part of their role.

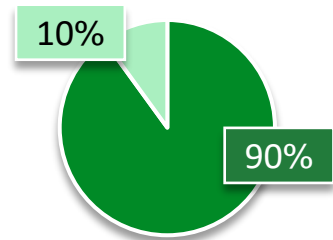
Max 12 learners in 4 breakout rooms for facilitator led role play of prepared scenarios. Learners participate in the role of patient, professional and observer. Professional role receives structured feedback to enhance reflection and learning.

Audience: Macmillan professionals and wider cancer workforce who are having emotional conversations with people who have cancer and other life limiting illness.

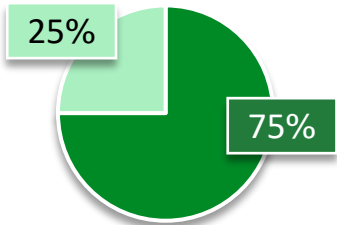
Theory delivered in 60-minute pre-work (reading, watching and reflection exercises). Practice and discussion at 4hr virtual classroom - a courageous conversation is analysed to demonstrate techniques, strategies alongside useful words and phrases.

Safe to take risks in small groups. Use of chat function throughout in addition to plenary sessions to enhance engagement.

Results and Conclusions



90% strongly agreed & 10% agreed the course helped them improve the service they offer



75% strongly agreed & 25% agreed that their knowledge about this subject has increased

I knew it would be interactive which can be a bit intimidating, but the environment was very safe I felt very comfortable doing all of the exercise and participating.

More than my expectations. I loved the direct learning and the interactive learning.

It will definitely help me with difficult conversations.

Allows me to be more comfortable in uncomfortable situations.

The facilitator delegate ratio of 1:4 enables the provision of structured personalised feedback, enhancing the learning. The carefully crafted scenarios stimulate delegates to grow their skills, enhance their confidence and highlights the emotional impact of these conversations. This is a viable model of delivering expert communication skills training.