

# Creating a new role to help deliver improved cancer care in London

## Background

The South East London Cancer Network is a network of voluntary sector organisations, private cancer care providers and NHS Acute providers who came together after the National Patient Survey found that the experience of cancer care in London is poorer than in the rest of the country.

Driven by the need to improve care for cancer patients, the group worked with Skills for Health to develop a new Band 4 Role of Assistant Practitioner for cancer care and palliative care.

## Why develop the role?

The lack of continuity of registered practitioners was one of the reasons thought to contribute to patients reporting a poor experience of cancer care in London. This was supported by the fact that London hospitals can find it difficult to retain Band 5 staff – they tend to go to London to train, and then move on quickly because there are many career progression opportunities available to them.

The role development group believed there were a number of tasks and activities undertaken by Band 5 practitioners that could be done by appropriately trained and competent support workers. This workforce group is less likely to move on as quickly as the registered practitioners and can therefore provide an increase in the continuity of staff providing care to this group of patients.



***“As a result of Skills for Health’s energy and expertise, we delivered a product that we hope will contribute to the delivery of good quality cancer care for patients and their families and also offer an exciting career opportunity for those who undertake the role.”***

**Tim Jackson**  
MacMillan Nurse Director

## The outcomes

Individual organisations are considering how best to introduce the role into their workforce plans and are considering a number of educational routes to underpin the development of the role.

The benefits related to improving the experience of cancer patients in London are expected to include:

- improving quality of hands-on care.
- increasing productivity without compromising the quality of care (reflecting the aims of the '6 Cs'\*).
- allowing registered practitioners to spend more time on complex tasks.
- alleviating nursing recruitment issues across London.
- enabling Assistant Practitioners to move across different cancer treatment environments without duplicating their core training (because 80% of their skills will be transferable).
- offering career development for support workers.



## How they did it

The group from across London worked together with Skills for Health. Three half-day workshops were held to:

- scope the detailed remit of the role.
- agree the career framework level at which the role would operate.
- ascertain the tasks and activities required by the role.
- identify the indicative learning and development required.

In between each workshop, sub-groups worked with Skills for Health to review, challenge and amend the workshop outputs until consensus was reached across the group.

A Transferable Role Template was then developed, detailing a set of agreed core and specific competences (National Occupational Standards) for the role.

The detailed role template can be accessed and downloaded from Skills for Health's Roles Directory, which contains a library of more than 150 role templates.

The Roles Directory can be found on Skills for Health's website. [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk).

\* Compassion in Practice, the Chief Nursing Officer's vision and strategy for building a culture of compassionate care, is based around six values – the '6 Cs': care; compassion; courage; communication; competence; and commitment.