

# Supporting Non-Clinical Staff in SE London to Engage in Cancer Care Conversations Across Primary and Community Care



South East London  
Cancer Alliance

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With growing pressure on GP services, non-clinical roles in primary and community care, particularly those introduced through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS), are increasingly important in delivering the NHS Long Term Plan and supporting cancer care initiatives. However, inconsistent role definitions, limited access to training, and professional isolation can reduce their potential impact.

This SELCA project aimed to better understand and strengthen the role of community based non-clinical workers in cancer care across South East London by:

- Mapping current involvement in cancer care
- Identifying and improving access to relevant training
- Creating a local community of practice for peer support and shared learning
- Supporting management to better utilise these roles in patient-facing cancer-related conversations.

*"my confidence only goes so far in having those conversations because you know, cancer's is a little word with a big meaning..."*

This project explored how non-clinical workers can be better supported to engage in cancer-related conversations across South East London through:

- **Engaging locally** with care coordinators, social prescribers, and key stakeholders to understand current practices and challenges.
- **Connecting nationally** with other Cancer Alliances (e.g., Wessex, Suffolk & NE Essex) to learn from similar initiatives and gather existing tools and resources.
- **Reviewing training and resources** from organisations like Macmillan, Guy's Cancer Academy, NHS Learning Hub, and ACCEND currently available to non clinical workers.
- **Surveying stakeholders** across SEL to map non-clinical roles in cancer care, revealing variation in role use and a need for clearer guidance, consistent training, and cross-borough collaboration.
- **Holding a focus group** with non-clinical staff to understand their experiences, highlighting that cancer conversations are already happening and support should focus on confidence-building, not new roles.
- **Launching a Community of Practice** to connect non-clinical support workers across SEL, promote peer learning, and share best practice.
- **Considering ACCEND** to align with national training frameworks and support cancer specific career development.

## Findings

- **Varied Role Use:** Non-clinical roles are used in different ways across, and even within, boroughs. Responsibilities range from primarily administrative tasks to more specialised, cancer-focused roles.
- **Inconsistent Support:** Access to peer and managerial support varies widely depending on the borough and specific job role with many staff reporting professional isolation
- **Training Challenges:** Training is often self-directed, requiring individuals to take the initiative to find and complete relevant learning. This can feel overwhelming, with some unsure where to begin. Additionally, many available resources are more tailored to clinical staff and may not meet the specific needs of non-clinical workers.

## Project outputs

Developed an interactive resource and training toolkit to be hosted on the SELCA website.

Launched the first SEL Non-Clinical Worker and Cancer Community of Practice, with 8 weekly ongoing meetings scheduled.

Developing an implementation hub to be hosted on the SELCA website, aimed at promoting current roles and supporting those looking to recruit similar positions.