

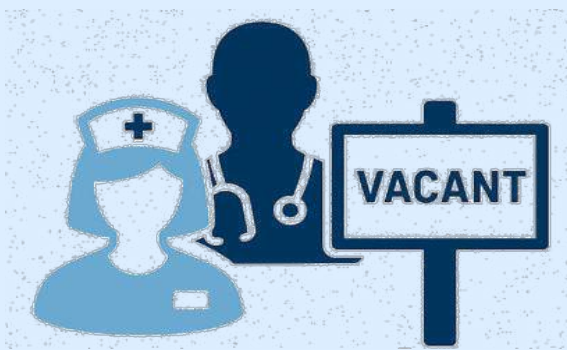
Macmillan Cancer CNS Development Lead Pilot Project

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Background

In October 2019, the London Lead Cancer Nurse Forum (LLCNF) produced a report on the current position of the cancer nursing workforce in London and identified urgent challenges to address these, including:



High vacancy rates (15% in London vs 12% nationally) and low retention rates



A high proportion of the existing workforce approaching retirement age (37% aged over 50 years)



The need to accelerate CNS development to address workforce gaps and foster career progression

Macmillan CDL Pilot Project Overview

- A project team hosted by North Central London Cancer Alliance was commissioned by NHSE in 2021/22 to further scope and respond to the challenges. The team developed a pan-London proposal to pilot implementation of innovative CNS Development Lead posts across the capital. This was successfully presented to Macmillan Cancer Support and NHSE for consideration for funding.
- The Macmillan CNS Development Lead (CDL) Pilot Project is a 3-year programme co-funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and NHSE.

Structure:

- This project is overseen by a project team in North Central London Cancer Alliance (NCLCA) in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, NHSE and all London Cancer Alliances.
- Five CDL roles have been recruited to work in trust clusters aligned to the five London ICS geographies
- Each CDL is hosted by a London Cancer Alliance or trust site
- Clinical and professional oversight and guidance is received from Lead Cancer Nurses and cancer alliance teams
- The delivery model within each cluster provides:
 - **Enhanced 1:1 support** focused on supporting CNSs to achieve the capabilities set out in the ACCEND framework
 - **Universal CDL support** through delivery of group-based coaching and education sessions

Sustainability:

- An independent evaluation was commissioned to review the project and is being delivered by an external agency, MEL Research

Key aims:

- Expand the CNS workforce across London and foster resilience and sustainability

CDLs will:

- Operationalise ACCEND to accelerate early career CNSs development in accordance with the 4 pillars of practice
- Promote the CDL role and raise awareness through outreach activities to grow the pipeline of future cancer CNSs, including amongst the international nursing workforce
- Improve visibility and leadership of the CNS workforce

Pilot Progress:

- A CNS Development Toolkit has been produced which has been derived from ACCEND. It comprises two resources designed for CNSs to assess and monitor their self-efficacy/confidence and provide evidence of meeting core cancer capabilities in practice. Each CDLs is trialling use of the tool locally with CNSs
- Enhanced support offered in all clusters. CDLs have supported c.117 CNSs to date (since July 2024)
- Universal support underway across all cancer alliances, targeting aspirant CNSs and leadership development for experienced CNSs

Challenges:



Capacity vs. Demand

High volume of CNSs requiring developmental support across clusters



Measuring Impact

Challenges in quantifying developmental and strategic outcomes to support future business planning



Sustainability and Funding

Uncertainty about long-term funding and role continuation post-pilot

Interim Findings – Impact of CDL Support (August 2025)

- CDLs receiving enhanced 1:1 support have demonstrated signs of increased confidence. Confidence growth is attributed to structured, relational engagement, though also influenced by time in role and team context.
- Many CNSs begin their roles feeling uncertain and overwhelmed. Regular one-to-one support fosters gradual growth in assurance, initiative, and engagement.
- CDL support is beginning to influence team behaviours. Some CNSs being supported are taking informal leadership roles, supporting colleagues and contributing to a more collaborative environment.

“There’s definitely more confidence...there’s something powerful about having someone from the CDL team sit down with them for an hour each month. I’ve had nurses say, ‘I didn’t realise how much I needed that.’” [A quote taken from a CDL focus group on the perceived impact of their role]