

## CASE STUDY

### James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

#### About James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust:

- Employs >3,500 staff
- Runs ~500 inpatient beds
- 345,000 outpatient and A&E attendances per year
- Summer and winter pressures due to coastal location
- Provides general acute services and hyperbaric oxygen therapy
- Runs many collaborative services with primary care and the community
- Teaches University of East Anglia medical students

#### How has the SAGE & THYME training been adopted?

The Trust initially ran SAGE & THYME Foundation Level (S&T FL) workshops under Macmillan Cancer Support's licence for about 8 years, before it decided to obtain its own licence so that it could offer training to more of its staff including those who are the first point of contact for patients and visitors. It originally purchased an organisational licence, but then moved to a network licence, so that it could train people from other local organisations (e.g. GP practice staff, care homes, CCG staff, social services, and third sector organisations such as MIND).



Some feedback from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service regarding the patient experience, highlighted that complaints around poor communication and disappointing Friends and Family surveys, suggested that staff attitude and behaviour could be improved to reflect the Organisation's Values better.

Therefore, the Trust decided to expand and relaunch its existing SAGE & THYME training provision. A business case was written by Heather Matthews, a respiratory nursing service team leader, with support from the medical director and director of nursing; to provide more frequent S&T FL workshops (2-3 per month) so that more people could be trained, and to increase marketing of the training to staff and local organisations over an 18 months period (starting in Sept 2018). This work is now ongoing and whilst the training is available to everyone, areas with high levels of complaints, or high staff sickness levels are being targeted. SAGE & THYME training is also being included in the staff appraisal process.

#### What are the benefits of the training?

The training has been taught to a variety of staff including clinical staff, radiologists, preceptorship nurses, administrators, junior doctors and consultants. It is also used to skill-up volunteers, such as the dementia befrienders who help hospital dementia patients and staff by keeping the patients occupied with meaningful experiences (e.g. with reminiscence tools) using a person-centred approach. The volunteers report that the training adds 'tools to their toolbox' and provides them with a useful structure for conversations; increasing their confidence in handling difficult conversations. It also helps the volunteers to know that it is acceptable to sign-post some patients on to other people with the required expertise.

In terms of changing practice, since the launch of the project in September 2018, 6-8 weeks post-workshop evaluation has shown that: 75% of staff who attended the workshop feel that the SAGE & THYME training has influenced and changed their practice; and 85% of staff feel that the training has had a positive impact on patient care.

## Staff stories

An administrator who had received the SAGE & THYME training at work, was attending the hospital as a visitor. Whilst she was sat in the A&E waiting area, she observed a woman with a baby who was very upset. Due to the confidence she had gained from the training, she went up to the woman and spoke to her using the SAGE & THYME structure. She said she felt 'empowered' at the end of the conversation because she had helped.



A medical secretary who attended the training said: "SAGE & THYME has helped me overcome my fear of answering the telephone, changed how to react to the different situations I encounter and how to escalate any queries I do not feel I am able to answer. For example, a patient called in distress as they had not received an appointment letter they should have received a while ago. Using SAGE & THYME helped me to understand and empathise with the patient. It taught me to listen, take notes and keep calm in the moment. I reassured the patient I would help and if I could not, I would advise who could help. This turned a negative situation into a positive one and the patient calmed down. I learnt that being patient, listening and understanding can help any situation change from negative to a positive."

## About SAGE & THYME

The SAGE & THYME Foundation Level workshop was created by staff and a patient at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, to teach anyone how to notice distress, listen carefully and respond helpfully to patients, clients, carers and others who are concerned. It places published research evidence about effective communication skills within a memorable structure using the mnemonic 'SAGE & THYME'.

To discuss how SAGE & THYME could benefit your organisation, please contact Rachael/Mandy on:

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Email: **sageandthyme@mft.nhs.uk**

## What tips do you have for others wishing to run the SAGE & THYME Foundation Level workshop?

1. Be aware that patients remember how they are treated by staff more than anything else during their hospital visit, which is why SAGE & THYME training can be so helpful.
2. Target influential people in your organisation to gain their support for the training.
3. Build in funding for administrative support into your business case (e.g. for booking delegates, organising rooms and facilitators, ordering catering).
4. Try and gain funding for 3-5 years, to enable momentum to be gained and to increase sustainability.
5. Promote the training regularly and widely by advertising it around your organisation on screen-savers, canteen displays, magazine, flyers and banners, as well as during every training course run.
6. Have reminders about the SAGE & THYME training during staff appraisals.
7. Run the training regularly to maintain the skills of your SAGE & THYME facilitators.
8. Ensure that your SAGE & THYME facilitators rotate around all the roles (e.g. giving the presentation) during the workshop so that they are not deskilled.
9. Make time for a structured debrief by the facilitators at the end of each workshop.
10. Keep a record of rehearsal scenarios used, in case delegates cannot think of one to use during their training.
11. Make nurses and allied health professions aware that the training counts as 3 continued professional development (CPD) hours.
12. Liaise closely with patient experience and complaints departments so that the required areas can be targeted for the training.
13. Aim to have the training mandatory.