The key worker and end of life care

How the key worker can help ensure that terminally ill patients get the care, support and information that they need, at the right place and time.
We have been introducing the key worker role as part of the Marie Curie Delivering Choice Programme’s integrated end of life care model in Greenwich.

Our programme’s integrated model aims to reduce avoidable hospital admissions and enable more people with terminal illnesses to be cared for and to die in their place of choice.

**What is a key worker?**

A key worker is a healthcare professional who, with the patient’s consent, takes the lead in coordinating the patient’s care. The key worker also acts as the main point of contact for the patient, their carer and all the professionals who are involved in their care.

**Why do patients and carers need a key worker?**

The coordination of care across the patient pathway is often a main concern for terminally ill patients and their carers. The key worker’s role is vital to ensure that each patient has the services, support and information that they need to be cared for in the community.

**What are the responsibilities of a key worker?**

The key worker will provide ongoing monitoring of the patient and their carer to ensure that their needs are being met effectively. This includes:

- Ensuring that carer assessments are completed where appropriate and that the carer is referred to the relevant services
- Ensuring that risk assessments are completed
- Coordinating bereavement follow-ups for the patient’s family and carer including referral to appropriate services

- Leading and coordinating assessments, both initially and as required when the patient’s care needs change
- Ensuring that the patient is placed on the end of life care register
- Facilitating the efficient sharing of patient information with other service providers
- Offering advice, up to date information and guidance on relevant local services and support
The key worker and Greenwich’s integrated end of life care model

Greenwich’s integrated end of life care model is a whole-systems approach to improving care delivery. It addresses the areas of integration, coordination and communication. It also ensures that people have the necessary skills to deliver high quality care.

The Greenwich end of life care model comprises:
- current core services in the community including those provided by acute care, hospice, social services and out-of-hours care
- the new Greenwich Care Partnership
- the Greenwich end of life register

Who will be the nominated key worker?

Ideally, the key worker will be the main healthcare professional who is visiting the patient and is familiar with their care needs.

The key worker should:
- Be able to develop the trust and confidence of the patient and their family and carer
- Have knowledge of services that are available
- Have the skills and knowledge to coordinate and liaise with other health and social care professionals

The key worker will be assigned through regular discussions in the multidisciplinary team.

The professional who has identified the patient as being at the end of life will act as an interim key worker until the next team meeting when the most appropriate professional will be assigned as the patient’s key worker.
Who needs to be informed?

If you are the key worker, you must inform people of this. In particular, you must tell:

- The patient, their family and carer
- The palliative care coordination centre on 020 8320 5794
- Colleagues from the multidisciplinary team at the next palliative care team meeting

This information will also be documented on the end of life care register by the team at the palliative care coordination centre.

What if you are away?

If you are away, an associate key worker should be assigned by the multidisciplinary team.

The key worker should also ensure that the patient and their carer have the contact details of the palliative care coordination centre so that they can get information, advice and support at any time on any day of the week.

The key worker may change throughout the patient’s care pathway depending on the needs of the patient.

When appropriate, the role could be assigned to a more suitable care professional who has greater involvement in the patient’s care.

Although the key worker may be any member of the core multidisciplinary team, they will most likely be a member of the patient’s community nursing team.

Greenwich Care Partnership

The Greenwich Care Partnership was introduced in May 2011, with services delivered by Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice in partnership with Marie Curie Cancer Care and Greenwich Community Health Services, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust.

This care partnership is part of the Greenwich integrated end of life care model developed through the Marie Curie Delivering Choice Programme.

The Greenwich Care Partnership consists of:

- a palliative care coordination centre
- a rapid response service
- a planned night care service
- a personal care and support service

In addition, the care partnership is providing a carer befriending service.

These services work alongside existing core services provided by GPs, district nurses and specialist nurses to deliver 24/7 high quality, coordinated care to patients with end of life care needs.

Contact the Greenwich Care Partnership:

Phone: 020 8320 5794
Fax: 020 8320 5796
www.communityhospice.org.uk/greenwich-care-partnership

Delivering Choice Programme

The Marie Curie Delivering Choice Programme aims to improve care services so that more terminally ill people who are nearing the end of their lives can have the best possible care in their place of choice. Our programme’s south-east London project covers six boroughs – Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark.

Working in partnership with local health and social care organisations, our south-east London project has developed a number of new initiatives.

They include:

- the Greenwich Care Partnership integrated end of life care model
- the implementation of the Liverpool Care Pathway and Gold Standard Framework for Care Homes in care homes across south-east London
- an end of life care information website: www.endoflifecareinformation.org.uk
- carer support pilot programmes in Lewisham and Greenwich
- a quick reference guide leaflet for professionals with helpful prompts on considering the diverse needs of carers
- an end of life care education and training strategy, including a detailed analysis of coursework and recommendations for all staff
For more information on the Marie Curie Delivering Choice Programme, visit:
www.mariecurie.org.uk/deliveringchoice