

Using guidance to improve lymphoedema services for people living with and beyond cancer (LWBC): the experience of the Transforming Cancer Services Team (TCST) in London.

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Introduction

The Transforming Cancer Services Team (TCST) supports the delivery of NHS England's Five Year Forward View and National Cancer Strategy across London. TCST work with multiple stakeholders to support delivery of cancer waiting targets, earlier diagnosis of cancer, those who are living with and beyond cancer (LWBC) and to increase the pace of improvement.

In 2014, the NHS in London prioritised lymphoedema as one of the consequences of cancer treatment that needed attention. Despite this, it was well reported that variation in care existed. Lymphoedema can have a devastating impact on people living with the condition,

*'I feel as though one has to battle all the way along the line – the discomfort, the fatigue, the disfigurement and no one to help it leaves one feeling alone and helpless'*¹.

Implementing best practice in lymphoedema care can benefit both patients and society, improving outcomes and saving money. Macmillan Cancer Support have predicted that for every £1 the NHS spends on lymphoedema care, the NHS saves £100 in reduced hospital admissions².

References

- 1) Commissioning guidance for lymphoedema services for adults LWBC. TCST, 2016.
- 2) Lymphoedema Services in England: A case for change. National Cancer Action Team, 2013.

Methodology

This work aimed to develop comprehensive guidance for improving lymphoedema services and involved:

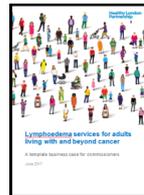
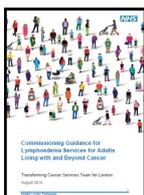
- A multidisciplinary task and finish group
- Semi-structured interviews with funders
- Comprehensive mapping of all specialist services
- Endorsement of the guidance at a London level.

Implementation involved:

- Highlighting the economic arguments for change
- Influencing for local action plans in 3 priority areas
- Raising the profile of lymphoedema through events, presentations, publications and social media.

Results

TCST has produced a comprehensive guidance document including a service specification and a template business case (see below).

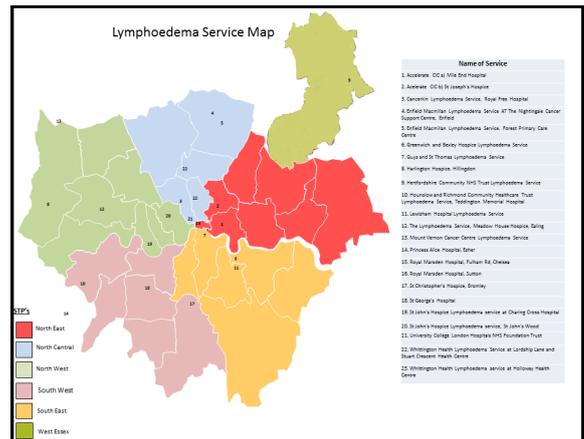


There are several issues directly impacting on patient care in London:

- Significant gaps & some areas with no services (see map)
- Lack of awareness and profile of lymphoedema
- Workforce challenges and education/training needs

Impact of our work so far:

- Through events & social media we have raised awareness of lymphoedema and our resources (see right)
- TCST has influenced 2 priority areas to generate action plans
- TCST guidance has been shortlisted in the 2018 'Healthcare Transformation Awards'
- Our work has helped shape new national guidance (due late 2018)
- Planning is underway for a new 'Community of Practice' to support healthcare professionals.



Conclusions

TCST lymphoedema guidance has been well received by peers and had some early impact locally and nationally.

'I can say generally that we are encouraging its use as a tool with managers and politicians to raise awareness and potentially reduce inequalities' (Brit Lymph Soc, 2018)

More work needs to be done to monitor the impact on service provision and patient outcomes in the long-term.