



Head and Neck Focus Groups

On Friday 4 May patients, carers and staff who have been affected by, or work in, head and neck cancer met with members of the Cancer Alliance to discuss their experience and views of the current head and neck cancer services.

The focus groups took place at the Source in Sheffield and were led by Georgia Thompson, Cancer Manager at Barnsley Hospital and Head and Neck Pathway Lead for the Alliance and Denise Friend, Cancer Alliance Quality Improvement Lead. The aim of the focus groups were to; engage with patients, carers and health care professionals, inform any improvement recommendations and consider the challenges, barriers, solutions and opportunities.

The sessions were attended by 15 participants in total and gave a wide range of both patient/carers and clinical view-points.

For the first part of the session the attendees were split in to 2 facilitated groups – patient/carers and health care professionals. For the second part, health care professionals left the room and patients and carers were split in to 2 separate groups. This allowed carers to speak openly without fear of offending or upsetting the patient and vice versa.

The first part of the session was a focus group which covered the patient experience of the whole pathway from first visiting primary care, either GP or dentist, to discharge and follow up. Attendees were asked to consider a number of questions, they were asked to answer questions anonymously by writing their answers on post it notes. Attendees were asked a range of questions including questions about referral, waiting times, diagnostics, staff in secondary care, the level of information they received, the level of care, treatment, support and follow up care.

During the second part of the session carers and patients were invited, in their separate groups, to discuss anything else that they wanted to say or highlight about their experience. Each group raised insightful discussions during this session.

Health Care Professionals were also given the opportunity to feedback any issues or areas for improvement which would support pathway delivery. This session was unstructured and held away from the patient and carers to give staff the freedom to speak openly and raise issue.

Georgia Thompson said: “The day was a great success, we gathered some really useful information and insights from both patients/carers and staff. The data gathered from this exercise will help us to use current patient experience and clinical teams’ views of current head and neck cancer services to help inform any improvement recommendations.”

For more information about the sessions please contact Denise Friend, denise.friend@nhs.net or Georgia Thompson, georgiathompson@nhs.net.