Abstract – Providing cancer support and information during Covid and beyond

We are extremely proud of this unique and innovative service which has provided vital support and information for people affected by cancer during a frightening and isolating time. To share learning, raise awareness of how services and roles can be adapted to meet service needs, highlight the benefits and opportunities for both patients and staff. Celebrate the hard work and commitment of the teams involved. This model is transferable to other areas
Demonstrate how collaborative working across organisational boundaries had a significant impact on the experiences and accessibility for cancer patients and their loved ones.
Having a single point of access for these patients at such a challenging and frightening time had a positive impact on their experience, eased anxiety and allowed issues and concerns to be dealt with efficiently and effectively. Many staff would have been unable to work in their normal capacity during this time and these staff were identified and redeployed to the Covid helpline where their knowledge and skills were fully utilised.
As a result of this service during this period we built relationships and trust and established partnerships and collaborative working that would not have happened without the pandemic and the challenges it presented. The helpline was able to offer enquirers a holistic assessment of their needs not only addressing their clinical concerns but exploring their social and psychological needs too. With each enquiry a full needs assessment was undertaken to ensure that the immediate needs were addressed and by providing that early intervention we were able to prevent crisis situations, hospital admissions and anxiety and in turn prevent the need for them accessing other stretched services to ensure their needs were met and they had information to be able to address them locally

We Set up a covid cancer helpline within days across two hospital sites to respond to the changing service needs during the pandemic. This required innovative thinking, collaborative working, Each site had different needs but worked to the same operational policy.
We had the ability to respond to changing service needs day to day as more staff were redeployed their phone lines were camped to the helpline. We contacted all cancer patients as they exceeded 62 days on their pathway to offer support and information.

The Covid pandemic was a huge challenge but it allowed opportunities for innovation and new ways of working to emerge. Staff were able to apply their skills in new areas in a crisis situation to ensure patients had the best support possible. For the staff we were able to keep on top of daily changes in guidance and requirements and communicate this information, dispelling any misinformation and supporting access to services and support. Within days a small project group developed a sop, and set up a Covid telephone helpline for anyone affected by cancer or worried about Covid. Because of redeployment and the re prioritisation of services without the helpline patients and loved ones would not have been able to contact their clinical teams, or had their concerns addressed in a timely manner. During this period we developed a bespoke website with online resources, established a weekly call back service for the lonely, isolated and vulnerable, linking in with local community services:
The helpline was a single point of access for both patients and staff, allowing staff to refer patients quickly and focus on their own roles and new priorities