

# Enhanced Palliative Care Helpline Highland

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**Abbreviated abstract:** A 6 month pilot of an Out of Hours (OOH) enhanced palliative care helpline (EPCH), commenced in Highland in response to the pandemic. This enhanced service meant that people contacting this line spoke directly to palliative care trained nurse who either resolved the call or triaged this to OOH clinicians. This was a integrated service delivered through NHS Highland and Highland Hospice. Robust evaluation was undertaken to provide evidence for its continuation as service as usual.

## Related publications:


- Mason, B. et al 2020. Unscheduled and out-of-hours care for people in their last year of life: a retrospective cohort analysis of national datasets. *BMJ open*
- Wilson, L. and Livingstone, H., 2019. 1 Goldline 5 years on: how a 24/7 support and coordination hub has helped to drive identification, reduce inequalities, increase use of EPaCCS and improve care for patients and their carers at the end of life.



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# Existing Service – Challenge - Approach

## Existing Service:



- Dedicated number commenced in 2016 direct dial to central hub
- Call handler took details raised as 1 hour call for advice on Out of Hours (OOH) system
- Worked in to clinical workloads of OOH Primary Care clinicians for response

## Challenges:



- COVID- 19
- Increased need for community support for palliative patients
- Increasing workload pressures on Primary Care OOH

## Approach:



- Short life working group setup to support community palliative response
- Palliative helpline enhanced with almost immediate response to patient calls from palliative trained nurses piloted over 6 months
- Integrated delivery between shielding nurses in NHS Highland and Hospice inpatient nurses



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# Enhanced Palliative Care Helpline Implementation

Service developed by short  
life working group lead by  
OOH Clinical Director



Delivered by shielding  
nurses from home across  
localities in Highland  
Monday - Thursday 1800-  
0800

Delivered by nurses working  
in the inpatient unit at  
Highland Hospice Friday –  
Sunday 1800-0800

## Training / Review

- Online Teaching
- Case Reviews
- Service induction

## Nurse Support

- Buddy support from OOH clinicians to nurses initially
- WhatsApp Group for peer support

## Delivery / Evaluation

- Helpline widely advertised
- Identified for those in last 3 months of life
- Quality assurance through Medical call review
- Embedded evaluation



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# Enhanced Palliative Care Helpline 6 Month Pilot Outcomes

## Objective Evaluation

195 patients, 470 calls, 2.5 calls per patient average

2 fold increase in calls to the EPCH from 2018

46% of calls to EPCH nurses resolved without onward referral

More equitably delivered service across all disease areas

## Other Outcomes

Increased resilience of OOH service through additional capacity

Specialist support to patients and OOH clinicians

Increase in expertise, knowledge, and autonomy of nurses

Exemplar of an integrated service delivery NHS - Hospice

## Professional Survey

96% of surveyed OOH clinicians noted the change to service was better with the same % wishing to retain this service

*'It has absorbed a lot of our workload and with shifts getting busier and busier, I'd be worried patients wouldn't be seen quickly without them'*

*'Previous triage was pretty hit-and-miss and patients did not always get a good service'*

## Future Development

Increase access to service for those in last year of life

Improve equity of access to service currently 70% are those with a cancer diagnosis

Develop professional advice Care Home / Ambulance Service / Carers

Explore supporting family / carers with symptomatic medication delivery



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