

SAGE & THYME CASE STUDY SUE RYDER

About Sue Ryder

"At Sue Ryder, we can't make life's most difficult moments easy, but we can carry some of the load. For more than 70 years, we have been a source of strength and support for anyone living with a life-limiting illness or grief.

"Dying and grief are universal experiences, but too many people face them alone. We are a safe and reassuring hand you can reach for. From providing care and support for someone at the end of their life to helping someone manage their grief, we know there is no one size fits all when it comes to how we cope and the help we need.

"We campaign for everyone who is approaching the end of their life or grieving to have access to the right support, at the right time. And we seek to break down the barriers to talking about dying and grief - so we can all be better prepared and better equipped to be there for each other.

"We can make a positive difference during even the darkest of times. Whether in the last months, weeks or days of life, or living with grief, we help people live the best life they possibly can. We are there when it matters."



Embedding communication skills in clinical education

In 2022, the Head of Nursing and AHPs Workforce and Education at Sue Ryder was responsible for training staff across all the charity's services. In these care settings, clear, compassionate, and effective communication can make a profound difference for patients, families, and colleagues.

At the time, some services sourced SAGE & THYME communication training externally. However, the launch of the Clinical Education Strategy and Framework marked a turning point. As part of implementing this new strategy across the whole organisation, Sue Ryder decided to provide more training internally — including delivering SAGE & THYME workshops in-house.

This shift recognised that communication skills are not just a "nice-to-have" — they are a core part of high-quality palliative and end-of-life care.

Effective communication helps build trust, support emotional needs, and prevent misunderstandings. It also improves teamwork among professionals and protects staff wellbeing by providing a structured approach to difficult conversations. In this context, communication skills are central to delivering compassionate, person-centred care and ensuring patients and families feel supported every step of the way.



Why SAGE & THYME Online workshops were chosen

Sue Ryder chose SAGE & THYME for one key reason: it is backed by evidence and proven to work. The training equips staff with a structured, empathetic approach to conversations—especially those involving distress, uncertainty, or emotional vulnerability.

The option to teach SAGE & THYME Online meant that staff from around the UK, could access the training without the need to travel. Using funding from the continued professional development budget, 12 members of staff have been trained to deliver the SAGE & THYME Online workshop.

Word about the training has spread through practice educators, monthly education meetings with services, educators, and managers, as well as through the online booking system where staff can sign up directly. Word-of-mouth recommendations from staff who have attended have also helped build enthusiasm.

To date, the SAGE & THYME facilitators have taught the workshop to over 200 staff. While it was initially challenging to fill all the workshop places, interest has grown steadily, and recent sessions are now almost full. Over the coming year, the plan is to run 10 more workshops to meet this growing demand.

Who has benefited from SAGE & THYME training

One of the strengths of Sue Ryder is its diverse workforce. The SAGE & THYME Online workshops have welcomed participants from all corners of the organisation: from nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and ward clerks, to fundraisers, complementary therapists, administrators and heads of operation.

Looking ahead

Sue Ryder is considering: whether other areas of the charity could benefit from the training; and evaluating the impact of the training, perhaps after 6-12 months.

Tips for others adopting SAGE & THYME Online workshops

- Get a plan together about how you're going to run the training within your organisation.
- Be realistic about the time needed to set-up before delivery can start:
 - *Set-up a system for organising facilitators for each date and for advertising and booking staff on to the training.*
 - *Create an online survey to capture feedback from participants attending the workshop.*
 - *Allow some time for the newly qualified SAGE & THYME facilitators to prepare for the training.*

Quotes from workshop participants

"The training was fabulous. Smooth delivery, incredibly informative, excellent team of facilitators."

"I think the content is simple yet effective to enable you to have the start to any conversation."

"The training has really opened my eyes to communicating differently with someone in distress."

About SAGE & THYME

The SAGE & THYME Foundation Level workshop was created by staff and a patient at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, to teach anyone how to notice distress, listen carefully and respond helpfully to patients, clients, carers and others who are concerned. It places published research evidence about effective communication skills within a memorable structure using the mnemonic 'SAGE & THYME'.



To discuss how SAGE & THYME could benefit your organisation, please contact the team on:

Phone: 0161 291 4210

Email: sageandthyme@mft.nhs.uk

Website: www.sageandthymetraining.org.uk