

The Hospice UK Extending Frailty Care Programme:

Transforming care for older people living with advancing frailty and meeting their palliative and end of life care needs

Introduction and background

There are currently 1.2 million people living in the UK with moderate frailty. Around 10 per cent of people aged over 65 years have frailty, rising to between a quarter and a half of those aged over 85. By 2031 the number of people over 85 is set to increase to over 3.4 million.

Frailty is a leading cause of death in older people, and frail older people are projected to form the largest proportion of recipients of future palliative care. Hospices are likely to be working in partnership with acute frailty services, community frailty services, mental health, and social care services. It will be important for hospices to align to the work of the Acute Frailty Network geographically where it is in place. Establishing relationships at a system level will also be central to the work moving forward.

The Trustees of the Kirby Laing Foundation have agreed to fund this project with a major three-year grant to Hospice UK commencing from April 2022.

Aim of programme

The overarching aim of Extending Frailty Care is to improve quality of life for older people with advancing frailty who have palliative care needs, and who also experience lack of care coordination due to fragmented community services. The programme will focus on people aged over 65 years with multi-morbidities, including those both with mental capacity, and those with varying degrees of loss of mental capacity (e.g., due to dementia).

The programme will bring together UK opinion and research leaders in frailty and palliative care to determine 'high impact opportunities for improvement'. Emerging evidence-based frailty care models will be planned and tested using a Quality Improvement approach by a group of up to 10 hospice partners from around the UK in real world settings. Hospice partners will be identified via a robust grants selection process.

- The preliminary objective of the Programme will be to share learning and work towards the development of the How to Guide/Knowledge Transfer resources by the end of phase 2.

Programme outline: The programme is comprised three phases

Phase 1 - April -September 2022

- Engage an Expert Reference Group of opinion leaders from across the four nations to review and advise on best practice frailty attuned care models for testing
- Appoint an Independent Programme Evaluator
- Establish an evaluation framework

Phase 2- September 22 -March 2024

- Promotion, application and selection of grant recipients from Hospice UK partners
- Engage up to 10 hospices and their local partners across the UK
- Identify frailty champions and project teams and establish Project ECHO curriculum and a Community of Practice
- Hospice UK to deliver support for the projects with Quality Improvement coaching

Phase 3 - April 24 -September 2024

- Ongoing - Evaluation
- Dissemination of findings