Helen Scharf and Andy Mizen

Joint CNS/SLT Head & Neck Cancer Surveillance Clinic - West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Helen, a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) and Andy, a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) have developed and are running an innovative Head and Neck Surveillance Clinic - the first of its kind nationally. The focus of this clinic is to enhance the offer for people post Head and Neck (H&N) cancer towards the prevention of ill health and inequalities beyond their initial treatment which often includes invasive surgery and radiotherapy. The clinic provides a holistic approach to H&N cancer surveillance, which is traditionally consultant-led. This innovative model comprises hybrid of consultant/SLT-CNS for first 2 years post diagnosis moving to wholly SLT/CNS led after two years post treatment (with consultant clinical support as required) and aims to prevent ill-health in a group of patients who often experience significant health inequalities.

Helen and Andy have completed additional training and have developed an enhanced holistic and safe clinic for these patients going above and beyond what was offered on the consultant-only pathway with more focus on patient well-being and cancer survivorship issues. Patient outcomes have been extremely positive with patients' report feeling listened to as they navigate life in the longer-term post radiotherapy and understand how to prevent subsequent ill-health. There has also been increased identification of dysphagia and dysphonia. Patients are also supported to commence prophylactic exercises to avoid late effects/secondary issues and are better able to manage their own health and well-being. Helen and Andy plan to present this to the East of England Cancer Alliance soon as a new service delivery model which could be replicated elsewhere in the region.