



for Advance Care Planning &
End of Life Care Conversations

Introduction to the SAGE & THYME ACP workshop 11 Feb 2026

1. Background – SAGE & THYME Foundation Level Workshop

The SAGE & THYME® model is an evidence-based structure to use when speaking with people who are worried or upset. It is taught in an interactive communication skills workshop, either face to face or online.

The training is suitable for anyone, at any level and requires no previous knowledge.

It was developed in Manchester by hospital staff and patients in response to NICE guidance¹. It is delivered in a **3-hour** workshop (**'SAGE & THYME foundation level workshop'**) for up to 30 learners, using 3 facilitators. Its aim is that health professionals will

- Listen better
- Hold back with advice
- Not feel that they have to find solutions to the person's emotional problems
- Let people make their own decisions
- Be more confident in talking to people about their worries
- Feel more competent in helping patients talk through their worries
- Understand the worried person better
- Help the other person to think more clearly

The workshop uses a combination of a lecture, small group work and interactive rehearsals of the conversation.

Research with 412 learners has shown that the SAGE & THYME ACP workshops had a significant positive effect on self-confidence ($p < 0.0005$), self-perception of competence ($p < 0.0005$) and willingness to explore the emotional concerns of patients ($p < 0.0005$). In addition, 95% felt that the workshop would be very likely to have an impact on their practice.²

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) trains trainers from other organisations to become SAGE & THYME facilitators and licences them to deliver SAGE & THYME foundation level workshops.

The workshop is suitable for all health or social care staff wishing to learn or enhance foundation level communication skills across all settings (including non-clinical areas) and disease groups.

¹ NICE 2004: Improving Supportive and Palliative Care for Adults with Cancer.

² Connolly M, Perryman J, McKenna Y, Orford J, Thomson L, Shuttleworth J, Cocksedge S. (2010). SAGE & THYME: A model for training health and social care professionals in patient-focussed support. Patient Education and Counseling; 79: 87-93.

2. SAGE & THYME® for Advance Care Planning (ACP) and End of Life Conversations Workshop ('SAGE & THYME ACP')

This workshop is based on the same conversational structure (SAGE & THYME). The workshop focusses on the particularly challenging consultations that can introduce advance care planning (ACP) and end of life issues. The **SAGE & THYME ACP workshop** lasts for **3.5 hours**, is run by 3 facilitators, and can be attended by up to 30 participants. It uses a combination of a lecture, small group work and interactive rehearsals of the conversation.

During the workshop, learners focus on **effective communication skills that help open an advance care planning conversation. The structure provides a consultation guide as concerns and issues are disclosed.** Note that the workshop does NOT cover: breaking bad news; Mental Capacity Act; or specific ACP documents.

The SAGE & THYME ACP workshop has been delivered to a number of GPs, community nurses, acute and out-of-hours staff who are responsible for advance care planning. Participants' feedback has demonstrated that they have an increased confidence in starting an end of life care or advance care planning conversation, and in responding to a patient's or relative's concerns during the conversation. They also rate their competence in conducting such a conversation more highly after the workshop.

The workshop is suitable for senior staff who would engage in advance care planning/end of life care discussions with patients and relatives in the course of their role (working at level 2 of the four level NICE communication model¹).

3. Summary of similarities and differences between SAGE & THYME Foundation Level and Advance Care Planning workshops

	SAGE & THYME Foundation Level	SAGE & THYME ACP
Target audience	All levels of health and social care staff (clinical and non-clinical) requiring foundation level communication skills	Senior staff who engage in advance care planning/end of life care conversations (e.g. GPs, healthcare staff, social workers, lawyers)
Previous experience required	None	Experience of advance care planning / end of life care
Aims	To provide a structured approach to dealing with concerns	To provide a structured approach to introducing advance care planning issues and dealing with concerns
Duration of workshop	3 hours	3.5 hours
Number of learners per workshop	30	30
Workshop format	Lecture, small group work and interactive rehearsals	Lecture, small group work and interactive rehearsals
Workshops delivered by	MFT and other organisations with a licence to run the workshops	MFT

4. What do others say about the SAGE & THYME ACP workshop?

Dr Peter Nightingale, GP: “I was reasonably confident about communication in EoL [end of life] (perhaps cocky!), so when I attended the SAGE and THYME workshop last September, I smugly thought I didn't have much to learn. I was wrong; it helped me greatly to structure conversations better. I used this structure for the Dying Matters DVD which was well received. The 30 GPs in Morecambe also gave very positive feedback.”

Dr Ayede Ejere, GP: “Excellent; very enlightening and educative. Will recommend this to other doctors.”

Heart Failure Nurse: “A very informative and worthwhile workshop giving healthcare professionals insight into the importance of [a] structured model to help with ACP.”

Dr Melissa Robertson, GP: “An excellent, informative and constructive workshop that will definitely help me with those tricky conversations - 3 hours well spent!”

Dr A Rawson, GP: “Excellent. Should be mandatory.”

Dr Stephen Huck, GP: “This workshop gives a clear structure to help make difficult conversations much easier.”

Hospital doctor: “I now have a strategy for initiating difficult conversations and dealings with questions and concerns from patients that I may not have immediate solutions for.”

5. Contact details

If you would like MFT to provide a quote for running a SAGE & THYME ACP workshop in your area

Please contact the SAGE & THYME team:

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