



# TalkingMats<sup>®</sup>

# TALKING MATS

## AN APPROACH TO SUPPORT CONVERSATIONS IN A HOSPICE SETTING

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### Background

Professionals who work in palliative care settings strive to provide person centred care (1). Finding out what is important to patients and families is core to this (2). People who use hospices often have specific difficulties communicating their thoughts and feelings because of advanced illness and emotional factors. Talking Mats is a visual framework which has been shown as an effective method to enable people to express their views, especially when their ability to communicate is compromised, for example because of cognitive, physical or emotional difficulties (3, 4, 5).

Talking Mats have also been shown to be a helpful thinking tool which can be used by people with and without communication difficulties (e.g. families) to help them think through and make decisions together (6).

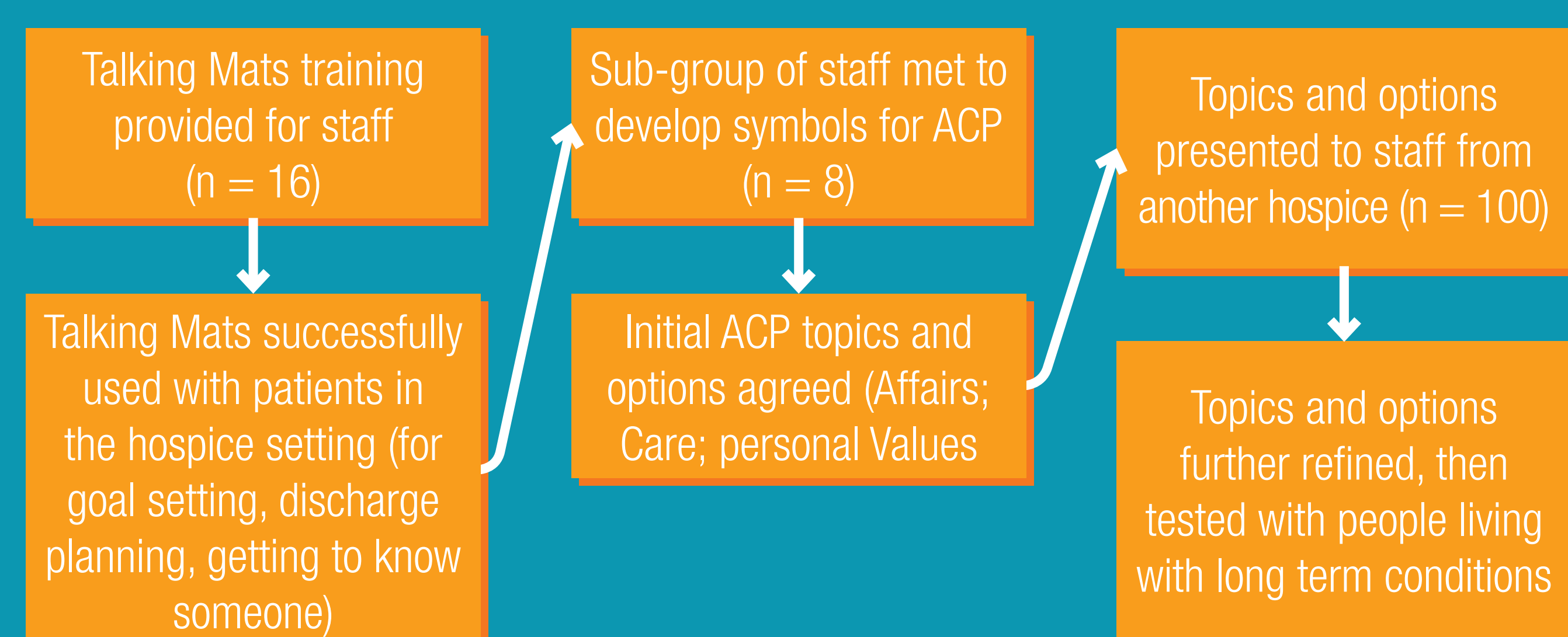
### Aims

We aimed to introduce and use Talking Mats in a hospice setting and to develop a symbol set to support conversations relating to Advance Care Planning (ACP).

### Methods

Sixteen staff from the multidisciplinary team were trained to use Talking Mats and successfully used it with patients in the hospice. A sub-group of staff attended a workshop to discuss the potential use of Talking Mats to support conversations relating to ACP. Topics and options were agreed. These were then presented to a wider forum of staff from another Hospice for validation and checking. Three main topics to support ACP conversations were identified: Affairs, Care and Personal Values.

These have been trialled with a range of people living with long term conditions involved in our community project 'Living Right up to the End'.



### Results

Staff trained in the use of Talking Mats found that they could use it with a range of patients for a variety of purposes: getting to know someone; identifying goals; discharge planning and enabling ACP discussions. To date, the ACP symbols have been used with people living with long term conditions in the community. Participants have found the resource easy to use and, in spite of the subject matter being emotive, it has helped them think through important issues.

"He was quite surprised to find he had placed more cards on the positive side as well his thoughts and feelings and he felt good about actually seeing that in front of him."

"I'm surprised that I still have things to do" (Power of Attorney, will etc.)

"This is really making me review my situation"



### Conclusion

Talking Mats can be used by trained staff in a hospice setting to open up difficult conversations and support people to express their views and help them plan for the end of life. We continue to trial the ACP symbols with a range of people with long term conditions who are living with declining health.

### References

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**TALKING MATS OPENS UP DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**