

**NHS**

**Wessex  
Cancer Alliance**



# Pathway Navigators Pilot in Wessex

Jo Tibbles; Project Manager Workforce



# Pathway Navigator Pilot Project



**Wessex**  
Cancer Alliance

## Background

- When cancer is diagnosed at an early stage there is a much greater chance of being able to treat the disease successfully
- The NHS Long Term plan sets out ambitious targets around earlier and faster diagnosis
- Pathway Navigators are one intervention that has been shown to make a difference to delivery of the 28 day FDS
- In 2021/2 WCA were able to bid for HEE funding to join a South East Pathway Navigator Pilot and combined with other budget funded 14 new Pathway Navigator posts across Wessex
  - Additional WCA budget funded 10 more posts in 2022/3
  - Scoping is underway for 2023/4

## Approach

- Trusts were asked to identify where there was interest in and a need for Pathway Navigators
- Data was reviewed to prioritise funding for the more challenges pathways
- Reaching the recruitment stage was time consuming with the first Pathway Navigator starting in April 2022
- There has been some attrition within the first year
- 29 Pathway Navigators in post or out to recruitment (March 2023)
  - 4 existing lung navigators
  - 19 new navigators in post
  - 6 at recruitment stage



# Pathway Navigator's



## Introducing New Roles

- 12 month fixed term contracts
- Band 4
- Patient facing
- Non clinical\*
- Sited between referral and diagnosis

## Purpose of the role

- To improve patient experience
- To release capacity for clinical teams
- To improve performance in the pathway



Meet Anastasia: <https://vimeo.com/779651013/fba9fd973b>

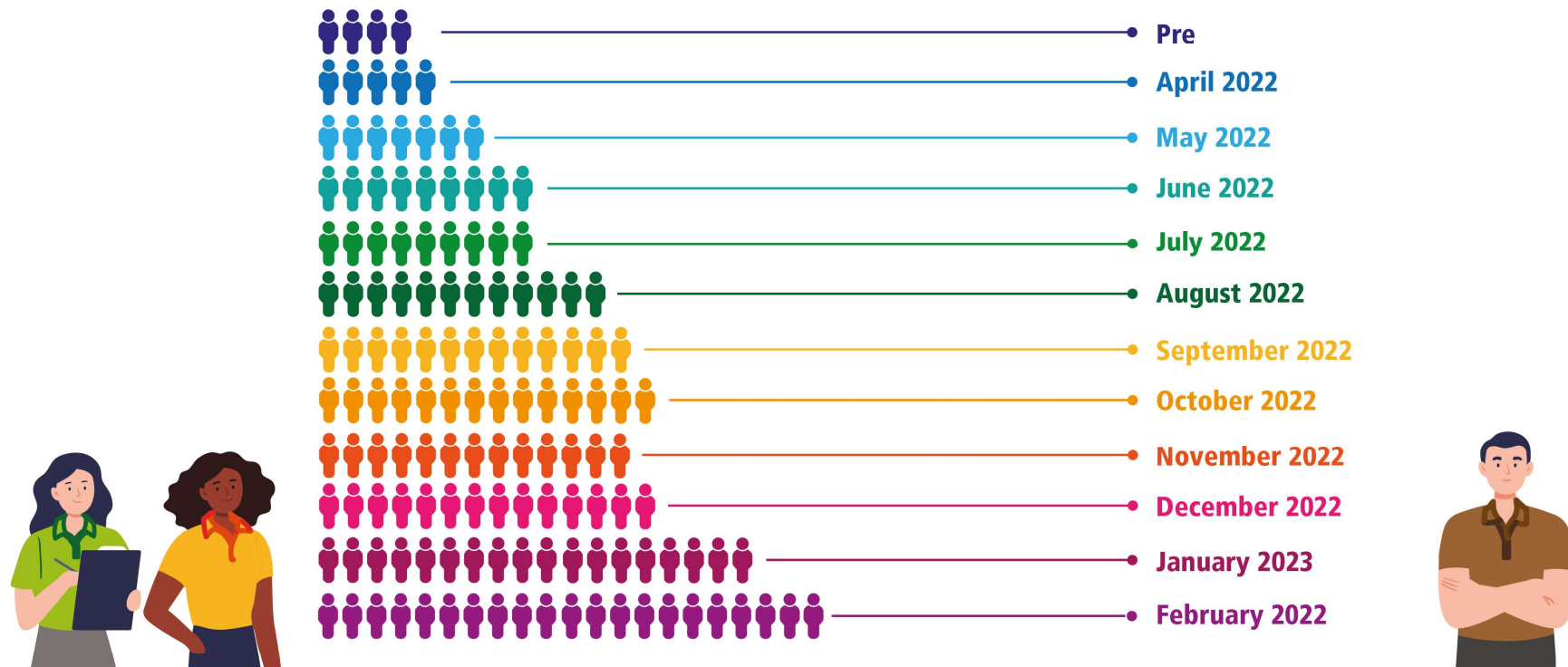
\*role is not a clinical role but some navigators may upskill dependent on service need, previous experience and interest



**Recruitment to Posts:** *initially slow with delays getting jobs advertised but has recently snowballed*



## Number of Pathway Navigators in post over time



[www.wessexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/pathway-navigators/](http://www.wessexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/pathway-navigators/)

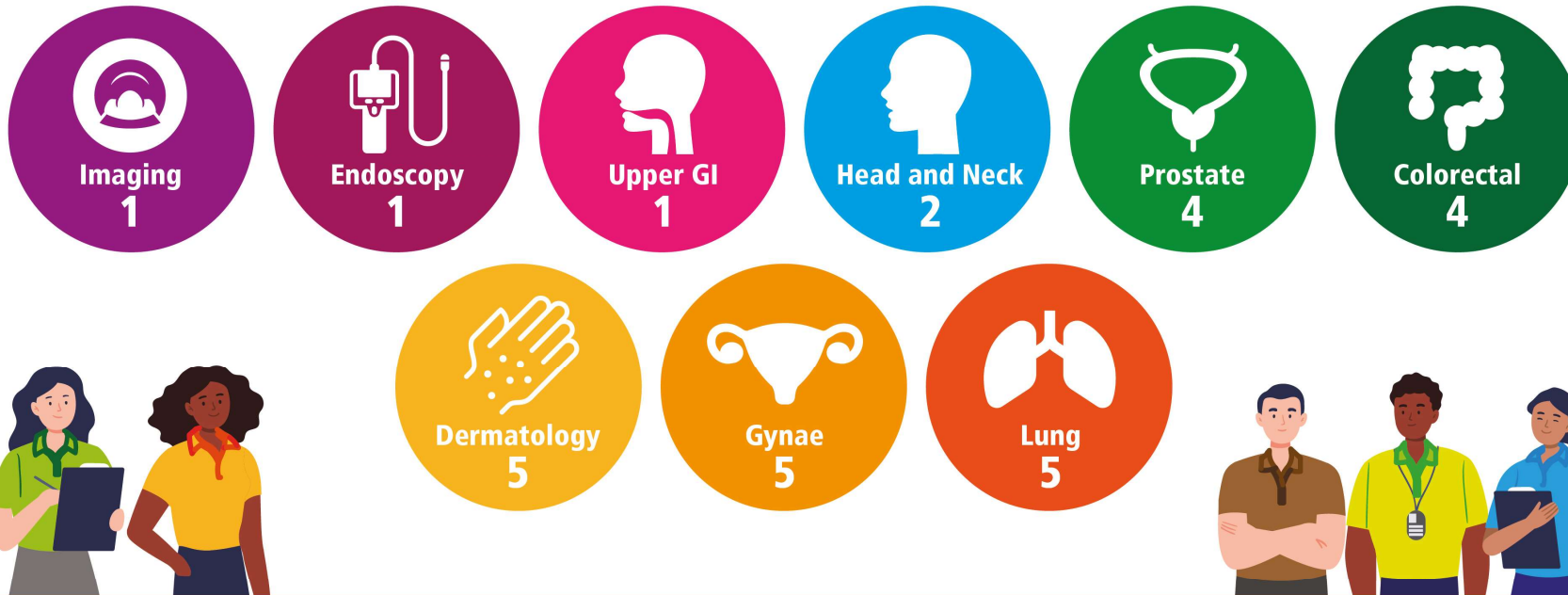




**Funding Allocation:** *across our six Trusts posts have been funded in a range of specialties as well as in imaging and endoscopy.*



## Confirmed Locations of Pathway Navigators



[www.wessexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/pathway-navigators/](http://www.wessexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/pathway-navigators/)



# Support Package for Trusts and Navigators



## Pre Recruitment

- WCA Project Management support to scope and prep

## Induction

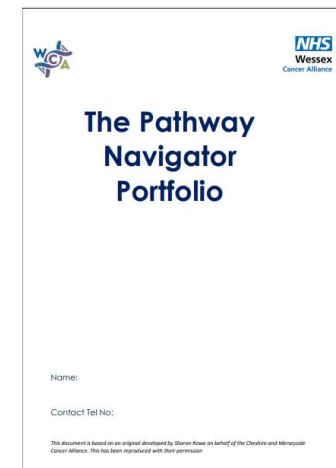
- Trust Induction
- Line manager and PN meeting with WCA Project Manager
- Connected to other PN on same Pathway during induction

## Navigator Network

- Bi-weekly virtual network
  - 2 different days/times
- All Wessex Navigators invited
- Peer support and project updates

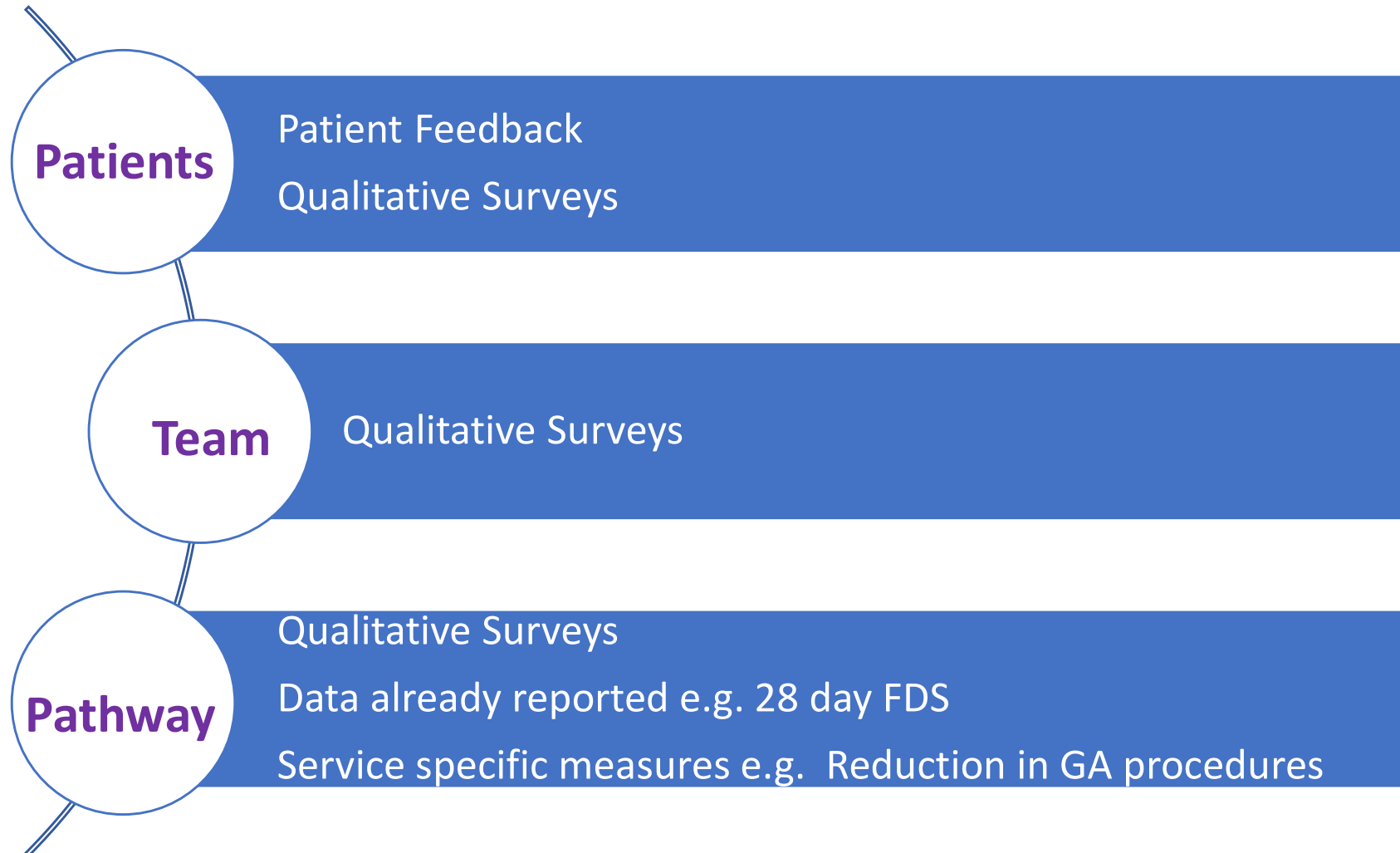
## Development Programme

- Pathway Navigator Portfolio
  - Introductory sessions
- Learning and development
  - E-learning
  - David O'Halloran webinars
  - Local offer
  - HEE Funding
  - ACCEND
    - PCCP





# Measuring the Impact





# Outcomes - patients

## Navigators have become:

- ✓ Single point of contact
- ✓ Information providers
- ✓ Personalised care givers
- ✓ Supportive staff

9. 1. Thinking about your Pathway Navigator did you feel supported and guided by them throughout your care? **Scale of 1 -10 with 1 being not supported and 10 being fully supported** (0 point)

4  
Responses



**Patient Survey**

Just wanted to tell you that I have had a few ladies that have sent their thanks to you since starting your new role. They have found your phone call really reassuring and helpful. They have named you in person. Thanks and well done.

**Direct Patient Feedback**

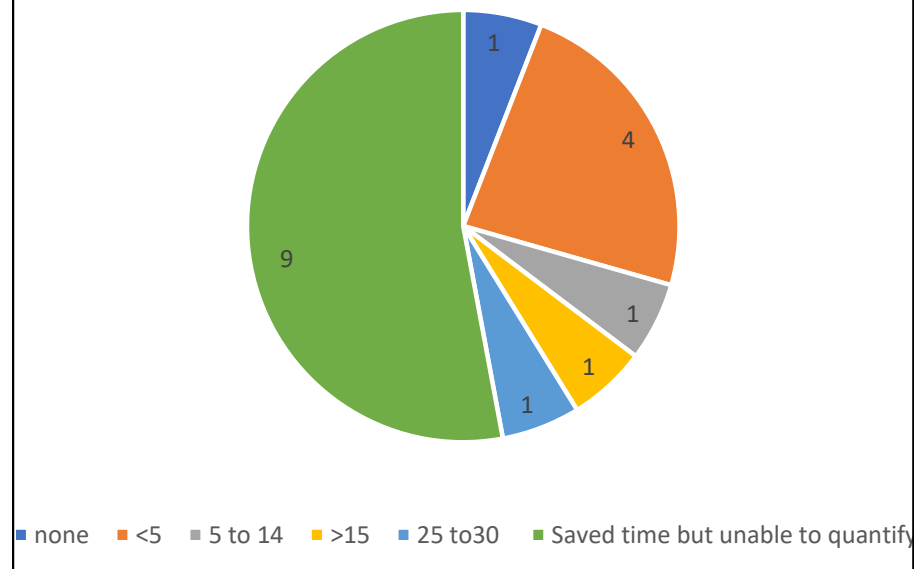
“I supported a patient attending her CT app and then to a clinic app. She kindly gave me a thank you card and said she would not have had the CT scan if I had not been there with her” *Pathway Navigator*

“Patients are coming to clinic with better understanding of the investigations that can take place in the clinic” *Team member*

**Some of the tasks picked up by navigators which have freed up time for other team members:**

- Becoming point of contact for patients
- Completed safety checks/questionnaires
- Booking appointments
- Answering patient calls and responding or triaging
- Taken on e-referrals
- Tracking patients
- Helped chasing diagnostics
- Chasing investigations, results and correspondence
- Communicating with other teams
- Contacting patients
- Monitoring clinic spaces
- Taken on telephone clinics

**Average time saved per week**



**“I have learnt fusion biopsies which will free up consultant time”**  
*Nurse working with PN*

**“I can focus on training and development of my team to try and improve retention”**  
*Colleague of PN*

# Outcomes – pathway

## Increasing Capacity

- ✓ PN identified that timeslot of CT colonoscopy could be reduced to pre pandemic level saving 15 minutes per appointment
- ✓ Support of PN in 2ww clinic has enabled extra 4 patients to be seen per week
- ✓ Temporarily suspended routine appointments to increase 2ww capacity

## Improving Utilisation

- ✓ 2ww MRI slot booked by PN means all are now being utilised
- ✓ Improved communication with patients to reduce DNA's
- ✓ supported in the downgrade process of 2ww referrals, minimising the amount of inappropriate referrals

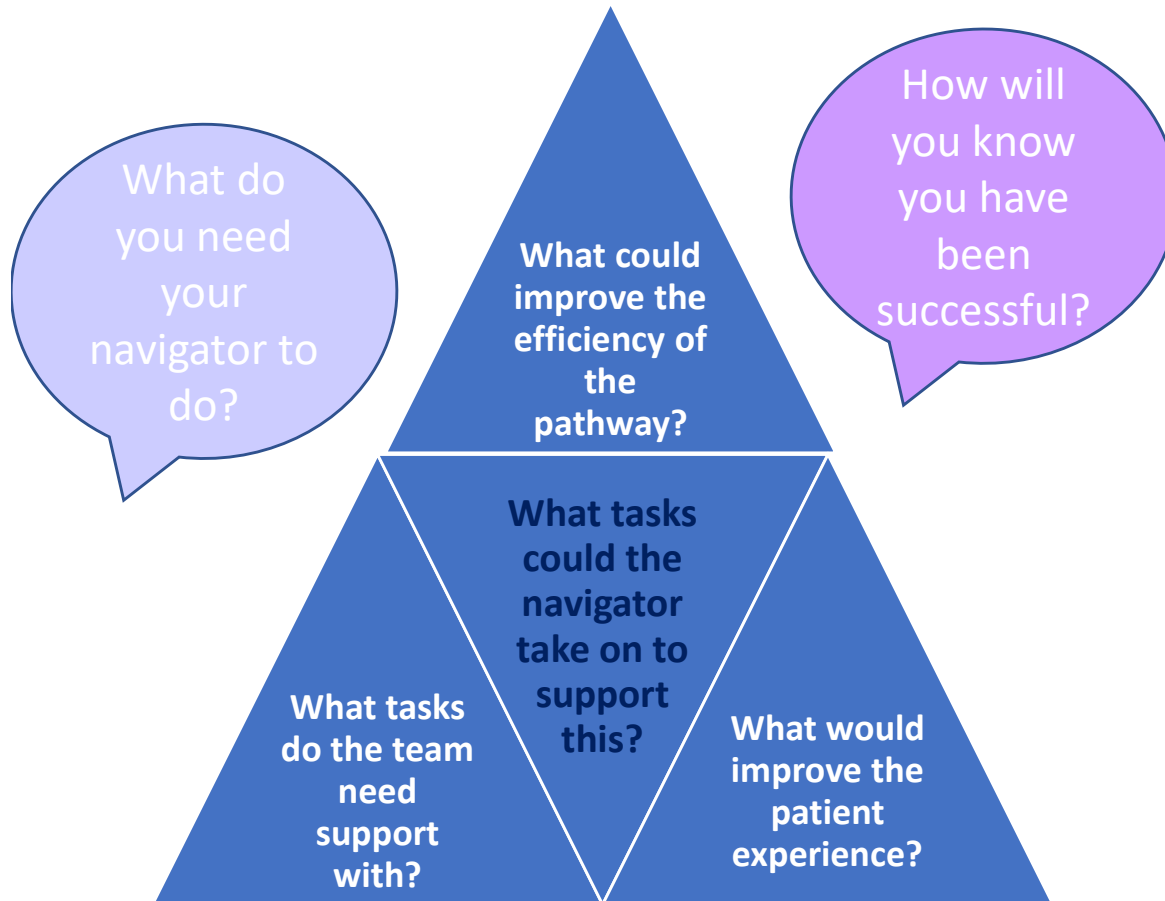
## Reducing length of pathway

- ✓ Booking more CWTs within 7 days due to patient tracking and prioritisation
- ✓ Improved turn around time for clinic letters
- ✓ All scans now booked immediately after CNS triage
- ✓ Introduced daily MRI review so patients are being discussed much sooner



# Key considerations for introducing Pathway Navigators into Teams

## Clarity of Role “create a shared understanding”



## Part of a Team “engage, involve and embed”

- Ensure all team members are **aware** of the new post and its purpose
- Allow existing staff the opportunity to **provide feedback**
- Consider the **practical** arrangements e.g. desk, phone line manager, dual sites
- Plan the **induction** so the PN can spend time with different team members



# Other things to consider...



- **Engagement** ...navigators work with the whole MDT team and cancer services so good engagement with staff before the navigator starts helps to build strong relationships
- **Clarity of role** ...shared understanding for the post holder, clinical team and cancer services is essential. Time spent mapping out the tasks and intended outcomes is never wasted
- **Trust Challenges**...being upfront about potential challenges will improve the effectiveness of the role for example:
  - Is there a physical space for the navigator to sit with the team?
  - Could staff shortages risk the navigators time being absorbed elsewhere?
  - Are teams on board with the new role or might there be resistance when they start?
  - Has any potential overlap or duplication of roles been addressed so all staff know how the navigator compliments their role?
- **Recruitment**...requires a lot of time and energy and shorter 12 month contracts tend to be less attractive to external candidates. Secondments do offer an opportunity for staff development but may leave other teams depleted.
- **Retention**...multiple reasons have been cited for attrition within the navigator workforce including:
  - Role not being as expected
  - Unclear and shifting expectations
  - Lack of patient contact
  - Resistance from other team members
  - Not feeling part of a team



# Overall Impact



*“It is a more **efficient**, patients have a **dedicated point of contact**. This allows them to have **re-assurance** before attending appointments, and know **what to expect** when arriving for their appointments. Contacting patients on the day their referrals are received. It **enhances the care** for patients throughout a worrying time. It is a dedicated role to the patients, a **role based around patients**. Right patient, in the right time for the right treatment. It **gives the patient a faster diagnosis**”*

*(Team member talking about the impact of the role)*



# More Information



Contact: [Josephine.tibbles@nhs.net](mailto:Josephine.tibbles@nhs.net)

Website: [www.wessexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/our-work/workforce-and-education/pathway-navigators](http://www.wessexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/our-work/workforce-and-education/pathway-navigators)

A screenshot of the NHS Wessex Cancer Alliance website. The top navigation bar includes 'About Us', 'Our Work', 'Primary Care', 'News', 'Resources', 'Get involved', and 'Contact us'. The 'Our Work' menu is open, showing a list of categories: 'Projects', 'Prevention and Earlier Diagnosis', 'Faster Diagnosis', 'Treatment and Care', 'Personalised Care', 'Workforce and Education', 'Children and Young People's Cancer', 'Patient Services Innovation Fund', and 'Diagnostic Workforce Innovation Fund'. The 'Workforce and Education' category is selected, and a sub-menu is open showing 'Allied Health Professionals', 'National CNS Day', 'Pathway Navigators', and 'Physician Associates'. The main content area features a large image of a healthcare professional wearing a face mask and talking on a mobile phone, with other staff members in the background. Below the image, there is a section titled 'Working as part of the personalised care agenda, Pathway Navigators have been shown to make...' followed by a 'Useful links' section. The NHS Wessex Cancer Alliance logo is visible in the top left corner of the screenshot.

