

CASE STUDY

Kate Ford: Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialist, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

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Kate Ford is a [Macmillan](#) skin cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist. She has worked at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust for 22 years. She joined the cancer CNS team in 2006 as a colorectal cancer CNS and then moved to skin cancer in 2014.

Why did you become a Cancer CNS?

I fell into it really. I wasn't sure how I wanted to progress in nursing but then I saw the cancer CNSs visiting patients on the surgical ward I worked in and thought it looked like a job where you could give a lot of time to patients when they really need extra support.



Why do you carry on in the role?

As I thought the job really does allow me to give time to patients when they most need it. It's busy but I love the fact that it's ever changing. I carry out nurse led skin cancer assessment and biopsy results clinics and love working autonomously to ensure patients receive the information they need in a sensitive and informed way. I am currently undertaking skin cancer assessment modules at Masters' level, which have hugely enhanced my practice.

What's the best part of the job?

It's different every day and I get to work with lots of great people!

What do you need to be a cancer CNS?

You definitely need to be organised and have excellent communication skills. It can be a hard, emotional job at times so being part of a supportive team is also vital.



What would you say to someone who was interested in the role?

Find out about it! It's quite a hard role to understand unless you are actually doing it, so speak to CNSs and visit teams to find out if it is for you. Experience in cancer care is always valuable but some nurses move into CNS roles from other areas such as surgery, like me. Just because you haven't worked on a cancer ward or chemo unit doesn't mean you haven't looked after patients with cancer. I became a cancer link nurse when I worked on a surgical unit and this really helped me gain more of an understanding of what patients with cancer experience.

What does being a Macmillan nurse mean to you?

[Macmillan](#) provides so much support for people who are diagnosed with cancer, having treatments and procedures, and living after this.



It is so reassuring to be able to direct people to the advice and support that is there for them, and I feel really lucky to work closely with them. Macmillan also supports cancer CNSs in many ways with education and development. Our team were nominated last year for a Macmillan Cancer Professionals award for the work we carried out during the Covid pandemic and that was such an honour.

