

Impact of the National Audit of Care at the End of Life (NACEL)

Aim: To improve the quality of care of adults (18+) at the end of life in NHS-funded hospital inpatient settings in England, Wales and Jersey.

NATIONAL	How the project provides evidence of quality and outcomes of care nationally	The NACEL 2025 State of the Nations Report calls for action where improvement is needed – including Recommendation 2, asking the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to prioritise research on reducing inequalities in end-of-life hospital care.	NACEL's partnership with The Ambitions Partnership for PEOLC informs national priorities; NACEL was invited to review the national Ambitions document in 2026.
		The Mental Health Spotlight Audit supports system-wide improvement toward a good death regardless of location. In 2025, 59 providers took part, contributing 54 organisational overviews, 179 case note reviews and 597 staff feedback surveys. Report available here.	Two 2025 abstracts in BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care cover the Good Practice Compendium and improving bereavement survey response rates – see 16:A61 and 16:A20. All NACEL publications: www.nacel.nhs.uk/outputs.
		Audit findings inform NICE Quality Standards, CQC inspections and national strategies, reaching every hospital ward. NACEL is cited in NICE Quality Standards QS13 & QS144.	NACEL is raising the visibility of UK end-of-life care through conferences and academic research. At the 2026 Palliative Care Congress, NACEL presented 2025 findings to around 100 delegates, plus three posters and five accepted abstracts.
		NACEL is shaping national policy, contributing to the new Modern Service Framework for End-of-Life Care.	NACEL is a flagship example of benchmarking informing international practice: the team won Best Poster at the 2026 International Collaborative for Best Care of the Dying Person Summer School (Malaga), presented orally, and showed three posters. Researchers in Iceland are exploring the NACEL model.
		NACEL's evidence is recognised nationally, cited in the 2025 Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman report, Conversations that matter most: improving communication in end of life care.	NACEL's reporting tool benchmarks results locally, regionally and nationally across England, Wales and Jersey, letting viewers track hospital performance over time (yearly/quarterly) via the data-over-time impact summary and the NACEL State of the Nation Reports.
		The NACEL 2024 dataset was shared with the Association for Palliative Medicine in 2025, directly informing a national hospital workforce planning proposal.	
SYSTEM	How the project supports policy development & system management	Over two-thirds of ICBs use the NACEL Data and Improvement Tool – 1,233 users from 247 organisations as of April 2026 – shaping strategy and commissioning decisions in end-of-life care.	The NACEL dataset identifies system variation in end-of-life care quality by region and provider type (acute, community and mental health inpatient settings).
		NACEL shares learning and good practice with other audit providers to support the NCAPOP Programme; ICNARC approached NACEL in 2025 to learn from its approach.	NACEL continues to provide key evidence on community hospitals' contribution to palliative care, most recently through educational outreach at the latest CHA conference — a plenary session attended by over 100 delegates and two workshops that received positive feedback.
		NACEL's analysis of inequalities, featured in the 2024 and 2025 State of the Nation Reports, shows where patients from minority ethnic backgrounds receive poorer care.	NACEL identifies outliers and informs regulators including the CQC, NHS England, HQIP and Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW). Its 2026 Management of Outliers Policy formally notifies providers of alert-level performance and escalates outliers to these bodies.
		NACEL shares its findings with medical specialties for which end-of-life care is important. In 2025, this included data cut by age (75+) shared with the British Geriatric Society, to inform geriatricians on end-of-life care.	
LOCAL	How the project stimulates quality improvement	NHS providers report that audit findings support business cases, learning and workforce development. Over 400 local examples are in the NACEL Impact Compendium.	Case Note Review data shows that the percentage of patients reviewed by a specialist palliative care team during their final admission rose from 38.0% in 2018 to 57.8% in 2025. <i>(Please note: the 2025 question also includes end of life care team reviews, so is not directly comparable to earlier years).</i>
		Providers recognised for exemplary quality improvement are featured in the Good Practice Compendium and put forward for external awards – East Lancashire Hospitals won a 2026 Excellence in Clinical Audit Award using NACEL data.	NACEL drives improvement through a new Community of Practice (CoP) with the Q community, a forum for networking and sharing quality improvement questions. As of August 2026, the CoP has 57 members.
		Case Note Review data shows that 85.5% of people expected to die had an individualised care plan in place in 2025, up from 67.0% in 2018. <i>(From 2024, 'Yes' covers both template and notes documentation, vs a single Yes/No option before).</i>	Hospital/Site Overview data shows that the percentage of organisations reporting face-to-face palliative care available 8 hours a day, 7 days a week rose from 36% in 2019 to 64.1% in 2025.
PUBLIC	How the project is used by the public and the demand for it	The NACEL Patient and Carer Tool makes results transparent, helping patients and carers understand what good care looks like. Bereaved people co-designed the tool, which has received over 1,000 views to date.	Non-NHS providers are adopting NACEL materials to shape their own research and improvements.
		In 2026, NACEL ran a co-production group of 5 bereaved people and healthcare professionals from across the UK to support development of the Patient and Carer Tool. More on the impact of NACEL's PPIE work here.	Growing demand to expand NACEL into emergency and community care shows its value as a trusted standard. In 2026, Compassion in Dying and National Voices agreed to share the Patient and Carer Tool with the 30,000 people they support.
		Over 22,000 bereaved people have shared their experience with NACEL since 2018. In 2025, the audit received 5,994 bereavement surveys.	The NACEL Helpline receives thousands of queries, supporting healthcare professionals and organisations to understand audit findings and drive improvement. In 2025 alone, the NACEL inbox received over 2,500 queries.