



*Welcome to your December edition of the MDT Newsletter. As Christmas approaches we'd like to share all the positive and wonderful good news stories that are happening in your local MDT areas. We hope you enjoy reading this issue. Seasons Greetings!*

## AHP Research & Innovation Conference 2025 Transforming Care through Collaboration



*Prof. Michelle Tennyson, CAHPO Northern Ireland*

On the 12th September 2025, over 250 delegates attended the Belfast campus of Ulster University for the second AHP Research & Innovation conference.

Supported by DoH, PHA, CAHPR, HSC, NIAS, UU, QUB and representatives from professional bodies, delegates enjoyed presentations from over 64 presentations from AHP staff across the region.

The conference was opened by Professor Michelle Tennyson CAHPO Northern Ireland who talked about the role AHP staff have in transforming care for patients across every part of the treatment pathway and ran across three conference streams including a practice research skill session sponsored by CAHPR.

Primary care MDT teams were well represented by FCPs from across the region showcasing research, innovation and creativity taking place within primary care.

The following staff were successful in getting abstracts shortlisted and presented their work to delegates.

*Continued...*

## Platform Presentations

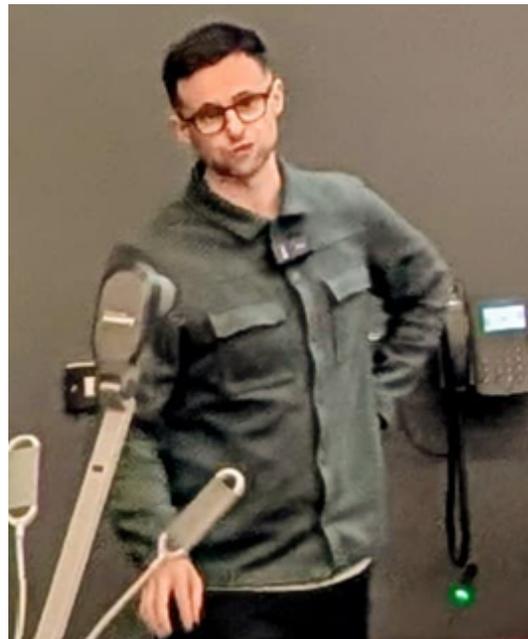
**Navigating the unknown; clinical complexity FCP caseload in Northern Ireland** - Helen Welch (Winner of Best Abstract submission & Best platform presentation) (BHSCT/West Belfast GP Federation)

**Addressing Frailty in Primary Care: A First Contact Physiotherapy-Led Intervention Pilot** - Conor Smyth (SEHSCT/Down GP Federation)

**Primary Care Multidisciplinary Chronic Pain Review Clinic** - Leanne Holmes (SEHSCT/Ards GP Federation)



*Navigating the unknown -Clinical complexity of FCP caseload: Best abstract submission: Helen Welch presented James Martin MBE & John Cowman CEO Chartered Society of Physiotherapy*



*Addressing Frailty: Conor Smyth*



*A Primary Care MDT Chronic Pain Review clinic – Leanne Holmes*



## Rapid Five Presentations

**Fighting Osteoporosis: identifying patients at risk of developing osteoporosis and fragility fractures in primary care** - Martin O'Hanlon (SHSCT/Newry & District GP Federation)

**Living well with musculoskeletal health complaints - a community-based improvement initiative** - James Smale (SEHSCT/North Down GP Federation)

**OAK Knee: Option Advice Knowledge: participants' experiences of a community engagement program** - Arlene Blair (BHSCT/West Belfast GP Federation)

**Never Too Late: A co-produced animation raising awareness of physical activity guidance, promoting self-care for patients within primary care multi-disciplinary teams** - Denise Hall (SHSCT/Newry & District GP Federation)



*Living well with MSK conditions -Tom Evans, James Smale, Karen Stuart*



*OAK Knee: Arlene Blair*



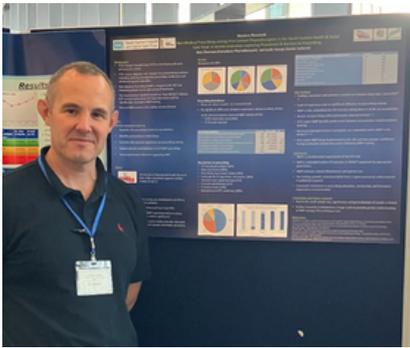
*Never Too Late: Liz Connolly, Paddy McRandle, While Waiting Well : Ailis Doyle, Fiona Gribbon, Denise Hall, Martin O'Doherty, Ailis Doyle*

## Poster presentations

**Non-medical prescribing among primary care First Contact Physiotherapists in the SEHSCT: A survey exploring the prevalence and barriers to prescribing** - Alan Thomson (SEHSCT/North Down & Ards GP Federations)

**Well While Waiting: A service development to improve the health literacy and empowerment of patients on orthopaedic knee waiting lists** - Gemma O'Donnell (SHSCT/Newry & District)

**Coproduction and the use of seed funding by the GP Federation of Family Practices West Belfast** – Michelle Toland (BHSCT/West Belfast GP Federation)



*Non-medical among FCPs –  
Alan Thomson*



*While Waiting Well: Ailis Doyle,  
Fiona Gribbon,  
Gemma O'Donnell, Shauna  
Corbett*



*Coproduction & use of seed funding:  
Deirdre Winters*

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## MSc Award

Congratulations to Alan Thomson, Consultant Physiotherapist and First Contact Physiotherapist Lead for North Down & Ards who has successfully completed his Masters in Advancing Healthcare. His research into evaluating prevalence and barriers to non-medical prescribing among FCPs in the South Eastern Trust is the first looking at non-medical prescribing within primary care in Northern Ireland and provides comparison to published research from elsewhere in the UK. Alan presented his findings at the APHNI research and Innovation Conference at Ulster University on 12 September 2025. His research has prompted Ulster University to consider conducting a wider study into non-medical prescribing among FCP across the region with a proposal currently being prepared for ethical submission to IRAS.



# West Belfast MDT

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## West Belfast Federation FCP Team Member Retirement Karen McCrea, First Contact Physiotherapist



Karen has been an integral part of the First Contact Physiotherapy team since implementation with her expertise and knowledge of assessment and management of musculoskeletal conditions benefiting the populations of West Belfast. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen for her dedication, support, and leadership over the time in the FCP service and she will be missed by colleagues and patients alike.

She will be particularly missed at Riverdale Surgery and Springfield Medical Centre where she was worked since starting in the FCP service. The whole MDT and primary care team wish her well in her retirement.



From left to right: Arlene Blair, Michelle Toland, Karen McCrea, Briege Cahill



From Left to Right Cathy Turner, Stephen Lennox, Karen McCrea, Trudy Matchett, Helen Welch, Arlene Blair, Freddie Matthews, Colleen Rowell, Julie Millar

# Newry MDT

## Positive Ageing Events

First Contact Physiotherapy provided support to Positive Ageing Events in Kilkeel, Newry and Dromore. First Contact Physiotherapy Practitioners were able to provide resources and information on the Primary Care Multidisciplinary Team, First Contact Physiotherapy Service, the many benefits of Physical Activity and steps to take to prevent frailty.



MDT Social Worker, Kellie O'Donnell attended the NISCC Professional in Practice awards last week and received a Specialist Award for Palliative Care Social Work.

Kellie is now enrolled with Queen's University Belfast to complete the MSc Palliative care.

## MDT Social Café



The MDT Social Café in Warrenpoint was created in April 2022 and facilitated by The Multi-Disciplinary Team at Summer Hill and Rostrevor Surgeries, with the aim to reduce isolation. The MDT Social Café met every Monday in The Panto Hall in Warrenpoint, which provided a safe space for adults to meet new people, make new friendships and build upon their knowledge of local resources and services available to them within the local community.

The project ran for 97 weeks and ended in June 2025. During that time we supported 1,389 people, in partnership with statutory services and the community and voluntary sector. This included Warrenpoint Men's Shed, NMDDC, Versus Arthritis, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, The Police and Community Safety Partnership, Action Mental Health and referrals for further care within the primary care multi-disciplinary team and other agencies within the SHSCT. The group also raised over £2500.00 in donations for Macmillan Cancer and The Southern Area Hospice between October 2023 and October 2024.



*Pictured we have a group photo which includes the presentation cheque to The Southern Area Hospice and a group photo of a woodwork project completed in partnership with Warrenpoint Men's Shed.*

# Causeway MDT

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An essential aspect of MDT Social Work is community development work which aims to address issues in our communities before they come to primary care, thus saving General Practice time and resources and also hopefully preventing onward referral to secondary services. This community based and social prescribing model is developing in Causeway locality with significant projects across our area. We are working with our community, voluntary, statutory and spiritual partners to address the needs in our communities before issues become clinical and/or more complex.

## ***Case Studies – HUG in Coleraine and Warm Hub Rub***

There are over 80 patients on the register for HUG group across the 4 GP Practices in the Coleraine area, with twenty seven new members in the 2024-2025 financial year.

## ***Outcomes expressed by participants terms of feeling life satisfaction...***

*Good company and meeting new friends gets you out of your apartment. A good way of meeting people who are in the same situation as you are.*

*Has been very interesting, good fun, lovely company and a reason to come out of my own four walls  
Lonely is not a good place to be and coming here gives us a new lease of life.  
Thank you girls and thank you Cathy*

*HUG is excellent. It has given me a new outlook and I love all the things we do.  
All the girls are very good to everyone*

*I was newly widowed when HUG contacted me as it was lockdown.  
We couldn't meet but as life become more normal -  
we met. Wonderful to get out, make friends, a cup of tea or coffee & a chat.  
HUG has helped me - long may it last*

*The best things I have joined since being on my  
own. Great activities, made new friends where we  
go places outside HUG. Would never have  
happened if I wasn't in HUG - all friends*



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## **Rasharkin Warm Hub (RWH)**

The main objective of RWH is to ensure that members of the community are welcomed into a warm, safe and friendly environment, where they can enjoy a warm drink and a snack. In addition, they have the company of other people, as well as access to services. It is very much a 'back to basics' and pragmatic approach.

There are now around 45 participants and the project highlights the essential aspects of co-production with key stakeholders (statutory, voluntary and community) working together empowering their communities. Volunteers from the local community are instrumental and work collaboratively with all involved.



There are weekly informal drop-in social sessions (e.g. luncheon club, coffee afternoons, gardening sessions) from October – May.

- Experiences to reduce isolation and build confidence.
- Skill development (e.g. cooking, gardening, computer literacy on available laptops).
- Creative activities (e.g. craft, music).
- Exercise-based activities and classes. (Walking Group)
- Knowledge sharing through guest speakers (e.g. Make the call benefits, nutrition, batch cooking, using your freezer, keeping healthy, supporting people in a similar situation).

The project runs on a weekly basis addressing issues of poverty, isolation and loneliness. There are energy saving (tips, advice, draught excluders etc.)

The Hub has incorporated all members of the community and has been a life line for those struggling with loneliness, anxiety and isolation in this rural community





## Initiatives across the locality

Ballymoney Surgery continue to operate a successful walking and craft groups and are establishing a Chatty Carriage Initiative with Causeway Loneliness Network. They have already established a network that are performing activities together and addressing social isolation. A recent trip to Castlerock highlighted the physical and mental benefits of activity based programmes that address frailty, disability, loneliness and low mood. This holistic approach combining physical activity with mental wellbeing aims to decrease patients/ service users' reliance on clinical services and present them with alternative strategies to enhance their own health.



## Strength and Balance Project



Lodge Health MDT Social Work also ran a very successful Strength and Balance Project open to patients across Coleraine. The 1 x 12 week Strength and Balance programme had 20 participants. The course was delivered by a fitness instructor and Health and Wellbeing related talks were arranged from the NHSCT Health and Wellbeing Officer, Causeway Older Active Strategic Team, Home Accident Prevention, NHSCT Falls Screening Service and Connect North.

15% of participants rated the class as Good and 85% rated the class Very Good. Comments on the course included people saying that they enjoyed 'friendship and fun,' 'the company' and also that the class made them more aware of falls prevention by 'teaching them to use muscles I didn't know I had' and 'making me more aware of how to get up and down off the chair.'

# CONNECT WEDNESDAY

2024 - 2025



- Luncheon Club
- Arts & Crafts
- Games & Quizzes
- Afternoon drop in
- Social activities/outings

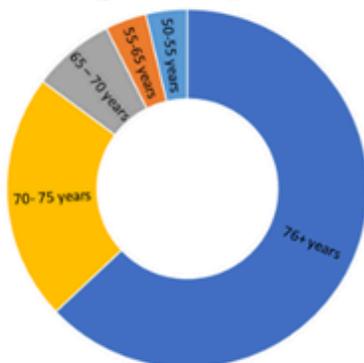


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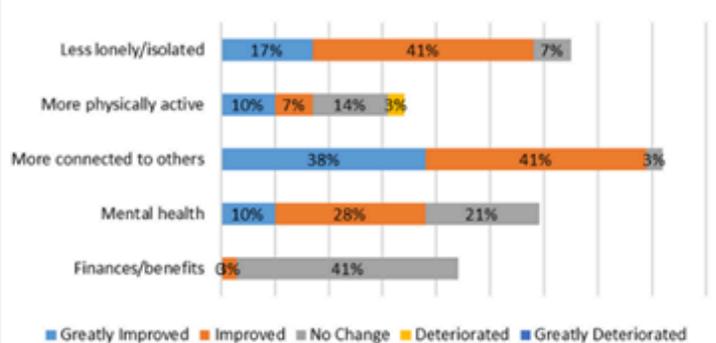
- Wednesday group is excellent for meeting new people
- I enjoy meeting with new people. Connect Wednesday is so wonderful
- Connect Wednesday is excellent
- I enjoy the company of other members. There is lots to know.
- Warm welcome by other people
- I look forward to Wednesday afternoons and have learnt many new skills. It has been lovely to make new friends as I live alone

”

Age of Participants



Life changes since joining Connect Wednesday



Average of 30 participants over 35 weeks, which equates to 1,050 contacts



## Castleroe PS and Mountsandel HC Collaborate on Focus on Mindfulness Project



Castleroe Primary School was delighted to collaborate with Mountsandel Medical Centre on the inspiring Focus on Mindfulness Project. This initiative has provided our pupils with enriching experiences that promote both mental and physical well-being.

One of the highlights has been the development of our outdoor play area, which offers one of the most effective learning environments for children. Outdoor play fosters essential life skills such as negotiation, problem-solving, self-regulation, and social interaction. It also nurtures healthy relationships with peers and adults, all while sparking a sense of adventure.

Research consistently shows that limited access to outdoor physical activity can negatively impact children's health and development. However, children who engage in outdoor play experience a wide range of benefits—both short-term and long-term. At Castleroe PS, biking activities using balance bikes have significantly enhanced pupils' motor skills, coordination, and balance.

Thanks to this programme, our pupils are enjoying ongoing positive experiences that support their mental, physical, and academic growth across all seasons.

We are sincerely grateful to Mountsandel Medical Centre for this valuable opportunity to work together in supporting our children's holistic development through the seed funding



# Down MDT

## Population Health Initiatives - First Contact Physiotherapy, Down Federation

Additional Population Health / Brief intervention talks were delivered by the First Contact Physiotherapists in the Down Federation Area, targeting Bone Health & the Benefits of exercise for Older Farmers, Positive Age Month & Falls Prevention have also been delivered by the First Contact Physiotherapists within their local practice areas & within the local community settings which have been examples of collaborative working with multi-agencies which have included the GP MDT teams, Trusts, Councils, NIAS & the local community & voluntary sectors and have had very good service user feedback with a plan to continue with this way of working in order to have a greater impact within .

**South Eastern Trust on X:** ""Age is just a number" ❤️ The energy was infectious at St Patrick's Parish Centre, Ballynahinch, as older people from across the Trust gathered for games, exercise, tea & plenty of laughs to celebrate #PositiveAgingMonth 🤝  
<https://t.co/1gExDTJZx9> / X

## Chartered Society of Physiotherapists Conference

Congratulations to Conor Smyth, First Contact Physiotherapist working in the Down Federation, who has just presented his poster on Addressing Frailty in Primary Care: A First Contact Physiotherapy- Led Intervention Pilot at this years Chartered Society of Physiotherapists Conference in Wales November 2025.



## Addressing Frailty in Primary Care- a First Contact Physiotherapy Led Intervention.

Frailty is highly prevalent in older adults in N.I., affecting almost one- third of people over the age of 50. Despite national recognition of frailty as a public health priority local primary care lacks accessible, structured exercise interventions for early frailty.

A 12 week programme was designed and delivered by the First Contact Physiotherapists as home-based programme of six functional strengthening exercises. The exercises required minimal equipment, could be performed safely at home, were supported by exercise sheets and regular reviews.

The intervention improved objective functional outcomes and patient reported quality of life. Clinically meaningful gains in measures suggest reduced disability risk, while improved quality of life scores highlight broader health benefits. The programme was resource- light, scalable and delivered entirely within FCP activity with no additional waiting list burden.

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### MDT Social Work 19 November 2025

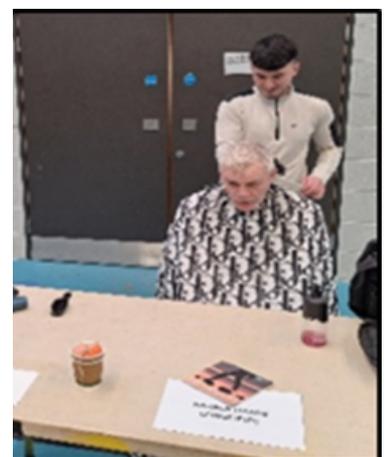
The Downpatrick MDT Senior Social Work Team held a “Listen Up Lads!” event to celebrate international Men’s Day and the positive roles men’s play within society. The event was supported by the wider MDT team, community and statutory partners.

The event recognised and highlighted male specific health and wellbeing issues. It provided links for local men and carers to statutory and community/ voluntary sector supports. It created a warm, welcoming space whereby local men and their families could relax, engage in self-care and make connections with other men in their community.

25 stall holders attended, with representation from statutory and community and voluntary sector services. A local barbour volunteered his time to provide free hair cuts to event participants. Approx. 80 men and/ or carers of men from the local community attended the event.

30 men attended two bespoke workshops facilitated by statutory and MDT colleagues. Ed Sipler SE Trust Health Development Team provided a workshop focused on male wellbeing. The MDT Physiotherapist provided a workshop on ageing and exercise which were well attended with positive engagement and feedback from facilitators and attendees.

23 written evaluations were completed by visitors with 100% scoring the overall quality of the event 5/5.



## Positive Ageing Event to Celebrate International Day of the Older Person - 8th October

Celebrating International Day of the Older Person a positive ageing event was facilitated by the MDT Social Work Team in Montalto surgery. The MDT Social Work Team in partnership with the MDT physiotherapist along with medical students from the surgery provided an active morning of physical activity. Over 30 older people from the community attended the event. The group was split into two teams engaging in competitive completion facilitated by a fitness trainer.

This event not only provided the opportunity for older people to take part in exercise in a fun enjoyable way but it also allowed them to engage and make peer connections. All those who attended thoroughly enjoyed the fun and games. It was a chance for people to connect with old friends and meet new people. MDT staff also had the opportunity promote the service and benefits of exercising and socialising as we get older.



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### SE Trust Chairmans Award Rising Star Winner 2025

Congratulations to Gabriel Carlin, Social Work Assistant in North Down and Ards who recently won the SE Trust Chairman's Awards for Rising Start. Gabriel consistently goes above and beyond in his role, making a profound impact on the lives of those around him. His hard work and dedication shine through in everything he does.



### NISCC 2025 Professional in Practice (PiP) Awards.

Congratulations also to both Andrea McGlennon & Catherine McNiece, MDT Senior Social Work Practitioners North Down and Ards on receiving the NISCC Practice Award for Community Development Approaches—this is such a well-deserved recognition of your commitment to learning and professional growth.

Their knowledge and skills make a real difference to the team - well done on this fantastic achievement!



## ADHD Awareness event:

### MDT Social Work Team - Donaghadee Health Centre : 26 Sept 2025

Given the high level neurodevelopmental ADHD referrals being received by the MDT Social Work Service and extensive statutory waiting lists for assessments, The MDT Social Work Team in North Down and Ards facilitated a parent/carer information event in the area of ADHD. The aim of the event was to help parents/carers feel better informed about the range of ADHD symptoms, treatment strategies and challenge some of the stereotypes related to ADHD. The event promoted the work of the MDT in the surgery, as well as the services available in local health and wellbeing organisations.

Key note speaker Consultant Paediatrician Dr Matthew McConkey SeTrust delivered a presentation to 170 attendees in the area of ADHD symptoms, assessment processes, strategies to support children/young people with ADHD and discussed what supports are available. A number of health and wellbeing stalls from the statutory and community / voluntary sector were in attendance to provide additional advice and support to attendees.

## Down MDT - Mental Health



**OUTCOME 4: WE ENJOY LONG, HEALTHY, ACTIVE LIVES**  
**OUTCOME : WE CARE FOR OTHERS AND HELP THOSE IN NEED**

01<sup>st</sup> July– 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Our SMHP's were busy with ongoing groups and events throughout the community**



FFP Down CIC

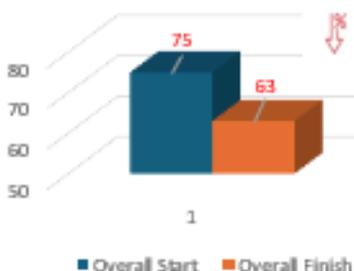
- Anxiety Management Programme : Two SMHP's Successfully delivered this five week Anxiety Management programme to patients of the Down Federation.
- The sole purpose of this programme is to promote and provide techniques to develop strategies to reduce symptoms and improve coping skills.
- Patients from surgeries in the Saintfield, Crossgar and Killyleagh localities were referred by GP's, practice nurses, physiotherapist and social workers.
- SMHP and First Contact Physio delivered a wellbeing session to a group of over 20 farmers recently. The session was well received and the men shared that they found the session very interesting and thought provoking.
- SMHP & First Contact Physio even had time to fit in a live demonstration of "How full is your Stress Bucket" which the men enjoyed.



Chart shows General Anxiety Disorder score at start and finish of 5 week programme



Chart shows overall decrease in General Anxiety Disorder score for the group



"I would most certainly like to access this group again. The people are friendly, and we are all in the same situation"

"There is no judging of others in this group"





# Anxiety Management Group

## Service User Feedback

"I feel I have a better understanding of how to deal with anxiety and panic attacks. I have learned to accept that they will still happen but I am better equipped to deal with them"

"Great support by the team. They made the group so welcoming and created an environment that allowed people to share. Seeing how others suffer and deal with anxiety has been really helpful"

"I have benefited from chatting to others in the group. The discussions were great and the handouts for future reference"

"I have attended numerous groups over the years and this group has been the most beneficial to me by far. I am in a reasonable place due to this group and I wish to stay there"

"I feel better in myself. Talking to other people made me think that I am not on my own"

"The ladies who were taking the group were excellent. It helped me so much"

"This group has made to stop and think and try to work out why I am feeling anxious, then stop it before it gets worse which could lead to a panic attack"



"I really enjoyed coming each week and I would have attended for longer if the group had continued on"

1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025

## Senior Mental Health Practitioner's Down GP Federation



Two Senior Mental Health Practitioners attended the Neurodiversity event in the Crowne Plaza Belfast. Both praised the new ideas and informative approach.

Empowering Minds is a community group which meets in the Ardglass area regularly.



"Call in have a cuppa with people from your community, we laugh, we cry, we sing and when we leave... we leave connected and supported"

Recently, our SMHP from the Ardglass Surgery attended the monthly meeting and presented a talk on the role of the Mental Health Practitioner in Primary Care.

GPNI SAFEGUARDING: DOMESTIC ABUSE & COERCIVE CONTROL TRAINING COMPLETED

BLS Training attended and completed by SMHP



**Do you have an addiction?** **Need support?**

**Empowering Minds Community Social Group**  
Ardglass Community Centre

Everyone Welcome !!  
Every Thursday 7 - 9pm  
Tea/Coffee and light supper

**Lonely?** *In your mental health low?*

Or maybe you just want to call in for a coffee and a chat

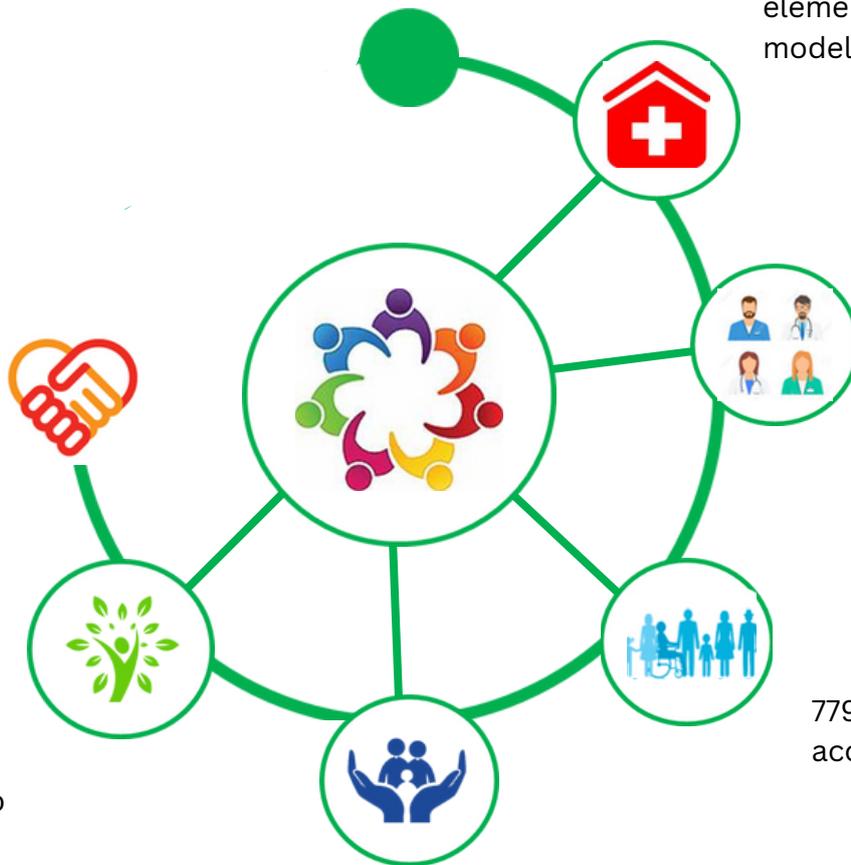


# MDT IN NUMBERS

## GPIP MDT HIGH LEVEL DASHBOARD

### MDT DATA - AS OF SEPTEMBER 2025

118 GP practices currently have an element of the MDT model



#### WTE Staff in Post\*\*:

Mental Health – 73.4  
Physiotherapy – 58.7  
Social Work – 116.2  
Health Visiting – 45.4  
District Nursing – 64.8

70%\* of patients managed with no onward referrals

779,345 patients with access to MDTs

85,083\* patient contacts

Our GPIP MDT High Level Dashboard is populated with both EMIS and Vision data and provides data from January 2020 on a continuing basis. This dashboard is the official dataset for MDTs and will be refreshed at the beginning of every month.

Current figures can be found above.

*Data may vary depending on timing of quarterly submission of Highlight Reports*

*\*Source: GPIP Q2 2025-26*

*\*\* Staff in Post data as at September '25*