

Primary Care Multi-Disciplinary Team



Newsletter Issue 4 - December 2020

Mental Health Practitioners in General Practice

Newry and District GP Federation is working in partnership with the Southern Trust to roll out the 'Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT)' initiative which aims to promote the physical, mental and social wellbeing of local communities.

MDT Mental Health Lead Appointed

Tracey McConnell has been appointed as the Mental Health Lead for the Primary Care MDT in the Newry & District GP Federation. Tracey is a Mental Health Nurse with over 30 years' experience in Mental Health Services including many years as a Primary Care Mental Health Facilitator in the Craigavon & Banbridge legacy Trust. She has also held senior roles in the Southern and South Eastern Trusts leading on the development of a range of Primary Health Care Services.



Tracey McConnell
MDT Mental Health
Lead

"Having Mental Health Practitioners (MHPs) in GP surgeries will mean patients are able to access mental health care and support in a more timely manner and at a familiar location, that is close to home. MHPs will support the provision of holistic multidisciplinary care and by having a focus on prevention and early intervention hope to empower patients to practice self-care to improve, and maintain, their mental health and wellbeing."

Barney McNeany Director of Mental Health and Disability welcomed the appointment of Mental Health Practitioners to the Multi-disciplinary Teams in Primary Care



Mr Barney McNeany
Director of Mental
Health and Disability

"The concept of getting support to those facing problems with their Mental Health and Well-being as early as possible, is a really important development. We hope and expect that being able to intervene earlier with people will lessen the impact of anxiety and depression on their well-being and will avoid onward referral to Step 3 Mental Health Services. It's also an opportunity to lessen the stigma there is around poor Mental Health and I see great opportunities for Primary Care Mental Health Practitioners linking our many community supports to help those in mental and emotional distress."

Dr Shirley Forshaw, MDT GP Lead for Mental Health

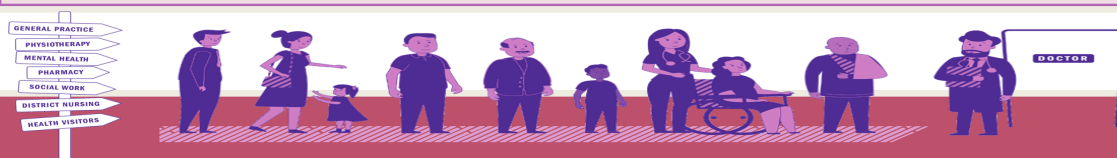
"I have been working as a General Practitioner in Newry for the past 24 years and I have seen many changes during that time; the increased pressures on General Practices, increased waiting times, supporting an ageing population and looking after patients with more complex needs. When I first heard about MDTs in 2019, I was very excited and thought this would be a great way for patients to access the service they need more quickly and be seen by someone more appropriate than the GP."

I have always had a special interest in patients' mental health and when the opportunity arose to be the GP Mental Health lead for MDTs in the Newry and District Federation, I had to put myself forward for it. Never has it been more important to improve the mental health of our population.

We have been very lucky to have a mental health practitioner in our practice for the past nine months and she has not only improved timely access for patients and supported individuals with a variety of mental health problems during this time but she has also educated us as GPs about the many services available for our patients which we were not aware of. She has also boosted staff morale greatly during the pandemic and been very supportive to our staff during these very difficult times. We hope this can be rolled out in all practices very soon, so that all patients in Northern Ireland can avail of this amazing service."



Dr Shirley Forshaw
MDT Mental Health
GP Lead



#MDT #DeliveringTogether

What is a Mental Health Practitioner?

Mental Health Practitioners can be from one of four professional backgrounds, they may be a mental health nurse, social worker, occupational therapist or psychologist. MHPs have expert knowledge and skills in mental health care and will see patients, of all ages, in their GP practice, without first having had to attend a GP. They will work within the Stepped Care Approach at Steps 1 and 2 and will refer onwards to Step 3 or other services where appropriate. **Further details on Stepped Care is available [here](#).**

What can you expect at an appointment with a MHP

MHPs will see patients who have any emotional or mental health problem. They will listen to the person to understand their difficulties and assess their mental health care needs. Based on the person's needs the MHP may provide short term treatment, such as talking therapies, give advice and information to support self-care and may direct or refer to other services and organisations, as necessary. Some examples of common mental health problems that a MHP may be able to help with includes;

- ♦ Symptoms of stress, anxiety, panic, low mood or poor sleep
- ♦ Concerns about self-harm or suicide
- ♦ Issues with alcohol or drugs

If you are concerned about your mental health seek support from the MHP in your practice.

Good mental health is just as important as good physical health.

Meet The Team



Emma Finnegan
Dr McCandless,
Banbridge and
Meadowlands,
Newry



Sam Edgar
Old Forge
Surgery, Annalong.
Mourne Family
Surgery, Kilkeel



Mary Rafferty
Clanrye Surgery,
Clanrye Medical,
Meadowlands,
Newry



Sinead Murphy
Summerhill,
Warrenpoint & Dr
McNiff, Banbridge



Therese Carroll
Dr Allen & Dr Fee
Practice
Crossmaglen



Steven Stothers
Dr Ramsey,
Banbridge &
Clanrye Medical,
Newry

"The Mental health workers have been an enormous asset within our practice and have provided us and our patients with a wealth of knowledge and support."

Practice Manager, Group Surgery Banbridge

"I really can't speak more highly of this service and I urge anyone needing help to take the next step and seek this help as they will definitely be in a better place for it."

38year old patient

How to Book an Appointment

Patients may book an appointment directly with the Mental Health Practitioner. If you have concerns about your mental health and wellbeing contact the GP Practice Reception in the normal way and an appointment can be arranged. Or you may be offered an appointment with the MHP based on your symptoms when you call to make an appointment with your GP.

If you require any further Information please contact:
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