

BCPP NEWS



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VALLEY RANGERS, KILKEEL AND ANNALONG PHARMACY TAKING COLLECTIVE ACTION

Valley Rangers Football Club operating within the rural Kilkeel area of the Mourne's creates an opportunity for their members (aged five to adults) to be supported on their football journey. The Club is in a unique position to engage with males about their health and wellbeing on a regular basis.

Valley Rangers previously received Level 1 BCPP funding of £2,500 and the project was such a success that they teamed up with Annalong Pharmacy to apply for a Level 2 grant of £10,000. This group of 11 men (team players and coaches) along with the Pharmacist used a community development approach to explore common issues and take collective action to find solutions.

Over 14 weeks, Pharmacist Martin Mallett delivered 10 sessions and on four occasions he co-facilitated sessions with community/voluntary partners to explore a range of health topics using different delivery styles and adopted a trusting space for the participants to ask questions.

These sessions gave the group an improved knowledge of local services and support for health and social issues.

PIPS Hope and Support delivered awareness sessions which were both informative and relevant given that mental health issues are high on everyone's agenda. At this session, the group heard about the Community Champions training which PIPs offers on suicide awareness and some members will complete this training later in the year.



The Pharmacist delivered a range of different interactive sessions on topics which the group requested including physical health, emotional wellbeing, Covid and the vaccination.

By the end of the BCPP project, the whole group said they felt more confident and knew where to go locally if they needed help. The group now has the health literacy understanding and confidence to approach their local Pharmacist for a wide range of issues. The confidence and life skills of the group have increased and they feel that they can support children and signpost young people and their families should they need help and support.

Although the men knew each other well, it was extremely beneficial to explore further mental health and wider health issues with the Pharmacist who has extensive knowledge. Martin now has a better insight into the health issues within the community and the group members' lives.

From co-facilitating the community/voluntary organisations presentations, he also gained an improved knowledge of local services and is better able to signpost.

Neil Ardis, Chairperson of Valley Rangers said 'It was great to get to know Martin, the Pharmacist and understand what he does. As a Club we all have a greater awareness of how and why we should look after our health more. We all learnt more about different health matters and where to go to get help.'



Taken Pre Covid

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I found a great benefit in delivering this project with Valley Rangers Football and believe it has strengthened our knowledge of the issues. I was able to provide additional knowledge and support to the group around minor ailments, smoking cessation and managing medicines. I hope to work with this group of men again in the future.”

Martin Mallet – Annalong Pharmacy

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I found the project really interesting and have a greater understanding about the pharmacy and the services they offer, it's not just medication. I feel more comfortable going in and asking for their advice. I am also more aware of the different organisations in my area that can help.”

Mervin Teggarty – Coach

FUTUREPROOF & PARKES PHARMACY

MAKING POSITIVE HEALTH CHOICES

FutureProof offers support, advice and education on a wide range of health and social issues for young people aged 11-25 across the Banbridge and Craigavon area. The daily drop-in service ensures that young people always have somewhere to go for support and health advice.

The organisation applied for Level 2 BCPP funding of £10,000 in partnership with Parkes Pharmacy, Gilford for a project working with young women between the ages of 14 and 18 on issues such as relationships, mental health and substance misuse. The aim of the project was to increase the likelihood of these young people making positive health choices by having improved health literacy and greater self-worth.

Given the pandemic, a major challenge was engaging with the young women however as they had planned the session topics, it was easier to keep them engaged. Using videos and other creative means, this BCPP project explored sensitive health issues over a number of sessions and the young women shared and learned from each other's lived experiences.

The trust and rapport the group had with Michele Thompson, the Pharmacist, was evident throughout the health discussions on sensitive topics. Michele listened to their opinions and heard the misinformation which the young women believed about many health issues. She offered professional knowledge, explained the pharmacy's range of services and corrected misinformation to benefit the young women now and in the future.

Common Youth, experts in sensitive topics such as sex and consent, co-facilitated a session along with Michele, the Pharmacist.



A speaker from Dunlewey Addiction Services engaged in a session with the group and the Pharmacist was able to impart information about side effects she had seen first-hand in the community.

The project also heard from PIPs, a charity with a focus on suicide prevention. An outreach worker, Anna, from Youth Initiative, Banbridge delivered a session. It was extremely beneficial for the young people to meet Anna so that they could go to her for help if needed. The Pharmacist was able to bring back this learning and share with her pharmacy team.

Zoe, a participant, told us *'This project was so much fun. I loved getting to meet up with my friends every week on Zoom and listening to the presentations. I did learn and Michele is really cool so that if I ever do need advice, I can chat to her'*.



This project was a unique opportunity to facilitate health discussions between our young people and a Pharmacist through Zoom. We were so fortunate to have such a brilliant group of enthusiastic young people - the relationship that has been built between all of us and the Pharmacist means that the project could have a significant long-lasting and life changing impact for the young people involved".

Debbie McCague, Youth Worker, FutureProof

BIRTHWISE & MCCARTAN'S PHARMACY

IT TAKES A VILLAGE...

Having had the opportunity to pilot a BCPP Level 1 health literacy project previously, the organisation partnered with Stephanie Haughey of McCartan's Pharmacy to apply for a Level 2 grant. The application was successful and two groups of approximately 12-15 women met weekly for nine weeks along with the Pharmacist and discussed topics that each group felt were important.

The aim of this BCPP project was to help educate mums and mums-to-be on maternal mental health, diet and exercise and get them out of their homes to socially interact with their peers and the Pharmacist. The early days of maternity leave can be a lonely time and many mums tackle postnatal depression, issues with feeding, sleep deprivation and social isolation.

As the weeks progressed and participants became more familiar with each other and the Pharmacist, the group members formed a network of support, sharing their experiences, both past and present. In some of the sessions, local and regional support organisations attended including Homestart, Surestart, AWARE, Breastfriends and Bolster Community (previously SPACE). Zoom is certainly an easy way to have these fantastic organisations on board.



The Birthwise course was invaluable to me in my pregnancy journey. As a first time mum, experiencing pregnancy in a pandemic was quite an isolating experience as many resources were no longer available. The small group sizes meant I felt comfortable asking questions that otherwise would have gone unanswered and made me feel much more confident for the journey ahead. It also allowed me to tap into a community of people who I would not have been aware of."

Project Participant



The group members are now able to signpost other people to local services and charities and have adopted the motto 'it takes a village'.

This BCPP project offered a holistic approach to health, incorporating ideas such as prevention is better than cure to encourage patients to look to the future setting healthy goals and gaining skills to self manage and self care. The women's health literacy was improved along with their understanding of their health. Familiarisation removed the stigma of the Pharmacist being unapproachable in the dispensary and this project has been instrumental in increasing footfall through the local community pharmacy.

Stephanie Haughey, Pharmacist, said *'After the pandemic hit, there was so much uncertainty for the participants. We made the decision to finish out the project via Zoom as these ladies definitely needed support when the usual sources were restricted. The feedback was fantastic and we are so glad we moved to online rather than pause the programme'*.

CLOUGHFIN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION & TALLON'S PHARMACY

A LIFELINE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Cloughfin Community Association works for the benefit of local people and provides activities for all ages of people. Activities include dancing classes, crafts and historical projects as well as the promotion of health. The community building - an old primary school - is the only meeting place in this isolated rural area.

The group availed of a Level 2 grant of £10,000 for a project with Paul Tallon of Tallon's Pharmacy, Sixmilecross. After their previous BCPP project, they realised how indispensable the local Pharmacist is in their community as a first point of contact for health issues. The aim of this BCPP project was to build strong connections within the group and with the Pharmacist and broaden everyone's knowledge of what support exists in the area.

Initially the group was funded to work with young mums to children under five. However due to the pandemic, However due to the pandemic, Cloughfin Community Association felt that it would be difficult for group members to commit to attending 16 sessions on Zoom. An existing group, 'Bright Ideas Arts & Crafts', made up of ladies mostly 60+ who suffered from lack of social contact was interested in a BCPP project. CDHN was happy that the project worked with both groups – delivering eight sessions to each.

At the planning meeting for the 'Mother & Others' project, some young mothers were surprised to learn that they could get a grant from Sure Start on the birth of their first child. The fact that they had to find this out from other parents demonstrated the need for this project.



Together with the Pharmacist, the women chose session topics on a range of health issues. These included pharmacy services, sleep deprivation, postnatal depression and access to services. The Red Cross co-facilitated a session with the Pharmacist and the group was introduced to First Aid.

Many of the young parents who had been working found themselves alone with children under 5 and no-one to talk to all day - poor mobile phone reception and broadband coverage in the area did not help. The move to Zoom from face to face meetings meant some lost out on the programme but other parents became involved meaning an increase in numbers in the group which was very positive.

The Bright Ideas Group wanted to cover mental health, the importance of sleep and pharmacy services. Joe Donnelly from TAMHI (Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues) delivered a session with Paul, the Pharmacist.

Sessions were interactive and the Pharmacist often held quizzes which was a great way to share learning and keep everyone engaged.

As a result of the BCPP programme, the Pharmacist built up strong relationships with the participants and has a better knowledge of the problems young parents and older people face both mentally and physically. With the nearest GP practice approximately five miles away, the women now have a better understanding of what the pharmacy can offer and are more confident in their understanding of health issues.

Rosemary McMullen, Cloughfin Community Association felt that this BCPP programme gave the group a great kick-start to take action against the issues which are currently holding them back from enjoying life and having fun with their young children. Rosemary said *‘Our Facebook page has never been so busy as we share as much as we possibly can. Of course, we just can’t wait for the day when everyone can meet up physically.’*

Aideen, one of the mums who benefited from the project, said *‘I really enjoyed this series of Zoom meet ups with the BCPP programme. It was so great to be able to speak to other parents and the community Pharmacist. I found it to be a lifeline during the pandemic.’*



Marie, a member of Bright ideas told us *‘I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to avail of the useful and vital information given to us by Paul - not only is it of personal benefit but as I have also been able to pass it on to other family and friends the information is being spread among many other people. Paul imparts the information in ‘plain English’ which gets the message across very effectively.’*

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With the COVID restrictions, technology played a key role and I felt slightly uneasy delivering sessions via Zoom initially. As the project progressed, I could see the participants interacting, laughing and enjoying the sessions more and more. Participation in this BCPP programme has been a joy for me, I have experienced new learning, formed new friendships and made new contacts.”

Paul Tallon, Pharmacist

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The programme is just brilliant, like minded people from all walks of life with one common theme. We are meeting new people and linking in with people we have lost touch with! We are experiencing new things, we are learning, we are laughing and, overall, we are reaching out to each other within our community to either give or get support. I have taken information away which I am using already or will use in the future. It has been fantastic. I am so glad I joined in. I mean every word!”

Elaine, Project Participant

WOMEN'STEC & CROSSIN CHEMIST

OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

WOMEN'STEC is the largest quality provider of training for women in non-traditional skills in Northern Ireland. The organisation supports women into industries where females are underrepresented and uses hands on trade skills as a framework for participants' personal development. They are based in the heart of North Belfast and work primarily with women who face significant barriers to training and employment and often those who have experienced some level of crisis in their lives.

In 2018 WOMEN'STEC partnered with Pharmacist Kevin McDevitt of Crossin Chemists, North Belfast and made a successful application for Level 2 BCPP funding. The project aimed to enhance the participants' perceptions of health, their understanding of the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) and, crucially, what actions they can take to improve their own and their families' health and wellbeing. The partnership was granted further funding to continue their collaborative delivery into 2019 and 2020.

The 'Women's Well-Being' programme worked to engage women from the local area who were furthest removed from services and education within their communities and, in the context of COVID -19, recruited eight women for this programme delivered via Zoom. The project used a community development approach, allowing the group to shape the project from the outset by identifying issues most pertinent to their health-related needs.

The project focused on the importance of creating a safe and welcoming environment

The logo for WOMEN'STEC features the word 'WOMEN'STEC' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters 'W', 'O', 'M', 'E', 'N', 'S', 'T', 'E', and 'C' are in blue. The letter 'I' is in purple, and the letter 'C' is in yellow.

which facilitated communication and allowed participants to feel at ease discussing sensitive personal and health related issues. As a result of the BCPP sessions, the group were better able to self-recognize the issues of greatest concern to them and the Pharmacist had an increased ability to directly address the group's individualised needs, provide relevant support and onward signposting. There was a general consensus within the group to focus upon understanding mental health, particularly relating to the impact of isolation and poverty. Interactive presentations were sought from support agencies such as AWARE NI and these were very well received.

Lynn Carvill, CEO of WOMEN'STEC, commented that the organisation's participation in the delivery of the BCPP Women's Programme over the last couple of years had been an overwhelmingly positive experience for both the organisation and its beneficiaries.

"The programme provides a space for women to explore pertinent health and wellbeing issues in a safe space with our local expert Pharmacist, Kevin. You will not be surprised to hear that there is always a waiting list for this programme and I expect demand for this programme to grow as we move to recover from the last year of lockdown, isolation and for many, bereavement and/or trauma."

When asked for feedback on her experience of the project, a participant emphasised the confidence Kevin McDevitt's expertise and knowledge fostered within the group. She went on to say that the Pharmacist "had a great way of letting everyone voice their concerns and answered them with patience and in a way that we could understand. A very worthwhile course and very informative."

Another participant felt she learnt a great deal during the sessions, asserting that by self-identifying the topics the group were able to 'dive deep into areas such as gastric health, medication use, side effects and food nutrition etc.' "These topics were all very interesting and the tutors kept us engaged throughout. WOMEN'STEC is an invaluable resource in our community and we would not have been able to get such in-depth tailored information anywhere else.'

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We started our project as we usually do, by asking participants what they wanted from the workshops. Not surprisingly, we started with a session on Covid-19 and the mental impact it is having. Zoom was challenging to start with, particularly in terms of participant feedback but we got the hang of it. Being at home may even have made some more comfortable and more confident to participate.

Kevin McDevitt, Pharmacist

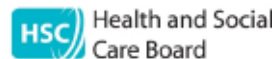
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Everyone had a say on what would be covered so that each individual would get the most benefit from the course. These BCPP projects have been a great help to me and my family especially for social connection during this awful session of isolation. Everyone could learn from the comfort of their own home. The best takeaway for me was being able to ask professionals. This is so invaluable when you have questions needing answered but cannot necessarily get out due to illness or speak to a GP."

Project Participant



Taken Pre Covid



☎ 028 3026 4606

✉ bcpp@cdhn.org

@ www.cdhn.org

