



November 2021

BCPP NEWS

This newsletter is brought to you by Community Development and Health Network (CDHN)

Building the
Community-
Pharmacy
Partnership



20

years
of
BCPP

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the BCPP programme. To truly appreciate how long ago 2001 was and grasp the magnitude of this accomplishment, we only have to reflect on the world at that time.

This was the year that almost 3,000 people lost their lives in the terrorist attacks which brought down the Twin Towers in New York. The first space tourist travelled to the International Space Station and the Eden Project, in Cornwall, opened its doors. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone was released in the cinema and Atomic Kitten were topping the charts. Closer to home, David Trimble was First Minister with Seamus Mallon as Deputy. This was the year the PSNI was established, and the Provisional IRA began to decommission weapons. Are you feeling old yet?

It was also the first year of the BCPP programme – initially £23,000 was distributed to seven projects to explore health issues in local communities and co-design and deliver solutions to address them. A version of partnership working advanced well beyond its years. Who would have thought, 20 years on, the programme would continue to develop and support collaboration at a local level?

Over the last 20 years, more than 950 individual partnerships have been funded at an investment of over £6.3 million. The relationships built between pharmacy and communities during this time are embedded in local communities and have long outlived the funding provided.

We continue to explore ways to develop the programme and share the learning and impact of this work. We have a successful model of practice that brings communities and primary care together. We recognise the importance of sharing this evidence to support partnership working in other areas of our health and social care system.

Some truly special and committed people have been involved in BCPP over the years, operating at different levels, from administration and participation to advocacy and support. We thank you all.

CDHN would like to acknowledge the commitment of Dr Vanessa Chambers and bid her a fond farewell as she steps down from the Steering Group. Vanessa has been on the BCPP journey with us from the beginning and was instrumental in getting the Programme up and running. We thank Vanessa for her support over the years, wish her well in her future endeavours and hope that our paths cross again.

CDHN would like to thank Joe Brogan and colleagues at the Health and Social Care Board for leading by example in excellent partnership working. BCPP is a solid example of what our sectors can do when we work together, in a way that is based on mutual respect and trust. Enjoy some throwback photos from 20 years ago!



Vanessa at the first BCPP Conference in 2004

“Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership programme is twenty years young, and as we reflect on the many successful partnerships that have been developed over the years, it is important to recognise the contribution that many people have made along the way. The concept evolved from inspirational thinking that involved a number of individuals, not least, Dr Vanessa Chambers. Throughout the twenty years, Vanessa has been a stalwart for community – pharmacy partnerships, recognising the innate value of community pharmacy at the heart of neighbourhood health and well-being. It is with sadness that Vanessa is stepping down from the steering group after 20 years and we wish her all the best in the next chapter of her career.”

Joe Brogan, Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, HSCB





“ I would like to congratulate Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) and the Health and Social Care Board on 20 years of the Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP). Over two decades BCPP has established strong partnerships between local communities and their community pharmacies across Northern Ireland. There is no doubt that the effective and trusted community development approach brought by BCPP has helped improve health literacy, address local health and social wellbeing needs and has made a meaningful difference to people’s lives. The tremendous work of all involved in BCPP provides a strong foundation for the future and I hope that we will see many more initiatives that work towards increasing local people’s skills, community activity and encouraging local people to play a role in promoting health by engaging with their community pharmacists.”

Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, DoH





THE RIGHT KEY & JOHNSTON'S PHARMACY

SINGING FOR HEALTH

The Right Key (TRK) is a musical performance Community Interest Company with a vision to bring about positive social change for people at the margins of society. They deliver 'singing for health' workshops to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of disadvantaged groups and provide accommodation for recovering alcoholics/addicts at their newly renovated premises in Loughbrickland that has been their home for five years. The group also offers a range of services, community activities and volunteering opportunities.

TRK and Johnston's Pharmacy worked in partnership previously on numerous successful BCPP projects and came together again this year to make another application. The group planned to work with recovering alcoholics/addicts, ex-offenders and those with poor mental health who are less likely to access healthcare services. The mixed group of people from across NI have different health and social needs though they all

commonly suffer social marginalisation, disadvantage and inequalities of health.

A series of 10 sessions led by Cathy Smyth, the Pharmacist and eight co-facilitated sessions were planned on health and wider issues affecting the group. Varied and interactive, the content was relevant to the needs of the group. In keeping with a community development approach, the group members were actively involved in all areas of the BCPP project including identifying and defining their community health needs. After each session, the group took part in a 'singing for health' workshop delivered by TRK musicians - the benefits of which were evident to see!

Pharmacist Cathy Smyth used her expertise and knowledge to facilitate group discussions, identifying and offering advice on the health issues affecting the group as well as signposting group members to supporting agencies. As Cathy co-facilitated sessions

with external organisations, she also learnt about the services available within the community sector and the social issues affecting the group such as poverty, mental wellness, unemployment, imprisonment and housing. Similarly, participants learnt about the role of the pharmacist as an accessible local resource, providing expert knowledge and advice on a range of health issues. One key topic that the group wished to explore further was around developing parenting skills and rebuilding family relationships. Depression, sleeplessness, anxiety and despair were issues faced by some members of the group and the Mental Health Wellness Network delivered a session on health and wellbeing. Many were anxious, experiencing low mood and concerned about their future and their recovery because of Covid. This session introduced them to skills and techniques they could use every day to improve their mood.

“ The pharmacy project is a great addition to ongoing recovery programmes at The Right Key. Continuing our work throughout the Covid-19 pandemic with our extremely vulnerable groups in need of services more than ever was so important for TRK. We were able to do this with our greatest asset of TRK - the knowledge and lived experience of the volunteers.”

Sheila Smyth, Chief Executive, TRK

“ I believe this project was a great success due to everyone involved participating fully. We built up trust within the group which enabled the participants to discuss personal issues openly and shape the overall content of the sessions. The timing of the project was fantastic, coming post lockdown when the participants needed it most.”

Cathy Smyth, Pharmacist



A representative from Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders came in discuss the range of issues impacting on ex-offenders such as employment rights while Clanmil Housing gave advice on housing rights and the different types of accommodation available.

‘The group members have told us that the recovery programmes were a lifeline for them at this time of isolation and loneliness and that the pharmacy sessions were an essential part of their recovery.’ said Sheila Smyth from The Right Key.

This BCPP project offered improved access to health services and

resources and a reduction in health inequalities among our target group. As a result of the project eight members of the group were referred to community services and other health professionals for further support. Three members of the group have gone on to volunteer with TRK.

MILLBURN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION & HENDERSON'S PHARMACY

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Millburn Community Association is a voluntary organisation working across the Causeway Coast & Glens area. It offers various clubs, sporting activities and wellbeing projects to the community as well as an Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club supporting the local veteran community with activities.

The high rate of unemployment in the area coupled with low educational attainment mean many young men have feelings of isolation and worthlessness. Millburn Community Association has addressed these issues over the years by providing clubs and programmes and planned to use this BCPP project to further tackle health issues prevalent in men from working class areas.

The Community Association partnered with Pharmacist Evan Reid of Henderson's Pharmacy to run this BCPP project with 10 local men. The group realised that men are the hardest group to engage normally so hoped that offering skills in woodland management, furniture building and gardening activities in an outdoor space would entice the men to attend the group. It is often said that men talk more about issues shoulder to shoulder than they do face to face so by encouraging a work type environment, this would encourage issues to be addressed.



“

The BCPP project was a great success - it's the first time the group has engaged outside its own boundaries. This programme is truly life saving with the support it has been able to give especially in times when physical and mental health organisations and health authorities are overwhelmed because of the global pandemic. The group had a place to access the support they needed.”

Ian Ellis, Millburn Community Association

Group work sessions commenced with the local pharmacist leading on 10 topics chosen by the men. The group had planned to use Zoom however as the restrictions lifted, some were able to meet face to face which was just fantastic. The pharmacist also co facilitated four further sessions with the community/voluntary partners including Be Safe Be Well, Men's Shed, Causeway Adventures, Inspire Veteran Support Group and Focus on Family. These agencies and organisations were available to offer future support for participants and their families as and when they needed them.



Mental and physical wellbeing were explored along with drugs and alcohol awareness. By the end of the group sessions, participants were better informed and knew where to get support when needed. One of the topics that the men felt important was how to get a good night's sleep. The pharmacist introduced several bedtime routines that would assist with relaxation and a local psychotherapist delivered an interactive workshop on mindfulness at bedtime.

Pharmacist Evan has a natural ability to build relationships with his calm and warm manner and the group soon welcomed his input. The pharmacist's input is key to all BCPP projects - building relationships, breaking down barriers and providing the project participants with support, along with good information. As relationships developed, lived experience was shared within the room and the men saw the pharmacy as a place where they could go for advice and support.

The pharmacist and other partners built confidence within the group and developed group discussion on health related topics and issues. By providing meaningful skills based training and activity to improve their knowledge, the project encouraged more learning to develop and also an appetite for employment and volunteering.

The men themselves reflected on the project's success to date, collectively stating that it has been great to have the opportunity to spend time with like-minded people. It has been apparent that connecting with each other has been beneficial to the group members. This project showed the men that there is also a support base within the community sector to help them tackle issues. Although the project has now finished, the men still meet on a Thursday evening.



One of the participants told us 'We are better informed, more confident and have really enjoyed the activity and learning. We have developed trusted relationships and have shared stories, worries and concerns – we now know where to get support when needed. It really is true that a problem shared is a problem halved!'

“ Coined the 'Thursday Night Club', the BCPP project was a resounding success – the members enjoyed camaraderie and education and I was delighted with the attendance and interaction. Through the sessions, the men found that working outdoors had a positive mood changing effect and that they had developed relationships as well as increasing personal skills and building knowledge.”

Evan Reid, Pharmacist

RESPECT YOUTH PROJECT & MCCARTAN'S PHARMACY

SHARING THE LEARNING

The Respect Youth Project was set up in 2012 with the aim of using sport to engage with young people to help create safer, stronger and more respectful communities. The work of Respect has been widely acknowledged as a model of good practice in using sport as a way of addressing social issues in Northern Ireland. The project is run totally by volunteers.

Respect partnered with McCartan's Pharmacy to apply for Level 2 BCPP funding of £12,000. They planned to work with 10 secondary school young people (male and female) living in neighbourhood renewal areas across Newry city. The aim of this BCPP project was to give young people the skills, knowledge and confidence to act as peer educators by increasing awareness of underlying social conditions that impact health such as poverty, poor housing, isolation, loneliness etc. The programme would also help improve awareness and



“ The BCPP programme has been a great success with the young people learning a lot about various health topics and what help and support is available. The sessions were fun based and the group felt very comfortable talking to the pharmacist about any issues they had. We also received positive feedback from parents of those involved - the young people were coming home after sessions and talking about what was covered each night.”

Martin Connell
Chairperson, Respect Project

knowledge of available services and support to help address these issues within local communities.

Before the initial outbreak of Covid-19, Respect had carried out several consultations with young people that highlighted worrying concerns with regard to both their mental health and usage of both drugs and alcohol. Now, increased levels of anxiety are also showing in these young adults.

Engaging young people in the development and delivery of the content for the 16 weekly sessions was key. The group members were keen to explore the implications of lockdowns and isolation on mental health and discuss strategies for working through these difficult times. Issues that they planned to address over the 16 sessions were those around mental health, drugs and alcohol and improved physical health. Session delivery would be split between Zoom sessions and face to face sessions.





I really enjoyed learning about the different health issues each week. The workshops were good fun and helped me think more about looking after my health."

Project Participant

The young people involved also informed the community pharmacist and the external partners within the programme about the health needs/barriers of young people living in these areas giving them an insight into the real issues.

Cuan Mhuire delivered a workshop to the group on the use and misuse of drugs and alcohol, advising on positive strategies and addiction resources for both drugs and alcohol. advising on positive strategies and addiction resources for both drugs and alcohol. The FLARE project provided invaluable information on mental health illnesses, mental health problems and resources available.

The group members had plenty of fun learning about the benefits of exercise where they explored the physical, emotional, mental and social aspects of taking part in sport. They also got to have their blood pressure taken and learnt about the effect exercise can have on their heart. Tasting sessions for different types of fruit were part of the project and helped the members learn about nutrition and the benefits of a healthy diet.

During the project, Gemma McCartan, the Pharmacist played a key role in helping the group develop skills that they can use to look after their health and support them to take more responsibility for their health and the choices they make. Gemma signposted the group to credible online health information Apps and websites and warned them of the misinformation circulating from irreputable sites.

Participants were trained as 'Community Youth Health Champions' through the BCPP project developing their skills and knowledge around various health issues. The intention of this peer education approach was to make the project more user friendly and less formal so that it would be easier for young people to open up and express concerns they may have for their own physical and mental wellbeing or that of people close to them. These Health Champions would signpost others to available help and support within their community.

Group members involved in the Project will also have opportunities to share their learning with their peers through volunteering opportunities that will be available not only within the work of the Respect Project but also with local community associations and youth groups. As the project progressed, the participants increased their awareness of very important health information and also developed their confidence through a sports leadership qualification.

The Pharmacist has built trusting relationships with the young people in the group which made it easier for them to seek help and support with their health (and the health of their families) after the project had ended.



The BCPP programme in association with the Respect project has so far proved very successful and enjoyable for all involved. The project has provided the participants with the chance to learn about the benefits of exercise and good nutrition for overall health using interactive games and plenty of fun. The young people have developed a relationship with the Pharmacist and are now aware of what their local pharmacy can do for them regarding health."

Gemma McCartan, Pharmacist



MIND YOUR MATE AND YOURSELF AND MEDICARE PHARMACY

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Mind Your Mate and Yourself (MYMY) was set up in 2008 by bereaved family members and volunteers as a direct consequence of the increased suicides within Newcastle and District area. The organisation supports individuals who are suicidal, in distress or self-harming by providing advice, information and appropriate services.

MYMY partnered with Anna McLaughlin, Pharmacist in Medicare Pharmacy, Newcastle and was successfully awarded BCPP funding to run a 14-week project for local women aged 45 plus who were volunteers in MYMY. The aims of the project were to reduce health inequalities for women whilst increasing their knowledge and raising awareness around the issues that affect their health. The BCPP project also aimed to help the women reconnect with their community after the lockdown and isolation caused by the pandemic.

The group met weekly and held many of their sessions at the local picturesque park in Castlewellan. The Pharmacist, Anna, shared her knowledge and experience with the women addressing the topics of choice such as poor mental health, family support, nutrition and heart health. Anna also attended the sessions co-delivered by other groups. These included Age UK, the Ark Community Gardens and the Lions. Anna was able to share her experience and knowledge with these external groups while building her network of support to enable her to signpost others not involved in the project.

The women were delighted to hear the many benefits of walking including reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease, improved mental wellbeing and better quality of life. They set themselves a steps target and practised some strength training to help osteoporosis, improve their hormone profile and reduce muscle loss – all of the moves expertly demonstrated by Anna! Other sessions focused on managing medication, diabetes, the nervous system regulation and the benefits of nature. The group visited Marian and Frank Mc Greevy's Dundrum home where they marvelled at their gardens, discussed all things food and learnt how to recognise Type 2 diabetes.



The BCPP sessions enabled the women to be better equipped to self-manage their health whilst improving health literacy. The sessions educated women on how wider social factors (housing, employment, family life etc) impact on their health and empowered them with the skills to tackle these issues.

Anna, the Pharmacist, integrated the '5 steps to wellbeing' into the BCPP project and created a safe relational space where participants shared their vulnerabilities. Meeting Anna and working with her over the months created an accessible link for members of the community to a medical professional. The women openly discussed that they were burnt out, mainly due to Covid-19, and struggled with many issues. Some of the women had not realised that the local Pharmacist played a huge role in the community, providing health advice with no appointment required.

There was real bonding as a group and the members openly discussed their health agreeing prevention was so much better than cure. The ladies expressed an interest in getting their fasting blood sugars measured and this was offered at the pharmacy.

“ Many thanks to Anna for all her advice, for listening and arranging our visits and to all the speakers for guiding us through many areas of our health and wellbeing. It has been a relaxing and enjoyable time spent with a lovely group of people.”

Project participant

“ I really looked forward to our Wednesday afternoon meetings. As the weeks progressed, we emerged from the isolation of lockdown, gained confidence and formed friendships. We explored different topics each week including gut health, diabetes and arthritis. I was able to encourage the group to go to their pharmacies and get health advice there. I would like to thank BCPP for giving me the opportunity to work outside the pharmacy building and connect with the community, find out about the ladies in my group and help them in any way I could.”

Anna, Pharmacist Medicare Pharmacy

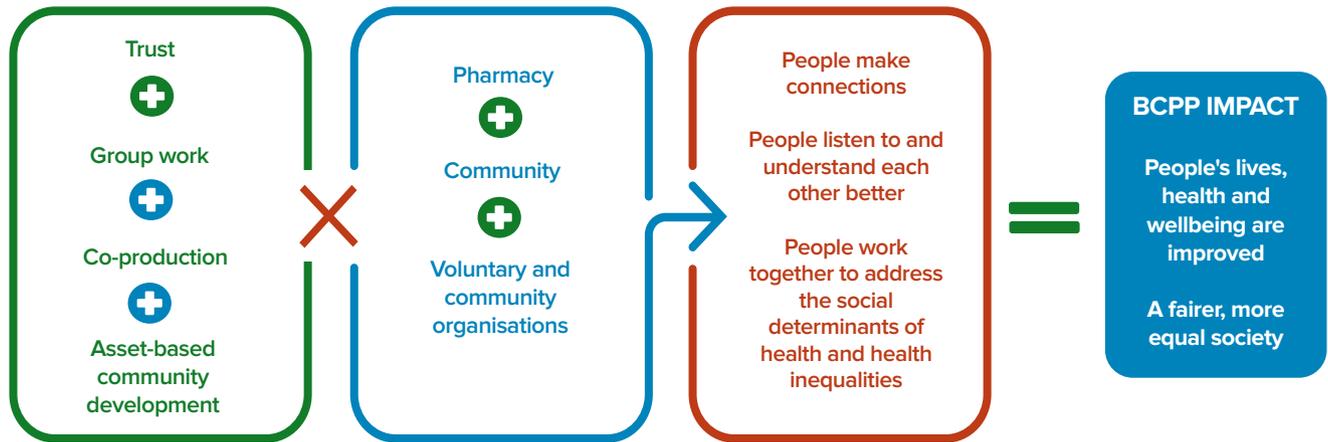
Through this BCPP project, the women were able to identify the assets in their community and bring their own assets and skillsets to the group. The women were also catalysts to improve people's health in their community by bringing this learning to their friends and families making a significant contribution to tackling health inequalities for the wider community.

At the end of the project, the women had improved self-management of their health, more social relationships and social support. Trusting relationships were nurtured within the project and new connections and friendships made. The local Pharmacist is an advocate of social prescribing and has the skills and capabilities to facilitate the women to reconnect to their personal health and resources as well as educating them on the important role of their local pharmacy – a one stop health place with no appointment needed.

Both the Pharmacist and MMY are more aware of women's health issues in the community after the project. They have a better understanding of the context and conditions of women's lives and factors that influence health and improved health literacy understanding and skills.



To bring pharmacy and community together to reduce health inequalities using an asset based community development approach



LEVEL 1 funding – grant up to
£2,500
project lasting up to six months

LEVEL 2 funding – grant up to
£12,000
project lasting up to one year

Application forms and guidance notes are available from cdhn.org/bcpp along with the closing dates for the next round of funding. If you have an idea for a project, please contact a member of the BCPP team who will be happy to guide and support you.

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