



Welcome to another edition of the South Tyneside newsletter. This month we have another new face to introduce to you; the first of many after a successful recent recruitment drive! We will soon be introducing you to our new care coordinators, health and wellbeing coaches, and more social prescribing link workers. We would also like to share with you one of the most inspiring journeys we have ever been involved with, some feedback from the people we are working with, and a little about how our tailored interventions have supported individuals with low patient activation to keep progressing despite the challenges of Covid-19. We hope you are safe and well. Sending you all our best wishes from the South Tyneside team.

The Impact - Our People

As a person-centred organisation, the positive impact of our work is best illustrated through the people we support and the changes they see in their day-to-day lives. Today's story comes from our High Intensity User service.

Meet "Caroline"

The individual in this case study had attempted to access numerous support services and had been unable to, due to not meeting eligibility criteria. When we first spoke to her, she told us that she had lost hope of getting support. We are very grateful to have such broad criteria for who we can work with, as this enables us to connect with people who are most in need of support and at risk of 'falling through the gaps' between other services.

Background:

Caroline was referred to the project in September 2019. Caroline is an ex-Primary School teacher who suffered with addition to crack cocaine and as a result lost her career, her family relationships and her hope for the future. At the time of referral, Caroline had been clean from substances for around 10 months however was experiencing high levels of anxiety which were preventing her from leaving her home. She was isolated, low in mood, prone to negative thinking patterns and self-harm. Her relationship with her partner was becoming volatile, and she had attempted to take her own life. Caroline's first PAM score was 45.3, a PAM Level 1.

Support

Caroline was supported by her Link Worker over a 12-month period, initially with intensive weekly appointments and reducing to 3-4 weekly appointments as her journey neared its end.

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A New Face - Ragen

Hello, my name is Ragen and I joined First Contact Clinical in May, as a Psychosocial Link Worker. My background is within the Ministry of Justice. I have many years' experience supporting people who have displayed challenging behaviour, mental health problems, and complex needs.

What I loved most about my role was helping to support people to make behaviour changes, that enabled them to progress and achieve the goals they wanted to, in a positive and safe way.

I have worked with people from a diverse range of backgrounds and I am a strong advocate for equality and diversity. It is something I have always been very passionate about, alongside mental health. This is why I then decided to further my education in health at degree level.

I am very excited to be embarking on my new adventure within the FCC team. I hold a firm belief that with the right support and tools anybody can make positive lifestyle changes, that allows them to live a happier and healthier life.

Ps I love cake but I can't bake, so if I offer you a piece of banana loaf in the tea room... make sure you have a napkin handy!





FIRST CONTACT CLINICAL
ENABLING HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Caroline's story, continued.

Caroline and her Link Worker worked through problem-solving techniques to resolve practical problems and as a result maximised financial income through welfare benefits. Caroline also had a self-employment idea which, through goal-planning and confidence-building, she has taken forward and now operates her own bath bomb business from home.

Caroline was supported by her Link Worker to explore the clinical interventions available to support her mental wellbeing and through engagement with Primary Care and is now prescribed medication which helps her to manage her mood. She has also been connected to Secondary Mental Health services and is awaiting an intervention from them.

A large proportion of the work between Caroline and her Link Worker involved developing coping strategies to manage anxiety, including some graded exposure work. As a result, Caroline is now able to leave the house to do stalls for her business, attend appointments, go food shopping, walk her dog and visit friends & family. One of these coping strategies involved saving money toward purchasing a car so that Caroline has control over her ability to leave a space quickly if she feels overwhelmed or unsafe. Caroline has now purchased a car and this has enabled her to leave the house more, going further afield.

Alongside developing coping strategies, Caroline's Link Worker supported her with Tier 1 CBT techniques to be able to challenge her own thought processes, rationalise her thinking and be able to modify her behaviour and responses. This has enabled her in particular to rebuild relationships with others, in particular her close family, and is supporting the growth of the relationship with her partner.

Caroline was also supported by her Link Worker to complete a Wellness Action Recovery Plan (WRAP) so that she is able to recognise and avoid triggers, recognise a "dip" in her mental wellbeing and takes positive and proactive steps to support herself.

Achievements:

Almost a year to the day of first engaging with the project, Caroline discharged herself with immense thanks for the support she had received. She shared...

"If someone told me a year ago this is where I would be today, I wouldn't have believed them. I wish I could speak to the people you are going to see next, to tell them how much a difference this will make to their lives."

Caroline's final PAM was scored at 75 points, a PAM Level 4.

Next steps:

Caroline has been connected with Cultural Spring in South Tyneside with a view to leading on some tutorials/sessions to show others how to make the products she makes for her business. This draws on her skill-sets in her crafty hobby as well as her skills as a teacher.

Caroline is also on a waiting list with Secondary Care mental health services to receive further support but has the skills and motivation required to self-manage whilst she awaits this intervention.

In the words of the people we work with:

"You just gave me more ideas on how I can make things easier for myself. Made me push harder."

"Thank you very much for these calls, I feel noticed and it gives me the drive to get things done."

"I just want to say many thanks and that you have a great telephone manner. It really lifted my mood just to talk to someone who really wanted to help."

"My mam told me about you, she said you were a great listener and she is right. Thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it."

"Thanks for everything. I feel better after we talk. You put me on different paths to get me sorted".

"I feel more confident now after talking to you. You've made me see that I can help myself in some ways."

Feedback from a GP

"He is very happy with the social prescriber. He is a nice fellow, listens, can talk to him. He feels he is making progress."

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Working with Less Activated Groups

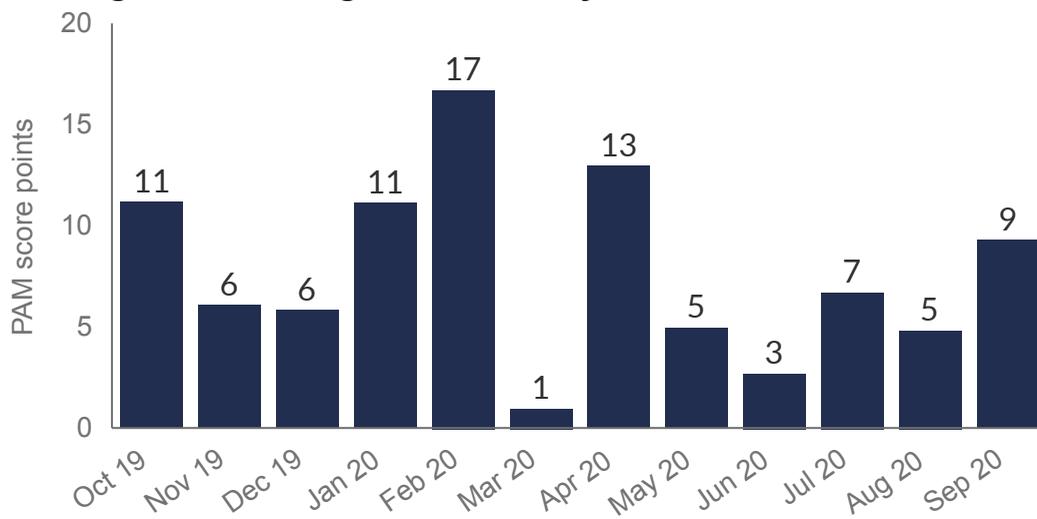
People with a lower level of activation often feel overwhelmed by the task of managing their own health. They may not believe that they have an important role to play. They typically say "I just do what the doctor tells me", but struggle to adhere to recommended self-care behaviours (such as taking their medication as prescribed or eating a healthy balanced diet).

They often have a lot of experience of 'failing' to adhere to doctors' advice and may have become passive or lost hope. Sometimes they prefer to avoid thinking about their health as they lack the confidence and knowledge to practice self-management behaviours.

Our link workers deliver tailored interventions which introduce the opportunity for these individuals to experience success through increasing motivation and setting realistic goals. Achieving simple goals provides the foundation to grow confidence and to build up to bigger goals.

Those who start with a lower level of activation show the most improvement with targeted interventions, as they have the most to gain. The graph below shows average PAM increases achieved by people who were initially a Patient Activation Measure Level 1 or 2 when they first entered our service.

Average PAM Change Achieved by Initial PAM Levels 1 and 2

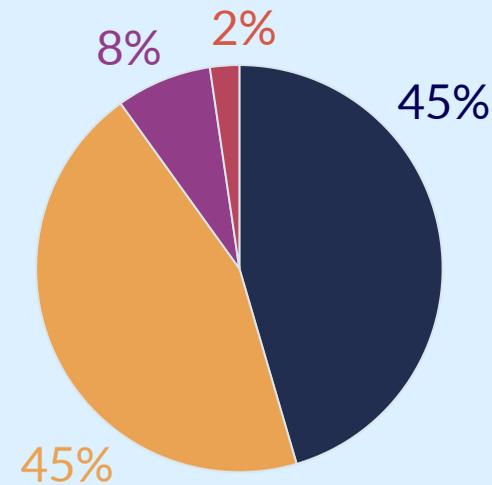
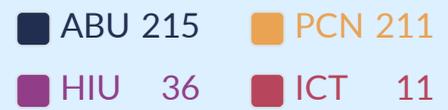


What does an increase in PAM score mean?

An increase in PAM score is associated with a reduction in medication use, reduced frequency of accessing unplanned care, better LTC outcomes, better interactions with healthcare providers, increased satisfaction with healthcare and more proactive and preventative actions in managing their own health.

What's keeping us busy?

We are currently supporting 473 people across our services in South Tyneside.



A gentleman was referred to us in October 2019 through our Integrated Care Team pathway. Initially a PAM Level 1 (39.1), he was feeling low due to his limited mobility.

With the support and encouragement of his link worker, he began to build confidence and motivation to practice walking at home. He is now walking twice a day and says he is 'slowly but surely' getting there! His mood is greatly improved and he experiences less pain. He is now a PAM Level 3 (58.1).

