

## Healthier South Wirral

Healthier South Wirral is a Primary Care Network (PCN) of seven practices made up of Spital Surgery, Civic Medical Centre, The Orchard Surgery, Allport Surgery, Eastham Group Practice, Parkfield Medical Centre and Sunlight Group Practice supporting 49,356 people. Through working collaboratively, the PCN has been able to implement a number of key projects which are making a real difference, not only to the day to day working of the practices but most importantly to the patients the practices serve.

Dr Thomas Wyatt, one of Healthier South Wirral's Clinical Directors (pictured right), said, "There is already so much great work going on out there, both in our health and care services as well as our local communities. But we need a place to pull it all together, where nobody has to do everything but everyone is able to do something to help people in our communities stay well for longer."



By encouraging better conversations and new relationships, both patients and those who work in health and social care are able to focus on what matters, what is currently working and how together we can create new solutions.

To help improve access to mental health care we were able to trial the use of a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner within General Practice. This member of staff was able to see people sooner and deliver group educational sessions. Our experience of this role has been used to inform our future local service design.

To help relieve the pressure on our GPs and expand our team we are developing new patient services with our team of Physician Associates. These individuals work alongside our GPs and help to care for people in care homes and the housebound, they also support those recently discharged from hospital and those attending the surgery when unwell.

Supporting our Physician Associates we have an established Clinical Pharmacist team who provide patient care both within our GP Practices and Wirral University Teaching Hospital. Sharing a workforce with our local hospital has helped us build stronger relationships that have already started to deliver closer working.

Working as a network has also enabled the Practices to build new partnership with our voluntary sector organisations. We are working with Age UK to extend a frailty pilot that provides early help to frail patients. A Personal Independence Coordinator (PIC) was appointed to help people in their own homes. The work focussed on being person centred and looked at how non-medical interventions could be used to improve quality of life.

The team worked with an 85-year-old patient who had used 10 GP appointments in just three months for recurring urinary tract infections (UTI). The PIC worker worked

in collaboration with the patient to increase education on the importance of hydration and even provided a measuring water bottle to ensure the patient was drinking enough. As a direct result of this the number of GP appointments needed for this patient reduced by half and she hasn't had a UTI in two months.

Following the pilot, the network has seen between 50 and 87% reduction in GP appointments in this group of patients and a 25% reduction in unplanned admissions to hospital in the patients who took part in the pilot.

Dr Wyatt added "The important thing we have learned in our PCN journey so far is to listen to stories, use data and improve the environments we live and work in. Also we don't actually have to agree on everything – as long as we're moving in the right direction together."