



# An Apple A Day

Newsletter for patients registered at GP Surgeries in Hitchin,  
Whitwell and at Bridge Cottage (Welwyn)

## HWPCN

**Hitchin & Whitwell  
Primary Care Network**

Welcome to the first newsletter from HWPCN!  
We plan to produce these quarterly and would welcome your feedback on this issue as well as ideas on what you might like us to cover in future.



## What is HWPCN?

Hitchin and Whitwell Primary Care Network is a group of GP Practices who are working together to provide new services for our whole patient population. The member Practices are:

- Bancroft Medical Centre, Hitchin
- Bridge Cottage Surgery, Welwyn
- Portmill Surgery, Hitchin
- Regal Chambers Surgery, Hitchin
- Whitwell Surgery, Whitwell

We cover a patient population of around 63,000.

Services such as Clinical Pharmacists, First Contact Physiotherapy, Social Prescribing and Care Home Frailty nursing are provided at a PCN level.

A great example of the PCN working together was the local Covid Vaccination Clinic which ran from Courtenay House Surgery, part of Bancroft Medical Centre. Bancroft kindly provided the building space but the clinic was staffed from across the whole PCN and patients from all Practices were invited.

Working with a tireless team of volunteers provided through Hitchin Rotary Club, we vaccinated 22,673 people in six months, whilst keeping existing services going too!

### Key contacts are:

Clinical Director – Dr Tara Belcher (Portmill Surgery) [hwpcn.cd@nhs.net](mailto:hwpcn.cd@nhs.net)  
PCN Manager – Angela Garrod [hwpcn.admin@nhs.net](mailto:hwpcn.admin@nhs.net)



# Social Prescribing

You may have heard of HertsHelp, a service which provides support with non-medical issues such as housing, befriending and financial concerns.

HPWCN has two social prescribers – “HertsHelp on legs” - called Tracy Haygarth and Natalie Kelly. In this issue we have interviewed Natalie to get to know her and what she does for patients...

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## "No-one needs to feel alone"

### Who are you?

My name is Natalie Kelly and I am the Social Prescribing GP Link Worker for the PCN. I am someone who has a passion for working with people and a keen interest in mental health and the effects our relationships and environment can have on our physical and mental health.

### How did you get here?

I started work as a carer. I really loved the work. Over time, my career moved me first towards office management and then to community engagement within a construction company. I could never ignore the passion I had for wanting to help people so the community engagement aspect of this job and working with people who were struggling motivated me into seeking work that served people more.

My heart is with people and service, so this job is perfect and like a dream come true. When I saw the post advertised, I knew it was what I wanted to do. My work is more than a job - it is central to me as a person. I am passionate about preventing loneliness because of the impact it can have on mental health, and volunteer for the charity ReachOut ([www.reachoutuk.org](http://www.reachoutuk.org)).

I have been in post for about two months, but the role of Social Prescribing GP Link Worker has been around for about two years and there are also Community Navigators that do similar work too.

### What does A Social Prescribing GP Link Worker Actually do?

We help patients with non-clinical community services, so anything in their lives that can't be prescribed in a bottle or helped with a pill. So, we can help those who are socially isolated and put them in touch with local groups, or help them with finding debt advice, housing advice, carer support, benefit entitlement or applying for blue badges. A social prescriber provides a listening ear and can be a main point of contact for all the organisations out there and be a support for patients in finding their way through problems.

I do not have a ready-made solution to each patient's problems, but I am here to listen and support them. There is nothing they cannot talk about and we are there to give them time and space to identify what they need – no matter how big or how small their problems. No one needs to feel alone. Anyone in a surgery can make referrals so patients can ask for support that way or they can contact HertsHelp directly (0300 123 4044) and they will make the referral to a Community Navigator or one of the Link workers.



## The best part of your job so far?

It is connecting with patients and being able to offer time for people to talk and supporting them to identify what is troubling them and what might help them recover. I have been so inspired by so many patients already and their determination to improve their life despite their struggles. It is so rewarding and an honour to help them move forward.

Then there is the great team. It is fantastic to work with colleagues in both HertsHelp and the PCN where everyone has the same values and the drive to help people. And, finally, finding out about all the great organisations that offer so much in the community – both large and small.

## Is there a highlight you would like to share?

Well, there have already been lots of amazingly positive experiences, but I can think of someone who had been a carer for a long time and had lost themselves in the process. With support, they were able to rediscover a hobby and are now meeting others who have similar interests two or three times a week.

It has transformed them.

## Contact Herts Help via:

**Website:** [www.hertshelp.net](http://www.hertshelp.net)

**Telephone:** 0300 123 4044

**Email:** [info@hertshelp.net](mailto:info@hertshelp.net)



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## Phone lines and booking appointments

We know it can be hard to get through to Practices at the moment as there is a huge demand for appointments. We are looking at a new cloud based telephony system to help with this. Please be kind to our Reception staff when you do get through - they are doing their best under pressure! To support them, we are arranging PCN-wide training on Conflict Resolution, and all Practices operate a zero-tolerance policy regarding aggression toward us and our staff.

Please be aware that appointments are time-limited and booked at intervals which are considered safe to manage **ONE PROBLEM** thoroughly. If you have more than one issue to discuss, you may be asked to make another appointment.

Practices do not have access to the hospital appointment system. You can contact the Lister on 01438 264444 for queries about appointments. Please contact your specialist's team directly for results of any tests ordered by them.

Most Practices are offering eConsultation, a great way to access non-urgent written advice about medical problems. Please be mindful that each eConsultation takes time for staff to read and reply to and consequentially there may be fewer telephone and face to face appointments.



## Healthy Memory Café

Last month saw the opening of the Healthy Memory Café, a monthly meet-up for people with memory loss or dementia and their carers. These sessions offer a cuppa, chat, information and support from professionals, and are held in the Create Community Hub Letchworth from 10-12 on the last Thursday of every month.

For more info contact 01462 792190.



## Looking Ahead

To meet growing demand for mental health services we are planning to introduce new staff roles, one focussing on children and young people and another offering health and wellbeing coaching.

We hope this extra support will make a real difference to patients who are finding life challenging.

**Better Health** every mind matters

Discover simple steps to help look after your mental wellbeing

Search Every Mind Matters

**NHS**



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