



An Apple A Day

Newsletter for patients registered at GP Surgeries in
Hitchin and Whitwell

HWPCN

**Hitchin & Whitwell
Primary Care Network**

Welcome to the fifth newsletter from HWPCN!

We are delighted to welcome Regal Chambers and Whitwell surgeries back into Hitchin and Whitwell Primary Care Network and we hope that we can work together to bring new and better services to our patients!

ENHANCED ACCESS SERVICE

Our last newsletter, in November 2022, focused on the development of our Enhanced Access service.

The service went live on 1st April 2023 and is offering appointments for HWPCN patients on **Monday – Friday evenings from 6.30pm -8pm and Saturdays 9am – 5pm**. We always have a GP during these hours, and a variety of our other clinicians are available.



Appointments are **face-to-face** unless otherwise requested by the patient.

Enhanced Access runs from Portmill Surgery, 114 Queen Street, Hitchin and you can book appointments by contacting your usual registered surgery.

The staff have access to your records and offer a full range of NHS services including ear syringing, cervical screening and wound care.



PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP MEETING

Following our well attended face-to-face meeting in November about Enhanced Access, and after discussion at our recent on-line Patient Participation Group (PPG) meeting, HWPCN have organised two face-to-face PPG meetings on Thursday 15th June at Hitchin Town Hall in the Lucas Room.

We will have two events – one from 1-2pm and repeated from 6.30-7.30pm. You only need to come to one of them!

Clinical Director Dr Tara Belcher will give a brief update on the PCN and then the floor will be open for discussions. Refreshments will be available.

There are 60 spaces at each event but you must book in advance and tickets are first come, first served. In the event of unexpected demand we will try to schedule another event. Free tickets are available online at Eventbrite:

Click to book 1-2pm session

Click to book 6.30-7.30pm session

We have reserved some spaces for patients who don't have on-line access – just ask your surgery to pass your details to the PCN!



FIRST POINT PHYSIO

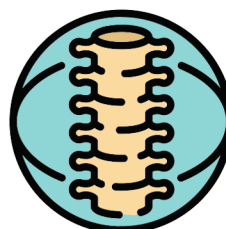
Our first contact physio provider has changed to Pure Physio. They have a fantastic website with lots of self-help resources. [Click here to view.](#)

Our current physios are Ed (pictured) and Raksha.

Currently, all physio appointments run out of the Treatment Centre (Portmill Surgery annexe).

We have appointments every weekday and hope soon to offer Saturdays and one evening per week.

Our physios are experts in assessing and diagnosing musculoskeletal problems, such as back and joint pain, and you can book to see them directly with Reception, without seeing your GP first. Our physios can order X-rays and refer on to secondary care where appropriate.

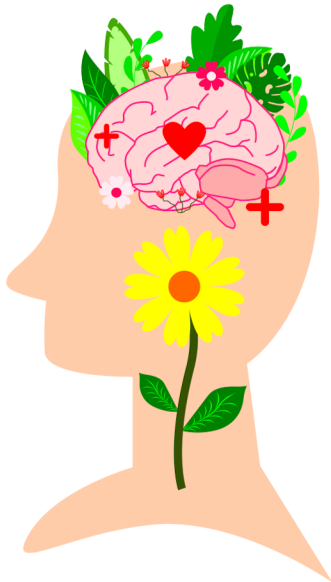


MENTAL HEALTH



A fantastic new addition to our team is Joscelyn, our mental health practitioner.

Joscelyn sees patients aged 18 and over with low mood, anxiety, ADHD screening and eating disorders. She works closely with GP Plus, our in house link to secondary care mental health services. Patients with mental health concerns as listed can book directly with Joscelyn without seeing their GP.



We still have our super Health and Wellbeing coaches at The Sadie Centre (previously Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living). These are accessed either via GP Plus or our social prescribing team.

For young people aged 11-25, we have coaching via GRIT charity. GRIT takes referrals from all HWPCN practices, local school and self-referrals.

Sometimes, non-medical problems, such as loneliness and isolation, can really impact on ones physical and mental health.

You can find support for these sorts of problems from our social prescribing team.

Your receptionists can refer you to Tracy or Dhruva who will take a holistic view of your situation and offer non-medical interventions, guidance and support.

You can also self refer to HertsHelp 0300 123 4044.



YOUNG PERSONS
HEALTH & WELLBEING COACHING



Are you aged between 11 – 24 years?



Do you struggle with anxiety, self-esteem, negative thoughts, or anger?



Do you have a goal you are struggling to achieve?

COACHING CAN HELP!



Support for you based around YOUR goals!



Become the person you want to be!

Scan in the code to contact our Coaching Service.



Connect with us at: gritcharity.org
or contact us at: grithello@gmail.com



or follow us on facebook & instagram at: [/gritcharity](https://www.facebook.com/gritcharity)

GRIT; GROWING RESILIENCE IN TEENS

Proudly working in partnership



OTHER NEWS

Our well established clinical pharmacist team is expanding – watch this space!

HWPCN has set up a limited company, H&W Health, in order to have a simple way to employ our shared staff. We have a new business manager, Jodie Toomey, who started with us on 1st February 2023 and we are currently recruiting an operations manager.

If you see the following logo, rest assured it is still your local GP surgeries.



Don't forget to book your space at one of our PPG meetings – see the links above!

Interview with Dr Tara Belcher – Clinical Director of the Primary Care Network



“I love being a GP. I feel so privileged. This is my passion and I have to say that is the best part of my work.”

Tell us a bit about yourself and how you ended up in this role?

I was born and raised in Hartlepool by my mother (an NHS nurse) and my grandmother. It was never a question about whether I would be a doctor, it was just instilled in me that that was what I was going to do. I went to local state schools and trained to be a doctor in Cambridge and the Royal Free in London before moving to Lister Hospital in Stevenage for a House Officer job before starting my GP training. My last year of training was at Portmill Surgery where I have been ever since, twenty years, and I am now a GP Trainer and the Senior Partner.

I am married with two children (both at University). We have three Ukrainian refugees living with us, a dog and a turtle [don't ask!].

I took on the role of Clinical Director for the first time about four years ago, soon after the Primary Care Network (PCN) was formed, because I felt the role would give me a greater voice in advocating for patients and their needs.

Please give us a little background on the Primary Care Network

Our PCN was set up about four years ago and brings the surgeries in Hitchin and Whitwell together (just over 47,000 patients). One of the advantages of having a grouping of several practices is that we can fund additional services that a surgery on its own could not afford, for example a physiotherapist. We can also to share ideas and best practice. It means we can better serve the needs of our local community and have more of a voice in the wider healthcare community.

...interview continued

What does your role involve?

I, and my small team, coordinate the work of our PCN. I enable the practices in deciding where our priorities lie and where we think the funding we have available is best spent and then I am responsible for implementing those decisions. I speak to Directors in other PCNs to share ideas and good practice. There is also the mundane work like preparing contracts, such as those for our physiotherapist, our Mental Health worker and the Pharmacists.

I act as a voice of the PCN at regional meetings.



What made you take on the role?

I used to go to regional meetings where people would come and give talks and I would find myself saying "But why don't you do it like this". I realised that if you want to make change you have to do it from the inside. When you have clinical experience and say "That is not what I am seeing on the ground" at meetings, then people listen. I felt I could make a difference.

I think that at higher level things get discussed that we pushed for as a PCN. So, for example there is going to be an open access pathway for patients with heart failure to have a scan rather than them having to go through consultants first. Also, patients in our area currently have to go to Hertford County for scans for osteoporosis and there is now a plan to have a local scanning machine.

What have been the best part of your role so far?

I love being a GP. I feel so privileged. This is my passion and I have to say that is the best part of my work. After twenty years at Portmill I have seen some of my patients since they were conceived, and they are now adults. I know their families and can put their needs into context. This is so important to me. I think staying in a place and getting to know your patients is of immense importance. I don't think I would get the job satisfaction by moving from practice to practice. As the Clinical Director, being able to use this knowledge and experience, and the similar knowledge of my colleagues, to inform policy and where funding is placed is really important to me.

What are you most proud of?

I suppose the real highlight has to be the COVID vaccination programme which was phenomenal. I have never done anything like it, and I don't suppose I ever will again. It was a really great example of collaborative working because we staffed it across the practices. People worked with staff they had never worked with before and they loved it. The atmosphere was fantastic even though it was a scary time for everyone. It was so uplifting, especially at the beginning when elderly people were coming in, who had not been out for over a year, saying "This is changing my life". I am so proud of how it went. It was an amazing experience and so positive.

...interview continued

We could not have done it without the Rotary Club. They coordinated the wonderful volunteers, I didn't have to think about it. We realised some people couldn't walk up the hill so a local shop supplied wheelchairs and other companies let us use their car parking spaces. On the first day we had a queue, and it was freezing cold. So I put out a post on social media and Hitchin BID got us some gazebos and a local pub chain got us some heaters. We set up some tents and the patio heaters so queuing was more bearable. It was all the local community pulling together, literally overnight. It was amazing.

What do you find are the biggest challenges?

There is never enough money to do everything you want for patients so there are always choices to be made.

I wish it were possible to get more of a patient voice into the system, but people are busy. I do try to listen to what patients say. For example, we kept hearing how bad our phone system was, so we are changing it across all the practices in the PCN.

The bigger the Patient Participation Group the more representative the voice, so we are doing all we can to widen involvement. I hope reading this article will inspire a few more of you to become involved in the patient participation group and influence change. Links to booking are in the newsletter (above).

With grateful thanks to Jennifer Piggott for undertaking this interview and staff interviews in our previous newsletters.



Better Health every mind matters **NHS**

Take this moment to focus on your

breathing

Search Every Mind Matters
for your personalised Mind Plan.



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