

**NHS PRESS RELEASE**

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## **A SMARTER WAY TO DELIVER GP SERVICES? HALTON trials new NHS pilot schemes**

### **PHOTOCALL/FILMING INVITATION**

**Launch of the £1.54 m primary health care trial at a “Christmas Connect” community event with over 100 Halton residents. Event includes community carols, Xmas lunch, wheelchair rugby....**

**Date: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. 10.30am – 2.30pm**

**Place: Halton Stadium, Lower House Lane, Widnes WA8 7DZ**

**Contact: Lynn Pegler, Pegler Communications, mobile 07783 686246**

A £1.54 million grant from the Prime Minister’s Challenge Fund (PMCF) has been awarded to the borough of Halton to trial a package of new services designed to make better use of local health resources.

The Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), GPs, pharmacies and community groups are piloting innovative ways of delivering healthcare to local people. As NHS services are placed under greater pressure from tighter budgets and a growing elderly population, Halton is one of eight boroughs within the North West leading the way in trialling new schemes aimed at improving access to local GP services.

Demand for health services has increased dramatically in recent years. The number of retired people (over 65) in Halton has grown by 19% since 2009 and this percentage is predicted to increase by a third in the next ten years. By 2025 it is likely that nearly a fifth of Halton residents will be over 65, placing tremendous pressure on both hospitals and GP surgeries.

Runcorn GP Dr Gary O’Hare, clinical lead for the project, said:

“There is a national recognition that we need to think of smarter ways to deliver healthcare. Halton has been fortunate to receive one of only 57 grants nationally from the Prime Minister’s Challenge Fund

“Local GPs are committed to ensuring health services meet the needs of the population now and into the future. In order to understand how we can improve services, we have designed a number of projects to trial delivering services in a different way.

“We have come up with three schemes aimed at testing different approaches to improving access to GPs, a project to make better use of local pharmacists’

expertise and a truly innovative approach to healthcare which tackles isolation and loneliness by promoting the valuable work of community groups”

Throughout the trial, there will be around 200 extra pre-bookable GP appointments each week available at selected practices in both Widnes and Runcorn. A new online ‘virtual doctor’ scheme has also been introduced in four GP practices, giving patients online access to their own doctor.

Eleven community pharmacies are currently helping adults with chronic lung conditions to improve their use of inhalers. In the New Year, pharmacists will be visiting several local schools to deliver workshops to children with asthma, offering advice on improving inhaler technique and how to keep well with asthma.

And ‘Patient Connect’ is combating loneliness and isolation by supporting more than two dozen community groups and activity sessions for all ages.

The trial programmes are all being monitored and evaluated by experts from the University of Chester and members of the public are invited to provide feedback.

Leigh Thompson, Halton CCG Director of Commissioning, added: “We have about a year to assess the effectiveness of all these pilot projects. Those that are clearly making a difference and are popular with patients will hopefully continue in the future, subject to further funding being secured.

“We would welcome feedback from all our patients and people will soon be able to tell us what think through a special page on the Halton CCG website. [www.haltonccg.nhs.uk](http://www.haltonccg.nhs.uk).

**For more media information, please contact Lynn Pegler,  
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*On behalf of Halton NHS Clinical Commissioning Group*

## **Note to Editors**

**Halton NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) is funding five projects through the Prime Minister’s Challenge Fund.**

1. **Widnes GP Extra:** A new out-of-hours service – ideal for busy people

An extra 98 doctor appointments are available each week to patients registered at the nine Widnes GP surgeries. This is a normal GP service which operates in the evenings and at weekends from the Widnes Healthcare Resource Centre, on Caldwell Street, just behind the Council office buildings.

*Address: Widnes Healthcare Resource Centre, Oaks Place, Caldwell Road, Widnes, WA8 7GD.*

The service provides routine bookable appointments to all patients registered in Widnes. Patients will not necessarily see their own doctor but they will see a local doctor. Appointments must be booked through a patient's usual GP practice booking service. The extra service will be available until November 2016.

**Clinic times:**

Mon-Fri (6.30-9.00pm) 10 appointments available each evening.

Sat and Sun (9am-3.30pm) 24 appointments available each day.

2. **Runcorn Extended Access (Brookvale Medical Centre):** Extra appointments at busy times

Two extra nurses and an extra doctor have been recruited to provide 110 additional appointments each week at the Brookvale Medical Centre. The centre is also carrying out targeted health reviews and screening for conditions such as diabetes, bowel cancer and obesity.

Extra sessions are being provided on the centre's busiest days – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Patients also now have the option of attending a clinic on Saturday mornings (9am – 1pm) too. At the moment this service is only open to registered patients of Brookvale Medical Centre.

***For more information or to make an appointment, contact the Brookvale Medical Centre on 01928 718182.***

3. **E-Consultation:** A new online 'virtual doctor' service

This is a new online service which is available 24/7. Ideal for busy people with minor ailments. It is currently available to patients registered at:

1. Grove House, Runcorn
2. Beeches Medical Centre, Widnes
3. Murdishaw, Runcorn.
4. Due to join - Appleton Village Surgery, Widnes.

Other GP practices may join the scheme soon.

As well as advice on some 100 common ailments eg. hay fever, back pains, chesty coughs, the new service now means that sick notes, referral letters, medical reports and prescriptions for diagnosed conditions are all available without the need to attend a face-to-face GP appointment. Access is via each individual GP practice website and patients are guaranteed a response by the next working day.

**4. Community Pharmacy**

Halton pharmacists have a wealth of medical expertise which could lighten the load on GPs and local hospitals.

The Prime Minister's Challenge Fund is engaging Halton pharmacies to extend the services they can offer, targeting three main health conditions: breathing difficulties, blood pressure and heart conditions. Initial services developed will support adults and children living with chronic lung conditions. Services in development include screening for the heart condition Atrial fibrillation. Identifying patients with this condition early can prevent them developing long term complications such as strokes.

## 5. **Patient Connect:** Promoting health and well-being in the community

More than two dozen community-based projects are helping people connect with other residents in fun, engaging activities. Projects are particularly targeting young people, first time families and older people, and include training extra coaches for wheelchair rugby, a pensioners' Christmas party, promotional support for University of the Third Age, a support group for alcoholics and a community choir.

## Two 'Patient Connect' Case Studies

### 1. **Christmas Party for elderly people – combating loneliness and isolation (PHOTOS ATTACHED)**

**Village Life** is a group aimed at providing social activities for pensioners, based at the Castlefield Community Centre in Runcorn. It benefitted from a grant to provide a Christmas lunch and an afternoon of singing and dancing on Saturday 12 December.

Isolation and loneliness are common reasons for many patients making unnecessary appointments to see local GPs. By supporting voluntary groups, community organisations and charities, the project aims to signpost patients to other organisations for support and information which may be more appropriate to their needs. This has the double benefit of making vulnerable people happier and healthier, and reduces the call on a doctor's time.

The Village Life project helps Runcorn pensioners and is run by Maureen Hoyland. Maureen said: "You would be surprised by the number of elderly people that just don't get out. The Village Life Project organises various events and aims to overcome social isolation. The pensioners love it. We got about 80 people together for the Christmas lunch and it gave them a great opportunity to socialise."

Contact: Maureen Hoyland; 0151 511 7474

### 2. **'Big Christmas Sing' – combating loneliness and isolation**

A 'Big Christmas Sing' was held at St Michael's Church, Runcorn, on Saturday 12th December to bring together isolated members of the community for some musical Christmas cheer.

Isolation and loneliness – especially at Christmas - are common reasons for many patients making unnecessary appointments to see Halton doctors.

The 'Big Christmas sing', supported by the Patient Connect project brought together over 60 people of all ages and abilities from across the community.

The event was organised by Rob Littler of Victoria Music Ltd, a charity that promotes access for all to arts, irrespective of means, age or ability.

In preparation for the event, he organised workshops for a number of groups including pensioners, disabled people and stay-at-home mums and they all come together to perform on the big night.

“There are many people that feel isolated and lonely, and suffer from poor health because of it,” said Rob. “The Big Christmas Sing was an opportunity for people to come together and act as a reminder that they do not have to be alone.

“Loneliness can be debilitating but through this project we have brought people together, raised their personal esteem and shown that community does matter.”

Even the non-musically inclined got behind the project and made banners and decorations that were used to dress up the church. The ‘Big Christmas sing’ concert was recorded and copies given to participants as a memento.

Contact: Rob Littler; 01928 589880