

People's Stories



Healthworks
the community health charity



Patricia's Story: Accessing our Action On Diabetes programme



Patricia referred herself for support to help manage her diabetes better. She was receiving some support from Talking Helps Newcastle, this was to help her overcome her fears around leaving the house.

Patricia began weekly 1-2-1 phone call sessions on our Action on Diabetes programme. Throughout the programme, she was advised on what types of foods she should be eating and the foods which she should be avoiding and each week the Health Improvement Practitioner and Patricia agreed on a small realistic goal regarding her diet and health.

Throughout the programme Patricia achieved many goals; she limited the food and drinks which were high in sugar and began to read the nutritional labels on food packaging so she could make healthier choices. Patricia's HbA1c was checked before her last appointment with us; this had fallen from 97mmol to 80mmol and she told us that she had dropped her dress size to 16/18 which she was delighted with.

Patricia said *“I am over the moon at how far I have come since our first appointment. The help and support along the way has been invaluable. Not only has my physical health improved greatly but my confidence has increased incredibly. I am confident that I can maintain the changes I have made and keep improving health. My diabetes was out of control and I didn't know what I could do to change it. I now know that if I keep taking care of my health, I will reduce my risk of developing any future complications due to Type 2 Diabetes”*.

Ashleigh's Story: Breastfeeding support from our Amazing Start Team



Ashleigh was struggling to get breastfeeding established, having problems with breastmilk supply after breast surgery in the past. She gave birth in the middle of the Covid-19 lockdown, because of this there were no groups for Ashleigh to attend which meant she was missing out on peer support.

Ashleigh was also under the care of the infant feeding team at the RVI who put a feeding plan in place before Ashleigh and her baby left hospital. Our Amazing Start team called to offer support and continued having weekly telephone contact with Ashleigh. Through weekly telephone contacts, we supported her to follow her feeding plan, gave encouragement when things were tricky and supported her in her feeding choices.

Ashleigh also joined in with our virtual breastfeeding social group where she was able to speak to volunteers and other breastfeeding mams to access the peer support that she was missing. When we last spoke to Ashleigh she told us her daughter was 9 months old now and still breastfeeding alongside solid foods.

Ashleigh said –

"I was so anxious about trying to breastfeed and I never thought I would be able to exclusively breastfeed but with the amazing support I have received from Claire from the Amazing Start team it has been possible. The team put plans in place for me and really helped me establish a routine with my daughter. They also listened to my concerns and gave me advice. I can't thank them enough for supporting me and I can proudly say after a lot of hard work my daughter is exclusively breastfed."

Alan's Story: successfully quitting smoking with our support



Alan was 71 when he was referred into our stop smoking service through the NHS Targeted Lung Health Check programme.

Alan had smoked for over 50 years with only one attempt to quit previously. Alan suffered from COPD and Asthma and managed this with numerous medications. While carrying out the stop smoking assessment with Alan we spoke about barriers that have stopped him trying to quit in the past and how we could help him to overcome these and support him through his journey.

Alan chose dual treatment of a 25mg nicotine patch and lozenges to start with and over the 12 weeks we reduced his strength of nicotine.

Alan told us

“I didn’t think it was possible at my age to quit, I have smoked from being a young lad. I must admit I struggled in the beginning, but I can feel the difference in my chest and I am not coughing as much.”

James' Story: weight management support



James was 33 when he was referred to our service by his GP surgery after an appointment with his GP highlighting that he wants to; make lifestyle changes, wishes to lose weight and control his diet.

His weight on referral was 118kg with a BMI of 36 taking him into the obese category. James was around 76kg when he got married and it was his goal to return to this weight. Due to his hectic lifestyle James found himself very tired, he was grabbing food on the go and increasingly turning to takeaways for ease.

James told us his eating was often emotional either through, low mood, stress, anxiety or comfort. James completed food diaries and with the support and guidance from his Health Improvement Practitioner he made positive changes to his diet on a weekly basis. The main focus was to reduce unhealthy snacking and replacing with healthier lower calorie alternatives where possible; have more home cooked meals and increase fruit, vegetable and salad consumption.

James made significant changes which resulted in a dramatic 18kg weight loss during his 2months support. As his weight came off, he told us that his mood and confidence were becoming increasingly more positive.

James told us: *“As I lost weight my confidence improved and soon I would like to incorporate exercise into my life to continue the weight loss which will also help my mood and health”*

Jacqueline's Story: quitting smoking successfully during pregnancy



Jacqueline was a 24 year old pregnant lady, who was referred into the stop smoking service through Newcastle Central Midwives. Jacqueline was referred at the early stages of her pregnancy.

She smoked 10 cigarettes a day and would have her first within 5 minutes of waking. Although Jacqueline was still young in age she had smoked for over 10 years and had never tried to quit in the past.

Pregnant service users can only use certain NRT products. Jacqueline opted for dual treatment of a 16 hr patch and inhalator. She remained smoke free throughout her time with the service and was very proud of her achievements.

Jacqueline told us

"I have never tried to stop smoking before, I really didn't think I could do it. I couldn't have done it without the support and guidance from my smoking advisor," I am now smoke free and saving the extra money for when the baby is born"

Alice's Story: 1-2-1 support and becoming a Cancer Champion



Alice was a 62 year-old lady who lived alone. She had experienced several health problems, including treatment for breast cancer, which then led to problems with her bones. As a result, she had difficulty in walking. She was unable to get out and about, and she began to feel anxious and isolated. She also contracted Covid which had a massive impact on her mental health.

Alice contacted us and we offered video support chats to Alice and we also supported her to get involved in Life Kitchen cookery classes, which helped her meet up and keep in touch with other people.

She then trained virtually with our team to become a Healthworks Community Cancer Champion. Alice joined our network of trained Cancer Champions who have an active role to play in helping us spread the word about signs and symptoms of cancer and the importance of screening and how to reduce risk. This also provided regular opportunities for her to catch up by video with the team and other Champions.

As she was unable to get out and about walking, Alice also told us she really benefitted from viewing our virtual Wellbeing Walks series on YouTube.

Alice told us "I'm so happy to have this support. I battled with breast cancer and won. I do have reduced mobility and Covid 19 has further reduced opportunities for me to spend time outside, so the virtual walks have been wonderful—thank you so much. I have to say I do look forward to the cooking challenges and wonder what I'm going to make next!"

Paul's Story: 1-2-1 support with his diabetes



DIABETES

Paul was 61 when he was referred to our service by his GP, as he wanted guidance on his diet and wanted to lose weight. His HbA1c was high at 92mmol. Paul's GP had diagnosed Paul with Type 2 Diabetes and he was receiving medication to control it.

Paul was aware he needed to reduce his HbA1c and understood his diet would have to change along with losing some weight and increasing his physical activity. Paul had previously attended routine check-ups and had seen a deterioration in his health relating to Type 2 diabetes thus prompting him to make changes.

Paul completed food diaries and with the support and guidance from his Health Improvement Practitioner he made positive changes to his diet on a weekly basis. The main focus was to reduce the sugar in Paul's diet, alongside controlling portion sizes and limiting processed foods. By week 4 of the programme Paul had made significant changes to his diet including cutting back on high sugary foods and sticking with wholemeal carbohydrates. He had also increased his exercise by walking and gardening more. These changes saw a decrease in his weight and therefore increased his motivation.

At the end of the programme Paul had lost 5kg and reduced his HbA1c 67mmol. Paul felt much more confident making healthier food choices and was keen to try out the gym once Covid restrictions had lifted.

Thank you for reading our People's Stories

**Visit our website to find out more about the work we do
and the difference it makes to the health and wellbeing
of people in the region**

www.healthworksnewcastle.org.uk



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