

Using social prescribing to improve women's wellbeing in Stockport

Victoria Primary Care Network (PCN) and Boost Wellbeing CIC are addressing health inequalities in Stockport by collaborating across health and voluntary sectors.



BOOST



After seeing how their social prescribing programme has been making an impact, Niamh Carroll (Research and Evaluation Lead, GM Moving) explores the recipe for success behind this work.

Introduction

Taking a targeted approach is key to improving health and tackling inequalities in our communities. In central Stockport, the second most deprived area in the borough, women face significantly lower life expectancy than just a few miles away, making women's health a clear priority.

There are two local groups working to improve health through innovative collaboration, delivering a social prescribing programme for women going through the menopause. After seeing how their work is making an impact, I started to write this case study as guide for other partners to learn from. I have spoken with Steve Flynn (Boost CIC), Andrea Ferguson and Danielle Grundy (Victoria Primary Care Network) to learn how they have done this work, and what has made it a success.

This case study shows that by combining local insight, partnership, and practical support, local initiatives are helping women stay well and reduce health inequalities.

I'm sharing this case study so our partners can learn from this work, see the replicable approaches and witness the impact in action.



Contents:

- 1 The key catalysts**
- 2 System enablers**
- 3 Relational enablers**
- 4 The impact: system and human**

The key catalysts

Catalysts from all sides of this work are rooted in a passion for tackling inequalities.

The Primary Care Network

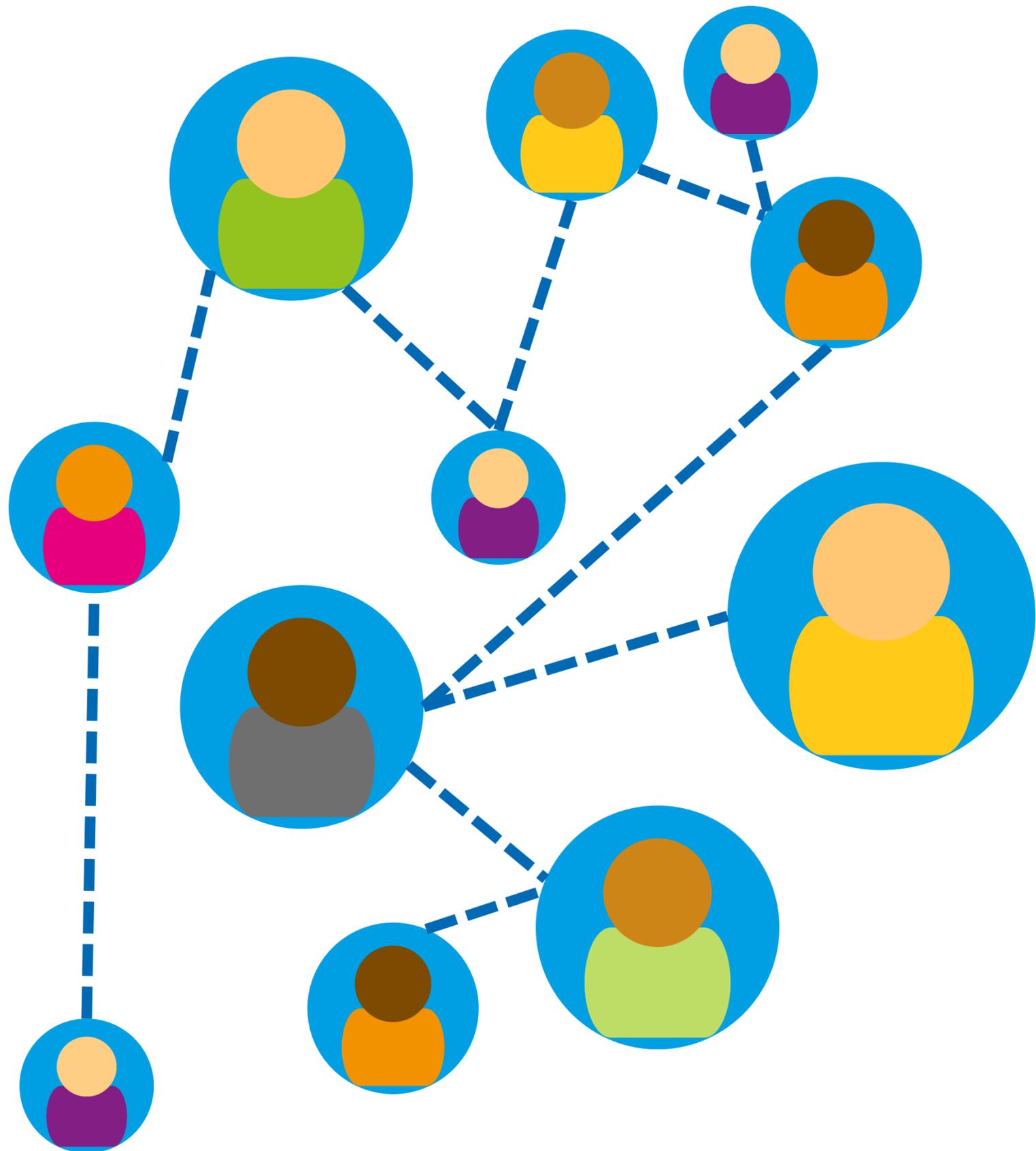
This PCN is passionate about women's health, and is open to new ways of working such as developing partnerships with community organisations.

The existing relationships

Relationships that already existed between local organisations and the health care system helped kickstart this work. These connections created strong opportunities for social prescribing initiatives, while lessons from other programmes showed the impact this approach can have in helping people become more active.

The community organisation

Boost Wellbeing CIC understand the sector and the role physical activity can play in health creation and prevention. It is driven by the passion of a community leader who wants to improve access to physical activity, particularly for people with mental and physical health conditions.



System enablers

Alongside passionate advocates, key enablers within the system have helped this work develop well.

Existing partnerships and connections in Stockport created opportunities for Boost to share their work, engage with healthcare providers, and identify PCNs ready for collaboration.

Flexible funding from Sport England, GM Moving's Tackling Inequalities Network and Live Well helped this work take off, adapt, and continue. Boost was able to adapt the sessions to the priority areas the PCN identified based on their demographic data.

The leadership and commitment of the PCN have been vital to the success of this work. Pushing through the challenge of understanding how different sectors work and finding the best way to integrate VCSE organisations into primary care projects enabled true partnership working. The PCN also played a key role in getting general practices to work together on an issue, identifying problems and solutions as a team.

Relational enablers

Boost's flexible and relationship-focused approach allowed the programme to adapt to the needs of the communities it served. The programmes have been created in welcoming and non-judgemental spaces centred around peer support. This meant changing session times so more people could take part and focusing on the groups the PCN wanted to reach.

The leadership of the PCN has taken this work beyond standard social prescribing. Victoria PCN has taken a lead in understanding the impact of these classes on their patients, exploring ways to capture the wider physical health outcomes from this work.

The multi-disciplinary team (MDT) approach was key to the project's success. People from across the sector, including the PCN, social prescribers, mental health practitioners, and VCSE organisations, worked together at every stage. This collaboration created a shared understanding of how the project should run and gave all partners a real stake in the work.

Each aspect of the project was done in partnership, enabled by trusted relationships, leaning on each other's expertise.



The impact: system and human

The impact on individuals and the wider system is clear...

Participants saw key improvements to their health and wellbeing as they were supported to engage with physical activity programmes designed specifically for their needs.

Highlighting how the targeted nature of the approach has contributed towards tackling a key inequality.

The wider impact on the system is clear. This approach to delivering social prescribing initiatives is setting a strong example for the future. Collaboration between the health and VCSE sectors is now seen as a key way to provide person-centred, targeted support and tackle health inequalities.

The project is a clear example of how we can shift to focusing on prevention and support innovation as stated in the NHS 4 ways forward.

Testimonials

I've absolutely enjoyed the classes! I've never stuck to going to the gym or exercise classes, but I've looked forward to these sessions with Cheryl! Over this year I've lost weight, so these classes have been great for me physically and mentally. The group were sad when they were coming to an end.

I feel like I've got my mojo back. I have really enjoyed the sessions and meeting new people.

I really felt the benefit physically and mentally. I'd never done any classes like that before so wasn't sure what to expect but I was pleasantly surprised at what I was able to do and how I developed over the 12 weeks. I certainly feel stronger and am sleeping better.