



Welcome to another edition of the South Tyneside newsletter. We have now completed our COVID-19 welfare calls to shielded and clinically vulnerable people, contacting a total of 4540 people over 48 days. All of our services are continuing to be delivered remotely, using telephone and video calls to connect to the people we work with. In this edition of the newsletter, we'd like to share an inspiring story from our Primary Care Network service, introduce you to a new member of the A Better U team and talk a little bit about how Patient Activation Measure scores could be affected by the current pandemic. We hope you enjoy! Best wishes from the South Tyneside team.

## The Impact - Our People

As a person-centred organisation, the positive impact of our work is best illustrated through the people we support and the changes they see in their day-to-day lives. Today's story comes from our Primary Care Network service.

### Meet "Robbie"

#### Background:

Robbie had a longstanding history of depression and anxiety. He had engaged with counselling in the past and had tried hard to increase his own knowledge and skills around mental health in order to practice self-care, however he felt that currently his anxiety was becoming worse. Due to COVID-19, he had a lot of work stress and was unable to see family. He also experienced a bereavement in this period.

#### Support:

Robbie's PCN link worker supported him to manage grief and the feeling of being overwhelmed due to increased pressure at work. Robbie was very anxious about being required to learn new systems and duties and this meant he was not sleeping well, so he had to take frequent sick days due to not being physically able to carry out his job.

With his PCN Link Worker, he did some cost benefit analysis around attending work and feeling overwhelmed versus taking some time off to get well. He felt he was unable to take 2 weeks off work to help manage his anxiety due to financial pressures as he would only be entitled to statutory sick pay hence why he was only having occasional sick days. His link worker supported him to develop some discrepancy around wanting to improve his mental wellbeing and attending work but not being able to carry out his role.

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### A New Face - Tyler

I joined the South Tyneside team on May 25th as a Link Worker Coach. I spent the previous nine years of my professional life in insurance, the last year specialising with only vulnerable customers. A great part of the company I worked for was their large CSR programme, of which I was an active member. This was as challenging as it was rewarding, it played a big part in my direction and give me greater understanding of what I wanted from my career.

I am in complete awe of the work that FCC do, to be part of the team makes me feel incredibly privileged. The passion, the purpose and devotion of the workforce that motivates the fundamental and necessary change into the lives of the people we work with, is what will no doubt be the driving force for my future here. In September I am embarking on a counselling degree, I am fascinated by the human mind and quite simply; why we do what we do. I see this complimenting my role and investing in myself will always a yes.

I have two beautiful daughters, Penny and Nina who I vow to empower through my actions, I love talking all things parenthood!

Far from being a yogi or as bendy as I'd like, I do enjoy yoga. I am a keen runner too but above anything, my true love is writing; please note: not about myself..





## Robbie's story continued...

At the next appointment, he informed his link worker that he was now being performance-managed at work and he was concerned that he may be asked to leave, so his anxiety had increased again. He was still not sleeping and had tried all the recommendations he had read about, such as avoiding caffeine and screen time before bed, blackout blinds, and so on. He had also sourced some NHS information around sleep but nothing at this stage helped. His link worker used the elicit-provide-elicit technique to provide information about an online CBT-i platform. Robbie was keen to speak to his GP regarding a referral.

Robbie and his link worker set weekly goals to support him to manage his anxiety using coping strategies, and to reduce isolation caused by COVID-19. Using a 'what matters to you' approach, Robbie's link worker identified that improving his mental wellbeing was the most important thing he wanted to work on. He was empowered to research private counselling services due to statutory services having a waiting list. He arranged a number of appointments to triage therapists. A solution-focused approach and motivational techniques were used to support Robbie to look at moving forward. Robbie and his link worker looked at his past successes to remind him that it was possible to improve his mood.

### Achievement:

Robbie decided to take some time off work to help manage his mental health. He has been referred to Sleep Station and is now attending private counselling, as well as continuing to engage with FCC.

Robbie's initial PAM score was 63.1 (Level 3), and although he is still a Level 3, his score has decreased to 60.6. This is not surprising given that he is now at risk of losing his job and is under considerable stress, however without this level of support his PAM score may have dropped significantly more.

### Why can a PAM score decrease?

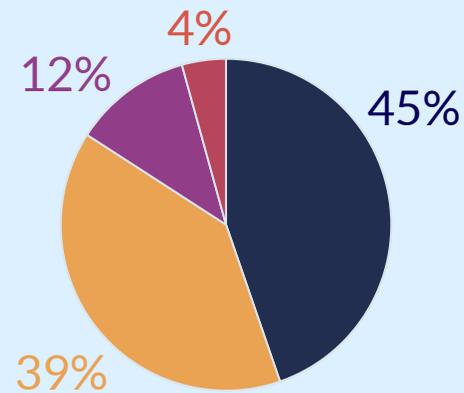
Patient activation is a dynamic concept, and therefore it is normal for it to fluctuate. If an individual receives a new diagnosis or experiences a complication with their health, they may have a temporary reduction in PAM score until they build knowledge, skills and confidence around managing the new health problem.

Experiencing stressful life events, like in the story above, can also negatively impact levels of activation, but working with a link worker can support the individual to develop skills and coping strategies for managing stress so that they can regain activation. We expect that some people will have experienced a decrease in activation due to the uncertainty and anxiety caused by the ongoing pandemic. Our link workers are supporting individuals to maintain their wellbeing and adjust to the 'new normal'.

## What's keeping us busy?

We are currently supporting 302 people across our services in South Tyneside.

■ ABU	135
■ PCN	119
■ HIU	35
■ ICT	13



## Virtual Group Consultations

Several of our link workers recently attended online training to learn about how group consultations can support long-term condition management and to learn how to effectively organise and deliver a good virtual group consultation.



Next month we will share how we supported an individual to move from PAM Level 1 (39.1) to Level 3 (58.1) between Oct '19 and July '20!

