

NAME

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ORGANISATION

Modality Partnership

POSITION

GP

SUMMARY

Niksham Healthcare, a not-for-profit organisation, and **Modality partnership**, a leading healthcare organisation, collaborated on a project aiming to address the complex lifestyle and environmental factors influencing chronic diseases. They offered patients a single 45-minute appointment which used motivational interviewing to support patients to take causes of their problems. Following this, patients were linked to local and community organisations and groups. Over 12 months, the GP surgeries noted a 30% reduction in the demand for GP appointments and this effect was sustained even 12 months after the one-off appointment.

OVERVIEW AND REASON FOR CHANGE

Long-term illnesses are an ever-increasing burden on health services worldwide. Often rooted in lifestyle and environmental factors, it is clear that NHS general practice needs to adopt a radically different approach to these complex issues. Busy clinicians and practice teams often **do not have the time or resources** needed to always address the root causes of our patient's illnesses, especially if the cause is largely social, behavioural or environmental. Healthy Lives is an **innovative pilot project**, developed jointly by Nishkam Healthcare Trust, a not-for-profit faith-based charity and Modality Partnership, a leading healthcare organisation. It is a **GP-led service** which aims to go beyond brief advice to bring out real transformative change for patients.

Through the service, patients see a GP for an **extended consultation to learn, plan and implement ways to improve their health** without further reliance on NHS services. They are then **linked with local health and social activities** and empowered to change their daily behaviours to improve health. This was done in a radically different way, using **behaviour change theory** and Nishkam's experience of meaningful community engagement as a trusted organisation passionate about selfless service for people from all walks of life.

WHAT DID YOU DO?

Individuals were offered a one-off 45-minute appointment using **motivational interviewing**, supporting patients to take responsibility and empowering patients to understand and address the root causes of their problems. The consultation model was based around the key question "what do you want for your life and health over the next five years?". As such, it was entirely person-centred.

This was followed by **social prescribing** to a wide range of **local activities** e.g. walking groups, emotional wellbeing groups, local English classes. The service is linked to **volunteer-led programmes** run by Nishkam and **other local community organisations**, including elderly befriending services, gym facilities, elderly day trips and volunteering. Medical prescriptions, hospital investigations and referrals were not available within this service.

WHAT HAPPENED?

The service was piloted for 12 months. In this time, we learnt what makes the difference between an effective and ineffective lifestyle medicine conversation. Crucially, we learnt how to help patients transform from people who just attend to people who change their lifestyle in radical and impressive ways. 220 patients were seen in the 12-month pilot between April 2017 and March 2018 and the results show this was hugely successful. Patients benefited from a **greater sense of wellbeing, community belonging**, and **reduction in illness**. Their GP surgeries benefited from a **30% reduction in demand for appointments** and **this effect was sustained** even 12 months after the one-off appointment. **Health outcomes improved**, including improvements in obesity and type 2 diabetes where 14 patients have improved their condition enough to reverse it to non-diabetic levels. This demonstrates the depth of impact from this innovative approach.

FINANCE AND COMMISSIONING

This service was set up with **NHS Vanguard funding** as part of broader changes and projects implemented by Modality Partnership. As that funding is no longer available the service has ended. However, the lessons learnt from this service are being used to inform the development of social prescribing and health coaching efforts locally.

NEXT STEPS: SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALABILITY

There is the potential for this type of service to be integrated within NHS general practice across the country to accelerate the impact of person-centred care and make general practice better suited to the modern burden of chronic lifestyle-related illnesses.

After the Healthy Lives project ended, we are now **running group consultations** for people with type 2 diabetes plus **running and facilitating several community-based activities** for the local population.

PATIENT STORIES

- A lady who was largely housebound for 18 months who now goes to the gym twice a week, goes to church and has lost 4kg in 6 weeks.
- Fourteen diabetic patients whose HbA1c readings have reached pre-diabetic levels.
- Many feedback comments such as “My life has totally changed” and “I feel like a new person”
- A lady who was contemplating suicide who destroyed her suicide note after attending the clinic appointment and feels a new sense of enjoyment in her life.

REFLECTIONS: TOP TIPS FOR OTHER GPs CONSIDERING SETTING UP SOMETHING SIMILAR:

- **Learn lifestyle medicine.** Numerous courses exist from different providers and there is always something to be learned from people with experience in this field. There is much more to lifestyle medicine than “eat less, move more”.
- **Learn motivational interviewing** to empower people and overcome barriers to behaviour change.
- **Taking the time to listen** and show genuine respect for someone’s experiences and ideas about their health is therapeutic time well spent.
- **Groups** are an efficient and effective way of empowering individuals where their goals are similar. This is remarkably straightforward to set up in primary care and is being done in many GP surgeries across the country.
- **Collaborate** with patients, colleagues and anyone else who has a passion to make lifestyle medicine work in your area. There are multiple ways to implement lifestyle medicine at different scales and what you do will be based on the assets available to you and the needs of your population.