



## CASE STUDY

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**COMMISSIONING BODY:** Cheshire and Merseyside Health Trainer Partnership

**TITLE:** Health Trainers and GPs: Making the links

**DESCRIPTION:** Since 2006 NHS Health Trainers (HT) have provided personal health support by working in the communities in which they live to develop patient health improvement plans to overcome individual barriers to healthier lifestyles. Although the programmes has been very successful in many areas, evidence from the HSJ suggested that that less than a quarter of those receiving HT services were referred through their GP. The need was therefore identified to raise the profile of HT's within primary care settings.

HM Partnerships commissioned a social marketing agency (Corporate Culture) to deliver a targeted social marketing campaign to engage GPs and practices across Cheshire and Merseyside in the HT agenda. In depth insight work was carried out to find out more about GPs, practice nurses and HT's, and the existing level of awareness of the HT agenda, prior to the campaign.

Five of the eight Cheshire and Merseyside were engaged in the insight phase of the work, this built a national and local picture and identified opinions and views of the service from GPs and other key partners.

**OUTCOMES:** In terms of benefits, Health Trainers were seen as new way of addressing health concerns, who can help patients focus on specific areas of their health that concern them. The insight also demonstrated that Health Trainers could be seen as bridging the gap between the community and the PCT. GP and Practice Nurses also liked the idea of giving patients a choice beyond medication, ultimately reducing 'revolving door' patients and helping patients see the surgery in a more positive light.

In terms of benefits for surgeries, many GPs could see that HT's will reduce surgery expenditure in the long-term as they are free to use and can help save money on prescriptions. Health Trainers were also seen as positive in helping surgeries to meet QoF and other targets. A further positive that was identified demonstrated how positive it would be to have all services in one place, with one referral that would potentially deal with a number of issues.

Some barriers to using the service that were identified include a view that the HT service is not proven in the long-term and there was some confusion over the skills

and the role of a Health Trainer. In some cases, uncertainty that the service can cope with lots of referrals was a barrier for some. Some GPs mentioned that they feel some patients want a quick fix to some issues e.g. medication for depression, rather than lifestyle guidance.

The key recommendations that came from the insight were:

- To develop a consistent look and feel core campaign, with a framework that would enable flexibility locally
- To develop a suite of consistent materials for GPs, Nurses, Patients and Practice Managers
- Reposition to focus less on the name of the service and more on the actual service
- Use a concise and short referral form – one was developed as part of the social marketing – to carry the project brand
- Set up a strong feedback system which delivers an end report to the referrer
- Invite PN's, GPs and Practice Managers to see HT's in action in the local community
- Attend protected learning events and PCT meetings to deliver presentations about outcomes and evaluation of HT services locally
- Build strong networks within the PBC team and emphasise the importance of the HT service in bucking a cut in budgets.

Findings from all the insight reporting were evaluated to inform a creative concept of design, the following branding was developed to recognise the work GPs do and HT's do, and how these services compliment each other.



A themed set of images to be used as part of the campaign were designed and put into an 'image bank' they consider the diverse mix of services offered by the different areas across Cheshire and Merseyside.

The decision was made to add further resources as part of the project to produce:-

- **A patient facing leaflet**  
This would give members of the public a good general overview of the services offered by the HT service. It would include a case study (where appropriate), methods of self referral and other generic information including contact details.

- **HT Powerpoint presentation**

To be used by Health Trainers themselves in delivering statistics, examples of current practice and services to the primary health setting, with a particular focus for practice meetings and protected learning events. Utilising the imagery from the brand name and the images used by the campaign, this would add relevance and further act as an engagement and information sharing tool. This template is flexible and allows, the images to be changed and images used from the 'image bank' that is provided with the finished resources. This would enable the HTs to use those images most relevant to their services e.g. weight management.

- **GP referral pad**

To be used to ease the referral process to the local service, this would contain all the relevant information needed by a HT, but still be simple enough to not add extra work to a busy GP. It would also include some general information about Health Trainers and be adaptable so that it can be tailored to meet the specific needs in an area.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** The final developed resources are available for use by any HT service or PCT, with personalisation and logos and contact details being added.

For more details or for copies of the set of resources please contact:

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