



**Pioneering Care Partnership
Annual Impact Report 2024-25**

www.pcp.uk.net
Registered charity no: 1067888



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

PCP 

**Health, wellbeing
and learning for all**



Our mission:
'Health, Wellbeing and Learning for All.'

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Heather Brewster, Chair of PCP Board of Trustees

The past year has been another period of successful change, development, and growth for PCP. We continue to thrive, supporting local people and communities.

After years of planning and months of building work, we were thrilled to unveil the newly refurbished Options Room and the completely renovated hydrotherapy pool at the Pioneering Care Centre. These spaces are designed not only to meet current needs but to serve future generations. In true PCP fashion, we sought the views of those who use these facilities, and their insights helped shape the outstanding results we proudly showcased during the official launch. It was a privilege to welcome HM Lord Lieutenant and the MP for Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor, alongside service users, partners, and funders.

Our projects and services continue to expand and we are committed to raising awareness, not only of our mission but of the impact we make. Our marketing team does a fantastic job of sharing our story, and I'm excited to see how this evolves.

At the governance level, we've refreshed our Board of Trustees with four new members, each bringing experience and a commitment to PCP. This brings our total to nine trustees, enriching our dynamic.

Each year, we carefully review our policies and governance systems. In 2024-25, we restructured our Sub Committees, introducing a new group focused on compliance and best practice. Looking ahead to 2025-26, trustees will work more closely with Senior Leaders by chairing the work of these committees.

Strong governance is the foundation of any successful charity. Equally important, however, are the high-quality, holistic, and evidence-based services we deliver. Every year, I'm inspired by the impact we have in helping people improve their health and wellbeing - and by how learning is embedded in everything PCP does. This success is driven by strong leadership, thoughtful planning, and the dedication of our skilled teams. I am grateful for their outstanding contributions and thank every single member of staff for their commitment.



Meet our Board of Trustees



Lynn Mohan



Mark Sacco



Anna Lynch



Melanie Fordham



Kevin Burton



Ian Cameron



Dame Dela Smith



Neil Hurst

Our Patron

Carol Briggs, along with a small group of local people, had an ambition of bringing health and social care services together to make them more accessible. This is how the Pioneering Care Centre (PCC) and the charity, Pioneering Care Partnership was born.

Appointed to the role of Patron in 2023, Carol enjoys this ambassadorial role which will continue to evolve.

During 2024-25, Carol attended a number of events and activities including the formal opening of the PCC renovations alongside His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant and the local Member of Parliament.



Chief Executive reflections – Embracing resilience, purpose and progress

As Chief Executive, I am proud to present this year's opening statement on behalf of our charity, PCP. An organisation rooted in the belief that **health, wellbeing, and learning should be accessible to all**. This past year has been one of both challenge and achievement, and I am continually inspired by the strength, compassion, and commitment of our people.

We have navigated a complex and often uncertain landscape, particularly in relation to funding. The evolving direction of the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) has introduced a level of unpredictability that has impacted planning and long-term sustainability. Short-term contracts have become the norm, placing pressure on our ability to forecast and invest in long-term solutions. Yet, despite these challenges, our mission has remained unwavering.

What has carried us through is the resilience and dedication of our staff and volunteers. Their ability to adapt, innovate, and maintain a strong, supportive focus on the people and communities we serve has been nothing short of remarkable. Whether

delivering frontline services, coordinating behind the scenes, or offering a listening ear, our teams have shown that even in times of uncertainty, our values shine through.



Team



Supportive



Making a
Difference



Friendly



Positivity

This year, we have continued to deliver holistic, person-centred services that empower individuals to take control of their health and wellbeing. From mental health support and physical activity programmes to learning opportunities and community engagement, our work has touched thousands of lives. We have seen people grow in confidence, overcome barriers, and build connections that foster resilience and hope; tackling loneliness and isolation is in our DNA.

Our commitment to learning and continuous improvement has also remained central. We have embedded reflective practice across our teams, ensuring that we listen, learn, and evolve in response to the needs of those we support.

We have also deepened our partnerships with local organisations, statutory bodies, and community groups. These collaborations have enabled us to extend our reach and amplify our impact. In a time when resources are stretched, working together has never been more important.

I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who makes our work possible:

- ✿ **To our Trustees:** thank you for your strategic guidance, your wisdom, and your unwavering belief in our mission.
- ✿ **To our Senior Leaders:** your support ensures we remain accountable, ambitious, and aligned with our values.
- ✿ **To our staff:** your professionalism, creativity, and compassion are the heartbeat of this organisation. You go above and beyond every day, and I am deeply grateful for your dedication.
- ✿ **To our volunteers:** your generosity of time and spirit is a powerful force for good. You bring energy, empathy, and a sense of community that enriches everything we do.
- ✿ **To our funders and stakeholders:** thank you for your trust and investment. Your support enables us to innovate, respond, and deliver services that make a real difference.

✿ **And to the communities we serve:** thank you for welcoming us into your lives. Your stories, your strength, and your aspirations inspire us to keep striving for a healthier, more inclusive future.

As we look ahead, we do so with cautious optimism. We will continue to advocate for sustainable funding models that reflect the long-term value of prevention and community-based support. We will continue to listen, learn, and adapt. And above all, we will continue to champion health, wellbeing, and learning for all, because everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive.

We have an exciting year ahead as we focus on co-producing our next strategic plan to further strengthen our direction and commitment to our charity purpose. Thank you for being part of this journey and I hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report which is only a snapshot of our impact.



PCP Chief Executive
carol.gaskarth@pcp.uk.net



About Pioneering Care Partnership



Our vision:

Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) is a multi **award-winning health and wellbeing charity** working across the North East and beyond. PCP aims to improve health and wellbeing through the development and provision of:

- 🌿 Services that **build capacity** with individuals and communities to improve their own health and wellbeing, and to have greater choice and control
- 🌿 Services that **tackle health inequalities**
- 🌿 **Locally accessible services** in community settings

Our mission is:

‘Health, Wellbeing and Learning for All.’

PCP is committed to improve lives by creating opportunities to improve the health, wellbeing and life chances of disadvantaged communities.

PCP overarching aims:

- 🌿 To promote **independence, choice and control**
- 🌿 To improve **lifestyle**
- 🌿 To increase **knowledge and skills**
- 🌿 To improve **physical health**
- 🌿 To improve **confidence, self esteem and wellbeing**
- 🌿 To improve **economic wellbeing**
- 🌿 To build **community capacity**
- 🌿 To improve **access to services for disadvantaged communities and groups**
- 🌿 To promote **social inclusion**



Meet our senior leadership team



Carol Gaskarth
Chief Executive



Liz Fisher
Deputy Chief Executive



Lindsey Wood
Wellbeing for Life Manager



Helen Dent
Project Development Manager



Bobby Hewitson
Project Development Manager



Melanie Bear
External Partnerships Manager



Jo Davies
Finance Manager



Sandra Roberts
Governance and Development Manager



Vicky Browning
Operations Manager



Gayle Goldsmith
Project Development Manager



In 2024-25, we have continued our mission to achieve our long term outcomes to create healthier and happier communities.

| Our impact

96%

of people who accessed a PCP service felt their independence increased



87%

of people found benefits to their overall lifestyle after attending a PCP service



95%

of attendees saw their knowledge and skills increase after PCP support



84%

had improved physical health after benefitting from a PCP service



91%

had increased confidence, self esteem and wellbeing after support



73%

of people found their financial wellbeing improved from support



53%

of people felt more connected to their community after accessing a PCP service



93%

found their access to services improved after support from a PCP service



87%

of people felt less socially isolated after attending a PCP service



251 volunteers donated **9,502 hours**

to support communities. This equates to an in-kind contribution of **£143,670** using the Real Living Wage Foundation as a benchmark.

738 people
benefitted from
hydrotherapy



12,358 people's
views were listened
to through Healthwatch

134,552 people
supported by dedicated
health and wellbeing activities



3,796 employees
received a health check
at work



365,348 people
visited the
Pioneering Care Centre



13,738 hours
in carer respite were
provided to support
them to relax and recharge

£449,931 invested in the
local community

Supported

744

people with a cancer
diagnosis, families,
friends and carers

19 health projects
delivered

17 wellbeing projects
delivered

16 learning projects
delivered

68,837
employees were
supported by
Workplace Health



Our impact



Healing with hydrotherapy

Michelle uses the Pioneering Care Centre's hydrotherapy pool to support and manage her Multiple Sclerosis (MS). The hydrotherapy pool offers fully accessible facilities - ensuring it can be used by everyone that will reap the health and wellbeing benefits.

"The pool's warmth is a huge benefit for me as well. I only weigh six and a half stone, so I need warm water to help muscle recovery. The accessible changing rooms are also fantastic. Everything has been thoughtfully designed to accommodate people with disabilities."

"My aim is to use the pool every week and eventually, to be able to jump again - because that's one of the first things you lose with MS."

"The hydrotherapy pool gives me hope. I'm trying to slow down the progression of my MS as much as possible."

‘I feel alive again’

Lynn felt lost and like everything in her life was getting on top of her. Juggling caring for her husband and managing her own health, she was referred into PCP's County Durham Resilience team.

"The service has been brilliant for my mental health. My husband and I were in a very low place. I felt so alone, and segregated from everything."

"The team has made me feel alive again, it's given me my life back. I'm looking forward to doing so many things. I'd stopped doing stuff, even meeting up with my children because of the distance. I'm meeting up with them again, which is great. My children said you look so well now mum."

"Being with the service has been amazing, it has reminded me of what life used to be like. It's given me that buzz to come out and actually try things and do things again."

Lynn was previously part of a musical society and as a direct result of the Resilience team's support, she has found the confidence to return to the stage.



Our impact



Like having my own Google for support

Lynne received support from our Joining the Dots service, which she describes as like having her own personal Google search for support that knew exactly what she was looking for.

"The breast care nurses were amazing and provided me with lots of information but I'd also received personal endorsements for Joining the Dots so I decided to contact them too.

"While other support services were delivered in person, not always easy during treatment due to low energy and the risk of infection, Joining the Dots provided telephone support - much more accessible and far less daunting.

"It wasn't counselling - it was practical suggestions, referrals, tips, advice, and signposting for me, my partner, and my children. Everything was led by my needs at the time."

Our impact

Losing weight and feeling great together

A group of people who have reaped the benefits of Wellbeing for Life's Eatwise programme, have decided to keep meeting each week to continue their support of one another.

During the twelve-week programme, which focuses on supporting long term lifestyle change, every member of the group lost weight and has continued to lose or maintain since programme completion. The ongoing success highlights that the lifestyle changes made during the programme are sustainable long-term.

One member commented: **“I realised I didn't know as much as I thought. It has been a learning process about food groups, portion sizes, reading food labels and making simple swaps rather than doing without.”**

Asked about how supportive the group had been, one member said: **“I'm pleased I changed from having telephone appointments to attending a group, I feel I have got so much more from the programme. Being part of the group has given me the motivation to make better choices, become healthier and now I have lost a stone in weight, feel better and my trousers are looser.”**



Our impact

Bringing health and wellbeing checks to the workplace

The pilot Workplace Health Checks programme was delivered across County Durham to gather data on the impact of providing health checks in the workplace on reducing deaths and disabilities caused by cardiovascular disease. Health checks were offered to routine and manual workers at participating organisations, of which there were **37** across the county.

Each health check included a chat with a Workplace Health Check Practitioner, where a blood pressure check, diabetes risk score and healthy weight conversation, pulse check and the chance to discuss long-term healthy lifestyle changes were offered.

536 people referred to support organisations in the community

2 people referred to specialist drug and alcohol support following health check



946 people offered support to manage their weight

188 smokers offered advice and support to help them quit

1,381 people provided with a workplace health check

512 people referred to their local GP for further health support

Calum from Gestamp

“I had my health check in January 2025, following a period of three months sickness absence. The practitioner was concerned over some of the findings, putting me in the ‘at risk’ category for possible stroke and heart issues. This, mixed with my ongoing health issues and losing my sister at a young age, I decided to make some changes. I changed my diet, cutting out excess fat and increased my exercise levels. I started playing football again for the first time in many years and getting back into golf.

“In June 2025 I went back for a second health check and was pleased with the findings. Since January I’ve lost over half a stone, two inches off my waist, my BMI went from 28 to 23 and my pulse check went from 110 to 86.

“I’m 41 and have always considered myself a healthy weight and reasonably fit, but this made me make some subtle changes to my lifestyle. I probably wouldn’t have done without having the screening. I’m really pleased I took this health check.”



Changing lives, one headline at a time

This year has been marked by powerful moments, meaningful partnerships, and lasting impact.

In this section, we shine a spotlight on the stories that defined our year, from community-led initiatives and innovative projects to milestones that reflect our commitment to improving health and wellbeing.

These headlines capture not just our achievements, but the lives changed along the way.



Celebrating success

PCP has been recognised for making a difference:

Winner - Make Your Mark Awards, Community Champion

Finalist - County Durham Together Awards, Health and Wellbeing category

Finalist - Tees Valley EDI Awards, Community Organisation

In pie we crust - PCP launches Men's Pie Clubs

PCP has partnered with Food Nation to deliver Men's Pie Clubs throughout the Tees Valley and beyond.

Men's Pie Club isn't just about making pies, it's about the men making the pies being able to come together in a safe space and support each other's mental health by getting stuff of their chest.



Real Living Wage

PCP has joined over 15,000 UK based organisations to prioritise fairly compensating employees.

PCP is committed to ensuring our staff are not only valued, but also fairly compensated. By becoming a Living Wage Employer our employees earn above the minimum wage, in alignment with real living costs.

PCP invests over £1 million into its community health hub

The Pioneering Care Centre opened its doors in October to launch its new and refurbished facilities.

The new hydrotherapy pool and Options room extension were opened by Sue Snowdon, Lord Lieutenant of Durham, and Alan Strickland, MP of Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor.



Driving change in workplace health

PCP partnered with the NHS to deliver a national Workplace Health MOTs pilot for employers across County Durham.

Each health MOT check includes a blood pressure check, diabetes risk score and healthy weight conversation, pulse check and the chance to discuss healthy lifestyle changes.

Healthwatch support patient's legacy live on

Andrea contacted Healthwatch Sunderland when she didn't receive any amputee support information following her procedure.

Andrea's feedback and Healthwatch intervention resulted in ensuring no patient discharged in Sunderland after amputation goes without support information in the future.



Helping workplaces prioritise employee health and wellbeing

PCP supported 92 County Durham based organisations to progress through the Better Health at Work Award.

That's an increase of 13 new businesses from last year, with 46 of those businesses achieving a higher award level than the previous year.

The people behind our mission

At PCP, our employees and volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. Their compassion and expertise are essential as we engage and support communities with their health and wellbeing.

Our people and talented teams across our organisation share a passion for helping others which is truly inspiring.

We are a Disability Confident Employer and provide rewarding careers in health, wellbeing and learning. We want our colleagues to feel valued, working together for a common purpose. Our dedicated teams help us achieve our ambitions.

PCP employs **135 employees** local people and is supported by a team of **251 volunteers**

Our employees

87 different learning and development opportunities provided to employees

55% consider themselves to be disabled or have a health condition

100% benefitted from learning and development opportunities



Our volunteers

Our volunteers are driven by a strong desire to support PCP and our projects and services to contribute to our mission of:
‘Health, Wellbeing and Learning for All.’

Our volunteers take on a variety of roles, covering events, administration, support for others, health, wellbeing and learning.

252 volunteers **donated** **9,502** hours of support

Using the Real Living Foundation rate as a benchmark, this equates to **£143,670** as an in-kind contribution.

95% of volunteers reported an increase in skills and knowledge by volunteering.

Quality that reflects our mission

PCP strives to be ‘pioneering’ in all we do. As a charity, we have achieved a range of nationally-recognised quality awards and standards.



The Pioneering Care Centre

365,348
visits to the
Pioneering Care Centre



Bringing communities together for better wellbeing:

The Pioneering Care Centre is a community health hub prioritising health, wellbeing and social connection in Newton Aycliffe. The Centre offers services that promote happier and healthier lives, with activities benefitting physical health and mental wellbeing. The Centre services include:

- ✻ Health and wellbeing initiatives
- ✻ A fully accessible hydrotherapy pool
- ✻ Community garden and allotments
- ✻ Community Cafe
- ✻ Community courses and adult learning
- ✻ Wellbeing and lifestyle support services
- ✻ Non-clinical cancer support
- ✻ Conference, meeting and room hire facilities

The Centre is also houses services delivered by partners including:

- ✻ Jubilee Medical Group
- ✻ The Village Pharmacy
- ✻ NHS clinics (Podiatry, and speech and language)
- ✻ NHS Mental Health Services
- ✻ House of Eden Children's Nursery
- ✻ Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Services



The Pioneering Care Centre opens its doors as a warm, welcoming and supportive space for all

Throughout the year, the Pioneering Care Centre has offered up its space to local people to stay warm, have a free hot meal, enjoy activities and access support services and signposting. The Welcome Space, Warm Space and Supportive Space projects combined supported **456 people**.

When asking attendees of the Welcome Space how has it improved your life, they said:

"It's good for your mental health, instead of being isolated it gets you out the house to meet and connect with other people."

"Helped me socialise with new people and make friends."

"Saves me each week whilst living on low income as my family live far away in Scotland."

"It's helped me save money by not having to buy and cook a meal whilst energy is so expensive. Also helps me get out of the house too."

"A place to come that is safe and comfortable each week."



Making a splash with a £1 million transformation

The Pioneering Care Centre's hydrotherapy pool has been redeveloped in 2024-25, offering exciting opportunities for more people to benefit from hydrotherapy.

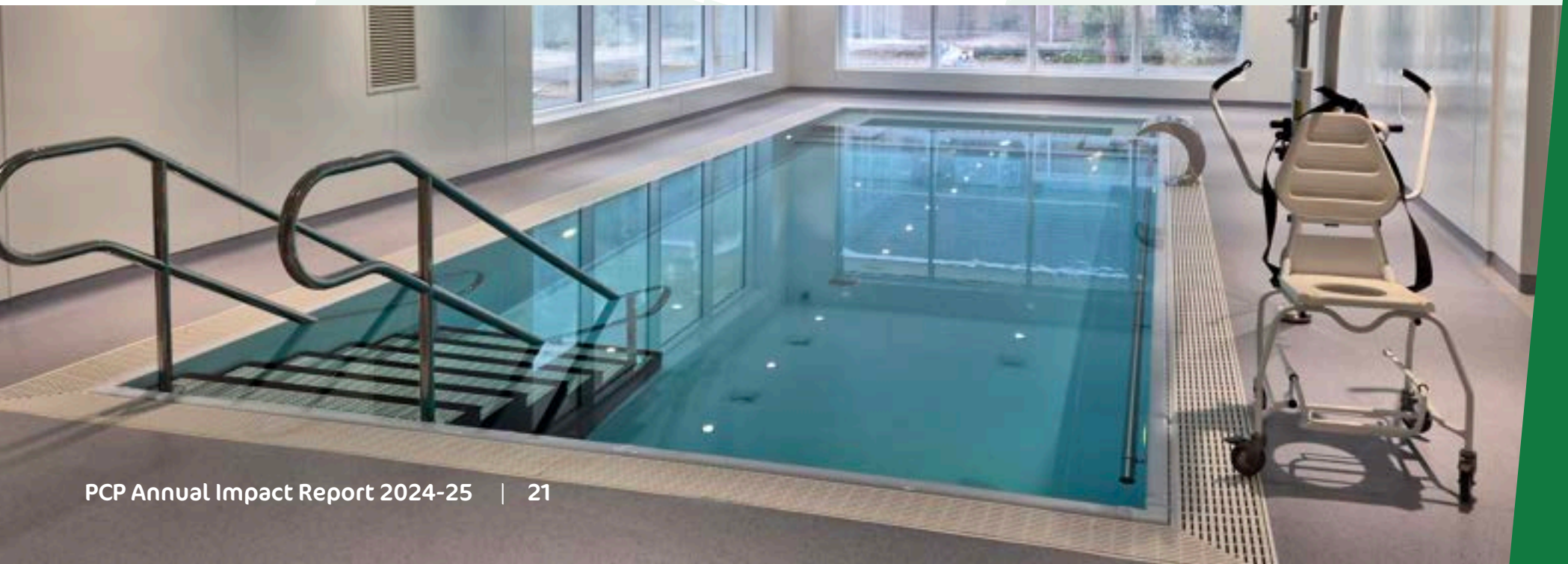
The hydrotherapy pool and accessible facilities bring new Learn to Swim classes, Family Fun sessions, Family Fun SEND sessions and Self-Led Exercise sessions. These new sessions are offered in addition to previous Open Hydrotherapy sessions and Social Swim sessions.

Valuable user feedback helped PCP ensure new facilities meet accessibility requirements, with:

- ✦ Accessible changing rooms
- ✦ Adjustable sink
- ✦ Ceiling tracking hoist
- ✦ Changing bed
- ✦ Easy access stairs with double banister for support

Other facilities include:

- ✦ Water massage fountain and water jets
- ✦ Innova dipper chair hoist
- ✦ Pool side showers
- ✦ Individual changing rooms with vanity area





PCP's Options service supports adults with learning and physical disabilities, and has benefitted from investment, with a much-needed extension and kitchenette. The additional space provides members with space to learn, thrive and develop key day-to-day living skills.

Carol Gaskarth, PCP's Chief Executive, said: **“As a charity, we have invested over £1 million to bring our ambitious project to life, ensuring we can continue to support people towards our mission of ‘Health, Wellbeing and Learning for All.’**

“The hydrotherapy pool is great, I've spoken with so many people who've told me how amazing it is for their health, reducing stress and increasing mobility.

“The Options room has also doubled in size, designed with members the space will enable greater flexibility and new opportunities for independent living skills. The group loves how the room now brings the outside in, with better access to the community garden and they're enjoying researching and cooking new recipes; which I can't wait to try.”



Events, classes and courses

During 2024-25 PCP delivered a diverse programme of events, classes, and courses to enhance the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Community Lunch Club

PCP received funding from Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership to offer a Community Lunch Club from the Pioneering Care Centre. Attendees received a free two course lunch and then an hour of activities from various providers. Activities included arts and crafts, mindfulness, guidance and support around exercise, healthy eating learning and much more.

One participant said: **“I have really enjoyed attending the community lunch club, as prior to attending following my cancer diagnosis I socially isolated myself. I have gained more confidence in venturing out of my home. The activities following lunch have also been enjoyable.”**



During 2024-25

2,919 people
attended PCP
hosted events,
classes
and courses

128 people
attended
learning focused
classes delivered



Walking, cycling and gardening

Get moving, get growing, and feel great!

The Pioneering Care Centre offers vibrant walking and gardening groups that boost both physical health and mental wellbeing. We aim to bring people together to feel better, stay active, enjoy the outdoors and build healthy habits.

Trish's story

"I've been volunteering at PCP for at least ten years. I've always liked gardening and being around others, so it's lovely to come out and garden with people rather than just being in your own garden and not seeing anybody. The company here is really special."

"One of the great things about the garden at PCP is that the beds are raised, which is ideal for me since I can't get down to the ground anymore. It makes gardening much easier, and the soil here is beautiful, it's a pleasure to work with."

"I help with digging, weeding, setting seeds, really anything that needs doing in the garden. I love being able to help maintain this beautiful place. Even the raised beds, we painted those, and it was great to do that with other volunteers."



87 people
benefitted from
learning activities
from the garden

320 people
attended a walking
group session

187 people
attended a cycling
group session



Options and social club

The Options service is shaped by its members, who chose the tagline 'Be our best'. The service supports adults with learning and physical disabilities, helping them grow, connect and thrive independently. It also runs a weekly evening social club, welcoming anyone with a learning or physical disability to come along, meet new people and make friends in a friendly, inclusive space.

Emily, Options member

Emily was referred to Options by her social worker and originally attended one day a week, but now enjoys it so much she attends three days a week.

"I have more confidence. I have responsibilities and I enjoy doing them. I enjoy coming to Options and doing different things. Options is a friendly place. People treat me with respect and we help each other."



During 2024-25

100% of Options
felt their confidence
and wellbeing
increase in sessions

30 adults
actively attend
Social Club

25 members
supported through
the Options day
service

13,738
hours of carer respite
given to enable carers
to take a break
and relax



Together 21

Together 21 is a place where children and young people with Down syndrome are supported to grow, learn, and thrive. Through fun and engaging educational sessions, the service helps develop essential life skills while nurturing confidence and independence. The service works closely with schools and local communities, to ensure every child is prepared for school and building skills beyond education.

Families benefit from a strong peer network where they can share experiences, build friendships, and feel truly understood.

Jo and Robbie's story

“Robbie and I have been attending for over a year now and the support we have received has made a massive difference for both of us. Robbie loves the one-to-one sessions, the Makaton sing and sign and the hydrotherapy pool. I myself feel the support of the families and staff has made this journey easier. There is always someone there that understands a difficult week, a new challenge or there to celebrate small achievements with you.”

90% of families found their knowledge and skills increased after support from Together 21

During 2024-25

42

children and young people benefitted from specialist interactive sessions

122 parents, carers and siblings benefitted from **1,620** hours of carer respite

272 one-to-one numeracy, communication and language sessions delivered

4 awareness Down syndrome raising sessions delivered to professionals

Together
21



Delivering local Healthwatch



Putting people at the heart of health and care

PCP champions independence, choice, and control, believing that real experiences should drive system change. By delivering Healthwatch and listening to people and learning from their stories, we help shape health and care services that truly reflect local needs.

We're proud to have delivered five local Healthwatch contracts in 2024-25, making sure voices reach decision-makers, commissioners and providers to help improve health and care services now and for the future.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees

PCP delivered Healthwatch in Stockton-on-Tees until October 2024.

42 focus groups and insight sessions held to listen to communities views

1,977 people shared their experiences of health and care services

85 people signposted to additional support and information in the community

Healthwatch County Durham

In 2024-25, many people shared their experiences, helping Healthwatch County Durham highlight important issues and work towards better support for everyone.

767 people shared their experiences of health and care services

167 people signposted to relevant services to access support or make a complaint

12 reports published on improvements people would like to see including accessing GPs

904 surveys were completed to advocate for insight driven change to services

You said, we did

Some people found it difficult to order repeat prescriptions or make appointments online.



Practices now review patients needs and allow telephone booking and ordering.

People were unclear about the different staff roles at the practice.



Pictures of the different uniforms are now displayed, identifying the relevant roles.



healthwatch
County Durham

Healthwatch South Tees

PCP is proud to deliver Healthwatch South Tees, listening to communities in Middlesbrough, and Redcar and Cleveland to understand what matters most to them.

Healthwatch South Tees gathers people's experiences of local health and care services to make sure NHS leaders and care providers hear what's important to the community and can make improvements that truly help.



During 2024-25

1,780 people shared their experiences of health and care services

434 came forward for advice on topics such as women's health and GP surgeries

4 reports published about improvements the public would like, including women's health

767 people shared their experiences of health and care services

Empowering communities: Providing information to support health choices

To support local communities, Healthwatch South Tees launched a new initiative aimed at providing residents with essential information about services that can enhance their health and wellbeing.

The first health and wellbeing event at Thorntree Hub welcomed over **100 residents**, providing them with direct access to expert guidance and practical support. These community-based events not only help people to make informed health choices but also give us invaluable insight into the challenges they face in navigating health and care systems.



Healthwatch Sunderland

Healthwatch Sunderland listens to local people's views about health and care services.

The popular information and signposting service helps people find the right support when they need it. By sharing their experiences with Healthwatch - the independent champion for health and care - local people help ensure that leaders, commissioners, and providers understand what matters most and can improve services accordingly.

In 2024-25, Healthwatch achieved:

1,729 people shared their experiences of health and care services

1,432 people came for advice on topics such as NHS dentistry

4 reports published on improvements people would like including accessing primary care

The big conversation: Women's health

Healthwatch Sunderland spoke to nearly **4,500 people** and held six focus groups with women to find out what matters to them most and their priorities. The regional Integrated Care Board, which funded the work, will be using the findings to take steps towards the proposals made.



healthwatch
Sunderland

Cancer Awareness County Durham

Talking about cancer to save lives

The Cancer Awareness Team is dedicated to supporting people in County Durham by helping people to understand the signs and symptoms of common cancers including colorectal, lung, prostate and breast.

Andrea, Cancer Awareness Worker

“I attended a mens group in Croxdale and delivered a prostate cancer awareness session. Three men came forward and told me that after the session they had realised they all had symptoms and individually made appointment to see their GP.

“The men were tested and two were diagnosed with prostate cancer, the third man had an enlarged prostate.

“One has had keyhole surgery, radiotherapy and has finished treatment. One is taking lifetime medication and is stable. The other has made lifestyle changes and is taking muscle relaxing medication.

“This highlights the importance of spreading awareness of key signs and symptoms to look out for.”

In 2024–25, the team spent time talking with people about ways to reduce cancer risk, with the goal of raising awareness, offering reassurance, and helping more people live longer, healthier lives:

59 in depth conversations on symptoms of cancer leading to a GP referral or screening

1,849 conversations raised in County Durham on cancer prevention

3,216 people were given information on signs and symptoms of cancer

2,002 people benefitted from attending awareness raising workshops



Community Connect Stockton-on-Tees

Putting support in the heart of the community

Community Connect brings people together to support overall health and wellbeing in Stockton-on-Tees. With both one-to-one and group support, the service creates welcoming spaces where people can build confidence, make connections, and feel less isolated.

PCP's dedicated Community Connect team works alongside local residents to link them with activities and opportunities that nurture healthier, happier lives and strengthen the sense of community that makes Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live.

During 2024-25

111 clients supported by the service with **88%** reporting **improved** personal wellbeing

86% of clients reported improved health literacy after completing a support plan



Greg's story

Greg was seeking support after he sustained a brain injury and was unable to maintain employment. He was looking for volunteering opportunities and the team secured a placement with Little Sprouts for Greg.

After a period of volunteering with Little Sprouts, Greg decided to expand his experience so the team investigated other volunteer roles - one being with Amala Wellness, as this would also benefit Greg's confidence and independence.

As his confidence grew, Greg started attending the gym more and social groups that worked towards improving his levels of loneliness. At sign off, Greg reported increased mental and physical wellbeing and thanked Community Connect for the support in building confidence and independence.

County Durham Resilience Service

During 2024-25

964 people supported with their health and wellbeing needs

11 group support sessions delivered including mindfulness and more

90% of clients benefitted from increased knowledge and skills from the service

The County Durham Resilience Service offers a local, community-based way for people in County Durham to get timely mental health and emotional wellbeing support.

PCP works closely with partners, including Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust and the voluntary sector to provide joined-up, holistic support. By working together with clinical and community partners, the service helps meet local mental health needs in a more coordinated and effective way.

“You have shown me patience and compassion. I continue using the tools to help me maintain my emotional wellbeing and health and because of this I am much happier and feel that I am in a more positive place. I have enrolled onto a fashion course in September, and I am happy knowing that should I need support from the service I can reach out.”

- Client of Resilience service

86% of clients found their independence improved after support from the service

87% of clients found their confidence increased after support from the service



Happiness Hubs / Safe Haven

Spreading community cheer

The Happiness Hubs Fund allocates grants across County Durham and Darlington to help community groups and projects thrive and engage with local people and their mental health. Each grant scheme throughout the year aims to directly support specific groups in our community, to ensure there are valuable opportunities for all on our door steps.

Happiness Hub client story

The Happiness Hubs provided funds to Bridge Creative to deliver Friendship Friday sessions. Claire attended, feeling extremely reserved - she barely spoke, avoided eye contact, and sat on her own. Over time, with gentle encouragement from staff and peers, she gradually began to engage in activities. As her confidence grew, she decided to join our volunteer project and started working in the kitchen at the new luncheon club. From there, she was supported to begin volunteering at Locomotion, where she has now held a sustainable volunteer role for nine months. Through Friendship Fridays she built strong friendships and took a major personal step forward.

£228,846

awarded in grants, with
match funding of £221,067

2,513 people benefitted
from Happiness Hubs

85% of people reported
improved confidence,
self-esteem and wellbeing
from visiting a Happiness Hub

82% of people reported
improved physical health
from visiting a Happiness Hub



Health Squad

Bridging the gap in health and wellbeing

Health Squad works to support vulnerable people facing serious physical and mental health challenges, often those with chaotic lives.

Across County Durham, PCP reaches out to people who misuse drugs or alcohol, those at risk of homelessness or sleeping rough, members of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, veterans, and people in the criminal justice system. Health Squad helps them connect with services and provides practical support helping people to improve their health and wellbeing.

Appleby Fair

A woman approached Health Squad at Appleby Fair and they discussed the free health assessment on offer. The woman was reluctant to have one, but she wanted to chat about cervical screening and whether a blood test could be done instead. She had only had one cervical screening in her early 20s and was now in her late 30s. After talking about the importance of having a cervical screening and how the GP can support, the woman agreed to have a health assessment.

**29**

clients received support to quit smoking for good through the service

44%

of clients benefitted from improvements to their lifestyle on plan completion

816 people connected with the Health Squad team for support

357 clients given a personal health and wellbeing plan to support them to improve their overall health

Lived experience leads

PCP's Lived Experience team works to make sure people's voices shape local mental health services. This multi-agency team gathers insights and personal stories from people with lived experience to improve care. They promote working together with system partners and decision-makers to design better, more inclusive services.

Over the last year the team have work collaboratively with Talking Therapies to improve the communications with patients. This work was born from meeting with a local men's group within the Chester-le-Street community. The team were receptive of the feedback and a number of meetings and development sessions were held in order to improve the way people are communicated with and the overall service user experience.

This had led to a strong working relationship being developed where the Lived Experience leads are embedded in Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS services, ensuring that the service user is at the heart of service design and delivery.



Held 62
focus groups
to engage with
individuals and
organisations

Had 73
with lived
conversations
experience
representatives

"Lived Experience is fundamental to everything we do, having that voice in the room when we are planning and implementing change has kept us focused on the priority which is the service user. We often can get tied up with process and policy and lose track of the aim, which is to provide person centred, collaborative care. Who knows those communities better than people with lived experience."

Angela Cross, Team Manager
Sedgefield North Community Interventions Team

Macmillan Joining the Dots

During 2024-25

707 people supported with a cancer diagnosis 

81 friends, carers or relatives supported by a member of the team

90% of clients reported improved lifestyle after support



Supporting you and your loved ones through cancer

The Macmillan Joining the Dots service supports anyone aged 18 and over who has been diagnosed with cancer, as well as their family, friends, and carers.

PCP's team is there for clients every step of the way, offering help and advice on family and relationships, emotional and physical wellbeing, lifestyle choices, spiritual or religious needs, and practical issues like finances and everyday support.

Lynne's story

"The team quietly listened, understood, and was able to signpost me to the most appropriate services. For example, my sense of taste was affected by the treatment, and I thought this might be considered trivial. However, Karen reassured me and put me in touch with Life Kitchen, a local charity specialising in recipes and cooking workshops specifically developed for anyone undergoing treatment and beyond. The focus is on different textures and flavour combinations which help reinvigorate appetite. This was great, especially as I wanted to take control of my own treatment and recovery."

Men's Pie Club

Making a difference, one pie at a time

Men's Pie Club was developed by Food Nation in response to the pressing need for social connections among men who are at an increased risk of becoming socially isolated.

PCP has partnered with Food Nation to deliver and expand the Men's Pie Club offer, managing delivery in the Tees Valley and County Durham.

79-year-old ex-light infantry soldier Stuart, said:
"Since I lost my wife, I've needed to get out of the house and mix, so the Pie Club offered opportunity to do that and of course make some lovely pies."

During 2024-25

7 new 
Men's Pie Clubs
created in the
Tees Valley
and County Durham

278 clients
supported at
Men's Pie Club



**MEN'S
PIE CLUB**

Peer Support

For many patients, connecting with someone who has been through similar experiences can be a great support - that's what peer support is all about. It happens when people with similar physical and mental health conditions or experiences come together to support one another in their recovery journey, either as a one-to-one or in groups.

PCP leads on peer support in the community across County Durham. We work closely with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust and voluntary sector partners to provide a team of Peer Support Workers. These workers use their own lived experience to offer one-to-one and group support in local communities.

Catherine's story

After losing her husband of 40 years, Catherine felt alone and anxious. She moved from Scotland to Haswell to be closer to her son, but found herself isolated in a new place.

Looking for connection, she visited Blackhall Community Centre and was introduced to the Peer Support service. With encouragement from a Peer Support Worker, Catherine joined the ladies' CREE group and soon began to feel part of a community.

Since then, she's taken part in regular activities like knitting, coffee mornings, and gym sessions, all helping to improve her mental and physical wellbeing. She's also become a volunteer and received extra support through a benefits check.

Catherine said: **"The Peer Support service has been fantastic for me. I'm now like part of the furniture at the centre and feel really settled."**



Primrose Lodge

PCP coordinates activities at Primrose Lodge in Chester-le-Street, supporting the recovery of inpatients with complex mental health needs.

Working with the Community Recovery and Rehabilitation team, the service aims to create fun, inclusive activities that help patients feel better, build confidence, and develop new skills - supporting both their physical and mental wellbeing.

Cycling together

Patients and staff took part in a bike challenge for Comic Relief, with everyone taking turns to cycle the distance from Chester-le-Street to the BBC Studios in Manchester. One of the patients kick started the challenge at 12.15am and night shift staff powered through the early hours of the morning, racking up 41 miles between them. The rest of challenge continued through to Friday evening when the 158.9 mile goal was achieved. Everyone worked well together as a team, encouraging each other, there was even a queue to get on the bike at one point!

In 2024-25

187 physical activity sessions offered,
including walking therapy sessions

318 creative activity sessions offered,
including music and art therapy sessions

100% of clients made friends from
attending activities and sessions



Stockton-on-Tees Community Wellbeing Champions

Empowering communities

PCP delivers the Stockton Community Wellbeing Champions project to engage residents of Stockton-on-Tees to stay up-to-date with key Public Health messages. The service has created a network of 'champions' to help dispel myths, provide support and identify barriers facing communities.



Susan's story

"As a champion, I gather feedback from the public about experiences with health and care services. I believe in the importance of having a voice in healthcare and my job role only enhances that belief. Becoming a champion has offered me a meaningful way to help others be heard."

"I enjoy the opportunity to connect with people. Listening to stories and knowing that their feedback could lead to positive change."

"One moment that stands out was when a person I spoke to at a community event later told me that sharing their experience helped them feel heard for the first time. It reminded me how powerful simply listening can be, and how important a champion's role is."

1,847 people reached with written Public Health information

133 champions recruited so far to engage with key Public Health messages

12 training opportunities given to champions to help them disseminate health messages

Treating Tobacco Dependency

During 2024-25, PCP integrated workers into County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust's NHS Treating Tobacco Dependency Service.

Smoking can seriously damage a person's health and impacts on the chances of a quick recovery. The service helps people who are in hospital, offering a range of treatment to help manage tobacco dependency. This aids recovery and also provides signposting to support in the community.

Dr Ruth Sharrock North East Respiratory Consultant:
"If you smoke, the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and chances of a successful recovery is to stop. Getting the right specialist support is now part of your treatment in hospital."



Approximately 63,200 people in County Durham continue to smoke. Smoking remains a significant cause of local health inequalities and preventable deaths, with over 13,000 years of life lost due to smoking-attributable conditions.

Durham County Council

5,214 patients referred into the service for stop smoking support

989 maternity patients provided with specialist stop smoking support

42% accessed brief intervention support from the service

46% of patients took up Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

636 set to quit plan having stopped smoking for good

726 were referred to support in the community following discharge

Waiting Well

Getting you ready for surgery

Waiting Well is a programme to support you to prepare well, both physically and emotionally, before treatment or surgery. Surgery can be hard on the body and mind. Being as fit and healthy before surgery reduces any risks.

A personal health and wellbeing plan is developed and may include an exercise programme, smoking cessation support and healthy eating advice.

Prehabilitation digital course now hosted on the Get Set for Surgery website

Geoffrey's story

"You can tend to sit in the house and watch the television, but getting out for an hour to spend time enjoying exercises with different people definitely improves your state of mind and gives you a little contentment."

"I just truly enjoyed it."

2,764 people invited to benefit from a get fit for surgery plan

492 bespoke wellbeing plans set with patients to get fit for surgery



Wellbeing for Life

Helping people feel their best

Wellbeing for Life works closely with people to look after both their physical and mental wellbeing. The service offers practical support, from eating well, getting active, lose weight, or support to stop smoking. The service also engages with people to raise awareness about the effects of alcohol and drug misuse, and help people find the right services in their community.



In 2024-25

90% of clients with a goal to reduce alcohol, completed their plan

270 of clients supported to stop smoking with advice and a dedicated plan

97% of clients achieved a 5% fat loss goal from 12-week group sessions

7,920 clients supported to improve physical and mental wellbeing



Carl's story

Carl was unable to lose weight and was struggling with his mental health after losing two close family members. He wanted to get physically well again and his GP gave him options to help lose weight and improve his overall health - these were medication, gastric surgery or the Eatwise programme with Wellbeing for Life.

Carl said: “Before I started with Wellbeing for Life, I couldn’t walk up the stairs without getting out of breath, I definitely couldn’t walk and talk at the same time, housework was out of the question, and I even struggled with washing and dressing myself. This journey hasn’t been about numbers for me, I was too embarrassed to get onto the scales at first. It’s about my quality of life - not only can I do the housework now, I enjoy doing some of my exercises while I’m doing it.”

Workplace Health

Making healthier and happier workplaces

PCP's Workplace Health team helps organisations support their employees' health and wellbeing.

Working directly with employers through the Better Health at Work Award and supporting progression, the team offer advice, training, mentoring, resources, networking opportunities, webinars, and signposting to other services. The Award has different levels that employers can progress through based on ongoing commitment to employee health and wellbeing.



Atom's Menopause Matters Initiative

Atom want all their employees to feel supported through the menopause. Many women don't talk about their struggles due to fear of stigma, and 1 in 10 even leave work because of it. To tackle this, Atom launched our Menopause Matters network - a safe space for women to share experiences and introduce menopause champion training.

Atom's 28 trained champions learned how to recognise menopause symptoms, support mental health, and have caring, informed conversations. They're now helping raise awareness across Atom, ensuring menopause isn't a taboo topic.

Atom also developed a menopause training session for Line Managers, giving them the knowledge and confidence to support their teams. Feedback so far has been fantastic, with sessions continuing into 2025 to reach all managers.

One participant said: **"The training really opened my eyes. It breaks down barriers and encourages real conversations. Everyone should do it."**

During 2024-25

86 businesses received the Better Health at Work Award

39,051 employees engaged with wellbeing messaging

25 workplaces benefitted from mental health training

439 employees took part in line management training

2,690 employees received bespoke health awareness training

“The award has opened the door to new opportunities for engagement and support. By introducing initiatives on physical and mental health, we’ve encouraged our team to take proactive steps towards their wellbeing.

“It has helped create an environment where conversations around health are normalised, fostering a greater sense of connection.”

- Senstronics



















Thank you to our supporters

PCP would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to our supporters, donors, funders and partner organisations. Without this support, PCP would not help as many people and communities as we do across the North East. Special thanks to all of our individual donors and funders:



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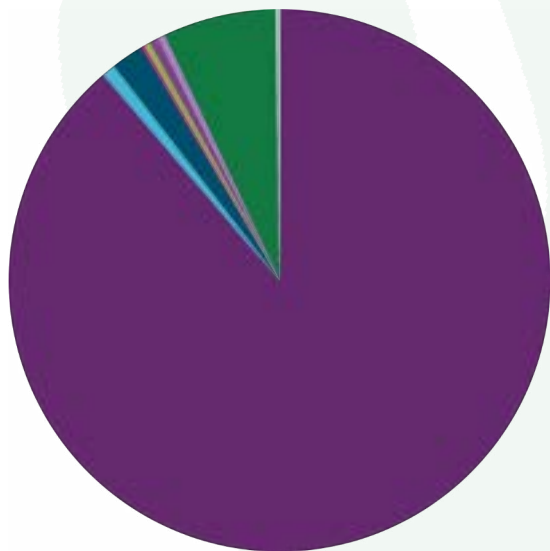
-  Gillian Moore
-  Andrea Affleck
-  Wendy Wilkinson
-  Gibson Funeral Services/Alison Hurworth Family
-  Mr Reg Dalton
-  Peter Hilary
-  Steve Lamb
-  Busy Bees

-  Amazon.co.uk
-  Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership
-  Supportive
-  Frazer Trust
-  Kingdom Culture
-  Health Innovation North East and North Cumbria
-  Smart IT
-  Point North

Income and expenditure

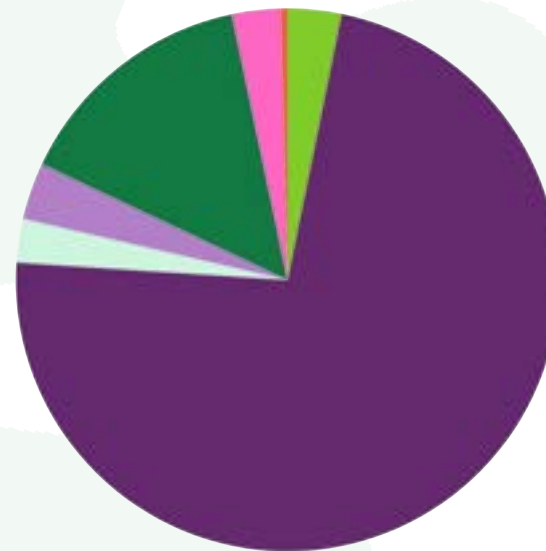
PCP is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. 2024-25 has been a year of investment, with fundraising efforts and charitable reserves supporting the Pioneering Care Centre to develop to meet community need. See an overview below of our total income and expenditure as an organisation from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Total income: £4,598,103



- Voluntary income grants - £9,319
- Fundraising income - £11,718
- Room hire and therapists - £28,180
- Hydrotherapy pool income - £16,308
- Tenant rent and service charges - £311,715
- Project income - £4,082,711
- Garden Kitchen - £36,458
- Interest received - £93,816
- Centre income - £7,878

Total expenditure: £4,870,421



- Fundraising and governance costs - £155,094
- Salaries and pensions - £3,548,621
- Utilities costs and depreciation - £125,686
- General administration - £166,437
- Project costs - £713,710
- Centre maintenance and rental costs - £142,039
- Development costs - £18,835



Spotting cancer early saves lives

Spotting cancer early saves lives



On the horizon for 2025-26 - PCP's next steps in making a difference

Maternity Connectors

PCP is excited to extend our partnership with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT). In 2025-26 we will be appointing a small team of Maternity Connectors to be a key part of the Community Midwifery Team. Maternity Connectors will help to strengthen personal resilience by working with people on a range of factors that impact on wellbeing. We will work with people with complex social needs, long term conditions, poor mental health and those who may be lonely or isolated, providing high intensity and targeted support.

Day Opportunities

PCP has successfully delivered day services and opportunities for adults with learning and physical disabilities for 25 years; using our extensive experience and first-class track record we aim to extend our services across County Durham and into Stockton. We are working with another charity to consider expansion possibilities and hope to be able to provide new services from September 2025.

Neighbourhood Health Centres

As part of the government plans for revolutionising health, millions of patients will be treated and cared for closer to their home by new teams of health professionals. The launch of a neighbourhood health service will see pioneering teams, some based entirely under one roof, set up in local communities across the country, to dramatically improve access to the NHS. These neighbourhood health centres will provide easier, more convenient access to a full range of healthcare services right on people's doorsteps, during 2025-26 PCP will be exploring how the Pioneering Care Centre can help meet this need.

The Youth Project - 'Health influencers'

A peer led initiative where young people will be provided a monthly message around physical and mental health improvement and will then cascade the message to the rest of the school and other young people. This is early intervention work will enable young people to make better informed choices about impacts to their health.



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

PCP

Health, wellbeing
and learning for all





The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service



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