

Increasing Referrals to Psychological Therapies for Older People: The impact of coaching and community engagement

Authors: The OPTIMAL Team: Rosie Begbie, Kate Randell, Morgan McDonald and Jessica McLaren
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Introduction

Older people are less likely to access psychological therapies than working age adults. In an audit of services in NHS GG&C, only 3.21% of referrals to primary care mental health teams (PCMHTs) were for older people¹. Yet, older people are just as likely to benefit from treatment². Accessibility barriers are proposed to contribute to this effect e.g. stigma, ageism and lack of awareness of services^{3 4 5}.

The OPTIMAL Team, a Clinical Psychology-led team funded by NHS Education for Scotland, was created to address this issue.

Aim: To increase the number of referrals of older people for psychological therapies in PCMHTs

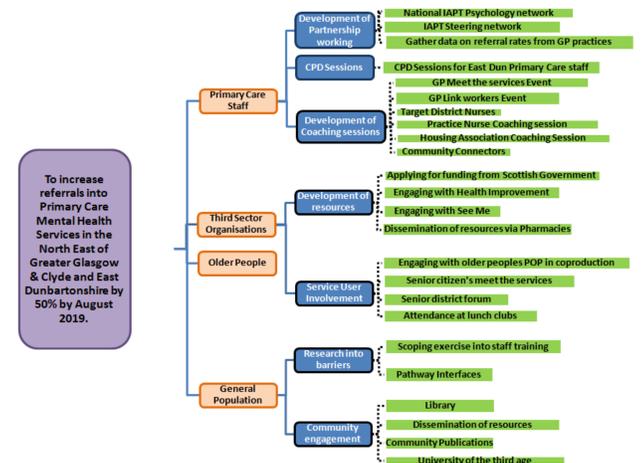
Method

We targeted our work in two HSCP areas: North East of Glasgow and East Dunbartonshire.

In both areas, we conducted coaching sessions with practitioners who were working with older people (e.g. both from primary care and third sector settings), with the aim of raising awareness and addressing barriers.

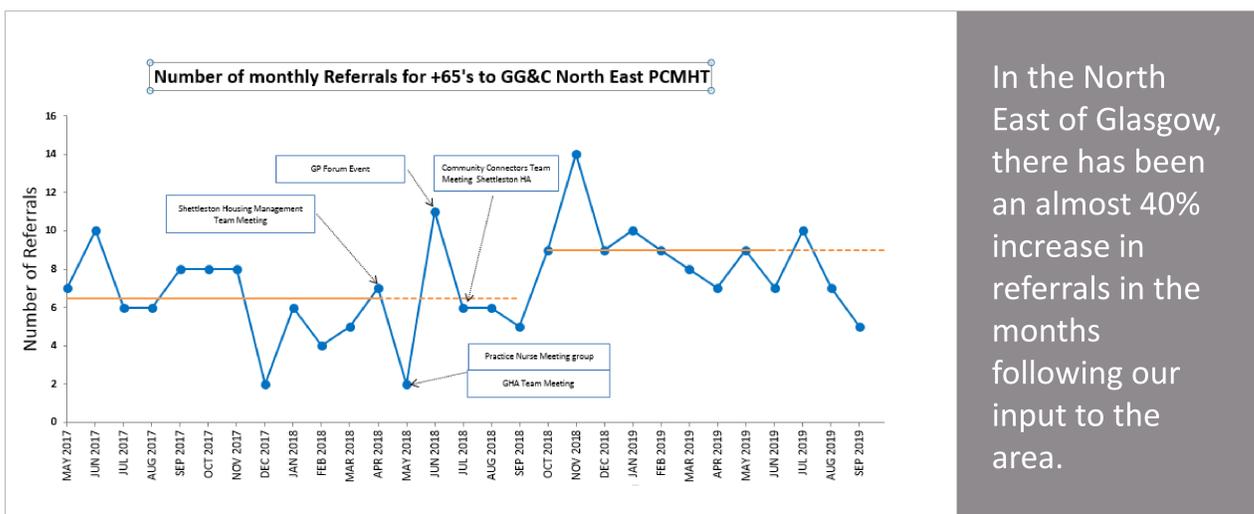
In East Dunbartonshire, we also carried out promotional work in the community to raise awareness with members of the public (e.g. distributing leaflets, community group talks, publishing newspaper articles).

We measured the number of referrals of older people to PCMHTs, to evaluate the impact of this work.

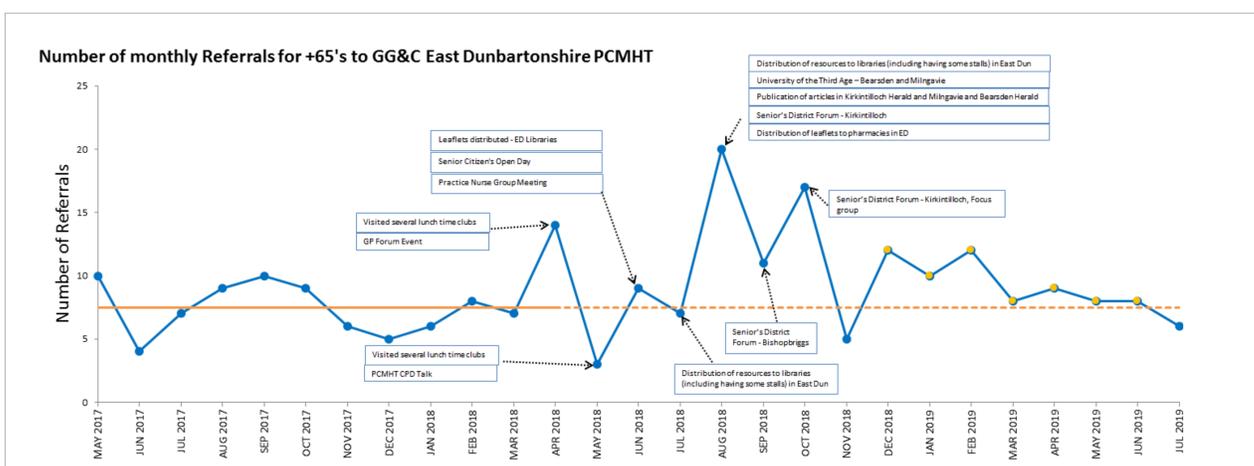


Conclusions

Raising awareness with members of the public, as well as third sector and primary care professionals both have the potential to increase referrals. However, more research is required to understand the factors which contribute to this impact becoming sustainable. New leaflets and posters have been developed based on feedback from older people and we plan to pilot these in the local area.



In the North East of Glasgow, there has been an almost 40% increase in referrals in the months following our input to the area.



In East Dunbartonshire, there was a signal of increased referrals but the increase was not sustained over time.

References:

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