

PLATT *HALL*



BETTER HEALTH MCR AND PLATT HALL HEALTH AND WELLBEING COACH REPORT

April 2024 - April 2026

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over two years from April 2024-2026, a pioneering partnership between Better Health MCR and Platt Hall has bridged the gap between clinical health coaching and community-based creativity. By embedding a dedicated post of Health and Wellbeing Coach within a GP Practice and a cultural heritage site, we have reached 534 residents with or at risk of long-term health conditions, resulting in 2,595 engagements. During this time, we have:

- Evidenced significant improvements to people's physical and mental health.
- Fostered change that prevents further ill health using health coaching methodologies to increase motivation, agency, and enable people to manage their own health.
- Worked in a non-clinical setting, supporting patients to talk through challenges, make sustainable and realistic changes, and break down barriers to accessing health care.
- Improved the Practice and neighbourhood environment through our gardening project.

- Fully integrated EMIS clinical coding, ensuring every creative intervention is part of the patient's permanent medical record.
- Provided system support: High clinician satisfaction, providing a vital "social outlet" for patients that reduces the burden of non-medical appointments on GPs.
- Developed a sustainable purpose for Platt Hall, as a creative health heritage and collections site.
- Brought Platt Hall collections and people together, evidencing how collections play a powerful role in unlocking, inspiring and validating lived experience.
- Evidenced significant improvements to people's physical and mental health.
- Fostered change that prevents further ill health using health coaching methodologies to increase motivation, agency, and enable people to manage their own health.
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- Provided system support: High clinician satisfaction, providing a vital "social outlet" for patients that reduces the burden of non-medical appointments on GPs.

- Developed a sustainable purpose for Platt Hall, as a creative health heritage and collections site.
- Brought Platt Hall collections and people together, evidencing how collections play a powerful role in unlocking, inspiring and validating lived experience.

This report demonstrates that when we work 'with, not for' our community, taking time to build trust and address concerns, we don't just improve health metrics—we rebuild confidence, reduce isolation, and foster a sense of belonging. Since 2019, collaboration between Better Health MCR and Platt Hall has grown from online support during the Covid-19 pandemic into a sustained programme of joint working that brings together clinical care, social connection, everyday creativity and the heritage of the built environment. Supported by a four-year Paul Hamlyn Foundation grant and Better Health MCR ARRS (Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme) primary care network NHS funding, the dedicated post of Health and Wellbeing Coach has created a rich programme that enables local residents to enhance their own health, build confidence, and improve their quality of life. This report outlines the impact of the post over its two-year duration, from initial development to the established programme we are running today.



ABOUT US

Better Health MCR

Better Health MCR is a not-for-profit social enterprise providing dedicated primary care at three GP practices across Manchester. Rooted in the city for over 70 years —originally as part of The University of Manchester—we have operated independently since 2011 with a focus on reducing health inequality, always with patients and communities at the heart of what we do. We value continuity, safety and good access.

BHM is not a typical Group of GP practices. As a social enterprise, we reinvest all of our income directly back into our community, our patients, and our team. Our board of directors is multi-disciplinary with a clear structure of accountability. We have a Staff Consultation Group with elected representatives, so everyone's views are heard.



Our Staff Wellbeing Programme helps to ensure that we support each other and work as a team. We use any additional resources to fund projects that add social value and break down health inequality. As an integrated Primary Care Network (PCN), our teams work as one to deliver seamless, expert care across Manchester.

Platt Hall

Platt Hall is a neighbourhood centre for creative health and wellbeing, located at the junction of Moss Side, Fallowfield and Rusholme in south Manchester. The Hall is one of Manchester's most significant Georgian buildings, commissioned in the 1760s as a fashionable home for textile merchant John Lees and his landowner wife Deborah Worsley. It was built when the surrounding area was open farmland and Manchester a small market town on the verge of becoming 'Cottonopolis', the world's first industrial city.

Paid for by the wealth of the textile industry, Platt Hall has a long and varied history - from 18th century country house to WWI workcamp, from park tearoom to police headquarters during the WWII Manchester Blitz. For 70 years it was the city's Gallery of Costume – the first museum of its kind – housing Manchester's nationally significant fashion and dress collection. After major building repairs, 2019 marked the start of a new chapter, and the development of a new identity for this historic landmark.



Today, Platt Hall sits in a busy public park in an inner-city residential neighbourhood.

As part of Manchester City Galleries, it houses parts of the city's extensive art, craft and design collection alongside a varied programme of creative activities and events. We work in partnership with local services and communities to bring together contemporary creative practice, local knowledge and lived experience, and the unique heritage of the Grade II*-listed building and its collections, to support health and wellbeing in the neighbourhood we serve. What was once a house for the privileged few is today a shared space for all our communities.

TOPLINE ACHIEVEMENTS



1,759

Health Coaching sessions held across Platt Hall and Better Health MCR, providing opportunities for people to set and manage their own health goals.



302

engagements through 6 six-week Healthy Lifestyles courses, providing group support to help patients manage better weight and exercise through talking, cooking, making, exercising and sharing experiences using collection objects.



434

engagements through our regular Monday morning social group providing a positive start to the week through art, conversation, cooking, walking, yoga and visits to cultural venues. A great progression route from Coaching and Healthy Lifestyles.



100

engagements (17 patients) with outdoor green space and gardening that has transformed the Robert Darbishire GP Practice Garden. Growing fruit, vegetables and flowers through weekly sessions from March to October, making the entrance to the Practice a cared and loved space for all patients and staff.



534

referrals from different clinical teams including GPs, nurses and healthcare assistants, physiotherapists, mental health practitioners and pharmacists, evidencing greater clinician understanding of the programme and the benefits of creative health intervention.



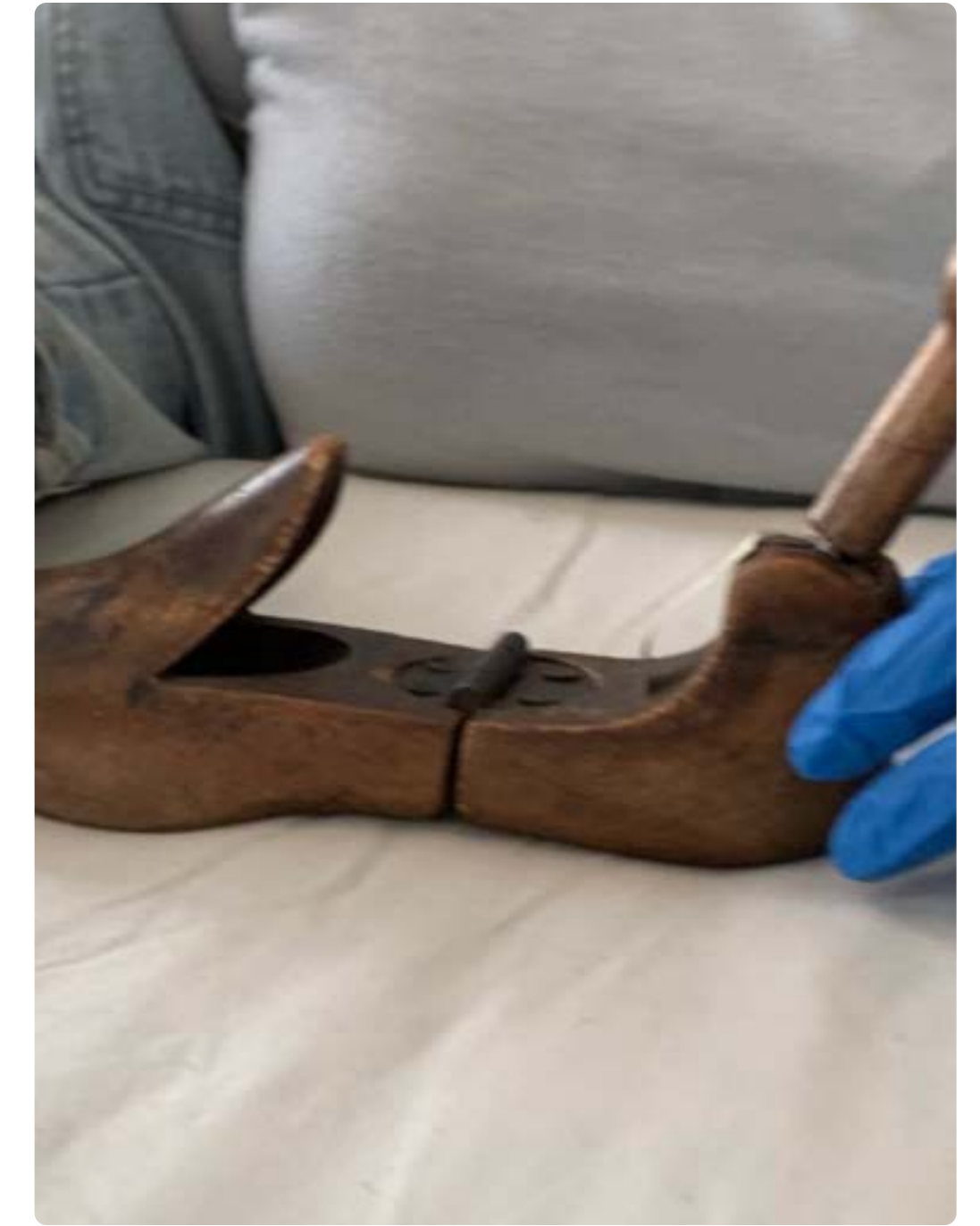
Collaborations

and regular referrals to key health and social partners including MCRactive, Nuffield Health, Sure Start, Change Grow Live.



Creativity

by working with artists and collections to explore health and wellbeing creatively. Artist-led activities across multiple disciplines, and objects and artworks from Platt Hall that reflect aspects of health, form the basis of our creative and clinical programme, supporting cultural connection, creative inspiration, individual and group belonging.



Confidence-building

and trust, developed through social connection and creative engagement, evidenced through patient attendance of wider Platt Hall programmes. Expanding the Hall's demographic of usership to reflect local communities and contributing to its future development as a shared safe space for all.

2. ESTABLISHING THE ROLE

Since 2019, Platt Hall has been undergoing a slow process of development as a community creative space. For 70 years it was the city’s nationally renowned Gallery of Costume, part of Manchester City Galleries. But after major building repairs and the creation of a new site for the costume collection, it was time for a new chapter. Platt Hall needed a new purpose – one that would bring tangible benefit to the community in which it sits and a sustainable future for this historic landmark building.

Better Health MCR and Platt Hall began partnership conversations in late 2019. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, both organisations met to map out priority health needs. As the world went into lockdown, Platt Hall Learning staff and Better Health MCR Social Prescribing staff worked together to consider how Platt Hall could be useful to residents at this difficult time. The result was our weekly online Collection Chat. Each week a participant selected two collection items from the Platt Hall website as a prompt to conversation.

People shared mutual support, shared experience and care through discussion and curiosity about the collection items. As restrictions eased, Better Health MCR identified post-Covid health priorities for patients locally, including increased diagnosis of Pre-Diabetes, weight management issues and poor mental health. This resulted in the trialling of several new programmes including a six-week Healthy lifestyles course, Walk and Talk in the park and development of the Platt Hall garden.

By 2023, following three years of successful pilot programming, our partnership reached a maturity that demanded a more permanent structure. We recognised that to move from 'temporary projects' to 'sustained impact,' we needed to solve two critical logistical hurdles: the requirement for a consistent, dedicated point of contact for patients and the need for a robust, GDPR-compliant framework for sharing clinical data.

The creation of a jointly managed Health and Wellbeing Coach provided the



solution. Formally supported by a four-year Paul Hamlyn Foundation grant and receiving unanimous approval from the Better Health MCR Board, this role bridges the gap between clinical care and cultural heritage and ensures continuity of care. It represents a shared commitment to a 'whole-person' approach—helping our community stay well, recover faster, and enjoy a significantly improved quality of life. The coming together of different yet complementary professional expertise

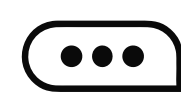
and knowledge, resources and assets, brings together shared common goals, to develop a new approach to health and creativity that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Arthur Simons was recruited to the Health and Wellbeing Coach post in April 2024, employed by Better Health MCR, with supervision, salary and programme costs shared equally by both organisations.

OUR VALUES

Both Better Health MCR and Platt Hall have established and aligned core values that together create a partnership that is caring, community-led, locally rooted, and creativity-driven. This in turn enables local people to feel supported, connected, and empowered to improve their health and wellbeing.

Better Health MCR



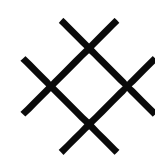
Mission

‘Thinking Differently, Breaking Barriers, Improving Lives’.



Care

We are set up differently to provide the best care for our patients and team. This means taking care in the detail, in our planning and finding efficiencies. Taking the time to be kind, respectful and meticulously organised.



Curiosity

We think differently to find new approaches and do things better. This means always asking ‘Why?’ and ‘How can I help?’ Finding new partnerships and ways to innovate and be inclusive in our communities.

Platt Hall



With Not For

A focus on building authentic relationships and partnership working. Working at the pace of trust and being open and transparent about where, when and how decisions are made.



Local

Our programmes invest in local people and serve their needs. We reflect and celebrate diverse cultures, enhance the local environment, instill pride and tell good stories about the communities of Rusholme, Moss Side, Fallowfield and Longsight to the wider world.



Everyday Creativity

Developing and supporting everyday creativity: experiences and expressions that spark joy, foster resilience and promote self-esteem and personal agency.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEED

Living in Rusholme, Moss Side, Longsight, and Fallowfield means being part of some of the most vibrant, diverse, and culturally rich communities in Manchester. However, it also means navigating significant socioeconomic and health inequalities.

The PCN footprint (Rusholme, Moss Side, Longsight) faces some of the highest health disparities in the UK. Platt Hall sits at the geographical heart of these communities. By offering a non-clinical "sanctuary," it lowers the barrier to entry for residents who might be hesitant to engage with traditional health services.

- **Demographic Makeup:** These neighbourhoods feature a young, highly diverse, and transient population, including large South Asian and African diaspora communities, as well as a high concentration of university students.
- **Health Challenges: Rates of Type 2** Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity are significantly higher here than the national average. The prevalence of Type 2 Diabetes in these wards is approximately 9-11%, which is significantly higher than the England average of 7%. COVID-19 pandemic, trauma, and adverse childhood experiences.
- **Wider Determinants of Health:** High levels of income deprivation, language barriers, and a lack of accessible green or communal spaces contribute to chronic stress and deep social isolation.
- **Ethnicity & Risk:** With over 60% of the population identifying as people from diverse ethnicities, residents are statistically at a higher risk of cardiovascular issues.
- **Mental Health:** Central Manchester also faces a heavy burden of mental health challenges, exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, trauma, and adverse childhood experiences. Local 'Common Mental Health Disorder' (CMD) prevalence is 19.5%, compared to 16.9% nationally."



3. THE PROGRAMME

HEALTH COACHING

Health coaching is a supported self-management intervention. It focuses on supporting people to make more informed and conscious choices about their health. It enables people to develop knowledge, skills, and confidence to take opportunities to become active participants in their care.

Health coaching focuses on empowering people to engage in goal settings to reach solutions, playing a more active role in their healthcare, and enabling them to make decisions about their future health.

It can be particularly effective in supporting self-management of conditions where there are behavioural/lifestyle risk factors, for example, conditions such as musculoskeletal (MSK) issues, managing pain, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, and stress/anxiety.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/health-coaching>

Referral Pathways:

All patients referred to the Health and Wellbeing Coach receive an initial consultation, to find out what is important to them about their health. For example, asking; What are they struggling with? What changes can they make? Follow up sessions are then agreed and offered via telephone or face-to-face at The Robert Darbishire Practice or Platt Hall. Group programmes are also offered at this stage, either activities facilitated by the Health and Wellbeing Coach, or onward referrals to other neighbourhood offers.

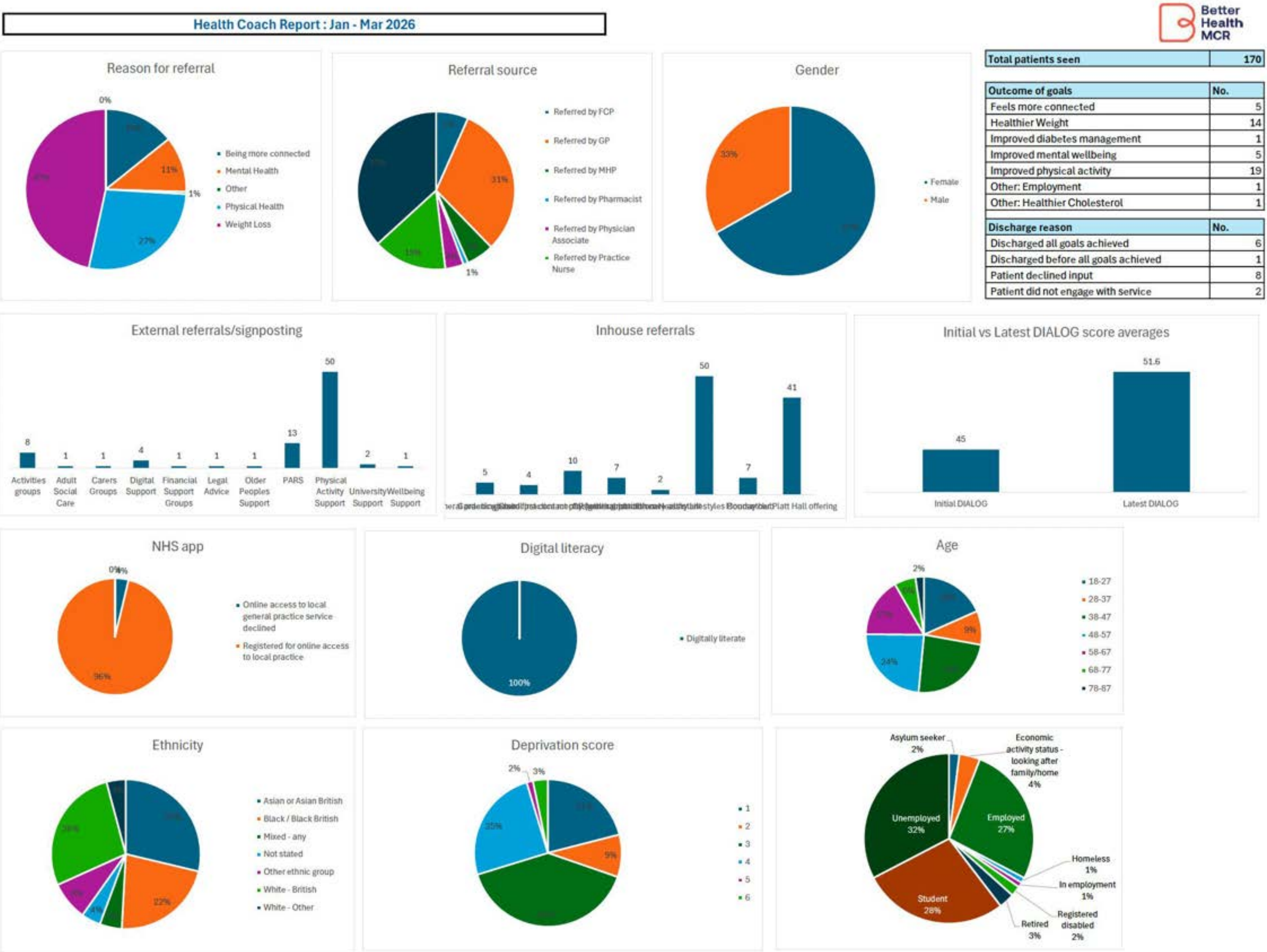
To ensure seamless clinical integration, the Health and Wellbeing Coach is fully embedded within the EMIS clinical system. This allows for real-time tracking of patient progress, shared coding with GPs, and a data-driven approach to coaching. By recording interventions directly into the clinical record, we ensure that 'Creative Health' is viewed not as a fringe activity, but as a documented, measurable clinical intervention.

Health Coaching is a relatively new role within the NHS, and evaluation methods are constantly being developed in partnership with peer learning networks across GM and beyond. We recognise that the impacts of Health Coaching interventions can be hard to measure, and that behaviour change is nuanced and often non-linear. Within this report, we are using a mixture of physical health metrics and patient self-reported outcomes and case studies. Over the last three months we have developed a new framework on EMIS which tracks goal setting during 1-1 consultations.

Throughout the two-year period we have explored using different outcome measures alongside questions which track patient goals. DIALOG is an accredited tool comprising 11 questions where service users are asked to rate their satisfaction and needs for care across different parts of their life and treatment.

It helps to guide a structured conversation between a health professional and service user that is patient-centred with a focus on change.

This is the report from January to March 2026 using this new template, which will serve to guide patient consultations and support, with easier follow-ups to ensure patients have the relevant support to achieve their goals and improve their health long term.



CASE STUDY: MOHAMMED

Referred by his GP for weight loss support with BMI<45

Mohammed is an international student living with class 3 obesity with several other health problems. He came to health coaching feeling socially isolated and overwhelmed. Through using motivational interviewing techniques, together we identified what motivates him to change and established a goal of losing 30kg over 12 months and broke this down into smaller, achievable steps. We then established a sustainable diet and exercise plan collaboratively, discussed plans for managing challenges and setbacks.

So far Mohammed has lost 10kg, his HbA1c has reduced from 66mmol/mol to 39mmol/mol. He has joined a badminton society at university and attends PARS exercise sessions. He has commented that he feels more confident and less isolated.

'I find these sessions useful for accountability, I'm happy when I get to talk about my progress. It feels like someone cares.'

* all case study names have been changed



HEALTHY LIFESTYLE COURSES

This six-week course focuses on nutrition, cooking, exercise, group discussion, and creative activities. Each session includes a dedicated slot for handling and discussing objects from the Platt Hall collection that relate to diet, nutrition and exercise.

The conversations enable people to feel heard, connected to each other and to share their experiences throughout history and the present day.

Clinicians deliver sessions focusing on nutrition and physical activity, and artists and chefs lead interactive creative workshops further exploring these themes. Patients receive follow-up health coaching and referrals onto other programmes once the six-week course has finished.

The average attendance per cohort has increased by over 50% through an

improved recruitment process to invite all eligible patients with high BMI combined with an information pack featuring clearer communication of course content. Crucially this has been a development over this two-year period, with each course informing the development of future courses, responding to people’s feedback.

Evaluation is done through post course questionnaires, and by taking pre and post health metrics. (Before the course starts and then three months after the course) to note any change and provide ongoing support where necessary. These health metrics include BMI, cholesterol, HbA1c, blood pressure, and pulse rate. This empowers patients to take control of their own health in a non-clinical setting.

September - October 2025

PARTICIPANT	WEIGHT	HbA1c	CHOLESTEROL	NOTES
A	+0.93%	-2.17%	-6.78%	Healthier Hbalc and cholesterol with slight increase in weight
B	-4.5%	- 3.33%	0%	Healthier weight and HbA1c, maintained cholesterol
C	-6.38%	-	-	Healthier weight / incomplete data
D	-2.86%	- 10%	-2.4%	Improved across all health metrics
E	-	- 8.82%	-	Healthier HbA1c / incomplete data
F	-1.97%	+2.70%	+7.84%	Slight increases but lower blood pressure
G	-2.4%	0%	-23.53%	Significant reduction in cholesterol, lower weight and maintained HbA1c

November - December 2025

Data showing changes to patient health from the two most recently completed Healthy Lifestyle courses. 100% of patients who had pre- and post-course health checks have achieved improvements in at least one or more measured health metrics at the three-monthly check-in point after the course. The majority of patients are now at a healthier weight, and on average, participants across all courses have reduced their BMI by -2.25% after 3 months.

PARTICIPANT	WEIGHT	HbA1c	CHOLESTEROL	NOTES
A	+4.3%	+9.4%%	-4.1%%	Lower cholesterol, increase in weight and HbA1c
B	-6.1%	0%	-11.6%	Healthier weight, lower cholesterol and maintained HbA1C
C	-9.8%	-	-	Healthier weight, incomplete data
D	-3.3%	-2.4%	+2.1%	Healthier weight and HbA1c, higher cholesterol
E	-6.8%	-4.9%	+2.3%	Healthier weight and HbA1c, higher cholesterol
F	-7.1%	-26.2%	+10.8%	Healthier weight and significantly reduced HbA1c, higher cholesterol
G	+1.7%	-	-12.2%	Lower cholesterol, slight weight increase
H	+1.1%	0%	+8.9	Lower blood pressure, slight weight increase and higher cholesterol
I	-0.5%	-30.3%	-10.6%	Significantly reduced HbA1c, cholesterol and slight weight decrease
J	-1.3%	-2.7%	+10.5%	Healthier weight and HbA1c, higher cholesterol

CASE STUDY: ALAYA

Alaya attended the Healthy Lifestyle course in May-June 2025. She had an initial coaching session in early May where she established her goal was to lose weight and get involved in more social activities. She was feeling overwhelmed by work and home life and that she had no time for herself. Alaya knew of Platt Hall as she lives locally but had never been inside and always wondered what it was.

“The course has helped me realise that I’m not alone. Lots of people are also trying. You meet people who are going through a similar thing but you don’t always discuss health with them so it’s nice to have that space. I’m missing the course now it’s ended, but I’ve stopped sugar at home, I’ve started playing rounders on a Tuesday evening in Platt Fields Park and I’ve joined a yoga class in the city centre.”

When we checked in three months after the course ended, Alaya had lost weight, maintained a healthy HbA1c level, and reduced her cholesterol and blood pressure.



MONDAY CLUB

A drop-in social, active and creative group session every Monday morning at Platt Hall that includes group walks, trips to museums and galleries, collection conversations, art activities, cooking workshops, and more. This developed from a weekly Walk & Talk, with a wider variety of activities to appeal to different people, focusing on increasing social connection, increasing people's physical activity levels and confidence navigating the city together. This is supported by two regular volunteers from the local community who have received training.

Between June 2024 and September 2025, the programme operated as a weekly Walk & Talk, with average attendance of four participants per session and limited growth. Following the redesign to the Monday Club format, average attendance more than doubled to 10 participants, a 110% increase. The introduction of different activities has broadened appeal, increased accessibility, and supported the development of a consistent and engaged group. We are now co-designing sessions with group members' input and support to facilitate activities based on their own interests and experiences. By creating this regular space for people to connect each week, we are aiming to create genuine, long-lasting social connection across a diverse group of people who may not usually get the chance to meet.



CASE STUDY: SKY

Sky was referred to Health Coaching with the aim of being more active, meeting new people and improving confidence. He is also engaging with the addiction recovery service. He is now a regular attendee of Monday Club and has been involved in the Platt Hall artist residency, The Place We Imagine, as well as being interviewed about Everyday Creativity in a Manchester Metropolitan University placement study.

"So when I came (to the UK), I had some kind of breakdown, burnout, and then it was horrible. Because if your CV is empty, no one will believe you. And then when you are foreign, I have realised it's not easy. So, then I was down, so I had to recreate myself, and I went into poetry. You have to help yourself. I'm coming back. I told him (Arthur), "Give me some time to come back, Okay, so now I'm coming, not missing my Mondays and other events, which is good. It's one of the good things."



GARDENING CLUB

A weekly Gardening Club from March to October on Tuesday mornings at the Robert Darbshire GP Practice, which increases people's physical activity and connection to nature, creates a sense of care, and a shared ownership in the local neighbourhood, as well as providing a space for conversation and connection. It makes the doctor's surgery a more welcoming place for staff and patients alike. It is a place to grow and share healthy food and to learn more about healthy cooking and sustainability. The garden is continually developing, with increased patient volunteer involvement and staff use shaping the space.

We aim to increase patient engagement throughout 2026, with additional development to the space through NHS Property Services funding and community partner projects. We are currently also in partnership with Sow the City, who have agreed to build a bog planter to increase the biodiversity of the garden.

This is one of the most well-maintained and well-used NHS community gardens in the region, largely due to it being an integral element of the Health and Wellbeing Coach's role, with dedicated time, resources and skill to support engagement.

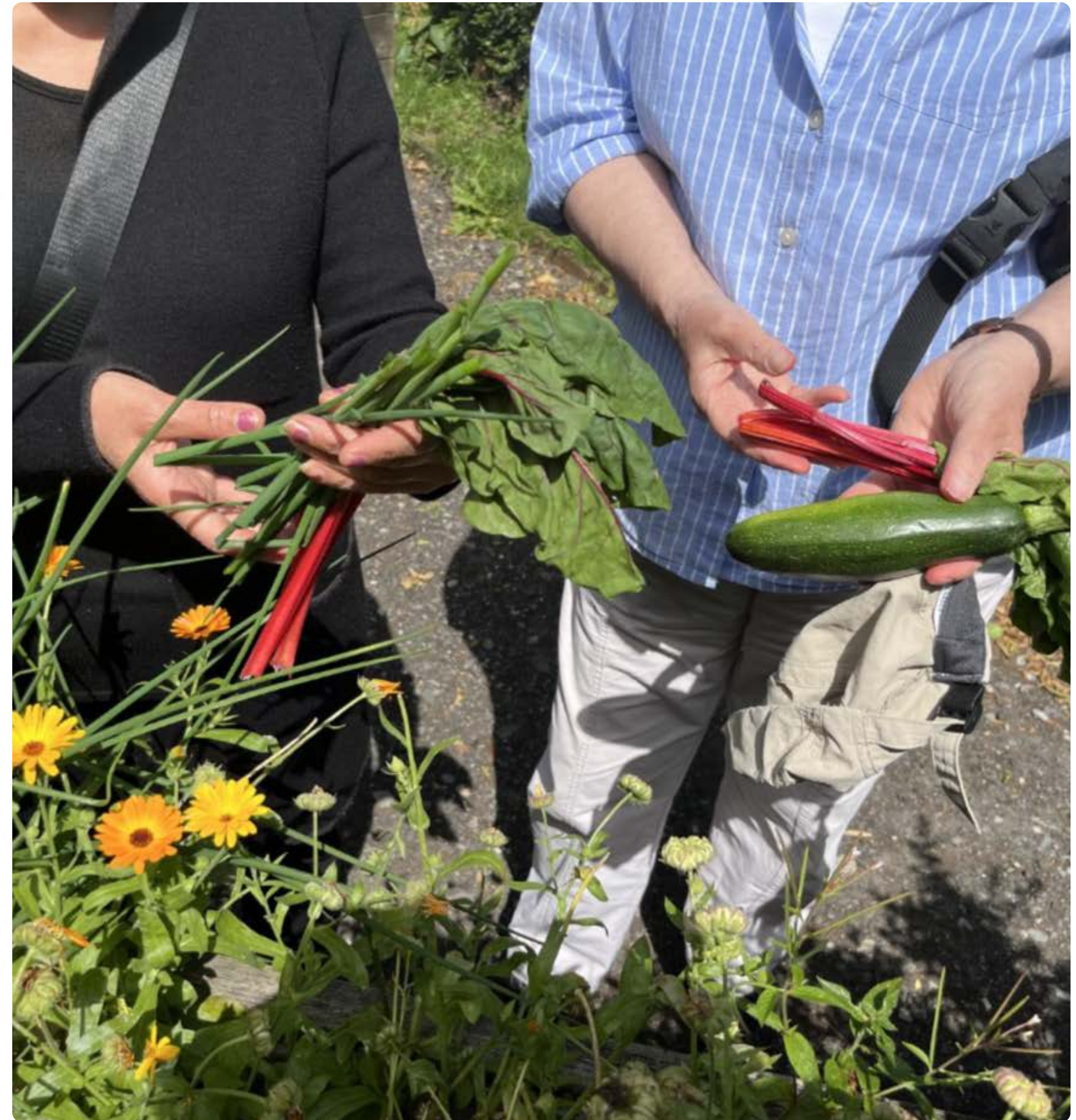


CASE STUDY: MARY

Mary has been a regular attendee for appointments over the last few years, having a variety of different long-term health conditions. She was feeling frustrated with the system and felt she was not always heard. Last year, during a consultation, her GP brought her outside of the clinic to the Gardening Club and introduced her to the session. She is passionate about nature and birdwatching but does not have a garden of her own.

Mary has since become a regular attendee of Gardening Club as well as Monday Club. She has commented that seeing the space transformed makes such a difference when attending the Practice and hopes that it helps others too.

“The atmosphere is easy going which suits me perfectly. I feel good when I’m around plants. I’ve found it enjoyable being in the open air. I’m more active, more connected to others.”



4. EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

BETTER HEALTH MCR AND PATIENTS

The Health Coaching programme at Platt Hall and Better Health MCR is now a well established and growing offer, with referrals increasing as clinical teams recognise its value. The Coach's developing expertise in consultation and behaviour change techniques is resulting in clear improvements in health outcomes for engaged patients, and the programme provides a strong pathway into wider wellbeing and community activities.

Six-week Healthy Lifestyle courses create supportive peer groups and blend clinical input with creative, place-based activities, helping many local residents visit the Hall for the first time, building confidence in making positive changes. To date, the combined Health Coaching and wellbeing programmes have delivered 534 coaching opportunities, with 1759 sessions taking place and 836 engagements in complementary programmes.

There is growing evidence that people with strong social connections are 50% less likely to die prematurely compared to those with weaker social ties.

The partnership between Better Health MCR and Platt Hall addresses social isolation as a critical clinical risk. Our approach is supported by the landmark Holt-Lunstad (2010) meta-analysis, which evidenced that strong social connections increase the likelihood of survival by 50%. By providing intentional, socially connected health programmes, we are addressing a risk factor that research equates to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, thereby strengthening both individual health and community resilience.

Beyond patient outcomes, the partnership has also reduced moral injury among clinical staff. GPs and Nurses often report feeling overwhelmed when presented with needs that they cannot fix in a 10-minute window. Having a direct, trusted pathway to Arthur and Platt Hall allows clinicians to feel more effective and supported.

Before this role was introduced, I often struggled with time to dedicate to lifestyle advice and support when patients presented with loneliness or lifestyle-related issues. Knowing that I can refer to a dedicated coach who has the time and the sanctuary of Platt Hall at their disposal has really helped with this. It is great to have a dedicated person to easily refer to who has the time and resources to give support.

Nurse Practitioner, RDP

Arthur has done wonders in turning the Gardening Club around, making it structured and fun to attend for the patients. Arthur has also put on very beneficial courses for our patients to help them with their wellbeing. I have had good feedback from a longstanding patient of mine who struggled with social groups, but found Arthur's six week course very useful and accessible for them.

Quote from GP

I am really impressed with the services Arthur has provided to our patients. I have referred many patients and they have made loads of progress and have engaged well, despite a lot of them lacking confidence and struggling with mental health issues.

GP, RDP feedback

Our work provides robust evidence demonstrating that social connection significantly improves health and reduces mortality risk. This partnership illustrates the value and necessity of intentional, socially connected health initiatives. Together, Better Health MCR and Platt Hall are creating accessible, person-centred opportunities that support both physical health and social wellbeing, strengthening community resilience.

It's just for me, knowing I can have just my time was nice. Made me a bit of a human being, and a person that, yeah, I do like these things. It is not just the stresses of home life. I do like looking at things. And it found me a bit of... So I see myself at Platt Hall really. And walking here, it's green, the sun's shining, the leaves are falling. So I like cook, try to take myself away from the problems at home, and when I'm out to look at things different. So, finding that balance now, I'm doing a bit more. And when I go home, it's still there.

Kaz, Healthy Lifestyles participant

PLATT HALL

The programme has impacted significantly on the development of Platt Hall's purpose and identity post-Gallery of Costume. Close partnership with a clinical healthcare provider has enabled the Platt Hall team to develop a deep understanding of the complexities of health inequality and how it impacts specifically on communities in the vicinity of the Hall. Evidence from quantitative and qualitative data has shown how the Hall is particularly valued by our more vulnerable users as a place of sanctuary – somewhere simply to 'be'. It demonstrates the unique potential of the Hall and its collections to make a tangible contribution to health and wellbeing in this neighbourhood through providing a safe space for shared connection, curiosity and creativity.

The programme has also directly broadened the demographic of engagement with Platt Hall, reflecting the cultural, ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the neighbourhood. People who might never have crossed the threshold of a building that speaks - on first impressions - of the cultural history

of white privilege, have found a sense of connection, belonging and sanctuary here, contributing to a network of usership that increasingly reflects the diverse demographic of the neighbourhood. This has been achieved by working at the pace of trust.

Slow working is key to engaging people for whom places like Platt Hall may initially seem irrelevant, alien or unwelcoming. The conversion rate for GP referrals into courses and coaching has improved substantially by taking time to reassure patients, build confidence, and maintain an open door when life gets complicated. This is a major shift in terms of local awareness of, engagement with, and investment in a significant historic landmark, and is in turn informing how we understand the value, significance and potential of the Hall in the longer term. The range of voices and lived experience contributing to development and delivery of programmes is directly influencing our understanding of what 'culture' is and does in this neighbourhood, and the lens through which we understand the site and approach its development and use.



Through the iterative and careful work of this partnership programme, Platt Hall has found a new purpose as a centre of excellence for neighbourhood creative health, pioneering place-based approaches to the use of creativity and heritage for physical and mental health.

LESSONS LEARNED

This is a new and unique post, which has required dedicated development work to build and promote awareness of the service within Better Health MCR clinical teams. It has taken time, care and interventions to build trust with clinicians to increase referrals.

Secure Data

- **The Challenge:** Integrating clinical patient data with community-based participation records presents significant GDPR and governance hurdles. We had to ensure patient confidentiality while still allowing for the tracking of outcomes across both sites.
- **The Solution:** Embedding the Health & Wellbeing Coach within the Better Health MCR clinical team ensured access to the EMIS clinical system. This allowed the Coach to code interventions directly into the medical record.
- **The Result:** We have a blueprint for safe data-sharing that respects clinical privacy while proving the impact of cultural participation on long-term health.

The Language of Engagement

- **The Challenge:** There is a disconnect between professional terminology ("Creative Health", "Non-linear behaviour change") and community-based language. Using overly clinical or academic terms can create a barrier to trust and attendance. This is a new and unique post, which has required dedicated development to build and promote awareness within Better Health MCR clinical teams. It has taken time, care and intervention to build trust with clinicians to increase referrals.
- **The Solution:** We adopted a 'bilingual' approach. In clinic, we talk about referral pathways and clinical metrics; at Platt Hall, we talk about Monday Club and Gardening. We recognise that for a patient, the 'fun' of the activity may be the primary motivator, while the 'health outcome' is the secondary (and often invisible) benefit.

- **The Result:** Higher retention rates. By not over-medicalising the experience at Platt Hall, we created a safe space where health improvements happen organically rather than feeling like a chore or a doctor's order.

Capacity and Demand

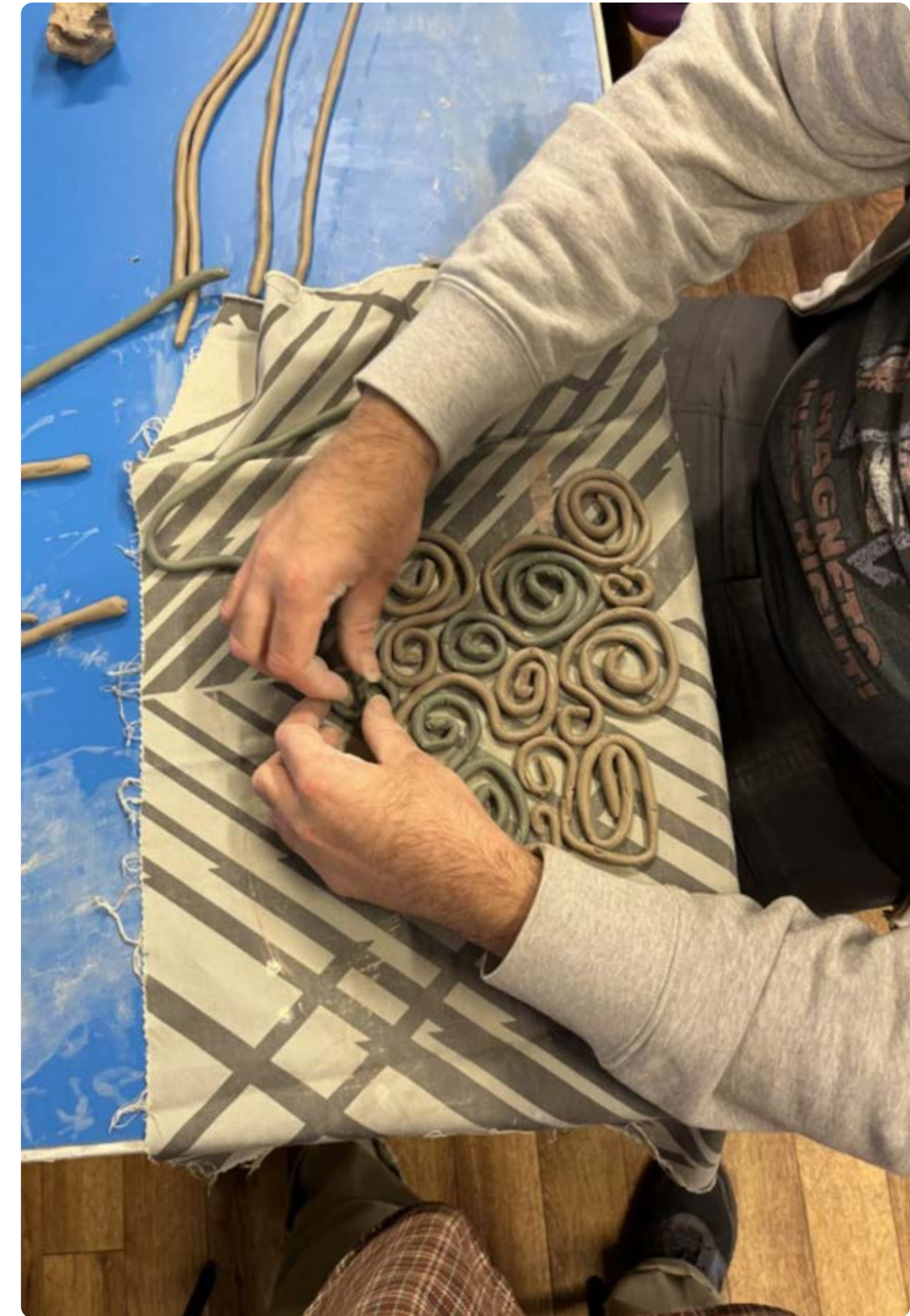
- **The Challenge:** Rising popularity and high volume of referrals placed pressure on coaching time, physical availability of spaces at the Hall, and staff capacity.
- **The Solution:** We transitioned from a purely 1:1 model to a "Tiered Pathway." Initial clinical coaching leads to sustained group-based support (Monday Club/ Gardening). We also began identifying "Community Champions" to help facilitate peer-led support.
- **The Result:** A scalable model that maintains a person-centred approach while preventing staff burnout and ensuring the Hall remains a welcoming, uncrowded space.

Bridging the Confidence Gap

- **The Challenge:** Many participants present with multiple long-term conditions, mental health challenges, and financial pressures. These complexities often manifest as low self-esteem or social anxiety, making the initial "step" into a group setting difficult.
- **The Solution:** We prioritise a "Pace of Trust" approach. The Coach provides structured but flexible support, allowing for extra time to build patient comfort before introducing them to a group. We ensure the Hall environment is psychologically safe—non-clinical, welcoming, and warm.
- **The Result:** High engagement from "high-complexity" patients who may not engage with traditional services. By treating the person, we have seen significant organic improvements in confidence and social connectivity.

Unified Communication

- **The Challenge:** Ensuring smooth communication between busy NHS clinicians and Platt Hall staff is time-intensive and risks "siloed" working, where the doctor doesn't know what the patient is achieving in the garden.
- **The Solution:** We established integrated pathways with regular feedback loops. By embedding the Coach in clinical practice meetings and providing regular updates to the GP practice clinical team, we ensured a shared understanding of both clinical priorities and creative programming.
- **The Result:** Clinicians feel more connected to the outcome, and patients feel their care is unified across both the surgery and the Hall.



Breaking Accessibility Barriers

- **The Challenge:** Transport, language needs, and limited mobility are real barriers for our community. Additionally, some residents feel that "museums" are not for them, creating an invisible cultural barrier.
- **The Solution:** We prioritise culturally relevant programming, using the Platt Hall collection to reflect local heritage and stories. We keep the building as accessible and non-elitist as possible, and we actively problem-solve transport needs during the coaching phase.
- **The Result:** By making the Hall a neighbourhood space and community asset rather than a museum, we have reached residents who previously had no engagement with Manchester's arts and heritage services.

Measuring What Matters

- **The Challenge:** Tracking long-term outcomes (three months+) is difficult in inner-city populations where people may change contact details or disengage once they feel better. Traditional "before and after" metrics often miss the nuance of "non-linear" change.
- **The Solution:** We developed a Shared Evaluation Framework that combines quantitative clinical metrics (weight, BMI, HbA1c, blood pressure) from EMIS with qualitative insights (confidence, connection, and wellbeing).
- **The Result:** An evidence base. We can now demonstrate that people attending the courses have measurable clinical improvements, providing a clear map of impact for future commissioners.

5. WHAT NEXT?

From Pilot to Permanence: Scaling Creative Health in Manchester

As we conclude this two-year phase of development, the partnership between Better Health MCR and Platt Hall has moved beyond "proof of concept." We have built a robust, data-driven model that proves how heritage and creativity can help alleviate pressure on primary care. Our vision is to transition from a successful pilot into a permanent community role.

1. Sustaining the Hybrid Model

Our goal for 2027 is to secure a long-term funding model. By combining NHS ARRS (Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme) funding with cultural grants and Manchester City Council support, we aim to ensure the Health and Wellbeing Coach remains a permanent bridge between the GP surgery and the Hall.

- **Target:** Establish this role as a model for an integrated Health Coach role that can be replicated elsewhere.

2. Cultivating Community Leadership

We believe the most sustainable health interventions are those led by the people who use them. In 2027, we will train "graduates" of our Healthy Lifestyle and Monday Club programmes to co-facilitate sessions.

- **Target:** Empower residents as peer-leaders to increase service capacity and deepen community ownership.

3. Influencing the Greater Manchester Strategy

We intend to use the findings of this report to influence the wider Greater Manchester Integrated Care System (ICS).

- **Target:** Present our framework at regional and national health conferences to share learning.

4. Optimising the Garden

Our goal is to evolve the Robert Darbishire Practice Garden. By completing the planned enhancements -including the biodiversity bog planter in partnership with Sow the City - we are maximising the therapeutic potential of the Practice's physical environment. This ensures that the first point of contact for many patients is a site of care, growth, and restoration.

- **Target:** Establish a flagship 'Therapeutic Garden' that serves as a blueprint for using NHS property to combat nature-deficit and improve patient health.

5. Strengthen Integration

We will use the data from this report as an evidence base to strengthen pathways with local VCSE (Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise) partners. By aligning our work more closely with organisations like MCRactive and Change Grow Live, we will prove the Return on Investment (ROI) for social prescribing. We aim to demonstrate that these partnerships don't just improve lives—they create a more efficient, resilient healthcare system.

- **Target:** Formalise a referral network where creative health at Platt Hall acts as a gateway to long-term community support, reducing the frequency of non-clinical GP consultations.

6. Strengthen Platt Hall’s focus on neighbourhood health

We will build Platt Hall’s identity as a centre for creative health, embedding the BHM/Platt Hall partnership at the centre of the Hall’s wider partnership programme, to develop a multi-layered service that uses the unique cultural assets of place, people and collection to address health inequality in our neighbourhood.

- **Target:** Develop partnership networks and programmes, including Sure Start Family Stay and Play, Platt Hall Garden Project and Heald Place Primary School partnership, with an explicit focus on individual, social and neighbourhood health.

7. Contribute to wider development of creative health practice

We will develop artist-led practice in creative health, support the development of the local arts ecology and share practice with cultural sector networks and venues to nurture and champion everyday creativity as a fundamental part of a healthy life.

- **Target:** Work with creative practitioners throughout our programme, support socially engaged artistic development through local partnership and mentoring, share working through sector-relevant networks and events.

8. Align care and resilience in heritage and health

We will align care of heritage with care of people, trialling activities that engage participants in hands-on care of the building and collections as a mechanism for developing self-care and community belonging. We will share the opportunities and challenges of developing heritage sites in ways that safeguard and develop heritage for contemporary community relevance and purpose.

- **Target:** Pilot a ‘caring for collections’ workshop with Better Health MCR patients that uses handling, wrapping, cleaning and housing Platt Hall objects as a way of slowing down, being present and considering care in relation to self and others.

CONCLUSION

This partnership between Better Health MCR and Platt Hall has transitioned from a pioneering experiment into a critical strategic asset for our neighborhood.

For the NHS, the "medical model" alone is no longer enough to address the complexities of modern health inequality. Up to 20% of GP consultations are driven by non-medical factors such as loneliness, debt, stress and social isolation. We need a "sanctuary" space where the clinical wall is lowered and trust is rebuilt.

For a local authority site like Platt Hall, its heritage value as a Grade II* listed building is no longer sufficient to support the investment needed to maintain it as a viable public space. It requires a purpose that supports city needs, provides genuine benefit for residents, and evidences value across multiple domains.

We don't just want Platt Hall to be a place people go when they are referred by a doctor. Or, for that matter, to experience a particular kind of heritage. We want it to be a place where the community stays well together, proving that culture is not a luxury. It is a vital component of public health. This marks a critical shift in thinking about the significance and value of a site that was built as a place of privilege for the few but which now sits in the midst of a community characterised by rich cultural diversity and significant inequality.

The partnership has transformed the Hall's identity as a cultural space by transforming its demographic of usership. This is where the pathway to sustainability lies.

The success of this partnership lies in the hybridity of the Health and Wellbeing Coach role. Speaking both the "language of the clinic" and the "language of culture," this role has turned a heritage site into a

vital organ of the neighbourhood. When a resident enters Platt Hall, they are no longer a "patient with a high BMI", they are a participant, a creator, and a neighbour. It is here that non-linear behaviour changes can occur.

By integrating our work into the EMIS clinical system, we have moved beyond anecdotal success to provide a data-driven blueprint for the future of "Creative Health." We have demonstrated that heritage can be a tool that helps people to reclaim agency.

By continuing to invest in this collaboration, we are sustaining a neighbourhood infrastructure that empowers our residents to stay well, recover faster, and reclaim their agency.

This report has been collectively written by:

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