



# Primary Care Navigation Programme Case Study



## Old Kent Road Surgery

### The challenge

Practice staff at the Old Kent Road Surgery in North Southwark found they were getting a high number of visits from people who didn't need clinical expertise. Patients suffering from loneliness, isolation and a wide range of social rather than medical problems were booking GP appointments to discuss their concerns. With many seeking advice on issues such as housing, benefits and social needs, practice receptionists were feeling frustrated at their inability to help them.

### What they did

In February 2016, the London surgery decided to take part in a care navigation pilot developed by Quay Health Solutions (North Southwark GP Federation) and the National Association of Primary Care (NAPC). The surgery put forward two front line reception staff to train as primary care navigators (PCNs). Their initial training involved six hours of e-learning, a one-day training course and workshops.

The role of the PCN is to signpost patients to any extra support they might need to help manage their lives and chronic conditions. The PCNs first focused on the surgery's over 65-year-old patients and signposting them to services to help them with their daily lives. This proved successful, leading the practice to look at other patient groups. The service is now available to all patients who need it.

The primary care navigators work in various ways – at the reception desk (ensuring patient confidentiality), via booked appointments in consultation rooms and supporting people over the phone. They signpost patients to the relevant agencies and community services that can provide the right support.

Networking with social and community providers has enabled the PCNs to access a wealth of local resources which they had previously been unaware of. These services offer patients the right type of extra help and care they need.

### The impact

The impact has been measurable. One patient with mental health problems booked 32 appointments in a year but after seeing a PCN booked five appointments in nine months. There have been many other similar success stories. A holistic approach to patient care, via social prescribing, is contributing to the health and well-being of patients. The morale of practice staff has improved with the realisation they can make a difference. Primary care professionals from as far afield as Sheffield have visited the surgery to learn about the success of their work.

### Lessons learned

It takes a special kind of person to perform the PCN role – they need to have good people skills including empathy, compassion and the willingness to go that extra mile to help patients.



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