



# Active Connections Impact Report 2023- 24

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January 2024 - April 2024



## Introduction

**The Active Connections contract aligns a programme of works to support physical activity for working aged adults (18 – 55 years), funded by Public Health Hertfordshire. This contract was awarded to HSP following an evidence review indicating Public Health investment in physical activity needing to be supporting working-aged adults, with earlier interventions to address inactivity, particularly among priority groups (i.e. people with a disability, long term health condition and those living in areas of deprivation as well as ethnic minorities and women (peri/menopause). Key to this contract is better integrating physical activity within the health system.**

## Project background



The Active Connections contract began in January 2024 and the first quarterly report has been submitted. The aim of the programme is to develop and deliver a physical activity programme to upskill the health and social workforces on physical activity and delivering a range of physical activity opportunities to support working aged adults with a focus on key priority groups. There are five key objectives across the contract:

1. Upskill health professionals (primary/secondary care) on the benefits of physical activity and knowledge of physical activity opportunities.
2. Upskill social prescribers on the benefits of physical activity and knowledge of local activity opportunities to support the Waiting Well project.
3. Provide oversight for the county's various exercise referral schemes and improve awareness/engagement with the schemes.
4. Review and promote activity apps.
5. Support the development and delivery of the Never Too Late to be Active (NTL) campaign 2025.

# Implementation

**Upskills primary/secondary care:** We have begun developing relationships with Health Professionals at Primary Care Network (PCN) level. This has included attending PCN protected learning time/target events/wellbeing days to promote our physical activity resources (e.g., Moving More Activity Finder) and training offers (e.g., Physical Activity Clinical Champions training; PACC). We have piloted this approach at two events: Stevenage South PCN target day and the Herford & Rural PCN wellbeing day. These proved successful, enabling us to establish better connections with healthcare professionals and providing the opportunity to promote the Active Practice Charter (APC) to get their staff and patients moving more. We are also currently speaking with Hatfield PCN to support them with their APC status, as well as working alongside Hitchin & Whitwell PCN to join their next target event.

**Upskill social prescribers:** We met with the Deputy Service Manager at Herts Hospital & Community Navigation Service (HCNS) to help us gain a deeper understanding of the current HCNS network, as well as exploring the potential to deliver training with HCNS Social Prescribing teams. It is anticipated that the training will be the London Sport delivered physical activity and social prescribing training.



We have also spoken extensively with the East of England Social Prescribing leads, a role funded by Sport England to support Active Partnerships to become more integrated with the Social Prescribing system. Jo Hall and Sian Brand, who fulfil this role, have assisted to increase our connectedness to Social Prescribers/Link Workers across Hertfordshire. Following conversations with Jo and Sian, they are hosting an East of England engagement event in May where we aim to bring together key stakeholders from Hertfordshire to assist in the co-design of how physical activity and Social Prescribing can become better connected.

**Exercise Referral Schemes:** Extensive Mapping has been conducted on the exercise referral pathways across Herts. Mapped information on each scheme running in Hertfordshire includes the name of centre running the scheme, location, post code, contact details, prices, and website links. We have also created an interactive map showing where local schemes are allowing the user to click through to find out more information – this can be seen [here](#). Everyone Active were able to promote their scheme at our South Stevenage PCN target event; we will aim to continue this method of promotion at future PCN days.

**Activity Apps:** We were able to tie in the initial assessment of physical activity apps into the redevelopment of the new Moving More website where we have since hosted the content. This can be seen at [Workout from Home Page on Moving More](#). These apps were identified and tested by either personal experience or due to their creation by a trusted source. We are due to create our own method for quality assuring physical activity apps moving forward.

**NTL Campaign 2025:** HSP are well embedded in the NTL Project Group. Enable us to contribute at collaborative meetings to start the initial plans for next year's campaign. Given the campaign's updated direction being very well aligned with HSP's wider strategic objectives we have been able to input and help guide developments using existing, and generating new, organisational insights. This has included closely aligning the campaign to HSP's place based approach. As a result, NTL will be adopting HSP's Active Local Spotlight Areas as the communities receiving a place-based focus for the campaign's interventions.

## Feedback

**“Physical activity is a vital part of living a healthy lifestyle and supporting health and happiness. The great thing about physical activity is it can be something different for everyone, anything from moving more in your everyday life or walking more through to structured exercise and sport! Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership are the specialists in physical activity for Hertfordshire and aim to give the opportunity for everyone to be more active. They have provided us with excellent insight, support and signposting for our specific needs and helping us to promote physical activity to standard patients across our Primary Care Network.” – Chief Operating Officer, Stevenage South PCN.**

**“Thank you to the team for coming to our event to train and share information about local services available and practical tips, which the team thoroughly enjoyed. Professional, informative, and engaging presentation” – Bhavina Khatani, Hertford/Rural PCN Lead**

## Partnerships

24

Exercise Referral  
Schemes  
mapped

9

GP's surgeries  
engaging in the Active  
Practice Charter

### JOINT WORKING

Herts Sport & Physical Activity  
Partnership

Public Health

Stevenage South PCN

London Sport

Hertford & Rural PCN

East of England Social

Prescriber Network

NTL Focus Group

Hatfield PCN

Hitchin PCN

HCNS Deputy Service Manager

PACC Training

## Outcomes and Benefits

We have built strong relationships across with several PCNs, reaching health professionals from across primary and secondary care. These relationships position us well to now start arranging training, support practices to gain Active Practice status, and generally promote physical activity resources (e.g., Moving More) across Hertfordshire.

We have connected with two PCN days, helped four practices gain Active Practice status, and have another PCN interested in setting up PACC training and a PCN target event. We are currently exploring the possibility of coordinating a step challenge across PCNs, targeting staff inactivity in line with the Active Practice Charter. Overall, the professionals we have engaged should have physical activity more at the forefront of their minds and will hopefully feel more confident in having the appropriate conversations with their patients to be active.



## Key Learnings

There is **limited training for social prescribers** available providing upskilling on physical activity. For example, there is an indication that the PACC training is suitable for social prescribers, but it is currently only available to 'professionals working in healthcare'. This training is due to be reviewed for 2025, so we hope to see some progress on opening this up to social prescribers. An option for mitigation we are exploring is developing our own training package in partnership with our regional social prescribing lead colleagues.

Within exercise referral schemes **sharing of information** has so far proved difficult to achieve based on a reluctance to share information with competing organisations. Our role will be to find a way of achieving this information sharing anonymously and safely.

**PCN events** and protected training days are infrequent. Therefore, it is imperative we are in constant communication with PCNs to ensure we don't miss out on the chance to attend these events. Additionally, we have learned that 'target events' might be more suitable than the 'wellbeing days' to engage a wider audience, due to there being a greater focus on learning.



## Next Steps

1

### **PCN target days**

Continue engaging with PCN's and arrange HSP to speak at target events.

2

**Training Time** Book training dates with interested groups e.g., facilitate PACC & London Sport training for Hatfield PCN.

3

### **EoE Social Prescribing Engagement Event**

Use event to develop ongoing plans to better connect physical activity and social prescribing in Herts.



## Conclusion

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As this contract is at the beginning of being delivered, the last three months have provided us with learning and insight into the world of primary and secondary care. We have already made good progress on three areas of the contract, upskilling healthcare professionals, upskilling social prescribers, and promoting exercise referral. Throughout the next year we will be tackling the Never Too Late 2025 campaign, developing our own method for quality assuring physical activity apps, and continue promoting schemes (Exercise Referral)/training (London Sport, PACC, Active Practice Charter)/opportunities (Moving More, HSP offers) across primary care, secondary care and social workforces. It is clear that the more conversations with partners and stakeholders, the greater learning and growth of the project.

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