

A Case Story

Robin Lane Medical Centre creating a new blueprint for General Practice

Robin Lane Medical Centre has nine doctors, employs 50 people, has 13,000 patients and more than 50 Practice Health Champions and is growing at about 5% a year. It also has a wellbeing centre, a café and an amazing 19 groups run by over 50 volunteer champions every week. Managing Partner, Mev, said: “We had a growing realisation that general practice was unsustainable in its current format. We can’t just go on employing more and more doctors to meet more and more demands; we had to think quite radically about how to change demand in the first place.

When we first put out an invitation to patients to join we had over 100 applicants, it was absolutely astonishing! Before we started we didn’t know if we would get one champion let alone if one person would use the coffee shop. And now we’ve got a wellbeing centre and groups on every day.”



We have regulars who come to the café and who might be a bit lonely. So they go into the café and have their breakfast then they come in here and have a chat for an hour, and then they go home. And of course we have our 19 groups run by champions.

The way it works is that it has to be the champions’ thing. The thing that interests them enough to give up their time. We will offer any support they need, but it’s their idea. If I’d approached them and said ‘We want to start this group, we need somebody to lead it,’ then it would be a lot harder.”

The Ukulele group is one of the groups and is run by

Lesley who said: “I wanted to start a group here because I love using this centre; it’s the hub of the community. It’s got so many exciting things happening and it’s all about community and people meeting each other and forming friendships, and learning new skills, enjoying and laughing, and sometimes being sad – but that’s good as well.

The group is about so much more than ukulele. Of course ukulele is important because it makes you smile – I’ve never known an unhappy ukulele player – but we hope people will step over that threshold and enjoy being part of the group. It’s all about friendship.”

Linda Belderson is the senior GP Partner at Robin Lane and has spent many hours alongside the volunteers – including preparing a Christmas Day lunch for local residents. She said: “The champions really have enabled a lot of things to happen which wouldn’t have been able to happen otherwise so it’s this huge resource of enthusiastic and very committed people.

““The great story is lives have been transformed. We reach hundreds and hundreds of people every week. People are no longer isolated; they have made new friendships and use services differently. We have increased our patient lists by 4,500 people and seen no increase in demand for either primary or secondary care consultations.”

Mev Forbes, Managing Partner, Robin Lane Medical Centre

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