Health Squad

Support Empower Thrive

Our Year in Review

Welcome to our 2024-2025 Year in Review, Health Squad newsletter.

The Health Squad are working with vulnerable, hard to reach clients in County Durham with the aim of tackling health inequalities.

Our newsletter showcases some of the work we did during 2024-2025 and I hope you enjoy finding out more about our service.

Alan Hodgson, Health Squad Programme Lead



Alan Hodgson

Meet the team

The Localities

The Team

Impact

Good News

Coming Soon

Our vision is to provide unwavering support to individuals who have faced adversity in life, guiding them towards transformative lifestyle choices that lead to lasting wellbeing, resilience, and a brighter future.

Supporting and Empowering you to Thrive

Meet the team

In this edition, we would like to introduce you to Health Squad's North Team so you can put names to faces.

Kay Wright

Health Squad Advanced Practitioner, North



Why are you doing this job?

I do this job because it is very rewarding. I believe times are very challenging at the moment, there are a lot of people dealing with different challenges and this often means putting their own health care needs on the back burner. I believe everyone is important and deserves a second chance and to be offered support if needed.

What do you do to look after your own wellbeing?

I spend time with my Fur Baby, Edgar dog and I love to do cold open water swimming.



Melissa Pearce

Health Squad Advanced Practitioner, North

Why are you doing this job?

I love my job as I get to work with a wide range of individuals in need of support around their health and accessing the basic healthcare they are entitled to. Every day is different and each individual is unique so no two days are the same. I really enjoy making a difference in people's lives and allowing them to realise there is light at the end of the tunnel no matter how dark it may be.

What do you do to look after your own wellbeing?

I love spending time with my family and friends and enjoying regular days out with them.

Snapshot of the North

Where are they going?

- Sanctuary 21 - community venue
- Reconnect hub - prison release service
- Waddington Street Breakfast Club - Step Into Recovery
- GRT sites
- FREE ladies group
- Probation ladies group
- Harbour - women's refuge
- The Fells - Changing Lives temporary accommodation
- Auckland house - Changing Lives women's temporary accommodation
- Job Centre Chester-le-Street
- YMCA - supported accommodation
- PACT House - community venue

Partner collaborations for health events

- CDDFT Sexual Health Team
- Wellbeing for Life
- Hep C Trust

Health events hosted & health inequalities addressed

- Positive Directions - supported housing
- PACT house - community venue
- The Fells
- YMCA
- Auckland House
- Probation Ladies group
- DASH
- Jigsaw
- Job centre Chester-le-Street and Durham
- Thirteen Housing

"I cannot thank you both for the help and support you have given me when I was homeless on the streets, and the continued support. I can say that Kay and Melissa are very caring and dedicated health workers and how they actually care and support the people they work with.

- The Fells -

"Melissa was sharp. She got straight on everything I asked her to do and went above and beyond for me. She was sound.

- A homeless gentleman -

Snapshot of the South

Where are they going?

- Trinity Church Spennymoor - food bank
- North Eastern Spennymoor - male supported accommodation
- Bishop Auckland Methodist Church - warm space and fare share
- West Auckland Memorial Hall - probation drop-In
- Women's Probation Hub, St Clare's Church
- St Clare's - food bank drop-in
- Ferryhill leisure centre - food bank drop-in
- Bishop Auckland Football Club - veterans group
- Shildon Alive - community hub
- Willington Open Door Church - food bank drop-in

Partner collaborations for health events

- CDDFT Sexual Health Team
- Wellbeing for Life

Health events hosted & health inequalities addressed

- Veterans Bishop Auckland Football Club
- Probation group
- 13 Housing - supported housing
- Cornerstone Housing - supported housing
- North Eastern Changing Lives - HIV awareness

"We love having you at the food bank, It's so important for our clients."

- **St Clares Foodbank** -

"Thank you for all your help. If it wasn't for you I would be dead by now."

- **Anonymous service users** -

"Thank you for your help, with GP registration. I didn't even now where the GP surgery was."

- **RED housing** -

Snapshot of the East

Where are they going?

- My Space Easington - supported housing
- Horden Breakfast Club - Step Into Recovery
- Blackhall Men's Group - CDAARS group
- Free the Way - residential rehabilitation
- Focus Easington - community centre
- Addictions North East - residential rehabilitation
- Rainbows Promise - Residential Rehabilitation
- Probation Women's Group
- Harbour- women's refuge
- Horden Hub House - community venue
- East Durham Veterans
- Horden Arc - community venue
- Spare 10 for Ben - mental health group
- Healthworks - evening welcome space

Partner collaborations for health events

- Spectrum Nurses through CDDARS
- CDDARS seconded to SHIP
- Wellbeing for Life
- CDDFT Sexual Health Team
- Coalfields Regeneration Trust - community dietician
- Horden Together

Health events hosted & health inequalities addressed

- Free the Way
- Addictions North East
- My Space
- Horden Together
- Safe Harbour
- Harbour
- Horden Youth Centre

"I approached you because my health is atrocious. When I got my blood pressure assessed you gave me written confirmation it was high and recommended I adjusted my medication and if this is the result it was well worth it!"

- East Durham Veterans -

"You were my first port of call. You were so important when I was first struggling, it's all thanks to you."

- WP client, supported to access CDDARs and Homestay -

"Without you being here, I would never have even contemplated stopping smoking, let alone stopped."

- Focus Easington -

Snapshot of the Health Squad Team

Roll out of Health Diagnostics – a new system to record full health assessments and allow the team to send the results directly to the GP practice the individual is registered with.





Appleby Fair annual gathering of Gypsies and Travellers in Appleby, Westmorland.

- 20 mini health assessments
- Discussions around: blood pressure, sexual health, diabetes, GP registration and healthy eating

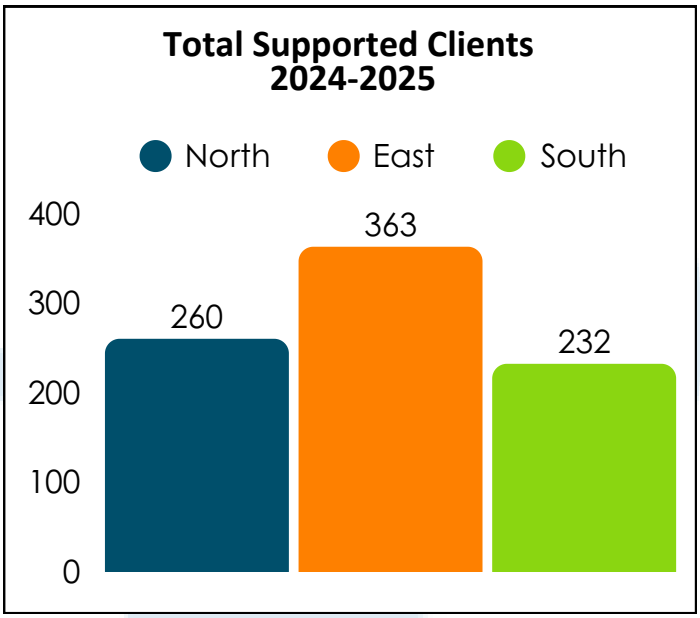
Training completed for Spirometry and FeNo





Nomination for the Working Together for Patients CDDFT STAR Awards.

Health Squad: 2024 - 25 statistics





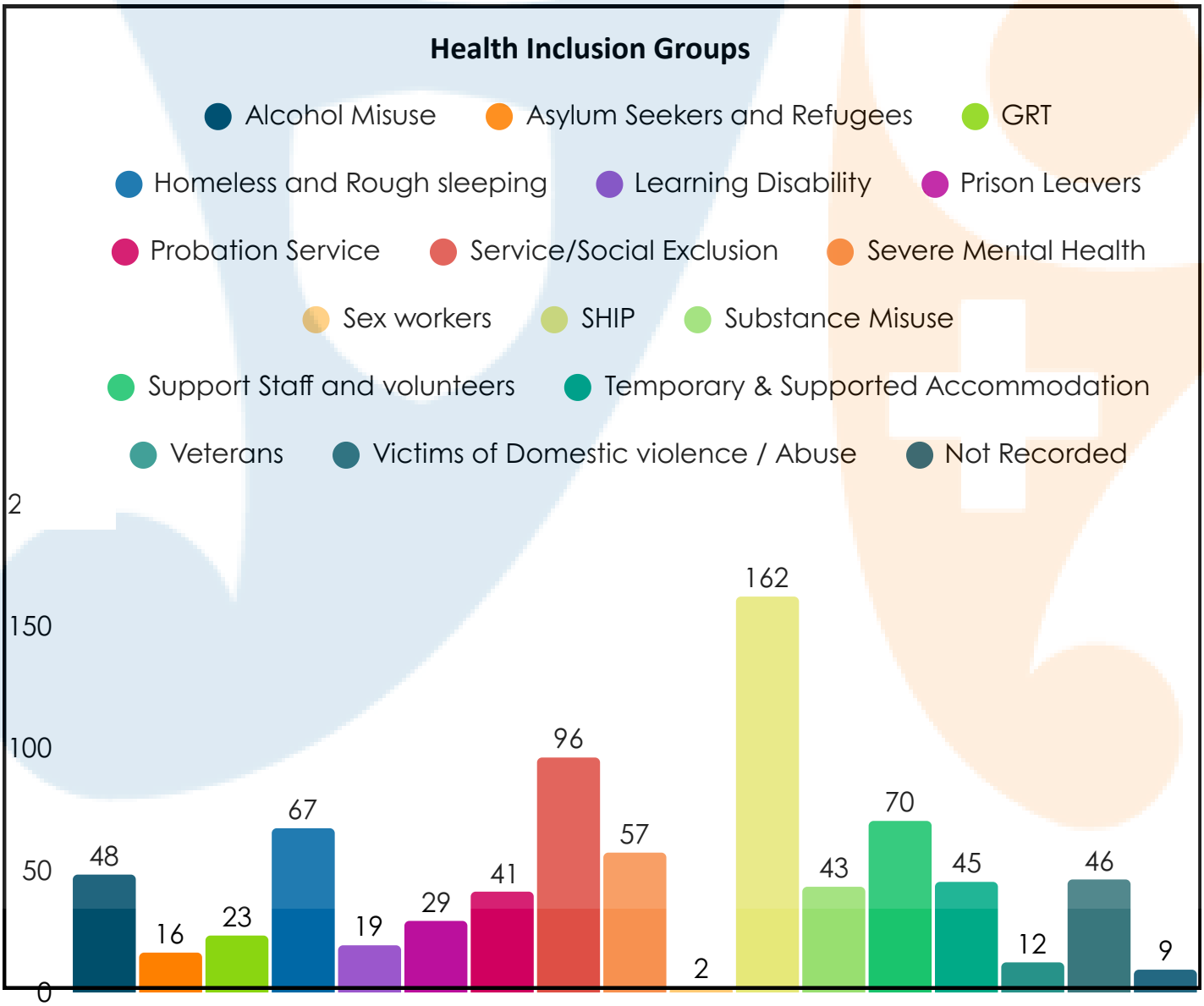
42.5% female 56.3% male
0.6% non-binary
0.2% transgender 0.4% other

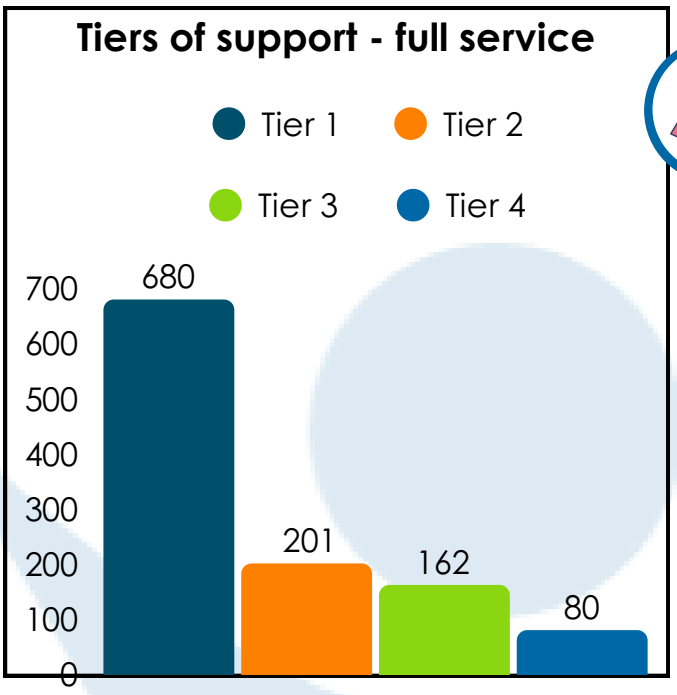


88.8% White - British
2.6% not stated
2.6% White Gypsy or Irish Traveller
1.3% Black / Black British – African
<1% Other



80.0% no religion 8.5% Christian
6% religion unknown 2.1% Muslim
<1.5% Other





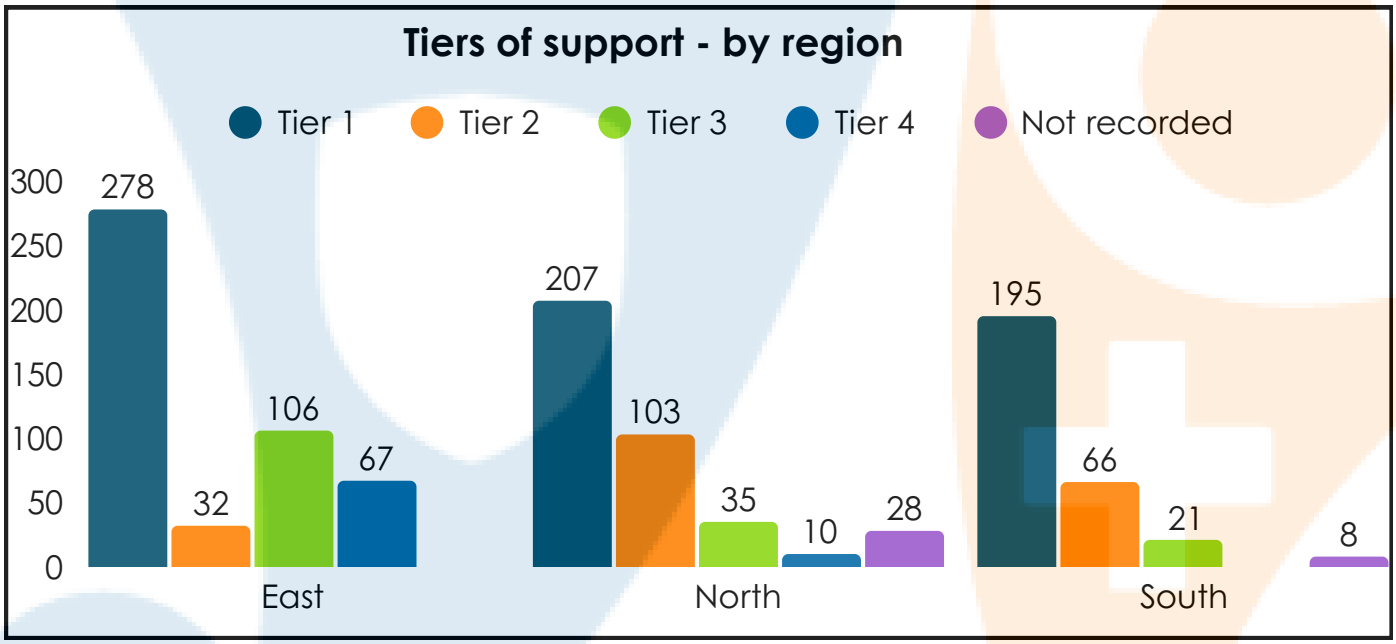
The type of support has been categorised into tiers of support:

Tier 1
Health assessment (full or mini)

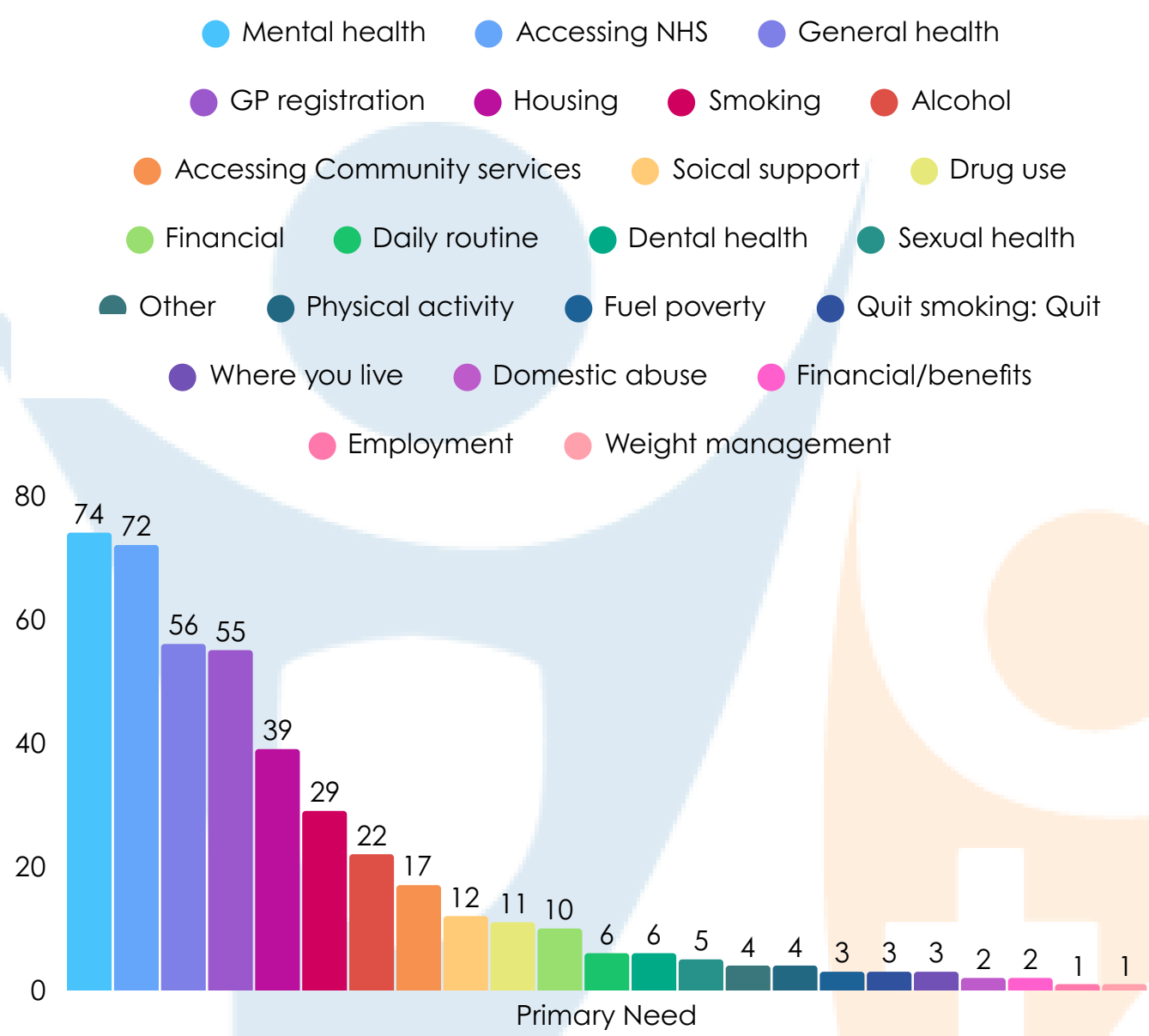
Tier 2
Signpost support

Tier 3
Referral support

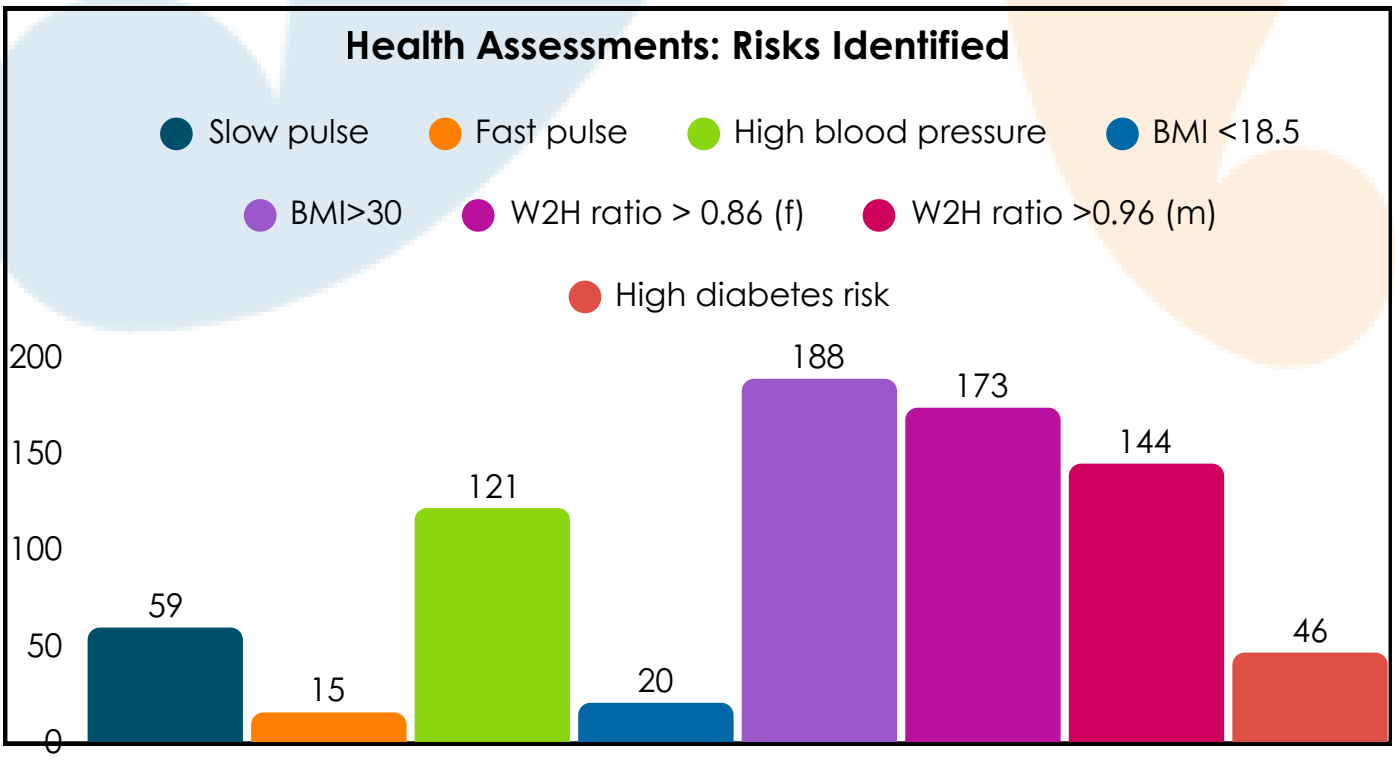
Tier 4
Supported work (more long term and in depth)



Primary need breakdown



Health Assessments: Risks Identified



Good news stories (all names removed for confidentiality)

GP Registration

The team met this client at the Sanctuary 21 drop-in. He was anxious and under the influence of both drugs and alcohol. He had been rough sleeping for three months on the streets and had no idea who his GP was before he moved to Durham and could only list some medications he thought he was supposed to be on.

The team contacted different GPs in his previous city until they found the correct one. The team facilitated all medications being sent to a pharmacy in Durham and registered the client at a GP in Durham city.

A referral was completed for the Mental Health Access team as well as to the Drug and Alcohol team. At his initial appointment with the GP he was given antibiotics for a chest infection. The client was also signposted to men's support groups as well as other drop-ins in Durham city.

GP Letter

A health check was completed a Health Check on client at Junction 7. Client was underweight and had irregular pulse. Client was at the time in active addiction and didn't feel his health was important.

A GP referral letter was issued and encouragement was given to hand in GP referral letter. Later a full health assessment was completed on the client. The client was thankful for the GP letter as he was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with arterial disease. Client received treatment over three weeks in James Cook Hospital and some of his main arteries were removed.

Client has shared he feels much better now and feels three things were achieved.

Prison Leaver

An individual who is an amputee and suffers with severe ill mental health was released from prison with no address to go to.

The client had a health assessment and a GP appointment was booked as there were concerns around his amputated limbs. As a result, he was later admitted to the hospital with a serious infection in his amputated limbs.

A wheelchair assessment referral was completed and prescriptions were sorted for both his physical and mental health.

Long term support- substance misuse recovery

An individual, who had relapsed following disengagement from another service, was struggling to manage his type 2 diabetes due to his mental ill health and substance misuse.

The Health Squad supported him to re-engage with the mental health team and advocated for him about the importance of support for his mental health to prevent any serious harm from his mismanaged diabetes. He slowly reduced his substance use and he was seen regularly at drop-ins and the team were able to monitor his physical and mental health, booking urgent appointments when he became unwell.

A referral was completed to a community dietician from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust who supported him with his diet and managing his diabetes whilst waiting for an appointment with the diabetic consultant.

Close working with the Mental Health team ensured there was coordinated support from both teams which meant that when the client got a serious infection, he was admitted to hospital and treated. His eating improved and he continued to attend various social groups. As a result, when he attended his diabetic appointment with the consultant, he was given further insulin as his own management of his diabetes had improved.

Coming soon

The Health Squad has seen the demand for their service and continue to work hard to meet the need and reach those who the majority of systems struggle to reach. The team have engaged countless individuals and have already changed the life trajectory for many individuals who otherwise would have been forgotten.

- Hoppings Fair in June 2025 to offer Health Assessments for the showmen
- Diabetes Checks
- Visit from the Chairman of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, Richard Scothon

Contact Health Squad

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www.yourwellbeingservices.uk/accessing-healthcare

Part of: adult wellbeing services

Commissioned by: Durham County Council

Provided by: NHS County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

PCP The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service — Health, wellbeing and learning for all