

Abstract

Guided by a Place-Based Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), a community facing significant health inequalities and poor wellbeing outcomes was identified. With a shared ambition between the community, GPs and the council to address these challenges, a collaborative group worked together to design and build a new health centre, improving access to GP and wider health and wellbeing services.

Introduction

Highley is an isolated, rural, ex-mining community in the Southeast of Shropshire; the Shropshire Council led JSNA in 2022 identified this population as having a higher than average prevalence of hypertension, long term conditions and mental health conditions. Data demonstrated this community to be at greatest risk of the ‘Cost of Living Crisis’ (Table 1) and community engagement highlighted an overwhelmingly consistent issue of access to health services. Of equal concern to the people of Highley was the availability of mental health support and access to physical activities, not only for adults but also for the children and younger people of the community.

Methods and Materials

Motivated to find a lasting, innovative solution to these challenges a 2am email exchange between PCN and Local Authority leaders led to collaborative group, comprised of members ranging from the Parish Council to the Leisure Centre, NHS Estates to Library services, working jointly with the local community. United by a shared ambition the group secured combined funding from UKSPF, CiL and NHS Estates enabling planning of a retrofit new Health Centre with 6 clinical rooms within the existing Leisure Centre, with a portacabin used to maintain services during the build.

Table 1. Demonstrating lower income in the Highley area

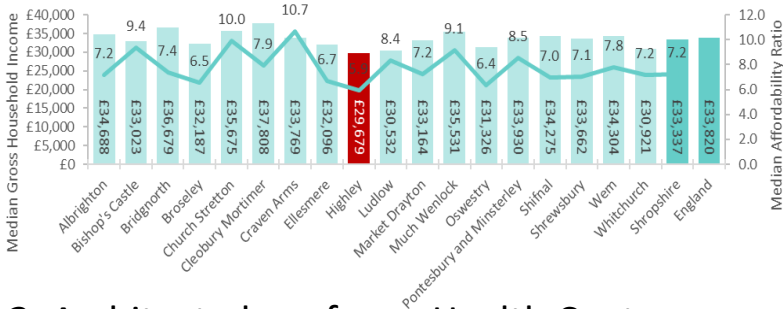
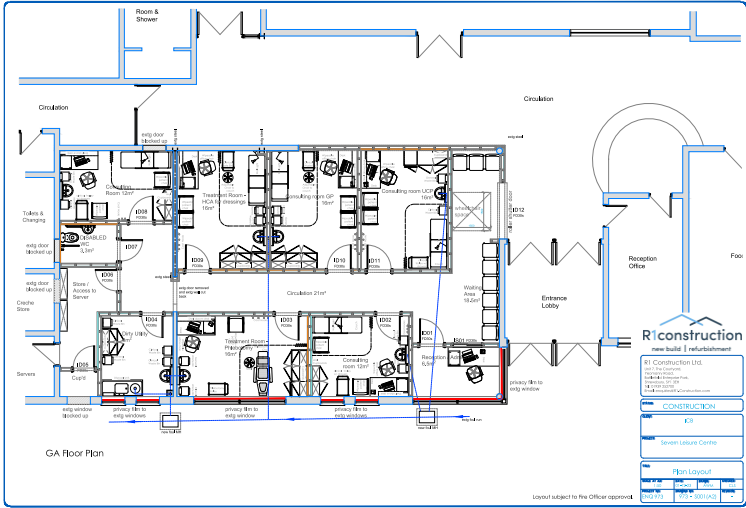
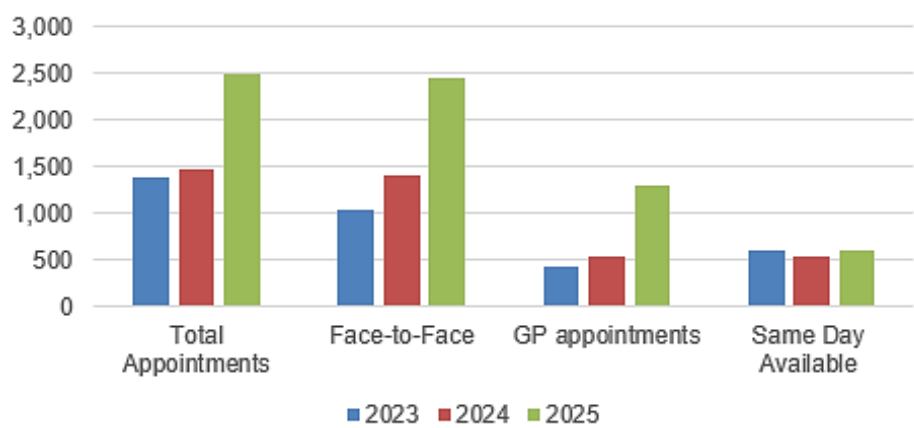


Table 2. Architect plan of new Health Centre



Results

Table 3. Appointment comparison over 1 month period: 2023 (previous provider), 2024 (during build), 2025 (new centre with new provider)



A 6-room surgery was successfully built and operational within 18 months of the project starting. Appointment numbers have increased overall by 81% with access to a wide range of support including a physiotherapist, a dietitian, a mental health practitioner, a health and wellbeing coach in mental health, healthy lives advisors, health visitor drop-in clinics, sexual health outreach and Women's Health Hub talks. A facilities survey completed indicates significant improvement in all areas including welcome, privacy, parking and critically, accessibility. The Library area has been renovated with numbers accessing now increased in active users by 23% and loans by 16%, plus gym use has increased by 15%.

Discussion

This project utilised available data to help determine needs and inequalities and through public engagement and visible actions the group was able to regain the trust and belief of the local community. Improving access to GP appointments alongside a wide spectrum of additional support has enhanced the local offer in line with the original ask and is anticipated to improve long term outcomes which we continue to measure.

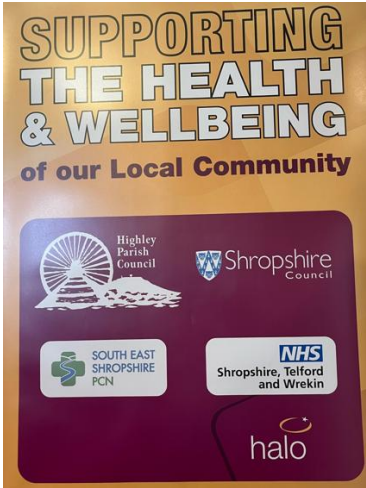


Figure 1. Poster from partners.



Figure 2. Dedicated children's area in Library

Conclusions

This project was a true form of Neighbourhood working proving that 2am ideas are often the best, plus in working together as system partners with the local community, anything can be achieved. This has improved the local health offer but restored trust relationships between professionals and the public.