

Our Impact

REPORT

2020 / 2021



Chest
Heart &
Stroke

75
YEARS
ON YOUR SIDE



Welcome

from **Declan Cunnane CEO**

Today there are over 335,000 people in Northern Ireland living with a chest, heart or stroke condition, that's 1 in 5 of us.

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke was founded in 1946 by 16 volunteers as a reaction to the Tuberculosis public health crisis three quarters of a century ago, and today we battle another respiratory pandemic - COVID-19.

The past year has been challenging, and we know it has been even more difficult for people living with chest, heart and stroke conditions, and their loved ones.

COVID hit us too, but it didn't stop us caring. To help people get through this pandemic, we set up a programme called "Still Caring Through COVID". Since the programme started, we've helped 2,671 people, making more than 33,000 calls to keep them well, feel less isolated, stay physically active and to help them manage their condition.

Over the last 18 months, and in reaction to the pandemic, we have adapted our rehabilitation programmes and care groups to a virtual platform, conducted online health checks and designed webinars for schools and community groups. We have set up a one-of-its-kind COVID recovery service to support sufferers of long COVID.

Through lockdown we have continued to disseminate advice on health and preventing disease, hosting webinars on sleep, stress and diet and offering a wellbeing programme to local businesses, all online.

It has, no doubt, been a challenging 15 months but, as always, NICHHS has adapted to support the community through this difficult time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff at NICHHS for all their hard work and dedication through it all.

Not many people realise that almost 90% of our care services and research are funded almost exclusively by public donations.

It is **you** that makes it all possible - our fundraisers, supporters, volunteers, followers and friends. Your contribution allows us to continue rebuilding lives across Northern Ireland. On behalf of our clients and our staff, I wish to sincerely thank you.

Declan Cunnane CEO

What we do

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke provides expert care and support to anyone at risk of or currently living with chest, heart and stroke conditions. We also fund local ground-breaking research into better treatments, care and prevention.

We provide the following services and support:

- Care & Support
- Health Promotion & Prevention
- Research
- Policy & Public Affairs

Working with people of all ages across the province, we've been delivering our services since 1946, carrying out extensive research into how to **prevent** these conditions, alongside 'on the ground' **support**.

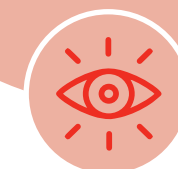


Our Mission

Leading the fight against chest, heart and stroke illnesses in Northern Ireland.

Our Vision

A Northern Ireland free from chest, heart and stroke illnesses.



£1,999,802

expenditure on charitable activities.

(based on our audited accounts for the year ended 31/3/2021)



11,287

people and organisations supported across all our services.

Care & Support

Our strategic priority is:

- **Enhance the quality of life and independence of our clients**

At Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke, we offer a wide range of information and support services for people living with chest, heart and stroke conditions. We work with people of all ages throughout Northern Ireland, along with their family and carers.

We understand the impact that living with a chest, heart or stroke condition can have on you and on your loved ones.

Through our Care Services team and our Family Support offer we provide:

- Practical advice and information
- Emotional support
- Access to physical activity to support rehabilitation
- A range of programmes for improving overall wellbeing
- Signposting to other organisations

Taking Control Self Management Programme

If you're living with a long-term chest, heart or stroke condition, then our Taking Control Self Management Programme provides a range of skills which will help you to manage your condition better and improve your confidence. It also connects you to people with similar conditions, who understand what it's like to live with a long-term condition.



The programme covers the following topics:

- Getting a good night's sleep
- Managing symptoms
- Medication 'how-to'
- Working with your healthcare team
- Setting weekly goals
- Effective problem-solving
- Better communication
- Handling difficult emotions
- How to relax
- Tips for eating well

Support for Carers

Carers Education Programme (CEP)

Despite the impact of the pandemic, we're still here for carers, with an online Carers Education Programme.

In addition we also offer group support across our chest, heart and stroke conditions as well as our Taking Control, self management programme, aimed at supporting individuals to manage their condition and benefit from peer support with others.

Support for Chest Conditions

If you're living with a respiratory condition, then our **Breathing Better** team is still here to help you with whatever challenges you may be facing. Whether it's providing information and advice on your condition to relieve worry and confusion or helping you to connect with others in similar situations, we're here to help you get back on your feet. In addition to one-to-one family support, our Breathing Better service offers:

Pulmonary Rehabilitation and Maintenance Classes

A series of videos aimed at people living with respiratory conditions developed collaboratively with local Health and Social Care teams across Northern Ireland.

Inspire Choir

Neither COVID-19 nor having a respiratory condition can silence our dedicated Inspire Choir, which is continuing to connect online via Zoom, despite the pandemic. The choir is primarily targeted at those with chest conditions as singing helps to significantly improve breathing and general lung function.



Supporting people living with heart conditions

Whether you've just been diagnosed with a heart condition, or have experienced a heart attack and are now recovering, we are here to help with all aspects of your recovery and we offer the following:

Heart Strong Programme

Our Heart Strong Programme is delivered in partnership with local cardiac rehab teams, providing a range of follow-on heart health and recovery services. These are specifically aimed at people who have completed their cardiac rehab and would benefit from continued support in their physical, emotional and mental recovery.

The Programme includes

Walking groups:

Available in the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust area, these are suitable for low-risk heart patients.

Head Strong:

Offering an education programme for people with heart conditions, Head Strong will cover topics including managing sleep, fatigue, improving confidence and overall wellbeing.

Supporting people living with Stroke

Stroke Joint Pathway

Formed and delivered in partnership with the Stroke Association, our joint pathway is still here for all stroke survivors and their carers family members. Through it, stroke survivors can access our Post Rehab Education Programme (PREP), a supportive online service which includes signposting to self management tools, along with physical activity videos and opportunities for peer support. Working in partnership with local Health and Social Care Trust teams throughout Northern Ireland, we continue to provide integrated support for you and your family through our Stroke Family Support Service, offering information, guidance and onward referrals to other services.

PREP Education (Post Rehab Exercise Programme)

Our newly adapted six-week PREP programme is available across all of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care Trusts and covers the following topics:

- What is a stroke?
- The benefits of exercise
- Emotions after stroke
- Food for life
- Lifestyle choices
- Fatigue and falls
- Signposting



Sean's Story Stroke Survivor

Sean O'Hare, 45 from Warrenpoint, hiked for 10 miles in the Mourne Mountains yesterday. Why is this remarkable? Because just recently, Sean underwent a serious heart procedure following a double stroke. He accredits Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke for getting him back in his walking boots.

Prior to his stroke Sean, a teacher at St Mark's High School, was an extremely active man; a footballer, hill-climber, marathon runner and gym circuits trainer, he trained every day, and often multiple times per day.

Sean explains; "Stroke to me was something that happened to really old people, those with a bad diet, who drank too much alcohol or indeed smoked - not me. I am a non-drinker, non-smoker, eat healthily - but it still happened."

Just a few days prior to his stroke, Sean was climbing Croagh Patrick in Co. Mayo. So, it came as a huge shock when, on a teacher training day in August, he started to feel extremely unwell.

"The power on my left side faded and I could feel my speech becoming a struggle as my face fell on one side. My colleague immediately phoned for help and an ambulance was summoned to my work place."

"After 5 days in Craigavon Area Hospital they confirmed that I had indeed suffered a double stroke. I had a problem with my heart where the Patent Foramen Ovale didn't close as it should have when I was a child."

Following corrective surgery in November 2020, Sean joined our PREP (Post Rehab Exercise Programme) and then completed the 'Taking Control Self Management' course.

Sean says; "They were both very good. Brilliant. Top drawer. I couldn't recommend them enough. The NICHS programmes explained what food to

eat, what exercise to do, how to deal with fatigue, anxiety and mental strife. It just all fitted into place for me. You get so much out of listening to other people, their stories, how they were coping and dealing with things. You just learn so much."

Sean would describe his recovery as three-fold: a physical, mental and emotional journey. So, following PREP and Taking Control, NICHS signposted him to 6 weeks of counselling support;

"From an emotional perspective, it was exactly what I needed at that time. While your loved ones are there for you, at the end of the day, you always feel like you're burdening somebody. With the counsellor, it was like I could just expel all the emotions out of my body."

Sean has been lucky and, after building back his strength gradually, would say he is almost 90% back to his prior self. He is delighted to be back in his hiking boots and he returned to school at Easter time (3 months ago).

Sean's advice? "Stay motivated, chart your journey - you will be amazed at how far you have come in a short space of time - talk to people (even if you are male and find this difficult!) and most of all, don't let your stroke define you as a person."

"They were both very good. Brilliant. Top drawer. I couldn't recommend them enough. The NICHS programmes explained what food to eat, what exercise to do, how to deal with fatigue, anxiety and mental strife. It just all fitted into place for me."



Care Impact 20/21

Caring Through COVID

The past year has been challenging, but it didn't stop us caring. We adapted our care services to make sure we could still support those who needed us most.

We've helped 2,671 people, making more than 33,000 calls to keep them well, feel less isolated, stay physically active and to help them manage their condition.



4,401

adults benefited from our Care Service provision.



Telephone Support Service

2,671

people supported by our telephone service during the year

33,779

telephone support calls made

223,465

minutes of support provided

94%

rated service provided as "excellent" **

The service has made a difference**:

98%

of those we supported felt they could manage their condition better.

95%

felt less lonely.

95%

felt less anxious.

98%

felt we were there when they needed us most.

** based on mid-year data

Care Services

As well as the Telephone Support Service, we continued to provide our Care service programmes over the year, adapted to online delivery.



1,730

people supported by our Care Service programmes.

Number of people we supported, with "chest", "heart", and "stroke" as their main condition, and their carers:

448

Respiratory

121

Heart

1071

Stroke

90

Carers

Number of people supported, by each of our services, over the year



194

Prep Online



148

Breathing Better



135

Taking Control



90

Carers' Programme



98

Inspire Choir



85

Young Stroke Groups



85

Stroke Activity Groups



67

Covid Recovery Service

Our services make a real and lasting difference to people living with chest, heart, and stroke conditions, and to their loved ones...

“

I really enjoyed PREP and it was of great benefit to me. The attitude of staff and volunteers was 100%. It helped my mental state also...
I would give the service a 5 +++!

”

“

I enjoyed PREP and I feel that the programme **motivates me** to get healthy again.

”

“

I learned that having a stroke is not the end of the world. PREP & Taking Control are **helping me move on with my life.**

”



Taking Control

is our 6 week programme proven to help people better manage their long-term health conditions.

“ This course could be the acorn seed to **turn someone’s life around.** ” “ Certainly, that bright light in a somewhat darkened room. ”

“ I will say in no uncertain terms that this course has basically achieved the same result as the heart surgeons themselves. I now can **look forward with much more optimism than I ever thought** I would again. Thank you all so much! ”

“ Knowing I can do something about this and **lead a good normal healthy life...** knowing I am in control, and don’t always need to see the doctor... I can now be myself and enjoy life with the help from NICHs. ”

COVID Recovery Service



67

people supported by our COVID programme

100%

rated the service as “excellent”

94%

were able to get the support & advice they needed from us

The service has made a difference:

84%

now confident to self manage their recovery

84%

could better deal with anxiety

74%

slept better; less breathless

68%

felt less fatigued

“ Thanks to NICHs, I’ve learned to **take control** of my illness, manage my symptoms, and set targets to **achieve my health goals.** ”

“ This was a **life line.** It is a **vital recovery service** for those recovering from the disabling illness COVID. ”

“ This course was a **real turning point** in my recovery. It built my confidence and helped me deal with symptoms after a very long illness... lots of people will benefit from this course in future. ”

“ Amazing programme. I’ve told my G.P. about the excellent value of this course... **I feel I can take control of my recovery** much better as a result of the programme. ”



Sharon’s Story Long COVID Survivor

A school Vice-Principal, ParkRunner and mother of 2, 51-year-old Sharon from Groomsport was busy, healthy and happy. She could never have anticipated being struck down by a long-term respiratory illness.

Sharon had been feeling unwell for a few days when she tested positive for COVID-19 back on 6 September 2020. Initially bedridden by the illness, her condition (long COVID) is still ongoing.

“There are waves of seeing some hope at the end of the tunnel and then, there are weeks like this one that are not great at all.”

Her symptoms include severe fatigue, breathlessness, an ongoing cough and vertigo.

Sharon took part in NICHs’s 6-week COVID Recovery Programme. The service was in its infancy at the time but has proven to have had strong results for clients with long COVID symptoms. Sharon describes herself as very fortunate to have accessed this support, when she felt like there was nowhere else to turn:

“The programme puts you in touch with other people in a similar position. On a day to day basis, you don’t meet many people with COVID, especially with everyone being in their homes a lot. Connecting with others and hearing their stories puts everything into perspective and helps you realise that you’re not alone.”

“Really the programme is about self-managing your condition. We spent time looking at physical health and sleeping; very practical ideas with regard to recovery. The constant message is that what you’re feeling and what you’re experiencing is normal and that’s very reassuring.”

“In between sessions, the NICHs girls would follow up with a phone call, just to see how I was doing, to see how my action plan were coming along. It was so supportive, especially emotionally, and so lovely to hear the phone ring.”

“The programme connects the physical to the emotional and offers a much more holistic approach. It really encourages you to care for your mental health too.”

Sharon’s journey back to strength is an ongoing battle, but she has regained some fitness and even took part in NICHs’s fundraising Red Dress Run back in February:

“I spent 22 days in bed! So, initially it was a very slow 5 minute walk for a week, then gradually I got to 10 minutes and so forth. I am normally a regular ParkRunner - every Saturday morning - so when I saw the Red Dress Run advertised, I just thought, “Look, it’s time to give a little back”.”

Research

Research is vital to the work we do. With your help, we've funded high quality research in local universities and hospitals since 1946.

Evidence demonstrates that research is key in the fight to prevent chest, heart, and stroke conditions. Due to the impact of COVID-19 we didn't invite any new research applications in 2020. However we currently have 21 live research projects. We are glad to say, though, that research funding has been agreed for 2021, and we hope to attract some high-quality research. Most of our funded research continued throughout the year, despite many of the researchers redirecting their efforts to the frontline fight against COVID - so a big thanks to our local researchers for their dedication!



AMRC certification

awarded May 2021 for best practice in medical and health research peer review.



21
live research
studies



£1,717,82
currently invested
in research

“RESEARCH is to see what everyone else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.”

Albert Szent-Györgyi de Nagrápolt,
Hungarian biochemist and Nobel Prize winner

Can the common cooking spice fenugreek combat heart disease?

A Q&A with researcher Dr Qiaozhu Su.

NICHs: Why is your research project focusing on fenugreek?

Dr Qiaozhu Su (Lead investigator):

Fenugreek is a spice that's widely used in many parts of the world. It has been shown to be effective in certain metabolic diseases, such as diabetes. So, we want to investigate whether it also has an effect in lowering hyperlipidaemia (high blood fats) in patients with cardiovascular disease, and whether it might be useful in preventing cardiovascular illness. One advantage of fenugreek is that it has shown itself to be safe and has no side-effects.

NICHs: How are you conducting the research?

Dr Qiaozhu Su: We are recruiting 132 patients who have hyperlipidaemia but do not have diabetes, and they will be subject to treatment with fenugreek for 8 weeks. We will then determine the lipid (fat) profile of their blood. This will include triglyceride (cholesterol) and other lipoproteins, and we will use the analysis to determine the effect of fenugreek.

NICHs: If you can develop a treatment as a result of the research, how will it benefit patients?

Dr Qiaozhu Su: Patients will benefit from reduced blood lipids and future development of cardiovascular disease. It will also mean that they can avoid the side-effects that are associated with some chemically based drugs.

NICHs: How will it benefit the Health Service?

Dr Qiaozhu Su: It's a nutrition-based treatment, which is in line with the guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, and it will give doctors more options for the treatment of patients.



NICHs: Would it simply be a matter of people adding it to their food, or could some kind of supplement in the form of a pill be prescribed?

Prof. Jayne Woodside (Co-investigator):

In this study, we're looking at fenugreek simply being added to food. But if it proves successful, the possibility is there for a nutrition-based supplement to be developed, and then people would be able to take a pill – a pill that's food-based. That would be something we'd have to look at in a separate study, but it might make it easier for people to make the change to incorporating fenugreek into their diets.

This two-year study will cost more than £98,000 – but that's tiny compared with the potential benefits. With your help we can succeed.

It has been reported that hospital admissions for cardiovascular disease in the UK alone increased by 46,000 over the course of just three years. By any measure, that is a heavy burden for a health service to sustain.

Imagine if future generations in Northern Ireland could avoid the trauma of cardiovascular disease with a simple addition to the diet. In addition, the benefits of expanding such treatment globally would be immense.

Thanks to your support, we were able to fund Dr Su and her team in 2019 and the research is still ongoing.

Research saves lives. Make a donation to our research today. Please visit www.nichs.org.uk.

Health Promotion

Our strategic priorities are:

- **Raise awareness of personal risk factors**
- **Support people to enjoy healthy and active lives**
- **Work with people and communities with greater risks**
- **Reach out to more young people to develop a healthy start**

As the only local charity in Northern Ireland dedicated to the prevention of chest, heart and stroke illnesses, informing and educating people about the early warning signs of these conditions and supporting healthy lifestyle changes is a core part of what we do.

We also work with a range of partners to promote health and raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of heart attack, stroke and to prevent obesity by encouraging people to enjoy healthy and active lives.

As part of our ongoing commitment to preventing chest, heart and stroke conditions, we offer services to workplaces, communities and schools to help detect early signs of chest, heart and stroke illness and information to empower individuals to adapt their lifestyles to support better health – now and into the future.

Our health promotion and prevention services include:



A Public Health Agency initiative

Work Well Live Well is a **free** Workplace Health and Wellbeing Support Service funded by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and delivered by Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke. Available to any workplaces based in the



Northern, Southern, South Eastern and Belfast Health & Social Care Trust areas, the service provides personalised support to improve the wellbeing of employees. This includes carrying out a health and wellbeing surveys and developing a bespoke health action plan for teams, as well as providing Health Champion and Mental Health First Aid training and access to webinars and resources.

Well Checks

Regular health checks can help detect the early warning signs associated with developing chest, heart and stroke conditions, which is why we offer Well Checks packages for organisations and their employees.

Our Well Checks:

- Assess and check for atrial fibrillation, blood pressure and cholesterol issues, as well as measuring your weight, body fat and lifestyle risk factors, with other options available to suit your needs.
- Empower people to make informed and manageable lifestyle changes.

- Promote organisational health and wellbeing with long-lasting benefits.
- Also includes, personal and organisational health reports and action planning template.

Well Webinar

Our interactive webinars empower people to make informed lifestyle changes that will reduce their risk of developing chest, heart and stroke illnesses. Webinars are available on a wide range of topics, providing the information and tools needed to enable employees to look after and improve their health. Bespoke webinars to suit your business needs can also be produced and delivered.

Topics you can choose from include:

- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity
- Cardiovascular exercise
- Physical Activity Strengthening & Stretching exercise
- Stress
- Sleep
- Alcohol

Well Mind

Well Mind is a workshop which focuses on recognising the triggers of stress and the impact that it can have on your employees. The session will enable employees to understand how stress can be managed in a positive way, using tools such as breathing techniques, reframing and mindfulness.

Well Talk

Well Talks provide health information to enable your employees to improve their overall health and wellbeing. Our health promotion team will provide information on lifestyle changes employees can make thereby reducing their risk of developing chest, heart and stroke conditions.

Well You

This supportive behaviour change programme motivates individuals who are ready to make healthier lifestyle changes.

Our health promotion team help employees identify areas that they wish to improve and support them to make these positive changes through personal face-to-face and online support.

Well Schools

Learning early how to enjoy healthy, active lives is key to giving children the best start in life. It helps them grow into adults who are less at risk of serious illnesses like chest, heart and stroke conditions, as well as obesity.

At NICHS we support families, schools and young people by educating about these issues and providing practical tips and advice on how to eat well, stay active and understand the risk factors to serious illness.

Topics covered include:

- Healthy eating
- Physical activity
- Stress
- Alcohol
- The dangers of smoking

Health and Homeless

We're all at risk of chest, heart and stroke illnesses but for those who are homeless, the risk is even greater and often, they don't have access to a GP or the conditions that support healthy lifestyle choices. That's why it's crucial that we keep providing these vital services:

- Health promotion information and resources
- Digital support
- Online Health Champion Training for Staff
- Online Health Checks and Talks

Our Health and Homeless service aims to raise awareness of healthy living and help to reduce the risk of chest, heart and stroke conditions. This service is currently available to homeless hostels and drop-in centres in the Belfast and South Eastern areas. Funded by the NI Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland, it prioritises families and young people who are homeless.

Work Well Live Well & The Consumer Council Story

Local business, The Consumer Council in Belfast, had some serious concerns about the toll that the pandemic has taken on the physical and mental health of its employees.

Determined to make a positive change and to put staff health first, The Consumer Council signed up to Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke's Work Well Live Well programme.

Noleen Charnley, Health Champion at The Consumer Council, is a strong advocate for the employee health programme;

"The Consumer Council has really benefitted from participating in the Work Well Live Well Programme. The programme is bespoke to your organisation as they use the information from the staff survey to identify the specific areas of health and wellbeing that your staff want to improve and develop. The programme has really helped motivate and guide us in setting both short-term and long-term goals to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our staff. We have set up a range of initiatives and fun activities that our staff can get involved in, as well as free webinars and online learning to help educate staff on a range of topics from healthy eating to coping with stress and building resilience.

The programme has been particularly beneficial throughout the pandemic, especially as our staff have been working remotely. As a result of the programme, we have agreed an action plan to improve the health and wellbeing of our staff. The programme has been fun and interactive and comes highly recommended."

Health Promotion & Prevention Impact 20/21



6,886

adults and children benefited from our targeted health promotion programmes

COVID-19 restricted the delivery of our traditional services, but we adapted and continued to offer targeted programmes to schools, communities and workplaces.

Health & Homelessness Service



38

hostels supported



114

telephone support calls



999

info packs / resources sent to hostels



32

staff signed up for AF & BP training



40

staff and residents signed up for Mental Health First Aid training

Well Space

Well Space is our 1 year programme which supports hostels to develop a health and wellbeing action plan. We train staff and residents as "Health Champions" and provide them with additional support and training, to help them make these action plans a reality.

3

hostels being supported through 1-year programme

14

staff & residents signed up to Health Champion training

36

staff and residents completing health survey

"Many people who are homeless find health care difficult to access... BP & AF checks takes the support we can offer to a higher level... we are really grateful to NICHS to be able to offer these to our clients."

"Well Space offers the opportunity to get service users engaged with their own wellbeing, and to make tangible lifestyle changes that will benefit them for years to come."

Health promotion in schools

672 pupils

took part in the digital Chester's Challenge programme

12 schools

(8 schools with high free school meals uptake)

4.7 ★★★★★

Teachers' average rating for digital delivery...

4.7 ★★★★★

...and their rating for programme overall



60 schools received Chester resources



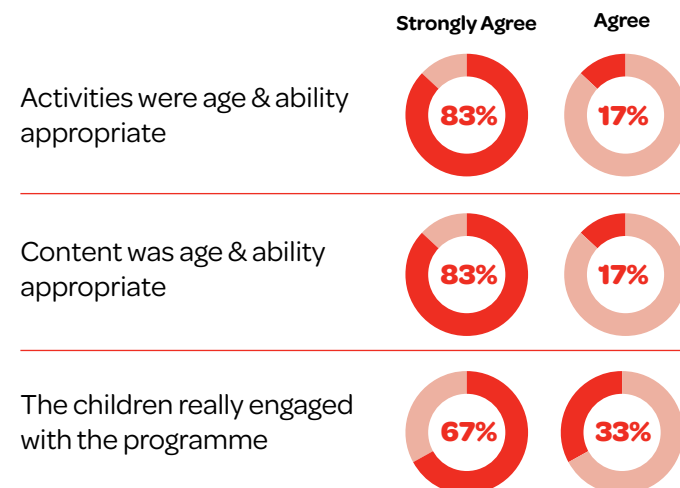
13 family hostels received resources

“It's been really great so far. Amazing what you have managed to cover via Zoom! The children are really enjoying it. **St Joseph's, Carryduff**”

“At a recent parent teacher meeting, a lot of parents mentioned Chester's Challenge and how the children brought the messages home. **St. Malachy's, Camlough**”

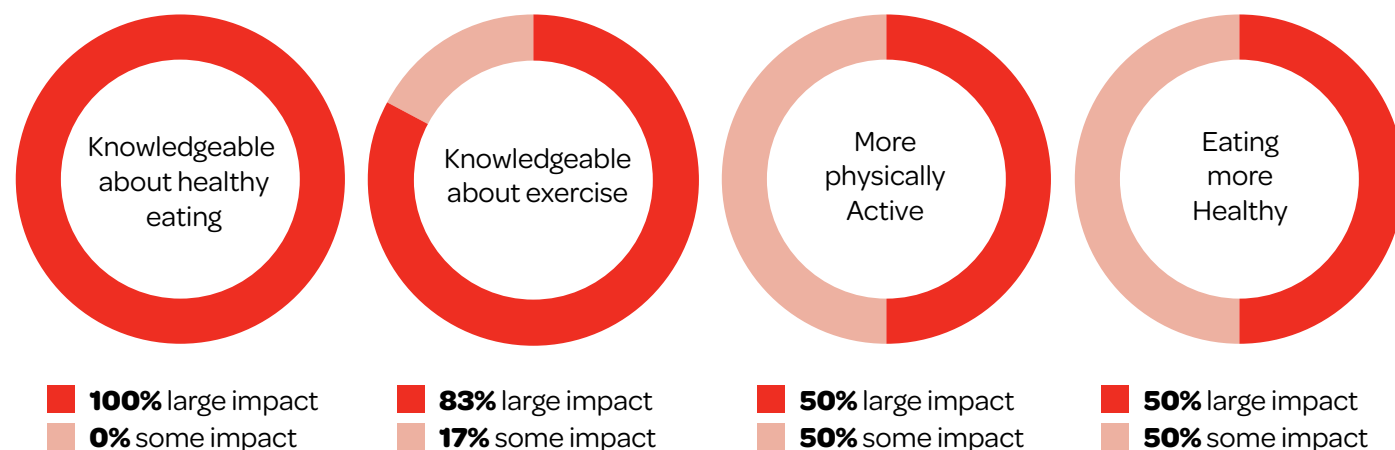
What teachers told us...

Most viewed webinar	Views
#1 Eat well feel well	109
#2 Physical activity	60
#3 Sleep webinar	50
#4 Stress webinar	37
#5 Smoking & e-cigs	16



The programme made a difference:

100% of teachers who linked the Chester programme / materials to the curriculum told us that, after Chester, pupils were more...



Health promotion in the workplace



3865 employees involved across 57 workplaces

183 Health Champions trained

57 workplaces supported to develop Action Plans, 100% implemented

31 NICHs training & networking events

154 Workplaces signed up to the Mental Health Charter

155 Registrations of interest in the WWLW programme

53 Well Checks

49 Workplaces trained in Mental Health First Aid

The programme made a difference

Health Champion average confidence in role...

Score out of 100: 60 before training, 80 after training (▲ 33%)

% trainees who reported their knowledge as "good" or "excellent" in the following workplace issues...

	% Before training	% After training	
Workplace health	23	84	▲
Nutrition	26	84	▲
Physical activity	26	84	▲
Alcohol	29	79	▲
Smoking	35	76	▲
Sleep	20	76	▲
Stress	32	76	▲

Well Checks



533 people received checks

COVID hit our face to face prevention services, but we adapted and continued to provide a vital service. We developed and offered a new online health check, and delivered 80 webinars to educate and support people to keep well during COVID. During the year, we provided 533 health



80 webinars delivered

checks, helping to identify Atrial Fibrillation (AF), a type of irregular heartbeat that increases your risk of having a stroke, high blood pressure, and other risk factors. With this information, we encouraged recipients to make healthy lifestyle changes, and signposted them to seek professional help.

4% referred to GP with possible AF

22% referred for help with high blood pressure

41% referred for help with high cholesterol

Policy & Public Affairs

With your help, we are leading the fight against chest heart and stroke conditions in Northern Ireland.

We always listen to views of people living with chest, heart, and stroke conditions, and to their loved ones. Your experiences help shape our campaigns for better care and prevention of these conditions, today and tomorrow.

COVID hit us too, but it didn't stop us. We continued to work with politicians of all parties and health bodies across Northern Ireland. We campaigned for better care and prevention of chest, heart and stroke conditions, and we raised awareness about the impact of the COVID pandemic on those living with these conditions, and their families.

Tackling Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity continues to be one of the leading public health challenges of the 21st century with **around a quarter (25%) of children aged 2-15 either overweight (20%) or obese (6%) increasing health risks now and in later life**. Childhood obesity is associated with adverse health outcomes. Physical inactivity, sedentary behaviour such as prolonged uninterrupted periods of sitting are independent risk factors for becoming overweight, obese and for poor cardiovascular health.

COVID restrictions had a negative impact on obesity rates including on physical activity and nutrition¹ which NICHs had predicted and obesity is a risk factor for developing COVID. We continued to campaign the government to do more to tackle obesity and to support families. We called for further investment in physical activity programmes for young people and schools, a total ban on online junk food advertising and for more targeted programmes for communities and people at risk to tackle the growing obesity crisis.

During the year:

- We continued to put pressure on the government to progress with reform of the stroke services to save lives and reduce disability.
- We ensured our chest, heart and stroke community who were shielding got access to medication, food.
- We raised awareness of Stroke and Heart attack symptoms and the importance of calling 999 taking action during COVID.
- We called on the Government to support the vital work of charities who were still operating under challenges during COVID.
- We campaigned for the introduction of minimum unit pricing for alcohol.

¹ Public Health Agency: Evidence Overview COVID-19 and Obesity



Fundraising

Almost 90% of NICHs's care and prevention services and research are funded exclusively thanks to public donations. So most of the work you can read about in this report was made possible by the unstoppable determination of individuals, families, friends and companies who are passionate about helping us. We can't thank everyone enough.

We need this support so we can continue to provide this and other vital services to the over 335,000 people in Northern Ireland living with a chest, heart or stroke condition.

There are lots of ways to help and support us. From becoming a regular giver and donating a small amount of money each month, organising fundraising events with friends or work colleagues, to leaving a gift in your will, we really appreciate any support you can give us so we can continue to help everyone in Northern Ireland living with chest, heart and stroke conditions.

Please visit www.nichs.org.uk/how-you-can-help for more information.



£2.29 million
Raised through public donations



3920
Regular Givers



22
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Over 130
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Thank you


to everyone who supported us in 2020/21

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Find out how you and your organisation can support NICHs at www.nichs.org.uk

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