

Pulse

Autumn 2022

**How we're trying
to help prevent 2 out
of 3 asthma deaths**

**Learn about the
difference we made
in 2021/22**

**The life changing
impact of a stroke -
Matt & Caroline's story**

**High blood pressure -
the link to 1 in 2 heart
attacks & strokes**

**Chest
Heart &
Stroke**



DID YOU KNOW 2 OUT OF 3 ASTHMA DEATHS ARE PREVENTABLE?

In June we launched our asthma awareness campaign. With approximately 1 in 10 people in Northern Ireland being asthmatic, including 36,000 children, this campaign aims to raise awareness of the condition, how dangerous it can be and the importance of the correct use of inhalers.

Fidelma Carter, Head of Public Health at NICHs explains; "The fact 2 out of 3 asthma deaths are preventable is unacceptable. Through our asthma awareness campaign, we want to help prevent future asthma deaths, make people think twice about asthma, as well as take their inhalers properly. This means taking their preventer inhaler daily and ensuring they carry their reliever inhaler with them at all times."

"Alarming, only 30% of asthma patients know how to use their inhaler properly¹. Furthermore, only 15% of health care professionals are educated on correct inhaler use which means they are not passing on the right techniques to patients². This situation needs to change as the blunt fact is asthma can be fatal and it is vital everyone with asthma is empowered and educated with the knowledge and skills on how to use inhalers correctly to help prevent unnecessary attacks and deaths."

There are several other issues our campaign is hoping to tackle. Fidelma continues; "We know

some people are not taking their preventer inhaler everyday which is crucial as this builds up protection in the airways over time to help prevent asthma attacks. We also know people are not carrying their blue reliever inhaler with them which means if they have an attack they are without the lifeline they need. Others think they do not have asthma anymore and mistakenly stop their treatment without consulting their healthcare professional. These are all behaviours which we want to try and change through our asthma awareness campaign."

A 2019 analysis of 19 high-income countries found that death rates for asthma in 10 to 24-year-olds, among all 14 European nations included, was highest in the UK³. Fidelma comments; "This is a shocking statistic and is why we are targeting children, teens, young adults and parents as part of this campaign-there is no room for complacency with this potentially deadly condition."

"Our campaign was developed in conjunction with our Asthma Partnership Group which includes leading asthma healthcare professionals and includes extensive outdoor, digital and radio advertising. To engage children, we developed superhero characters, Peter the Preventer and Raya the Reliever. The aim is to show children their inhalers are actually their superpower and give them the ability to

play, join in and have fun like everyone else. We want to empower children with asthma and give them the tools to do the things they enjoy whilst understanding their condition and the importance of using their inhalers properly."

"Parents and carers are also hugely responsible for helping their child manage their asthma correctly as set out in their Asthma Personal Action Plan. We cannot stress enough how important it is for parents to play an active role in ensuring their child is taking their inhalers regularly and properly. They should check their child's inhaler use technique and if they have

LIVING WITH ASTHMA

Local mum Hadil Ibrihim and her five-year-old son Mohamed, from Belfast, know all too well how serious asthma can be and what it is like to live with the condition.

Hadil says, "Mohamed was diagnosed with asthma shortly before he turned two. He had an asthma attack and we took him to hospital- he was admitted into the ICU where he was intubated. Scary isn't the word. I was nine months pregnant at the time and with the shock of it all I went into labour right there in the hospital."

Hadil recalls, "It was really bad. The doctors were telling me 'let's hope he pulls through.' As a mother, let me say, that is really scary."

Mohamed was discharged after a hospital stay and with time Hadil has learned to live with his condition. Hadil explains, "It's better now that I know how to deal with it. His doctors are great - they've given me so much help."

Hadil ensures Mohamed's asthma is well managed by making sure he uses his preventer inhaler every day and that his reliever inhaler goes everywhere with him. Hadil says, "I have inhalers and nebulisers everywhere. I would not leave the house without one, they really do save his life."

Knowing the triggers for your asthma is another key factor in preventing asthma attacks. Hadil says, "You'll never know every single trigger, but you need to be aware and keep your environment the best you can for them. Smoke is a number one trigger for Mohamed. Dust, mould, and enclosed spaces are also issues."

any doubts about whether this is correct they should make an appointment with their GP, asthma nurse or a pharmacist."

Fidelma concludes; "In 2017, the last year for which figures are available, 38 people in Northern Ireland died from asthma and the sad reality is that many of these deaths could have been prevented through better basic care and correct inhaler use. Our asthma awareness campaign will hopefully make people think twice about this condition and its potentially deadly impact."



What would Hadil say to other parents whose children have been diagnosed with asthma? "They need to get educated about asthma. Take inhalers everywhere. It is really hard. Being in hospital and seeing your child sick - it doesn't get easier. But by learning, being prepared, using your inhalers and taking them with you, you can prevent them being seriously ill and manage it the best you can for you and your child."

For further information and support about asthma visit, nichs.org.uk/asthmacankill

¹ Sanchis et al, 2016, 'Systematic Review of Errors in Inhaler Use: Has Patient Technique Improved Over Time?', Chest, 150(2):394-406.

² V.Plaza et al, 2018, 'Errors in the Use of Inhalers by Health Care Professionals: A Systematic Review', JACI IN Practice, Volume 6, Issue 3, p987-995.

³ Nuffield Trust Think Tank and the Association for Young People's Health study.

Supporters

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS

Partnering with NICHS as a business is a fantastic way to help us continue our important work whilst showing your company's support for your employees, customers and the wider local community.



Our corporate partner BDO NI are well on track to exceed their fundraising target of £20,000 within two years, having raised a staggering £13,000 already from December to July. As well as participating in our annual Red Dress Fun Run, abseiling down Belfast Castle and entering a relay team in the 40th Belfast City Marathon, the team at BDO NI also organised a five-a-side charity football match involving fellow accountancy firms.



Eleven brave members of staff from Corries Farm Butchers local stores and Head Office took to the skies in June (15,000 ft up to be exact), completing a sponsored tandem skydive in aid of our cause. This was the latest in a number of fundraising activities for the family run business who have been supporting NICHS since 2019 and they soared to success raising over £7,800.



We are so grateful for the ongoing generosity of Musgrave MarketPlace, their staff and customers. The funds raised by Musgrave MarketPlace and Drinks Inc through the One Step At A Time campaign will help us continue to deliver life-changing programmes and support that will help those affected by chest, heart or stroke illnesses to rebuild their lives.

To find out more about how your business or organisation can partner with us visit nichs.org.uk/fundraiseatwork



Our partnership with MACE is now in its 7th year and it continues to go from strength to strength having raised £227,000 to date. MACE Victoria Street Lurgan recently became the first store to reach a fundraising milestone of £10,000 thanks to the astounding generosity of their customers.

Store owner Anthony McDonald says, "From we first started fundraising for NICHS our customers have been so supportive. They appreciate the work the charity does in the Lurgan area and the fact the money they donate goes towards helping local people in need."

Lobbying



MAKING THE CASE ON BEHALF OF PATIENTS AND THE PUBLIC

One of NICHS' charitable objectives is to influence government and decision makers so that they do more to tackle chest, heart and stroke illness. This involves arguing for more action on prevention, for better care in our hospitals, and better support for patients in the community.

In recent years we have had a focus on stroke. We have campaigned hard for change and launched a 'Stroke Manifesto' in one of the first 'hybrid' meetings held in Parliament Buildings. We have encouraged government and Assembly Members to push forward with the Stroke Review. A central part of our campaign was to raise the profile of how strokes could be prevented by detecting atrial fibrillation (AF) – an irregular heartbeat that is the cause of 1 in 4 strokes. We have incorporated checking for AF into our health checks service and we ran a communications campaign to raise public awareness of this condition.

Recently we have seen progress on stroke reform with the Health Minister publishing a Stroke Action Plan in June which saw the inclusion of things we had pressed for in our manifesto such as action to ensure that everyone who could benefit from clot-busting drugs (thrombolysis) receives them. It is estimated 20% of strokes can be treated by thrombolysis.

We will continue to lead the fight against stroke, calling for more action on stroke prevention, the setting up of hyper acute stroke units, for community rehabilitation for stroke survivors and support for carers. Having a stroke can be life-changing, not just for the person affected but for family members as well.

FUTURE CAMPAIGNING FOCUS

While continuing to argue for improvements in stroke, our focus is changing at present to respiratory conditions. Again, the issues we will be campaigning on will involve engagement on a broad front. With politicians and government about the policy framework and funding (we intend to produce a Respiratory Manifesto in the Autumn). With clinicians about how we can improve best practice amongst healthcare professionals, for example in asthma care. And finally, in raising awareness amongst patients and the public about what they can do about self-managing their condition. Hopefully our asthma awareness campaign will have an impact over the next few months.

Next year we will focus on cardiac issues. At times it will appear that we have 'forgotten' an area but that is far from the case – we are simply working to a plan to try to maximise the public affairs and communications impact for all those with chest, heart and stroke illnesses.

We will continue to raise awareness of the unacceptable waiting lists, for prevention and early detection such as having your blood pressure checked, having access to health checks across Northern Ireland and working to combat the rising obesity levels amongst children too.

Our job is to represent the voice of our chest, heart and stroke community and our campaigns are more successful with your valued involvement and support.

Chest
Heart &
Stroke

Impact 2021/2022

THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE

To help us achieve our vision of a Northern Ireland free from chest, heart and stroke illnesses, it's important that we measure the impact of the work we do. This allow us to see what's really making a difference, helping us to focus our attention on key areas, while improving others, so we can deliver the most effective services and outcomes.

The next few pages highlight the effectiveness of our programmes, services and research projects over the past year. To find out more about our impact you can read our Annual Impact Report which will be available on our website from 31st August. Visit nichs.org.uk/about-us/impact to read the report in full.

CARE IMPACT

Over the past year, we've helped over 2,500 people and their families to adjust to life with a chest, heart or stroke condition, helping them to enjoy life to the full, re-engage with hobbies, and improve their confidence, independence and overall quality of life.



2,636
people supported by our
Care Service programmes.

Number of attendances to each of our services over the year



1,019
PREP and PREP
Online



415
Breathing
Better



909
Taking
Control



138
Carers'
Programme



218
Inspire
Choir



158
Young
Stroke Online



851
Surviving
Stroke Wellness
Sessions



541
Surviving Stroke
Online



195
Heart
Strong



491
Walking
Groups

RESEARCH IMPACT

Evidence demonstrates that research is key in the fight to prevent chest, heart, and stroke conditions and we have funded 9 new studies this year. We were delighted to be able to award new grants to these high-quality research projects following a pause in our grant allocation during the pandemic. **This year, we have attracted such incredible research projects that we even made the decision to increase our funding budget by 63% from £400,000 to £638,522.**



9

New
studies
funded



1

Respiratory
project



5

Cardiac
projects



2

Stroke
projects



1

Risk factor
project

POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IMPACT



Smoking in cars

We finally saw a ban on smoking in cars carrying children come into force.



Minimum Unit Pricing MUP

We pressed for a Minimum Unit Price for alcohol – and, as a result, a consultation is underway.



Waiting Lists, better services and fair funding

We campaigned for fair reimbursement for the stroke and respiratory services we provide, we raised awareness about asthma and its dangers and we campaigned for a reduction in waiting lists.



Service user focused

We championed the needs of people experiencing Long Covid, and ensured their involvement in our work.

FUNDRAISING IMPACT

Almost 90% of our care and prevention services and research are funded exclusively thanks to public donations.

All of the money we receive stays in Northern Ireland, funding programmes and supporting local people right here in our communities, workplaces, schools, hostels and universities.



£3.75 million

raised through
public donations



3676

regular givers



232

fundraising events
organised by the
public across NI



128

companies
supported us



94

gifts in Wills

Chest
Heart &
Stroke

Impact 2021/2022

HEALTH PROMOTION & PREVENTION IMPACT

We offer targeted services to workplaces, communities and schools to help detect early signs of chest, heart and stroke illness and empower individuals to make healthy choices.

over
14,000

adults and children benefited from our range of health promotion services.



HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS SERVICE



172

staff and residents supported



38

hostels supported



742

info packs / resources sent to hostels



45

staff received training

HEALTH PROMOTION IN SCHOOLS



5,964

children, young people and adults were supported by our schools programmes.

Chester's Challenge Programme

2,042

pupils took part in the Chester's Challenge Programme



HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE WORKPLACE



A Public Health Agency initiative

4,591

people across 61 organisations were supported

WELL CHECKS

Demand for our Well Checks has been overwhelming this year with local people seeking alternatives to visiting their GP to check in on their health. During the year, we provided 3,347 health 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.

2.2%

referred to GP with possible AF

18%

referred for help with high blood pressure

24%

referred for help with high cholesterol

Events



LAUNCH OF IN-MEMORY RUN TO REMEMBER EVENTS

On Sunday 21st August NICHHS Ambassador Gillian Abraham (pictured here with her brother James Davis) hosted her first Run To Remember event at Lurgan Park in memory of their father Martin Davis. Martin was a popular teacher at Brownlow Integrated College who sadly died suddenly of a heart attack. Gillian says, "Despite the time that has passed I still can't properly express the shock and pain of his loss and there is not a day that goes by that I don't think of him and how special he was to us."

Since then Gillian has been a great supporter of NICHHS, both fundraising and raising awareness in her father's memory. Run To Remember was a fun-filled, family friendly day out with a choice of 5K or 10K routes around Northern Ireland's largest urban park. It brought the local community together to remember their lost loved ones or in support of people currently living with a chest, heart or stroke condition.

If you would like to organise your own in-memory event, a run, walk, cycle, hike or any other activity, our Community Fundraising Team are here to help. For more information, email Community@nichs.org.uk or telephone 028 9032 0184 during office hours.



RED DRESS FUN RUN 2022 RAISES £50,000 TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST HEART DISEASE

On Sunday 27th February we celebrated the return of our Red Dress Fun Run, proudly supported by MACE, to Stormont Estate after a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic. The all-inclusive fun run was a huge success with almost 600 supporters attending the live event or signing up for the virtual option, completing a 5k run or walk on a day in February which is National Heart Month.

An incredible £50,000 was raised to help us continue to tackle heart disease in Northern Ireland and we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who took part or donated. Diane Anthony from our title sponsor MACE says; "We are so proud to support NICHHS, and this fantastic event, for another year. We are already looking forward to next year's Red Dress Fun Run and playing our part in raising vital funds to help local people."

Planning is already underway for Red Dress Fun Run 2023 on Sunday 26th February! To register your interest and hear when the £10 early-bird entry fee launches, visit nichs.org.uk/RedDressRun

Survivor Story



Matt And Caroline Cooke STROKE

Matt and Caroline Cooke, from Hillsborough, were relaxing on an ordinary weekend, when life as they knew it was turned upside down after Matt suffered a stroke, aged just 40.

Caroline recalls, "Matt had his stroke on the 31st August 2020. We were in Fermanagh as we had a boat down there just outside Enniskillen. We used to go every weekend and that was how we relaxed. On the Sunday we were due to come home, and we were packing things up. Matt went to the car and the next thing I was getting missed calls from him. I was still on the boat cleaning up. He said, 'can you help me?' which was very unusual. I went up to the car and saw he had pretty much fallen over. He was dizzy, but he wasn't displaying symptoms of a stroke at that stage."

"From there, it got gradually worse and I phoned an ambulance. They went through the FAST symptoms on the phone with me and during that process, Matt's face started to droop and that was when I knew it was a stroke."

Matt was taken to the South West Acute Hospital in Enniskillen. Caroline recalls, "The details aren't that clear now of exactly what happened, but I know they were trying to do Thrombolysis, but Matt kept being sick, so they couldn't. Later he was blue lighted in an ambulance to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. Overnight, his brain began to swell, and I got a call on the Monday morning to come in urgently as we needed to decide whether or not to perform an operation - a craniectomy. It was absolutely awful and terrifying."

Matt says, "It was very scary when the symptoms began, but by the stage I was in the hospital, I didn't know much, I was pretty much out of it."

As Matt began to recover Caroline wasn't able to visit regularly due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. "At first, I was allowed in for one hour every day in the ICU, but when Matt moved to the ward, it was one hour, once a week for a very long time", Caroline recalls.

In total, Matt was kept in hospital for almost a year. He remained in the Royal Victoria Hospital until October 2020, then moved to the Ulster Hospital for intense rehab before going on to the Brain Injury Unit at Musgrave Hospital.

When Matt first came around after his stroke he couldn't speak due to damage to his vocal chords from being intubated, and he was also paralysed on his left side.

Caroline adds, "He couldn't swallow, couldn't eat, couldn't go to the bathroom by himself. Now he's been left with left sided visual field deficit, which affects his ability to drive, and his left arm has never shown any function. With his left leg, he has tried really hard at his walking, but it doesn't bend by itself. It's much better now and he can walk using a stick. The stroke also had a big effect cognitively. Matt's long-term memory is amazing, but his short-term memory really suffered. He also can't cry anymore which is one of the stranger effects. At the start, he couldn't remember the days of the week or even do one plus one, so he's come a long way!"

When Matt was finally able to go home in March 2021, it was a big step forward, but also a huge challenge for the couple. Caroline recalls, "There was no care package in place. The hospital phoned and said Matt had to go home - we had to start figuring out what to do. We were about to move into a new house and were a couple of days away from signing the contract, but the house fell through as I couldn't sort it on my own while Matt was in hospital. I was living with my mum and dad - so where was Matt going to go? Our only options were either we made room at my mum and dad's house, or Matt would go into a home. Luckily my parents are very understanding, and they made it work."

"I took a month of leave from work and my mum and I cared for Matt. It was six weeks before we got a care package in place. When Matt first came home he couldn't do anything for himself, so it was tough."

When Matt was still in hospital, while researching strokes online, Caroline came across Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke and got in touch. She was referred to our online Carer's Education Programme.

She says, "Matt was still in hospital and the programme gave me an idea of what to expect as a new carer. We heard from pharmacists about drugs and prescriptions, and there was information about benefits and all sorts of other topics, which was really helpful. It was also nice to have the social element too - you could ask questions of other carers who were further on in their journey."

Once Matt had left hospital and completed his statutory rehab, he took part in our PREP programme (Post Rehab Exercise Programme) in Lisburn.

Of the programme Caroline says, "It was absolutely the best thing ever. It got us both out to do something together and it gave Matt a purpose. He met people of a similar age, people he could talk to who were like him and understood his journey. All the volunteers and staff are lovely and make you feel like part of a family and so welcome. Matt would be anxious about meeting new people but after the first week he couldn't wait to go back."

"The fact that Matt is a young man, and this happened when he was just 40 has been so

tough. He can no longer work as a joiner which makes him so sad. All his social activities were outdoor, we would have gone down to the boat and went out socialising. When he came home, there was nothing he could do, and we lost all our social activities. It was very isolating. PREP came around and offered something different. It was interactive and showed your improvement each week, which really helped Matt."

What is one message Caroline and Matt would give to someone facing a stroke? Caroline says, "Positivity, belief and having hope is so important. Everyone's recovery is different. The health professionals might say you won't recover any further after six months, you'll plateau, but Matt is still improving now. Just believe in yourself and stay positive."

For more information on NICHHS stroke services, visit nichs.org.uk/our-support-services/stroke

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF A STROKE...

- F** FACE - has their face fallen on one side? Can they smile?
- A** ARMS - can they raise both arms and keep them there?
- S** SPEECH - is their speech slurred?
- T** TIME to call 999 if you see any single one of these signs.

Supporters

SUPERHERO SUPPORTERS



Our Deputy CEO Gareth McGleenon and friends Roger and Kathy Johnston took on the charity challenge of a lifetime in August on a trek to Machu Picchu, Peru. Inspired to fundraise in memory of family and friends, the intrepid trio trekked up to 10 hours a day for 10 days through the Andes Mountains before finally arriving at one of the seven wonders of the world!

If you feel inspired to find out more about embarking on an adventurous International Charity Trek Challenge for our cause, we and the world are waiting for you. Contact events@nichs.org.uk or telephone 028 9032 0184 to discover more.



Paul McCord has been busy racking up the miles on his Triple Crown Cycling challenge this summer. Paul, from Armagh, took on the challenge in memory of friends who sadly lost their lives due to a heart attack or cancer and he hopes to raise at least £3,500 for NICHS and Macmillan Cancer Support. Paul's three incredible feats will total over 1186 miles and include cycling from Geneva to Nice over seven days as well as cycling 500 miles over one week with a group of family and friends at Lake Garda- taking on at least two climbs from the Giro d'Italia along the way!



Not content with simply taking on the Edinburgh Marathon in May, Stirling University student Stewart McCaw from Holywood decided to go one step further and fundraise for us in memory of his grandfather Harry McCaw whilst carrying a set of golf clubs for the entire 26.2 miles! Inspired by the sport that he and his grandfather shared a mutual passion for, Stewart's Herculean effort not only set a new Guinness World Record but also raised over £1,700.



Mia Forsythe's Nanna Joan passed away from a heart attack in 2019 and as she used to volunteer for NICHS, when Mia wanted to raise money in her memory, she thought of us. Mia, her family and her friends from Orangefield Primary School, Belfast raised an incredible £2,389 for our work by running a stall and organising a raffle at the Holywood May Day Fair as well as a fun run in Orangefield Park.



Two hundred members of #TeamNICHS stepped up for our cause at the 40th Belfast City Marathon on Sunday 1st May. Thanks to all their hard efforts the overall collective fundraising reached an outstanding £50,000!

For fundraising ideas and inspiration visit nichs.org.uk/fundraiseforus

NICHS Support

GIVE A REGULAR DONATION, MAKE A LASTING IMPACT

A stroke, heart attack or debilitating long-term chest condition can be devastating for both the person affected and their family. As a charity, our work caring for thousands of local people each year relies on the generosity of regular donations.

£5
per month

= £60 per year (£75 with Gift Aid) could help pay for a specialist neuro-physio to attend our PREP programme, providing rehab and support which helps individuals rebuild their mobility, independence and confidence after suffering a stroke.

£10
per month

= £120 per year (£150 with Gift Aid) could pay for 5 people living with an illness and their families to receive a home visit from one of our Family Support Co-ordinators in the aftermath of a devastating diagnosis.

£20
per month

= £180 per year (£225 with Gift Aid) could fund a researcher for a full day, working to advance how we prevent, treat and care for chest, heart and stroke illnesses so fewer people develop them and more people survive them with better quality of life.



CRAIG'S STORY

"I'm so grateful for the support I received from NICHS and I have now signed up to give a regular donation to support their work so that others can also benefit from the same life-changing help as I did. The team taught me how to pace myself, manage my symptoms and set myself goals and I can still phone or text whenever I need them. They are always on hand with support and advice." Craig Shilliday, Portadown

Please help us continue to support people like Craig when they need it most. Visit our website to find out more about making a regular donation and the many ways that it could help at nichs.org.uk/regulardonation



GET ACTIVE FOR #TEAMNICHS THIS AUTUMN

What could you do to make a difference to the lives of local people living with devastating health conditions? Anything you like! Whether you love to run, walk, hike, bike or abseil, do your thing for NICHS to help us continue to provide support and care in your community.

Or you could step up for #TeamNICHS on...

- Sunday 18th September - Belfast City Half Marathon
- Wednesday 9th November - Run In The Dark, Belfast
- Sunday 11th December - #TeamNICHS Santa Abseil Challenge
- Or host a Heartfelt Healthy Morning Break anytime!



Find out more and sign up for one of our charity challenges at nichs.org.uk/events

**Chest
Heart &
Stroke**



LET'S TALK ABOUT BLOOD PRESSURE

In September we will be launching our new blood pressure campaign to raise awareness of what is often known as The Silent Killer. Our campaign will encourage people to get their blood pressure checked as high blood pressure rarely causes any physical symptoms and is often only discovered after someone suffers a stroke or heart attack. Detection and subsequent action are therefore vital, but how much do you know about blood pressure?

WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

If your blood pressure is consistently higher than 140/90mmHg then you may have high blood pressure.

The only way to know what your blood pressure is, is to have it measured. If high blood pressure is identified, you need to act immediately to get it treated and make lifestyle behaviour changes. This will help prevent and delay the onset of heart attacks, strokes and other conditions linked to high blood pressure. If you already have one of these health conditions, it is also vitally important to monitor your blood pressure to prevent further exacerbation or damage to your health.

As a general guide:

Ideal blood pressure is considered to be between 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg.

High blood pressure is considered to be 140/90mmHg or higher.

Low blood pressure is considered to be 90/60mmHg or lower.

If you have **diabetes**, your blood pressure needs to be under 130/80mmHg.

1 in 2 heart attacks and strokes are linked to high blood pressure.

6 out of 10 strokes could be prevented by managing high blood pressure and leading a healthy lifestyle.

Around **146,698 adults** have **undetected high blood pressure** in NI.

CHECKING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

You can get your blood pressure checked by a doctor or nurse or at some pharmacies. You can also invest in a blood pressure machine to monitor blood pressure at home.

If your blood pressure is consistently higher than 140/90mmHg then you may have high blood pressure. We recommend you make an appointment with your GP for further tests or visit A&E as soon as possible, especially if you experience any stroke or heart attack symptoms.

Over 270,000 people in Northern Ireland are **living with high blood pressure**, that's **14% of the population**.

1 in 2 adults don't know they have high blood pressure.

15

TOP TIPS FOR A HEALTHY BLOOD PRESSURE

Maintaining a healthy blood pressure will help reduce your risk of heart and circulatory disease. There are several changes you can make to your lifestyle to reduce high blood pressure and to maintain a healthy blood pressure:



1. Reduce Salt Intake

Adults should eat no more than 6g of salt a day (approx. a teaspoonful). Read the labels on food packaging, choose foods lower in salt and try replacing salt with pepper, herbs and spices to add flavour.



2. Be More Active

Move more and sit less! Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity each week. 2 days of strengthening exercises should also be included.



3. Maintain a Healthy Weight

Being overweight means your heart must work harder to do everyday tasks- this leads to high blood pressure. Maintaining a healthy weight involves a combination of eating a healthy diet and being more physically active.



4. Limit Alcohol Intake

Drinking too much alcohol increases the risk of high blood pressure and can cause weight gain. We should drink no more than 14 units of alcohol per week, with several alcohol-free days. Men should have no more than 8 units and women no more than 6 units of alcohol per session.



5. Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Fruit and vegetables contain vitamins and minerals, along with fibre which help to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and improve our heart health. We should aim for 5 portions a day which can be fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced.

You should also take medication for high blood pressure as prescribed by your doctor or health professional in addition to making changes to your lifestyle, unless your health professional is happy for you to stop your medication.

For more information on how to maintain a healthy blood pressure, visit nichi.org.uk/blood-pressure

Chest Heart & Stroke

Care Services



SPOTLIGHT ON THE NICHS CARE TEAM

Our Care Services team is at the very heart of what NICHS does, delivering expert care and support to anyone living with chest, heart and stroke conditions. The team work with people throughout Northern Ireland, along with their families and carers, providing practical advice and information, emotional support and of course delivering our wide range of programmes. Read on to find out more about the services delivered by our Care team.

Family Support Service

Our Family Support Coordinators are here to help you and your family as you navigate life with a chest, heart or stroke condition. You will receive an initial home visit ensuring we can offer you the personalised advice and support that you need.

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

From The Heart

Our 'From The Heart' magazine provides postal support to service users to continue to reduce isolation and promote wellbeing at home.

Support for Chest Conditions

If you're living with a respiratory condition, then our **Breathing Better** team is 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

Our dedicated Inspire Choir is continuing to connect online via Zoom. 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

Delivered over 6 weeks, this online cardiac education programme brings together groups of individuals living across Northern Ireland who have a diagnosis of a heart condition. This programme is designed to help participants to learn more about their health and take steps needed to move forward post diagnosis.

The programme covers the following topics:

- Understanding your condition
- Emotions after diagnosis
- Physical activity
- Heart health
- Adopting healthier habits

Stay Strong Walking Groups

Our Stay Strong Walking Groups are operating at various locations across Northern Ireland with plans for expansion into new locations.

We recognise that for many people post diagnosis, regular exercise may be daunting, especially if it is not part of your everyday life. Our team can support you to gain confidence and help take some of the fear out of exercising. These groups are delivered over a minimum of 6 weeks and are open to anyone with a cardiac condition.

Supporting people living with Stroke

Stroke Joint Pathway

Formed and delivered in partnership with the Stroke Association, our joint pathway is here for all stroke survivors and their carers and family members. Working in partnership with local Health and Social Care Trust teams throughout Northern Ireland, we provide integrated support

for you and your family through our Stroke Family Support Service, offering information, guidance and onward referrals to other services.

Wellness Sessions

Our 17 information and wellness sessions delivered across NI focus on secondary prevention, health promotion, physical exercise and emotional wellbeing. They offer peer support and reduce social isolation.

PREP Education (Post Rehab Exercise Programme)

Our six-week PREP programme is available across all of Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care Trusts.

PREP provides additional support for stroke survivors after statutory rehab. Aimed at helping you to rebuild your life and gain confidence following a stroke, PREP does this through a combination of education and physio-developed exercises.

PREP covers the following topics:

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

Support for Carers

Carers Education Programme (CEP)

Our online Carers Education Programme is here for you if you are caring for a loved one who has had a stroke. The programme includes Q&A sessions with healthcare experts such as physiotherapists, pharmacists, and speech and language therapists and signposting to other organisations to provide support and guidance within your caring role.

Visit nichs.org.uk/our-support-services for further information on our range of Care services.

Research

We are delighted to be funding 9 new research projects this year. Read on to find out more about 3 of these exciting studies.



HELPING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

In the last edition of Pulse, we told you about how we were funding C-SLMM (Children – Sit Less Move More) which aims to get 7-9-year-old pupils to be more active in their classrooms and spend less time sitting. We are now also funding a study that aims to get post-primary pupils moving more.

Y-PATH (Youth – Physical Activity Towards Health) is a successful physical activity programme delivered in the Republic of Ireland. It focuses on the basics of “physical literacy” and health knowledge, with the aim of giving the next generation all the tools they need to enjoy being physically active. We have funded Dr Angela Carlin, from Ulster University, to test whether Y-PATH could be modified for Northern Ireland schools (Y-PATH NI), targeting 11-14 year olds.

TAKING BETTER CARE OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HEART FAILURE IN CARE HOMES

Heart failure is a serious condition, where the heart is not pumping blood around the body very efficiently. It affects at least 20% of residents living in care homes, leading to poor health, poor quality of life, and shortened lives.

We funded a research team from Queen’s University Belfast to develop a Heart Failure Toolkit that nurses and care assistants can use to better care and support residents with heart failure.

Find out more about NICHS research projects at nichs.org.uk/research



UNDERSTANDING WHAT CAUSES PIMS-TS IN CHILDREN

Although most children and young people who develop COVID-19 have no symptoms or very mild ones at the time, a small number develop PIMS-TS (Paediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome) a few weeks afterwards. PIMS-TS is a life-threatening vasculitis – swelling of the heart and blood vessels.

Even though PIMS-TS is a new condition, we are learning about it all the time. For example, we know it is caused by the immune system which fights off the virus but then over-reacts to affect other parts of the body, including the heart. We need to do more research however to work out why some children and young people develop PIMS-TS, but others don’t. That’s why we funded this research.

Dr Waterfield and his team at Queen’s University Belfast will compare blood samples from healthy children, children with PIMS-TS, and children with other serious infections. The team hope that this will help them understand differences in the immune response between the three groups and allow them to identify ways to diagnose and treat PIMS-TS.



The research team will develop this resource with the help of residents and care staff. They will also test whether the new resource improves staff knowledge and confidence in dealing with heart failure, and whether it helps improve resident health and well-being.

Your legacy of hope and care - a gift in your Will.

A gift in your Will could not only help your loved ones but can leave a legacy of hope for generations to come.

In Northern Ireland four in ten adult deaths are caused by chest, heart and stroke illnesses. We’re working hard to change this by funding life-changing research and caring for those who are affected by devastating health conditions every day.

We’ve been helping local people for over 75 years, and with your help we can continue to be there for people who need us now, as well as those who will need us in the future.

Please visit nichs.org.uk/gifts-in-wills for further information on leaving a gift in your Will to NICHS or call us on 028 9032 0184.



**Preventing, Supporting,
Caring and Rebuilding
across Northern Ireland.**

**Chest
Heart &
Stroke**

Almost 90%

of NICHHS's care services and research are funded exclusively by public donations.

**Find out how you can support NICHHS
at www.nichs.org.uk**



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