**09th March 2022**

**NES AHP Public Health Meeting**

**Wendy Carswell – Physiotherapy Technical Instructor (Health Care Support Worker) – NHS Ayrshire & Arran**

**Summary of Role**

An interview took place with Wendy Carswell, who is an established Physiotherapy Technical Instructor in NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

Wendy highlighted that her role focuses on supporting patients that have been initially assessed by the Physiotherapy team and then setting the rehabilitation in place through 1:1 appointments and gym sessions. Some of this work also focuses around weight management programmes and group for Osteoarthritis.

Another component of Wendy’s role is to establish links with community/third sector services, so that the Physiotherapists in the departments know where the available support services are. This has led to involvement in a developing links with Versus Arthritis and a Public Health campaign based around persistent pain called ‘FLIPPIN PAIN’.

**How does the role link with Public Health and how does this role address health inequalities?**

Wendy feels that her role very much is based around supporting patients through active listening and not just addressing the needs of the patients based around their injury but to address the bigger picture.

Wendy outlined that when she is working with a patient, she has more time than the Physiotherapists and as a result she conversation to patient involved will often open up more on the wider issues in their life, such as financial stressors, occupational stressors and home life. Her perception is that patients will not always open up to Physiotherapists on these issues as they don’t feel when they are at their appointments the focus should be on this and more about their condition or injury.

Wendy stated *‘ I have time to peel back the layers of what’s going on in that patients life, which often leads to me then signposting or seeking support for the patient’*

An example was discussed of a patient that attended the Physiotherapy department solely for the issue of a walking aid. Wendy noticed that when walking the patient was generally very tense around her neck and shoulders. Through discussion the patient made Wendy aware that her mood was being significantly impacted upon due to recent bereavement. Upon knowing this Wendy was able to seek support for the patient in the community/third sector, which later went onto the patient being involved in more social interaction out of the home.

Wendy did highlight though, that it can become easy to almost be too involved sometimes. It is therefore, important to recognise our scope of practice with regards to what we can and can’t offer.

Throughout the interview Wendy reported that health inequalities remain a huge issue, especially health literacy. This has become evident on the development of the Physiotherapy website in order to reach the population with the material as a whole. She feels that this will often lead to patients not attending for appointments, which is not a good thing on the basis that the patient is not receiving the support they need

I asked Wendy what AHP and AHP Support Workers can do to implement Public Health more into their roles.

*‘We need to understand what’s going on fully in patients’ lives as a whole and see what options are available to support’*

*‘We need to link closer with patient on what their main needs are’*

*‘Link closer with third sector and community services’*

*‘Be interested in what other services have to offer’*

*‘Plant the seed with a patient on how the wider issues maybe impacting on their health and let it grow’*

**How has your role changed during Covid-19?**

Wendy outlined that during the first wave of covid-19 she was re-deployed away from her role. On returning to her role the established support networks she had developed weren’t at that time not available and in some cases this is still the case. The main challenge now is knowing what’s available to support patients and re-building those relationships in the community and third sector.