Background

In the Scottish Borders, the Eyemouth Health Check project aims to improve access to primary care health services for people impacted by substance use. It helps GP practices identify people with health challenges who they have been unable to follow up with. It also offers a place for people to be supported in a drop-in community setting. Following their health check at the drop-in clinic, people can be referred back in to their local GP practice for further support.

The set-up of this project involved several key steps:

- developing a specific selection criteria,
- identifying a partner GP practice/s,
- GP practice staff identifying relevant patients they had been unable to follow up,
- Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) reviewing each person's clinical record and offering appointments where appropriate, and;
- following up and offering a physical health review.

Impact

Launched in August 2022, the Eyemouth pilot aimed to provide a more holistic, shared care model of support. It makes the most of existing resources through collaboration with GP practice staff for information sharing, and using the well-established drop-in service in Eyemouth to carry out health checks. Joint working and clear communication with practice staff were significant factors in the pilot's success. The team has consistently received positive feedback from practice staff who have seen benefits from the model's active outreach engaging patients who they have been unable to follow up with.

Learning

The process relied mainly on one interested GP to highlight patients that would benefit from the pilot. Clearer identification on the level of urgency for any instructions on follow up care would be useful. A traffic light system was suggested by the practice as a way of categorizing follow up processes. Relying on their single ANP to offer physical health checks has become increasingly time consuming. Training support workers to assist with checks is intended to support this.

Top Tips

- Engage with GP practices to secure buy-in and clarify that the project intends to streamline work, not increase it.
- Build connection and trust with people and professionals through face to face contact and connections.
- Have shared access to IT systems and records to allow necessary information sharing.
- Provide holistic care by working with third sector and other statutory providers in informal settings.

Next Steps

The team are focused on building on the current pilot by expanding to other locations in the health board.