

NEWS

Castledearg GP Practice Improves Patient Access

27 May 2014

Patients in Castledearg are directly benefitting from their local GP Practice having participated in a unique EU funded cross border programme, aimed at improving services for people with disabilities. As a result of participating in a Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) cross border health programme, Castledearg GP Practice has introduced a number of practical changes over the past 6 months that have significantly improved services to patients, particularly for those with a disability.

European Union INTERREG IVA funding, secured by CAWT for the Community Awareness Programme, enabled the GP practice to ensure planned modifications to its premises were in line with best practice to facilitate people with disabilities. In addition, Castledearg GP Practice staff engaged in a range of disability awareness training and improved their administration and communications systems in order to better meet the needs of patients with disabilities.



Pictured above: Castleberg GP Practice staff (left to right): Carol Sproule, Practice Nurse; Dr Linda King; Susan Young, Practice Manager and Amy Byrne, CAWT Citizenship for People with Disabilities Project.

Commenting on the impact of the improvements on the practice, Dr King from Castleberg GP Practice said: "Our participation in this cross border programme has given us a unique opportunity to improve our patient services. For example, disability awareness training has made our staff more confident in dealing with patients with physical, learning or sensory disabilities, including people with visual and hearing impairments. We have also enhanced our administration systems and have upgraded our signage and access, both externally and within the practice building. For example there is now more room in our waiting area for wheelchair users and a self-service check-in and visual patient call system has been installed, which have all been positively received by our patients."

She added: "These improvements mean that we are now more easily able to identify patients with a disability and encourage them to take advantage of our annual health checks. We offer these health checks in a variety of settings which has enabled us to detect previously undiagnosed health problems in patients such as diabetes, thyroid disorders, old hearing aids upgraded via referral to audiology, advice to patients on weight management, flu vaccination and check if all vaccines are up-to-date. We are very grateful to all those who have assisted us with the many changes, both small and big, which is already making a significant difference to the health and well-being of our patients, particularly those with disabilities."



Picture above: Castlederg GP Practice staff (left to right): Amy Byrne, CAWT Citizenship for People with Disabilities Project; Norma Crawford, Practice Nurse and receptionists Charlene Young, Elaine Coyle, Aisleen Snow, Hazel Clarke and Joanne Catterson.

CAWT representative, Brigid McGinty, Programme Manager said: *"It is wonderful to see how, for a relatively small investment from the EU's INTERREG IVA programme, both Castleberg and Stranorlor GP Practices have been able to make their services more accessible to people with disabilities. The doctors and practice staff really embraced the opportunity to ensure their services are as user friendly and welcoming as possible to everybody in the community."*

Castleberg GP Practice along with Stranorlar GP Practice in Co. Donegal were the two GP practices who were eligible to participate in the EU funded cross border programme, which is part of the larger CAWT Community Awareness Programme, which aimed to change attitudes towards people with disabilities and to make sure they have proper access to buildings, goods, services and information in their localities. The overall CAWT Community Awareness Programme was supported by the Western Health & Social Care Trust, HSE West, Donegal County Council and Strabane District Council.

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