

# PAINKILLERS DON'T EXIST.

## Aim:

- To encourage behaviour change in both clinicians and patients and raise awareness of the dangers associated with long-term use of these medications. Allow patients to feel empowered to seek support, and those prescribing have confidence to suggest alternative recover plans in order to reduce the number of the painkillers prescribed in the two CCGs.

## What we did:

- We commissioned Magpie, a behaviour change company, to run a campaign to highlight the issues around use of opioid medication. In collaboration with clinician and patient groups we developed a hard hitting campaign with the bold campaign strapline: 'Painkillers Don't Exist' ([www.painkillersdontexist.com](http://www.painkillersdontexist.com)).
- The website was developed to inform of the dangers of high dose opioid painkillers, and to provide a platform to help educate, share several lived experiences and signpost to support and pain management.
- Supporting information for GP practices and community pharmacies was provided as hard copy and was also available on the website.
- Magpie also utilised national and local media, social media posts (including 'paid for' and 'dark ads'), posters and advertising on billboards, sand art and pavement art to raise awareness of the campaign.

## Effects of change:

- From October 2020 – Jan 2021 [www.painkillersdontexist.com](http://www.painkillersdontexist.com) had 27,315 page views from 14,825 users. 150 GP packs were downloaded, along with 101 supporter packs (aimed at non-healthcare professionals).
- We adopted a reactive and proactive approach to media and received coverage nationally and locally.
- Prescribing of opioids has reduced since the campaign started in May 2019 in Sunderland and January 2020 in County Durham, but due to other concurrent work streams it is not possible to determine the proportion directly related to the campaign; Sunderland CCG has reduced its high dose opioid pain medication prescriptions by 42% and County Durham CCG has reduced by 20%.

## The outcome:

- The campaign has been successful in raising awareness of the issues, dangers and effects of high dose, long-term pain medication use amongst both clinicians and the public.
- Further phases of the campaign are being considered to support the implementation of the newly published NICE guidance which states that pain medication does not have a benefit in chronic primary pain.