

DESIGNED TO BE OPENED: A CREATIVE HEALTH INTERVENTION TO INCREASE UPTAKE OF PHYSICAL HEALTH CHECKS FOR PEOPLE WITH SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS

Sulia Celebi¹, David McQuillian², Sophie Peel², Sebastian Hinde³
¹Yorkshire and Humber School of Public Health, ²South West Yorkshire NHS Foundation Trust, ³NIHR Applied Research Collaboration: Yorkshire and Humber

INTRODUCTION

- People with severe mental illness (SMI) are almost five times more likely to die prematurely than those who do not have SMI.¹
- Annual physical health checks help to identify and manage early signs of preventable health conditions that contribute to this gap.
- Despite national targets and financial incentives, uptake of annual health checks remains inconsistent.
- Creative health uses arts-based creative approaches to improve health and wellbeing.
- There is limited evidence on the role of creative interventions in improving engagement among people with SMI.

INTERVENTION

- In Calderdale, a creative intervention was used to increase uptake of annual physical health checks for people with SMI.
- The intervention used a co-production approach with a co-design group of patients with lived experience of SMI and involved:
 - re-designing the content and envelopes of invitation letters with a local artist — “designed to be opened”
 - developing wider communications (videos) on SMI health checks for people with SMI and health-care workers.
- Due to implementation challenges, the intervention was staggered, with the co-developed letter content shared earlier (November 2021) than the full re-designed physical envelope packs (September 2023).

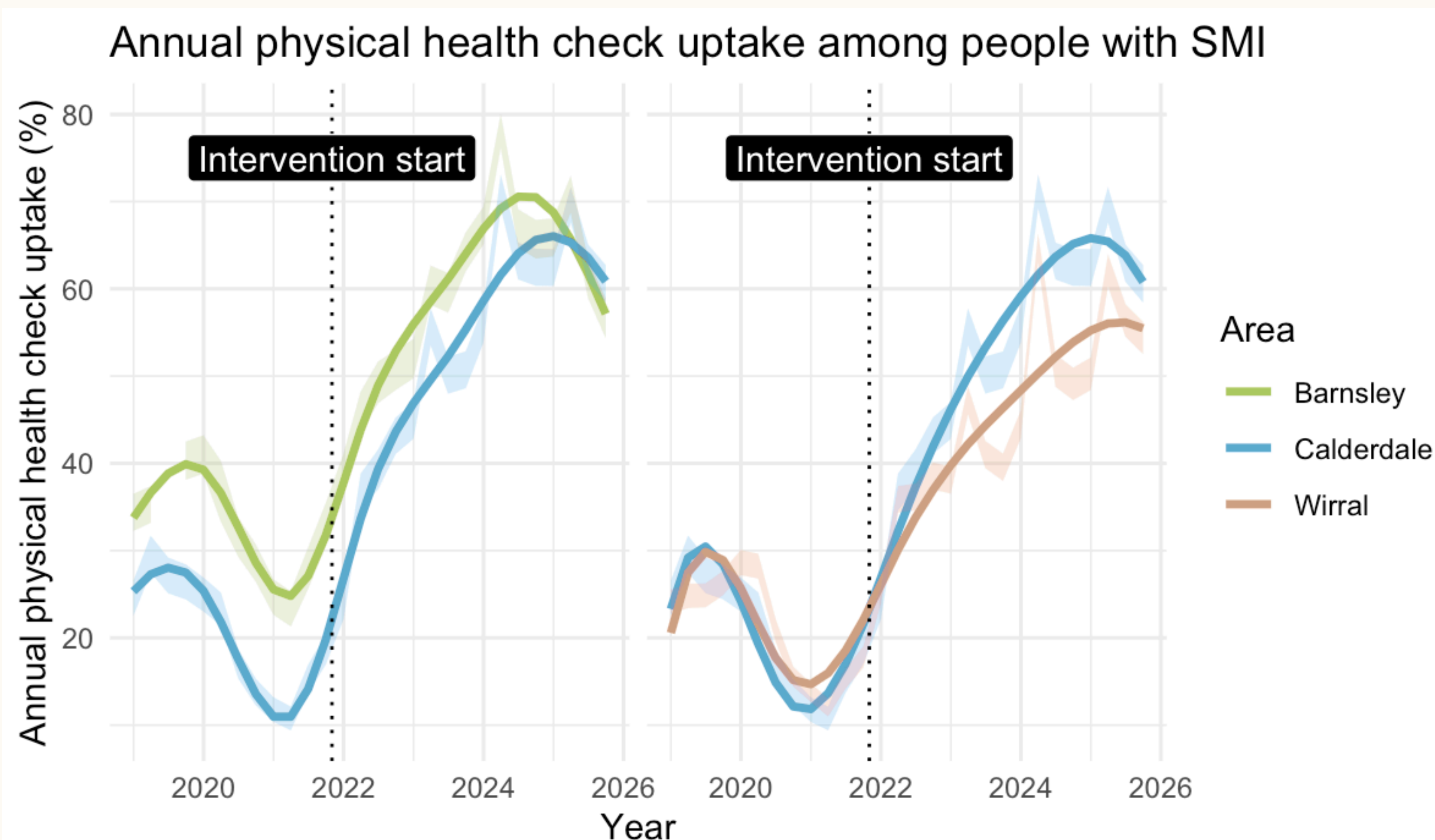
AIM

To estimate the effectiveness of a creative intervention — re-designing health check communications — to increase uptake of SMI health checks in Calderdale, West Yorkshire.

METHODOLOGY

- Publicly available quarterly data were used to measure the proportion of people with SMI receiving a full annual physical health check (2019-2025).
- Difference-in-difference (DiD) analysis was used to estimate the impact of the intervention, from the first point of intervention (November 2021).
- DiD compares the average change before and after the intervention in Calderdale, compared to similar control areas.
- Control areas were selected from similar ‘statistical neighbours’ that met DiD assumptions.

RESULTS



- The creative intervention was associated with a statistically significant increase in the uptake of physical health checks in Calderdale, which was greater than the increase seen in control areas.
- Overall, in Calderdale there was an average increase of 33 percentage points (95% CI: 30-35) in the proportion of the SMI population receiving a physical health checks, before and after the intervention.
- When compared to control groups, the average increase in the proportion of the SMI population receiving a physical health checks in Calderdale was:
 - 7 % (95% CI: 4-8) compared to Barnsley.
 - 9 % (95% CI: 7-11) compared to Wirral.

KEY FINDINGS & LIMITATIONS

- The findings suggest that creative interventions have the potential to be an effective means of working with patients with SMI to improve engagement and communication, and to ultimately contribute to improving health-care outcomes.
- These findings should still be caveated:
 - DiD accounts for key confounding, such as shared impacts and recovery from covid-19, but unmeasured confounding may remain,
 - The estimated effect is likely an under-estimate, as the intervention was implemented in a staggered manner, and control areas were exposed to their own local initiatives.
- The difference between the controlled and uncontrolled DiD estimates highlights the importance of including comparator areas for evaluation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Creative health approaches should be considered as a potential tool to support uptake of physical health checks for people with SMI.
- Creative health approaches may be valuable for engaging with underserved population groups to help reduce broader health inequalities.
- Further research and evaluation are needed to corroborate findings and strengthen the creative health evidence base.