

# Increasing Referrals to the National Diabetes Prevention Programme

## Authors and affiliation

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## Introduction

Between June 2021 and March 2023, Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit (MLCSU) were commissioned by the Black Country and West Birmingham CCG (subsequently the Black Country ICS) to engage with practices and assist primary care with improving referral numbers to the National Diabetes Prevention Programme (NDPP).

The NDPP is a structured educational programme designed to empower adult patients to make sustainable lifestyle choices to reduce their chances of developing type 2 diabetes<sup>1</sup>. Research shows this healthy living programme resulted in a 7% reduction in the number of new diagnoses of type 2 diabetes in England between 2018 and 2019<sup>2</sup>.

## Method

Prior to MLCSU supporting referrals to the NDPP, practices would identify suitable patients for referral on an individual patient basis for example at a long-term condition review or consultation. The new MLCSU approach involved providing practices with practical pathway documents to support engagement & implementation and a newly developed clinical system search to help them identify eligible patients at scale.

Practices were contacted by MLCSU to explain the support available and to increase engagement, MLCSU ran a series of webinars jointly with the local NDPP provider. Following successful engagement, practices ran the search and returned an eligible patient auto-report via NHS mail, to a newly established, secure NDPP inbox. MLCSU then undertook motivational discussions with patients to encourage referral to the NDPP provider.

Practices were informed of outcomes for coding in the patient's record via electronic transfer documents containing SNOMED codes for accepted/declined NDPP. To provide governance and assurance around the flow of data, a Data Processing Impact Assessment and a Data Processing Agreement were shared with practices.

*"Thank you very much for all your support and assistance. Clearly this exercise has been very useful. I will share the results with our team."*

Ikbir Kaur | Practice Manager, Hilltop Medical Centre

## Results

Since the project began, MLCSU have supported 42 GP practices across the Black Country ICS with over 3,680 eligible patients contacted and 2,130 referrals made to NDPP providers. This is a referral rate of 58%.

In the 18 months prior to MLCSU involvement, 33 practices had made 700 referrals in total. Since MLCSU involvement, these same practices made a further 1,784 referrals, an increase of 155%. There were 8 practices who had made zero referrals prior to MLCSU involvement and since, 424 patients were referred from these practices.

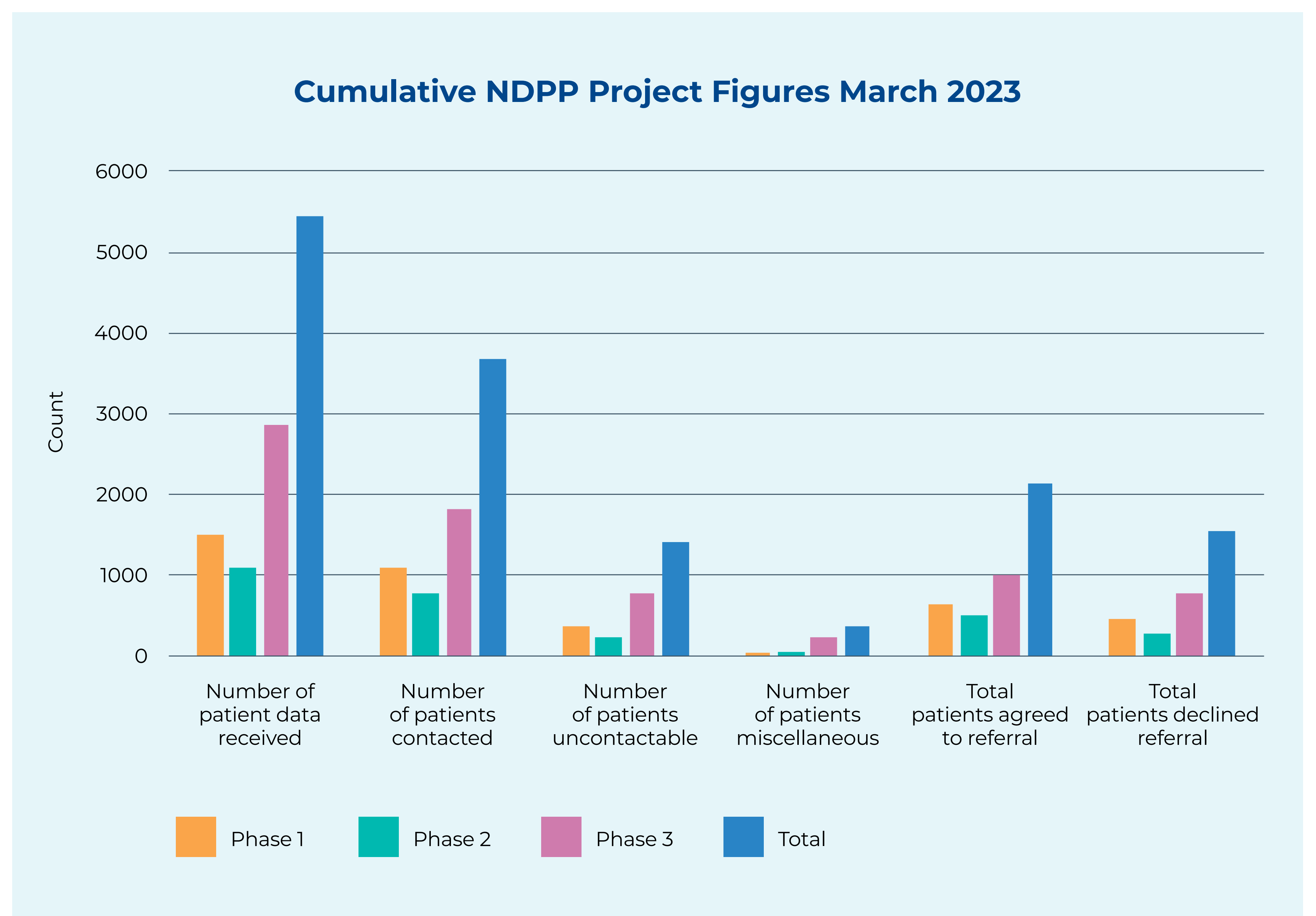


Figure 1: Cumulative project figures March 2023

## Conclusions

**Type 2 diabetes is largely preventable through lifestyle changes. It is estimated that there are currently approximately two million people in England at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Referring eligible patients into a programme that supports them to make positive changes to their diet, weight and physical activity, can significantly reduce the risk of developing this condition.**

MLCSU recently tested a model involving personalised video links sent by text to eligible patients. Results have shown high levels of engagement and high levels of action taken by patients, which shows using technology to engage patients in healthy lifestyle programmes can have a positive impact on uptake, in a more cost effective manner.

Learning from this project highlights practice engagement through key stakeholders such as General Practitioners with Specialist Interests and Practice-based Pharmacists is critical for success. Data quality is also a huge barrier to effective clinical system searches, so introducing processes to ensure up-to-date contact information is key.

This project has shown that the at scale approach employed by MLCSU for referral into the NDPP programme, is an effective means to potentially save thousands of people from the serious consequences of this condition and reduce the yearly cost of Type 2 diabetes on the NHS budget.

## References

1. NHS England NHS National Diabetes Prevention Programme (NHS DPP) <https://www.england.nhs.uk/diabetes/diabetes-prevention/> (accessed 06/02/23)
2. NHS England NHS Prevention Programme cuts chances of Type 2 diabetes for thousands in the Midlands <https://www.england.nhs.uk/midlands/2022/04/05/nhs-prevention-programme-cuts-chances-of-type-2-diabetes-for-thousands-in-the-midlands/> (accessed 06/02/2023)

