



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **National acclaim for digital service provided by health visiting teams in Leicestershire**

The innovative use of a text messaging service that enables parents and carers in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to gain confidential advice from a public health nurse (health visitor) at a time convenient to them has been highlighted in a national journal from the Royal College of Nursing.



The need for digital access to health services and advice is widely recognised by the NHS, which is why Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) has further developed its award-winning ChatHealth secure text messaging service (previously created to enable young people aged 11-16 to get advice from their school nurse), to meet the needs of parents and carers.

The first service of its kind in the country, the parent text line was initially made

available at the start of 2017 following a successful pilot.

[The Primary Health Care article](#) was written by ChatHealth clinical lead, Caroline Palmer, and describes how the text service for parents and carers was successfully adopted by LPT's Healthy Together (public health nursing) teams. During its first year, the service dealt with more than 5,000 messages covering a range of topics from questions about breastfeeding, to more general health advice, and concerns about constipation, immunisations, sleep and weaning. The article includes case studies from the perspectives of both a parent and a health visitor, and covers why the parent chose to use the messaging service, the care that was provided, and the parent's feedback about the service.

The article explains that far from replacing face-to-face care, the text service has increased the reach of health visiting teams and provided more choice and flexibility for service users about how and when they access healthcare support. One parent commented: "I love this service. It's great to be able to text as I can ask the questions I feel a bit uncomfortable about raising on the phone or in person. It's especially good for those little problems that I wouldn't normally feel I could ask about. It gives me peace of mind." Public health nurses within the service similarly feel that the service has had a positive effect on improved job satisfaction; they feel happy that they are able to provide increased support to families.

Read the full article [here](#).

**Ends**

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About ChatHealth**

ChatHealth is a safe and secure messaging service that enables service users to easily and anonymously have two-way text conversations with a healthcare professional who provides advice and support. Developed and owned by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, ChatHealth is now used by around 40 healthcare providers in the UK (including school nursing and health visiting teams). It is available to nearly 2 million young people, and to the parents and carers of approximately 80,000 babies born each year. ChatHealth has been supported by the East Midlands Academic Health Science Network (EMAHSN) from the development stage through to its continued growth nationwide, and recently joined the 2019 NHS Innovation Accelerator programme.

In Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, the Chat Health service operates Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm, excluding bank holidays. All texts are responded to by a public health nurse within 24 hours. For Leicester City the parent text number is 07520 615381, and for Leicestershire and Rutland it is 07520 615382.

### **About Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust**

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides community health, mental health and learning disabilities services for the one million people living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. We have a budget in excess of £275 million and employ approximately 5,500 staff. For more information visit: [www.leicspart.nhs.uk](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk).

Raising Health is our registered charity (number 1057361) which raises funds to support LPT's excellent care initiatives, equipment and innovations which go above and beyond core NHS provision, to enhance the experience of our patients, service users and staff. [www.raisinghealth.org.uk](http://www.raisinghealth.org.uk)

#### **About Healthy Together**

Healthy Together is the name for LPT's 0-19 public health nursing offer for children, young people and families across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. It is separately commissioned by Leicester City Council and by Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils.

#### **About Caroline Palmer**

Caroline Palmer is ChatHealth's digital development clinical lead. Her role involves developing and supporting innovative ways to engage children and young people across the country. Caroline qualified as a Children's Nurse in 2007, working within acute settings until 2011. Since then she has worked in community services across both school nursing and children's community nursing. Caroline began working on the ChatHealth messaging project in 2012, and went on to launch ChatHealth across the school nursing service in Leicestershire in 2014. In 2014 she was awarded the title of Queen's Nurse for her work in innovation within the NHS.

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