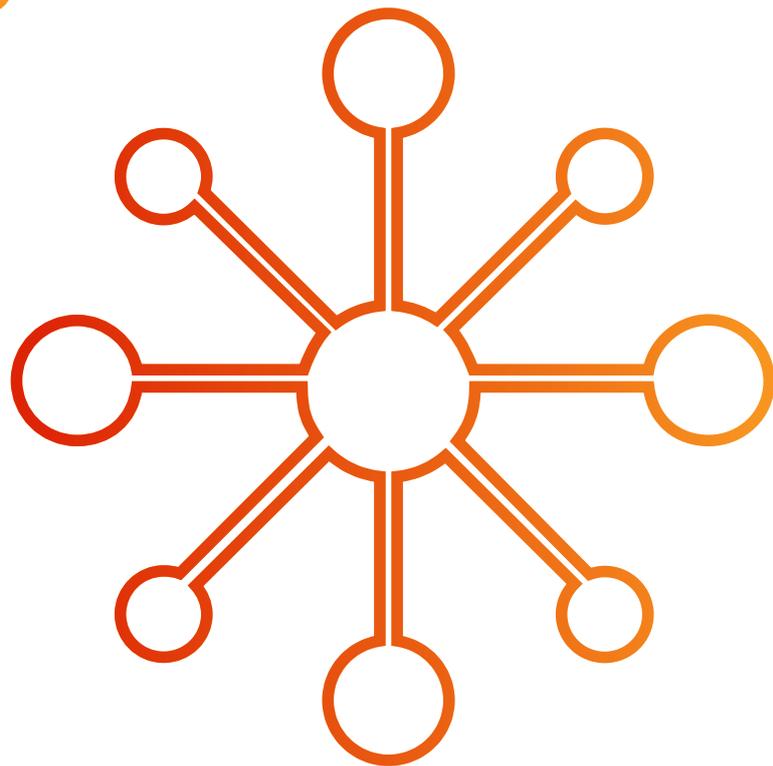


Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING



we|connect

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76%
DEVELOPED
Coping strategies

57%
STARTED
Physical exercise

60%
DEVELOPED
A leisure pursuit



A cost, effective community-based alternative to medical interventions for people with long-term conditions and mild to moderate mental health needs.

The need

It is increasingly recognised that there is a social as well as medical aspect to the management of both social isolation and long-term health conditions¹.

Many people who are socially isolated are repeat, often frequent visitors to their local GP surgery. They may present with a social problem, feel they are not coping or simply require some support, companionship or contact with other people.

There is also evidence that social isolation can also exacerbate, and sometimes even result in, long-term conditions such as depression, coronary heart disease, hypertension or diabetes.

Additionally, those diagnosed with a long-term condition which cannot be cured, only managed, are at higher risk of social isolation, low self-esteem, stigma and discrimination⁴.

These individuals tend to be heavy users of health care resources, accounting for at least 50 per cent of all GP appointments² with research indicating they are the most costly group of service users that the NHS has to look after³. As long ago as 2008/09 the annual cost to the NHS of patients who frequently attend a GP with medically unexplained symptoms was £3.1 billion⁴.

Our response

Family Action's Social Prescribing services are based in GP surgeries and aim to improve individuals' mental health and wellbeing through referral to non-medical sources of support within local communities, in turn reducing reliance upon health services and GP surgeries.

Our service works by:

- Facilitating referrals from GPs to a Family Action Social Prescribing Coordinator, who identifies local opportunities for social and community engagement in response to service user needs, goals and preferences
- Pairing service users with volunteer befrienders who support them to overcome barriers and begin engaging with local activities and support
- Alerting service users to activities such as local social groups, arts and creativity groups, physical activity sessions, smoking cessation, weight management, skills development and local volunteering opportunities
- Signposting and referring individuals to other appropriate services e.g. employment advice, benefits advice, housing, debt, legal support and relationship advice

Theory of Change:

Social Prescribing

Goal

Service users report improved mental health outcomes and reduced social isolation

Intermediate outcomes

- Increased uptake of community activity provision
- Increased awareness of activities and behaviours that improve and promote mental wellbeing
- Reduced levels of frequent GP attendance
- Reduced waiting lists for counsellors and psychological services
- Reduced inappropriate prescribing of antidepressants

Activities

- GPs refer service users to social prescribing service which promotes engagement in community activities
- Reasons and causes of frequent GP attendance and social isolation explored
- Service users paired with volunteer befrienders
- Service users supported to access local community services, resources and facilities as well as volunteering opportunities

¹ www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/more_than_medicine.pdf

² www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/ki/field/field_publication_file/delivering-better-services-for-people-with-long-term-conditions.pdf

³ www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/ki/field/field_document/managing-people-long-term-conditions-gp-inquiry-research-paper-mar11.pdf

⁴ www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg123/resources/cg123-common-mental-health-disorders-costing-report2



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Our impact

The Family Action Social Prescribing Service accepts referrals for a wide range of reasons such as social isolation, mild to moderate mental health problems, social problems, managing long term health conditions and to access non-clinical activities. The data below shows the percentage of our service users who achieved outcomes in the key areas of mental wellbeing, community participation, physical health and social networks. The wide ranging reasons for referral reflect an equally wide range in the outcomes achieved.

Evidence from the Social Prescribing Service⁵ highlights:

Mental Wellbeing:

In 43% of cases improvements were achieved in the area of mental wellbeing.

- 76% developed/used coping strategies
- 75% reported enhanced confidence
- 64% reported reduced mental distress
- 19% reported decreased reliance on mental health services

Community Participation:

In 39% of cases improvements were achieved in the area of community participation.

- 60% took up or developed a leisure pursuit
- 51% accessed community sports and leisure services
- 19% were supported to access voluntary work and 11% went on to volunteer in community organisations

Physical Health:

In 20% of cases outcomes were achieved in the area of physical health.

- 57% began regular physical exercise
- 63% reported health benefits
- 47% reported reduced physical symptoms

Social Networks:

In 17% of cases outcomes were achieved in the area of social networks.

- 70% reported positive new friendships
- 66% accessed peer support or self-help
- 40% reported stronger relationships with family and/or friends

CASE FILE

Dee* is 44 years old, has depression and a mild learning disability. She lives alone and receives limited support from the local Learning Disability Team. Dee used to live with her parents but when they died, she had to cope and live independently on her own. She was referred to Family Action's Social Prescribing Service as the frequency of her visits to her GP increased and she reported feeling more socially isolated. She says: "I came to this service because I wanted to meet people, do activities and learn more".



We helped Dee to connect and overcome social isolation

Dee gained the confidence to attend the class on her own, which she has continued to attend independently. She has joined in with other activities and feels she has begun to get to know other service users and staff.

Dee was also referred to the local Volunteer Centre and is now being supported by someone on a one to one basis to find opportunities to volunteer in her local community. She is now less socially isolated, more confident and has a sense of control back into her life.

**Name changed to preserve confidentiality*

Dee was paired with a Social Prescribing volunteer who she has met regularly. Her volunteer supported her to attend a computer class at her local community session, attending the first two sessions with her until

Service users are encouraged to map their own progress by completing The Recovery Star⁶.

This data shows that service users perceive that they make significant progress in the areas they were referred for:

Managing Mental Health:

81% of service users achieved improvement on this area of the Recovery Star⁷

Social Networks:

81% of service users achieved improvement on this area of the Recovery Star⁸

Identity and Self Esteem:

75% of service users achieved improvement on this area of the Recovery Star⁹

Relationships:

68% of service users achieved improvement on this area of the Recovery Star¹⁰

Qualitative feedback¹¹ from service users is very positive, with reports of:

- a feeling of re-connecting with the world
- renewed hope for the future
- positive interaction with local people and organisations
- improved structure in their lives
- feeling useful again (for those who entered volunteer work as a result of their involvement)

An external economic evaluation of our Hackney Social Prescribing service is currently underway. The evaluation is led by Dr Marcello Bertotti, Senior Research Fellow at the University of East London, and the findings will be published early in 2016.



A service user said:
"Before I had nothing to do. Now everyday I wake and think 'yes volunteer work!' or 'meeting friends!'"

⁵ Sample size of 288 cases. Referral and closure data for cases between February 2014 and July 2015.

⁶ © Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise.

⁷ Average change achieved by service users with 2 or more Recovery Stars at Hackney Social Prescribing, Sample size of 53 sets of stars as at July 2015, reported from InForm.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.