Foreword by Tracy Parr of the Healthy London Partnership

I am delighted to have been invited to write the forward to this overview of social prescribing prepared by the Young People’s Health Partnership. Much work is being undertaken in this area which reflects the finding that many people seek help from a health professional when they have needs whose origins are social, not medical. This paper is very welcome in progressing the work on how models of social prescribing for young people and their families need to reflect their specific age-related needs. I hope that this paper will encourage organisations working with young people to see the potential in pursuing alignment of their work with local social prescribing initiatives. These initiatives have huge potential to increase awareness of and access to voluntary sector provision for young people and ultimately achieve better outcomes for this section of the population.

Tracy Parr, Head of Children and Young People’s Programme, Healthy London Partnership

What is social prescribing?

Social prescribing means finding non-medical solutions to problems people are experiencing. Research shows that many physical and mental health conditions may be caused by social and environmental factors, so rather than writing a prescription for a medication, primary health care professionals, like GPs and nurses, may instead signpost someone to a source of non-medical support in their local community.

Taking part in sport, cycling, walking, creative arts, volunteering and dancing are all examples of activities for which a social prescription may be given.

Why is social prescribing important?

It has been estimated that around 20% of patients consult their GP for what is primarily a social problem. The NHS and Social Care systems are under extreme pressure right now, with an ageing population, an increasing burden of disease, especially in our poorest communities and an urgency to work more efficiently for better health outcomes. The voluntary and community sector is ideally placed to help reduce that pressure, by providing activities and support that prevent people’s health worsening and that actively promote recovery.

How can Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations get involved?

Most local areas now have a plan or a system in place for social prescribing. A search of your local Clinical Commissioning Group and Health & Wellbeing Board websites should provide basic details and a contact for further information.

To register, you may need to provide information about your organisation and your services on paper or in electronic format.

Social prescribing is also sometimes called community referrals. If you can’t find information online, you could try contacting your local CVS or Voluntary Action group.
Jargon Buster:

- **Link worker**: may also be called health advisor, health trainer or community navigator. They are not health professionals (like nurses or GPs) but they are trained to work in a social prescribing service helping the person who has been referred to them to find the right activity.
- **Primary Care**: health care provided in the community (as opposed to in hospital, which is secondary care). Primary care includes GP’s, Community Nurses and a range of other health workers such as community matrons, health visitors and mental health nurses.
- **CCG’s or Clinical Commissioning Groups**: organisations that replaced the NHS Primary Care Trusts a few years ago; they are led by GPs in a local area and are responsible for commissioning (allocating money to) local health services to deliver patient care.
- **Social determinants of health**: the conditions in which we live and work that affect our health and wellbeing; these include our social networks (family and friends) as well as our access to education, training, work, shops and health services, and whether we feel safe on the street and have decent housing; all of these conditions have a big impact on our health and are skewed by poverty and wealth.

**Sources of Information**

- **More than Medicine, New Services for People Powered Health NESTA (2013)** – who is involved and what needs to be in place to make social prescribing happen.
- **An Introduction to Social Prescribing Regional Voices (2015)** – brief description of how it works, the evidence base, and some examples from local practice.
- **Social Prescribing Network** – website for professionals, practitioners and funders with details of events, videos and contacts.

**Policy context**

Social prescribing was highlighted in the Department of Health’s 2006 publication *Our health our care our say* as a way of promoting health, independence and access to local services.

The NHS five year forward view (2016) encourages a focus on prevention and wellbeing, patient-centred care, and better integration of services, as well as highlighting the role of the third sector in delivering services that promote wellbeing.

More recently, the General practice forward view (2016) stresses the role of voluntary sector organisations and social prescribing specifically as a means to reduce pressure on GP services.

Local Sustainability & Transformation Plans (STPs) feature social prescribing as a key measure for cost-effectively improving the health and wellbeing of the populations and reducing demand on other health and care services.


**The effectiveness of health trainers: how clients have benefitted from social prescribing**

Source: Langford, K (2013)

**More than Medicine: new services for people powered health. NESTA**

**Social determinants of health**

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**Getting started**

1. Ask colleagues in your local public health team and voluntary sector about any existing social prescribing scheme or community navigators in your area.
2. Read some of the case studies referenced in this guide and think how you might replicate one of them in your area.
3. Make a list of the people and organisations who are already signposting or referring young people to your sessions or services.
#Thrive is for children and young people aged up to 19 years old who are experiencing emotional health and wellbeing issues such as feeling stressed, worried or simply not enjoying the way things are for them. By offering support as soon as possible the project aims to increase wellbeing and reducing the risk of more serious problems such as a mental health condition developing.

Leigh Anne from Link for Life describes how there was initially a concern from the CCG about reducing the risk of more serious problems such as a mental health condition developing.

"We were able to show a proven track record through previous work that we are a safe option. I think it also helped that we had agreed a working relationship with the Pennine Trust and our local MIND services so we can help the young people find the right service for them at the right time."

There was a lot of consultation carried out to ensure the voices of young people were listened to in the development of the service. The young people involved decided the best support would be:

- A dedicated phone line to arrange a time and place to speak to someone
- An online support system
- "Around the Corner" A new central hub based in Rochdale town centre. Around the Corner will be friendly, informal and welcoming. There will be a café and lots of information about activities and events with support on how to access these.
- Sessions at some local venues across Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale for those not able to get into the town centre.
- Video consultation sessions in your own home (or somewhere else of your choice that is private).

The service can offer advice on improving your general lifestyle, including exercise, diet and many other things. Support could be one-to-one or group counselling sessions, online support courses or other options such as sport, drama, music or art.

Leigh Anne says, "In year one we hope to work with around 60, the offer we have around sport is..."

You can read more about #thrive here

Case Study

Tim Allison, Director of Public Health, East Riding of Yorkshire:

"We have seen the benefits of making social prescriptions in to physical activity services. There is certainly the potential for social prescribing to have an impact on the health and wellbeing of young people, however we may well need to consider different models of delivery to the adult models such as family approaches or being able to bring a friend."

About The Young People’s Health Partnership

The Young People’s Health Partnership works with the Department of Health, Public Health England and NHS England as a strategic partner to raise the profile of the health agenda across the voluntary sector. The partnership includes Addaction, Ambition, The Association for Young People’s Health, Brook, CLIC Sargent, StreetGames and Youth Access.

We work to:

- influence and shape the health system to understand young people’s needs for age-appropriate services
- equip the voluntary youth sector to work in partnership with the health system
- support young people to exercise empowered and active voices in the healthcare system

http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/yphp