



Media Background Brief (March 2020)

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Introduction:

The National Academy for Social Prescribing was launched by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, on the 23 October 2019. It is dedicated to the advancement of social prescribing through promotion, collaboration and innovation.

The independent academy will receive £5 million of government funding and will be led by Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, the recent Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners. It has been developed in partnership across government, with Sport England, Arts Council England and a range of voluntary sector partners.

Social prescribing involves helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services.

The Academy creates partnerships, across the arts, health, sports, leisure, and the natural environment, alongside other aspects of our lives, to promote health and wellbeing at a national and local level. It champions social prescribing and the work of local communities in connecting people for wellbeing.

The National Academy for Social Prescribing will work to:

1. standardise the quality and range of social prescribing available to patients across the country
2. increase awareness of the benefits of social prescribing by building and promoting the evidence base
3. develop and share best practice, as well as looking at new models and sources for funding
4. bring together all partners from health, housing and local government with arts, culture and sporting organisations to maximise the role of social prescribing
5. focus on developing training and accreditation across sectors.

Social Prescribing - more details

- Social prescribing is a way for GPs and other local agencies to refer people to a link worker. Link workers give people time, focusing on 'what matters to me' and taking a holistic approach to people's health and wellbeing. They connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support. Link workers also support existing community groups to be accessible and sustainable, and help people to start new groups, working collaboratively with all local partners.
- Social prescribing works for a wide range of people, including people:

- with one or more long-term conditions
- who need support with their mental health
- who are lonely or isolated
- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing.
- In the Long Term Plan, NHS England committed to building the infrastructure for social prescribing in primary care:
 - there will be 1,000 new social prescribing link workers in place by 2020/21, with significantly more after that, so that
 - at least 900,000 people will be referred to social prescribing by 2023/24.
- This is part of the drive to Universal Personalised Care that will see at least 2.5 million people benefiting from personalised care by 23/24. The social prescribing link workers will become an integral part of the multi-disciplinary teams which are part of primary care networks. They form one of five additional roles in the five year framework for GP contract reform with 100% reimbursement for the salary costs of the link workers.
- Funding for the new social prescribing link workers became available to primary care networks (PCNs) from 1 July 2019, when the reformed GP contract began.
- This is the biggest investment in social prescribing by any national health system, and legitimises community-based activities and support alongside medical treatment as part of personalised care.

Evidence:

- Arts: There is “promising preliminary evidence”...that people who engage with the arts are more likely to lead healthier lives, including eating healthily and staying physically active, irrespective of their socioeconomic status and social capital (189).

Source: WHO report: What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review Nov 2019

- Loneliness Research shows that loneliness is associated with;
 - greater risk of inactivity, smoking and risk-taking behaviour
 - increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
 - increased risk of depression, low self-esteem, reported sleep problems and increased stress response
 - and with cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer’s

Source: Government’s Loneliness Strategy (2018)

- Rotherham (Service provided by Voluntary Action Rotherham)
 - The SP service in Rotherham has been running for 7 years, during which time they have taken approx 10,000 referrals. It has 13 link workers.
 - Over 80% of people referred to the scheme engage with service and over 80% say their well-being has improved when they’re followed up. For the people referred through their Mental Health scheme this rises to 92%.

Case studies

Dr Mohan Sekeram has been working as a GP for over 10 years in East Merton, London, and is the Clinical Lead for Social Prescribing for Merton and Wandsworth CCGs.

“I know from first-hand experience as a GP, that often the underlying reason a patient visits their GP is not medical, yet it can have a considerable impact on their health and wellbeing. Ensuring that GPs like myself, and our teams have good, easy access to Social Prescribing Link Workers who can link patients with classes or groups in the community and other non-NHS services, that could potentially be of far more benefit than any medicine. For more details see: <https://omny.fm/shows/enduring-health/the-power-of-social-prescribing-interview-with-dr>

Donald's Story

“I'm Donald and like most people, I have a story. I have Parkinson's and can't walk very well or far. My wife died two years ago and I am still grieving – I miss her every day.

I live in Colne and my family are very good – they come and see me when they can but they have lives of their own.

I have a scooter which gets me to the shops.... And the pub!

I have had some help from Minds Matters and I have a Parkinson's nurse. I don't really need help to get out and about, because I have my scooter and my family help me a lot. I did need help to get a blue badge which my family could use and I need some help in the house.

My nurse asked me if I would like to see a Social Prescriber. 'What's a Social Prescriber when they're at home?', I said. She explained that they can help to get me out of the house more – I told her I don't need getting out. I get out a lot and I am quite happy with the circle of friends I have. I don't need new ones. She said, 'No, Donald, they can help with other things too, like getting that Blue Badge you want and maybe getting you some help around the house'. I reluctantly said ok – she is quite bossy, my nurse. I thought, 'I'll meet with them and then never see them again – I don't need them'.

Amy came to the house to see me – I wasn't making the effort to go out, she could come to me! Amy is a Social Prescriber.

She asked lots of questions and I made it quite clear I did not need help in getting out and I have enough friends. Amy asked me to tell her what I did need. I told her about the Blue Badge and the help I needed cleaning the house. She said she would help me to apply for a Blue Badge – my nephew actually did the application with Amy.

Amy also helped me and my nephew to apply for some money to help with the costs of a carer – I can now pay my nephew to come in and clean my house. He was out of work and the money comes in useful for him and his family. He gets to spend time with me and keep a check on me.

I happened to mention to Amy, just in conversation that I had a laptop. She asked if I used it and I told her no, it was all magic to me! Amy introduced me to her young volunteer, Louise. Louise helped me with the computer stuff. She taught me how to use Windows and get onto the internet. She taught me how to use the internet safely and it has opened up a whole new world for me! I can keep in touch with my family (and they can keep a check on me).

Amy listened to me; she helped me with what I needed instead of trying to tell me what I needed.

I am glad my nurse 'bullied' me into meeting with Amy, I feel much happier. It doesn't stop me missing my wife, of course, but it has helped me to cope better."