

Evidence briefing

The impact of social prescribing on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

Introduction

This briefing helps set out what the evidence currently tells us about how social prescribing impacts children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

It summarises the key findings from a rapid evidence review, commissioned by NASP in partnership with NHS England, and delivered by NASP's academic collaborative.

The methodology for the rapid evidence review, further detail of the results, discussion of the reliability of the data, and future recommendations can all be found in more detail [here](#).

Headlines

- There is emerging evidence around the benefits of social prescribing for young people, particularly for those aged over 17, on personal and mental wellbeing, including loneliness.
- There is also preliminary evidence to suggest there is a potential favourable return on investment (ROI).
- Qualitative data suggests that whilst social prescribing can be of benefit to children and young people, barriers remain, particularly around interagency working, information sharing and incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives. To effectively roll out social prescribing for children and young people, further exploration of these barriers, as well as concrete suggestions to any encountered obstacles, is also needed.

How reliable is this evidence?

- Whilst small, the evidence base has increased in two years from no published evidence [1] to four published studies [2-5]. To strengthen the evidence base, more robust research is needed, including:
 - a) larger samples, which are representative of the target populations being studied,
 - b) more detailed reporting on quantitative data, including means, standard deviations and significance levels, and

- c) the use of control groups to be able to accurately infer the impact of social prescribing on children and young people.
- Based on above, emerging findings should be treated cautiously.

References

1. D. Hayes *et al.*, “Social prescribing in children and young people: a review of the evidence.,” p. 12, 2020.
2. M. Bertotti, C. Frostick, D. Sharpe, and O. Temirov, “A two-year evaluation of the Young People Social Prescribing (YPSP) pilot,” London, 2020.
3. M. Brettell, C. Fenton, and E. Foster, “Linking Leeds: A Social Prescribing Service for Children and Young People,” *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, vol. 19, pp. 1426-1442, 2022.
4. J. Halliday and T. Wilkinson, “Young, Vulnerable and Pregnant: Family Support in Practice,” *Community Practitioner*, vol. 82, no. 10, pp. 28-31, 2009.
5. J. Parks, “Special Report: Policy: Children’s Mental Health,” *Children and Young People Now*, pp. 29-40, 2021.