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National
Academy
for Social
Prescribing

Five Core learnings from the social prescribing link worker webinar series

Thriving in a neighbourhood team - How link workers strengthen integrated care

Social prescribing is a fundamental capability of neighbourhood health, not simply a referral service.



Social prescribing should not be viewed simply as a referral service rather as a key mechanism to achieve the ambitions of neighbourhood health: understanding what matters to people, strengthening community connections, mobilising local assets, and addressing the social determinants of health. These capabilities help connect health, social care, VCFSE around the needs of local people helping build the social connections, trust and resilience that underpin good health outcomes. Therefore social prescribing should become a system-wide approach that supports a shift from asking "*what is the matter with you?*" to "*what matters to you?*".



2.

Link workers are the 'glue', the specialist connectors at the heart of neighbourhood health'.

Link workers play a unique role in bringing together residents, primary care, social care, public health, VCFSE organisations and wider community assets. Their value lies not only in supporting individuals, but in connecting systems, sharing intelligence and helping organisations collaborate more effectively. Link workers provide the dedicated skills, community knowledge and trusted relationships that make this possible which makes them critical members of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.



Link workers must be involved early in neighbourhood health design and decision-making

Social prescribing teams add the greatest value when they are involved from the outset, rather than receiving referrals into pre-designed services. Link workers can contribute across the entire cycle of understanding needs, designing solutions, implementation, evaluation and improvement. Their local knowledge, relationships and insight make them important contributors to neighbourhood health leadership, not simply service delivery.



3.

Effective neighbourhood working depends on combining data with lived experience - learned through social prescribing

Link workers provide the "quiet voices" data that never appears in surveys or formal engagement processes, alongside measurable outcomes that aligns with the ambitions of neighbourhood health.* By combining local data with lived experience, community insight and an understanding of barriers (such as transport, digital exclusion, stigma and health literacy), neighbourhood teams can design more effective and equitable services.

*Research: Impact of the rollout of the national social prescribing link worker programme on population outcomes: evidence from a repeated cross-sectional survey.



Prevention and resilience are built through relationships and community connection

Social prescribing is a practical, evidence-based model for tackling the social determinants of health, providing a tangible mechanism for turning our understanding of what drives health into action. Strong community connections are one of the most important determinants of neighbourhood resilience, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Social prescribing helps build these connections, making communities more able to support health, wellbeing and recovery from future challenges.

[watch the full recording](#)



5.