

4th August 2016

Reflecting on our progress:

Well what a busy 9 months it has been – now the Social Prescribing Network is in full swing, I thought it was time to reflect on our progress – I personally can't actually remember my work before the SPN...

Whilst many of you have been developing your Social Prescribing services over the last few years (some even longer), the network only came into existence due to funding from the Wellcome Trust which we received in November last year. Since then we have held a national conference with 95 social prescribing innovators in January, reported on the priorities that need to be addressed to make Social Prescribing a national endeavour, launched the Social Prescribing report at the Houses of Parliament in March, developed a solid collaboration with NHS England, Michael, my Co-Chair, was appointed as the National Clinical Lead for Social Prescribing in April, we have raised awareness of Social Prescribing to the degree that all STP regions are writing this into their plans and now we have just started rolling out regional networks. So it's not surprising that behind the scenes here, we are having a bit of annual leave over August to catch our breath and enjoy the sunshine.

I'd like to take a moment to thank everyone who has supported the network and put untold and unpaid hours of effort into developing the network, the reports, the website, the PR, the research and so forth. We have achieved a lot on a little financial input, purely because you are all so committed to bringing about positive change in the NHS. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with you all. We do have one sad farewell to say – that is to Dr Nick Herbert, who has been working with me as a Research Fellow since before the project began. Many of you will have had conversations with Nick. He is taking up a new position at the University of Birmingham at the end of August, so leaves the Social Prescribing team - we wish him well and thank him for his hard work.

Do enjoy the rest of the newsletter, there is plenty to share with you.
Marie Polley, Co-Chair Social Prescribing Network

New administration setup:

Since Nick has been the main contact person for the network, we have now set up a new email address that the Social Prescribing Network will use: socialprescribing@outlook.com. We welcome news items for the newsletter which goes out once a month, it would be very helpful to write 'newsletter' in the subject line and [send the item to the new email address](#).

If you have emailed us in the last few weeks and we haven't responded, then my apologies. We have had a huge amount of email traffic and I am pretty sure there are emails that have gone unanswered. But you are an understanding group, so please just contact us again on the new email address, we'd love to hear from you! (And if you know of any philanthropists who would like to support the network financially then do let us know!!).

Regional Networks:

One of the tasks over the coming months is to set up some regional networks so that you can network on a more local level. We know that being in touch with other new and experienced Social Prescribing services can be an invaluable source of support and knowledge. Thanks to everyone who supported the first Northern Regional Social Prescribing event held in Wakefield in July. We have had some great feedback. The aim of the regional events is to support commissioners and healthcare professionals and other stakeholders, on what is already known about Social Prescribing and provide a networking space.

The next two regions to come on line will be the South West and London. Details for the events will be released as soon as possible and priority booking will be given to people in each locality.

London Regional event: This is in collaboration with Healthy London Partnerships and the University of East London. We are grateful to Shaun Crowe, Brendan McCloughlin, Marcello Bertotti and Caroline Frostick for their collaboration with us on this event. **Please put 22nd September in your diaries if you are London based – details will come out soon.**

South West regional event:

We are delighted that Dr Richard Kimberlee, who many will know for his work in Social Prescribing already, will Chair this SW regional event, **on October 20th as part of the Bristol Healthy City Week – details to be confirmed soon.**

Future Plans:

There has been a huge amount of work with the team at the University of Westminster to scope and review all the Social Prescribing evaluations that we could source. Many of you have sent these to us in response to the questionnaire we administered at the beginning of the year, and we are pleased that this phase of working is coming to an end. We will be sharing our findings in the autumn and are using these data to inform a toolkit that will support the implementation of high quality social prescribing services. As soon as we have firm dates for the toolkit documents, we will let you know.

Report on Art in Healthcare's Art Project for Baronscourt Surgery

Amelia Calvert would like to share with you a newly published report: '**A Report on Art in Healthcare's Art Project for Baronscourt Surgery**'. The report can be accessed [here](#).

Launch of the Waltham Forest Social Prescribing Service

Sharon Hanooman wanted to share an update on the Launch of the Waltham Forest Social Prescribing Service, which was launched on 14th June 2016:

What makes this scheme different from other social prescribing schemes?

We have tried to make it as broad as possible. We take referrals not only from GPs but from any health or social care professional in the borough. A key aim is to better integrate health and social care so the involvement of adult social care was very important to us. This is why the two social prescribers are hosted and managed (but not funded) by the adult social care department.

Also I have now negotiated with the local Citizen's Advice Bureau to place a Welfare Advisor in the 3 GP hubs across the Borough starting from September and referrals for Welfare advice in GP surgeries will be managed via the Social Prescribing service. This is very exciting with this partnership between the GPs and CAB with Social Prescribing being the key link. BBC London has now shown an interest in our service and want to do an interview with a patient referred to us where they have benefitted from social prescribing in terms of reducing social isolation, so we will be getting back to them in September once we get some more referrals and can see the impact.

Finally, we are very also pleased that our service will be evaluated by Marcello Bertotti (UEL) who did the evaluation for the City and Hackney Social Prescribing service referred to in the Social Prescribing Network Update on 27th April 2016.

The press release for this service can be accessed [here](#), and if you want any further information about this service you can contact Sharon directly (Sharon.Hanooman@walthamforest.gov.uk).

Future of Public Parks Inquiry launch

Sandra van der Feen would like to share that the Government has just announced an inquiry into public parks:

The Communities and Local Government Committee launches an inquiry into public parks to examine the impact of reduced local authority budgets on these open spaces and consider concerns that their existence is under threat.

The Committee invites submission of written evidence to its website on the following issues:

- Who uses parks and open spaces, how often and for what
- The contribution of parks to the health and well-being of communities
- The impact of reductions in local authority budgets on parks
- What the administrative status of parks should be in light of declining local authority resources for non-statutory services
- How new and existing parks can best be supported
- What additional or alternative funding is available and what scope is there for local authorities to generate revenue from park users
- What the advantages and disadvantages are of other management models, such as privatisation, outsourcing or mutualisation

This inquiry presents an excellent opportunity to submit evidence of parks contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities, especially those who may be providing social prescribing services. If you intend to write a submission regarding evidence of health benefits, could you please let me know (sandra@lvsc.org.uk)? London Parks & Green Spaces Forum is particularly interested in collecting case study evidence.

The Committee would be grateful to receive written submissions by 30 September 2016. Many thanks in advance.

Ways to Wellness blog:

Chris Drinkwater would like to share a blog regarding 'Ways to Wellness' – the blog can be accessed [here](#).

Case study in the Guardian:

An interesting the case study regarding the NHS teaming up with local libraries to deliver health promotion work has recently been published in the Guardian. The article can be accessed [here](#).

New local evidence on well-being improvements

Kate Lee would like to bring to members' attention some new local evidence about substantial well-being improvements for vulnerable people after being supported by community volunteers through social prescribing projects:

This evidence is an internal evaluation, which demonstrates improvements across all of the 5 ways to well-being and also includes 12 case studies with individual data on well-being outcomes. It assesses the impact on the well-being of vulnerable people who received Community CVS support through our social prescribing projects; Fast 4wd and Volunteering on Prescription. It is based on 83 vulnerable people who have been supported on a one to one basis by Community CVS peer support volunteers over a time period of at least 3 months, with 31 receiving support for 6 months. Volunteers included Community Navigators from our Volunteering on Prescription Project, and Recovery Support Volunteers from our Fast 4wd Project. Vulnerable people supported included those facing multiple disadvantages including, social isolation, disability or long term conditions, substance misuse or alcohol issues, mental health issues, housing or homelessness issues, or offending backgrounds.

The report is now on our website and can be accessed either through our homepage; www.communitycvs.org.uk in the tab at the bottom of the page– 'ways to well-being' or directly from this link: <http://www.communitycvs.org.uk/about/new-local-evidence-on-improvements-to-well-being/>.

Digital Platforms:

There have been a number of digital platforms developed recently to support Social Prescribing pathways, in terms of tracking patients and recording outcomes. If you have a platform that you would like to make people aware of please send us some information and we will happily send this out to the network. *Please note the Social Prescribing Network does not endorse any platforms.*

Are you involved in delivering social prescribing or community referral projects?

Connect for Wellbeing is a new digital platform featuring a detailed service directory and integrated direct referral tool. Co-designed by [Voluntary Action Sheffield](#) and a number of experienced agencies successfully delivering social prescribing projects, the site is specifically designed to quickly search and find local activities and services. An inbuilt referral tool offers both a self-referral option, as well as referrals made by authorised professionals on behalf of patients. All referrals are recorded to provide detailed statistics and data allowing you to evidence activity and demand for services, and to facilitate the tracking of a patient's journey. The platform is currently in use in [East Kent](#) and in areas of [Essex](#), and is receiving support from a range of health and

voluntary sector organisations, as well as pharmacies, leisure centres and social care agencies.

Webinars are running throughout August for anybody wishing to find out more and see how the system works. For more information, or to discuss your needs, please email s.grindrod@vas.org.uk or call 0114 253 6611.