

# What is Social prescribing?

Information source: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing>

Social prescribing is a key component of [Universal Personalised Care](#).

A [summary guide](#) has been developed for people and organisations leading local implementation of social prescribing. It sets out what good social prescribing looks like and why social prescribing improves outcomes and experiences for people, their families and carers, as well as achieving more value from the system.

Social prescribing is a way for 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.

When social prescribing works well, people can be easily referred to link workers from a wide range of local agencies, including general practice, pharmacies, multi-disciplinary teams, hospital discharge teams, allied health professionals, fire service, police, job centres, social care services, housing associations and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations. Self-referral is also encouraged.

A standard model of social prescribing has been developed in partnership with stakeholders, which shows the key elements that need to be in place for effective social prescribing;



Social prescribing complements other approaches, such as active signposting. This is a 'light touch' approach where existing staff in local agencies provide information to signpost people to services, using local knowledge and resource directories. Active signposting works best for people who are confident and skilled enough to find their own way to services after a brief intervention.

### Social prescribing link workers

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.

## Impact

There is [emerging evidence](#) that social prescribing can lead to a range of positive health and wellbeing outcomes for people, such as improved quality of life and emotional wellbeing.

Though there is a need for more [robust and systematic evidence](#) on the effectiveness of social prescribing, social prescribing schemes may lead to a [reduction in the use of NHS services](#), including GP attendance. [59% of GPs](#) think social prescribing can help reduce their workload.

## Resources

### Learning network

NHS England has set up an online learning platform to share the latest resources and encourage collaboration. To join the platform, please contact [england.socialprescribing@england.nhs.net](mailto:england.socialprescribing@england.nhs.net)

Below is a summary of key documents and resources:

- [What is social prescribing – The Kings Fund \(02 February 2017\)](#)
- [Social prescribing animation – Healthy London Partnership](#)
- [Making Sense of Social Prescribing – University of Westminster:](#)
- [Social prescribing: a pathway to work? – The Work Foundation, Lancaster University \(February 2017\)](#)
- [Spotlight on the Ten High Impact Actions – Royal College of GPs](#)
- [A guide to implementing social prescribing in London – Healthy London Partnership](#)
- [Social prescribing – a guide for local authorities](#)
- [A review of the evidence assessing impact of social prescribing on healthcare demand and cost implications – University of Westminster](#)
- [Creative Health – All Party Parliamentary Group report](#)