

Social Prescribing

What is personalised care?

Personalised care will benefit up to 2.5 million people by 2023/24. Giving them the same choice and control over their mental and physical health that they have come to expect in every aspect of their life. A one-size-fits-all health and care system simply cannot meet the increasing complexity of people's needs and expectations. Social prescribing is a key programme within personalised care.

Personalised care is based on 'what matters' to people and their individual strengths and needs, working alongside clinicians and other health and care professionals. The NHS Long Term Plan says personalised care will become business as usual across the health and care system and Universal Personalised Care confirms how we will do it.

What is social prescribing?

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 other 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. As set out in the NHS Long Term Plan, we will support 1000 additional social prescribing link workers in primary care networks by 2020/21. The number will continue to increase, so that by 2023/24 we expect 900,000 will be able to benefit from social prescribing. 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.

Social prescribing is not the same as active signposting, although they are complementary. Active signposting is a light touch approach, which works best for people who are confident and skilled enough to get involved in community activities after a brief intervention. Social prescribing supports people who have less confidence or fewer skills to help them get involved.



Who can benefit from social prescribing?

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.

Arabella's story

Arabella Tresilian maintained a career and hectic schedule for years, balancing work and family by constant juggling. Alongside this, Arabella's autism was a fact of life which sometimes made the challenges of this schedule harder to deal with. But in 2015 things fell apart.

Recognising that Arabella needed more than just medication to help her get well again, her doctor referred her to a social prescribing link worker. The link worker spent time with Arabella to help identify the things that mattered to her, and to look at what options were out in the wider community. As a result, Arabella joined a choir.

Arabella Tresilian maintained a Three years on, she is still singing and has recovered her poise. She is now helping other people cope when they have issues with their mental health.

Practical support and more information

NHS England website

www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing provides information and resources to support the implementation of social prescribing, including learning support available to social prescribing link workers.

Personalised Care Collaborative Network links partners across the health and care system to share learning, templates and experiences, as well as hosting discussion boards. This includes a designated area for social prescribing.

Contact england.personalisedcaredemonstrator@nhs.net or england.socialprescribing@england.nhs.net if you would like to join our networks.

“Now I feel good about the future. Social prescribing made all the difference to me and now I'm able to give back to my community.”

Arabella Tresilian

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NHS England and NHS Improvement

