

Creative Hertfordshire's Art of Wellbeing Conference Thursday 15th October 2015, Fielder Centre, Hatfield

www.creativehertfordshire.com/the-art-of-wellbeing

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What is Social Prescribing?

Social prescribing simply means a programme which links patients to non-medical support in their community.

Individuals might be suitable for social prescribing if, for instance, they have a chronic physical or mental health problem or they belong to a group which is particularly at risk, such as a recently bereaved older person or a newly arrived immigrant. Offering interventions when people are struggling to cope with long term illnesses or are at a particularly difficult point in their life means that person is less likely to have to rely on expensive care at a later stage. This helps the appropriate allocation of limited healthcare resources.

Social prescribing is about recognising that a number of social and economic factors – isolation, an inactive lifestyle, benefits and debt issues – impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals. Busy health care professionals do not necessarily have the resources or expertise to tackle these issues, so social prescribing draws on the resources in the wider community.

Social prescribing comes in many shapes and sizes. The activities offered differ according to what's available and the target patient group, but can include gardening and horticulture, formal education, creative activities, weight loss and exercise programmes and advice and information.

Many of the activities that are likely to be prescribed under this system are often be run by voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations for their local community. As a result, social prescribing offers a number of opportunities for these organisations to take advantage of.

As a matter of course, social prescribing brings together a wide variety of different organisations that need to work in partnership to achieve the health and wellbeing outcomes they're aiming for. This extends beyond local voluntary sector infrastructure and the local authority and will likely include others whose work is relevant to public health: such as CCGs, individual GPs, colleges and local businesses as well as community groups and smaller local charities.

In all cases social prescribing has the potential to empower individuals to make choices that give them more control over their own health. And what's good for individuals is good for the system as a whole.

With thanks to Compact Voice

For more information see <http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/blogs/compact-voice/2014/11/20/just-what-doctor-ordered-social-prescribing-and-partnership-working>