

## Learning Snapshot: Social Prescribing

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged over 50.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations relevant to best practice in Social Prescribing.

You can use it as a summary of the [full learning report](#), to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams, or include in your own presentations and briefings

<p><b>1. Why focus on Social Prescribing?</b> Social Prescribing connects people to community groups and services through the support of Link Workers who help people overcome the barriers often faced when engaging with local activities and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It provides a person-centred approach to suit individual social, emotional or practical needs.</li> <li>• Support can be given short-term (8-10 weeks) to help access a benefit or caring support, or longer-term (3+ months) to address more complex issues.</li> </ul> <p>In both cases a personalised plan is created based on what someone wants to achieve.</p>	<p><b>2. What are the challenges?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution meaning the provision and duration of the support needs to be flexible.</li> <li>• Link Workers need access to specialist mental health services as this level of support is outside the remit of the role.</li> <li>• Good management support and access to a strong peer support network is required to help manage the emotional challenges involved.</li> <li>• All Ageing Better areas observed that referral networks need constant review and updating due to the frequent restructuring and changes within statutory and community organisations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. So what can we do with this learning?</b> NHS England is recruiting a 1,000-strong workforce of Social Prescribing Link Workers in GP surgeries by the end of 2020/21 rising further by 2023/24. In Ageing Better, we align to the NHS model giving people ‘one-to-one’ time to help and support them.</p> <p><b>Test and learn from services in your area:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The early relationship-building phase is key to achieving good outcomes.</li> <li>• Offering a first home-visit is often beneficial.</li> <li>• A set number of appointments works better than setting a fixed time period as people sometimes need to temporarily disengage.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. How can we improve its effectiveness?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important for Link Workers to have access to Health and Social Care systems to help reduce the number of inappropriate referrals. Where this is not possible, Link Workers should attend regular Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings to ensure important information is shared.</li> <li>• Learning also tells us that for Social Prescribing to be effective, there needs to be an investment in community development to ensure there is somewhere (appropriate) in their community for people to be supported back into.</li> </ul>