

To: Patient Participation Groups, Cheltenham

From: Cheltenham Locality Executive

**Re: Update on Social Prescribing Project in Cheltenham**

This paper updates PPGs on the progress being made to implement a social prescribing project in the Cheltenham Locality and to set the continued direction of travel for the Cheltenham Locality and its partner organisations in relation to developing this area of work.

For the purposes of this paper, social prescribing is defined as a clear, coherent and collaborative process in which healthcare practitioners work with service users (patients) to select and make referrals into the most appropriate voluntary and community-based services.

The intention is to help ensure every individual in Cheltenham plan their health and social care with people who work together to understand them and their needs and bring together services to achieve the outcomes which are important to the service user (patient).

**Background**

There are many community-based and preventative organisations and services operating within Gloucestershire which successfully support the wellbeing of the population. However, these can be poorly understood, under-utilised and can appear disjointed to both the service user (patient) and referrers. In addition, Cheltenham Locality GPs have identified problems in their understanding of the availability of such services and access, along with the willingness of some service users (patients) who are referred to take-up the service. The impact of this can be:

- Increased repeat visits to GPs (and potentially other services) and increased prescribing;
- On some occasions unnecessary emergency admissions;
- Poor health and wellbeing outcomes that could be avoided;
- Inefficient utilisation of existing resources and so instability for small scale providers.

Social prescribing is a structured way of linking patients with non-medical sources of support within a community. These opportunities may include opportunities for arts, creativity, physical activity, learning new skills, volunteering, mutual aid, befriending and self-help, as well as support with for example, employment, benefits, housing, debt and legal advice.

**Outcomes**

At present there are a number of different delivery models being piloted across some of the Gloucestershire Localities and it is planned for all of these pilots to be evaluated and outcomes shared.

The aims of the pilot projects are the same, namely:

- to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes and user experience for people in the locality for whom “wellbeing” services are most likely to address their needs
- to reduce social isolation
- to deliver an effective approach to early intervention and prevention
- to support high quality, joined up services in the community
- to improve understanding amongst professionals of the services provided by other organisations and take up of service offers
- to support this approach with clear pathways, shared information, language and working principles between providers that ensure joined up care and shared understanding of purpose is experienced both by users and by professionals working in the locality
- to clarify what, if any, additional resources are required
- to evaluate the outcomes and costs of the pilot.

### **Cheltenham Locality**

Cheltenham Locality Executive (CLE) has developed a joint working approach with Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and Cheltenham Partnerships (CP), supported by Gloucestershire County Council Public Health.

The approach taken has been to consult with all Cheltenham GPs across the Locality and ask them to identify the ‘Top Ten’ non-health issues that patients attend their practice with. The CLE has since worked collaboratively with CBC and CP to identify and meet with those VCS organisations who have the capability and capacity to support the service user (patient) priorities. As a consequence a Working Group has been formed to take this piece of work forward on behalf of Cheltenham service users (patients).

Although GPs are already making referrals to a range of VCS organisations, it is felt that this project will help manage these referrals in a more structured way and give assurance to the GPs as the patient advocate, that the service user (patient) is being supported appropriately.

The team have met and worked with a range of voluntary organisations to discuss the project. It was agreed that initially the project would work with 6 organisations that have the capacity to meet potential extra referrals within the Cheltenham Locality.

These organisations include:

- Alzheimer’s Society
- Carers Gloucestershire
- County Community Projects
- Gloucestershire Lifestyles
- Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
- Third Sector Services

It has been agreed that these organisations will take responsibility for sign-posting the service user (patient) to a more suitable service other than themselves if appropriate, whilst retaining responsibility for the service user (patient).

To help facilitate this approach, the CLE have drafted an electronic non-medical referral form which will work with GP practice systems. In this model, the referrers will give the patient a referral form with all contact details of the VCS organisation and a further copy will be forwarded from the surgery to the VCS organisation by the referrer or identified Social Prescribing Lead in practice. It is intended that the patient will contact the VCS organisation direct to make an appointment, however, the VCS organisation will provide a 'courtesy' follow-up call if the contact is not made within 7 days of receipt of referral form to make an offer of support.

### **What Happens Next?**

Cheltenham Locality are committed to building on this work and have included social prescribing in their refreshed Locality Development Plan for 2014/15. The CLE value the contribution the VCS organisations have made to the development of this referral pathway.

At the moment different social prescribing models are being used across the county, all of these will contribute to a full countywide evaluation late January/mid February.

Should you have any further queries regarding this project, please contact Cheryl Ewing, Locality Development Manager direct on 0300 421 1534 or via email on [Cheryl.ewing@nhs.net](mailto:Cheryl.ewing@nhs.net)

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