



## Social Prescribing for Unpaid Carers: Information for Carers Centres

### Introduction

This guide is aimed at people working in carers centres<sup>1</sup> and explains what social prescribing is and how it can help unpaid carers. The guide also explains how you can connect with local social prescribing services. Though social prescribing is available to everyone, this guide focuses on adult carers as young carers (under 18) may have more specific support needs than most social prescribing services can support with.

### Social Prescribing for Unpaid Carers

Social prescribing connects unpaid carers to community groups, activities, and services that support them with issues that affect their health and wellbeing. Social prescribing recognises that if someone is an unpaid carer, not every issue that impacts their health and wellbeing can be solved with a medical solution. That is where social prescribing can come in. Social prescribing can help support unpaid carers to stay healthy, well and connected to their community.

Social prescribing works particularly well for unpaid carers who are feeling lonely, experiencing poor mental health, have long term conditions or complex social needs.

Social prescribing link workers based in the community and in the NHS:

- Work with unpaid carers, one to one, and build a trusting relationship
- Ask, “[what matters to you?](#)”
- Give unpaid carers time and space to think about what would help them
- coproduce a simple personalised care and support plan

The personalised plan focuses on what an unpaid carer wants and needs, rather than what other people think might be best for them. It might include connecting them to statutory services, like benefits and welfare advice, help with employment support and volunteering, or supporting access to social activities linked to nature, art, and physical activity.

As an unpaid carers centre, you might offer a form of social prescribing, where a dedicated worker supports an unpaid carer to get the support they need. You might

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<sup>1</sup> Carers centres are local organisations that provide support to unpaid carers in their area

also run specialist services or activities that social prescribers can link people to like carer assessments, benefits advice, and peer support. Local carers centres are an important asset that local social prescribers should be aware of and it is vital that you work together.

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### **Working Together**

Making the connection between your carers centre and local social prescribing services will enable services to work together more effectively to ensure that unpaid carers are supported in the most effective collaborative way. For example:

- Social prescribing services support a wide range of people so can help to identify people who don't see themselves as unpaid carers and connect them to your carers centre. This means that more unpaid carers can be supported, and they might get support earlier than they would otherwise.
- Social prescribing services are experts in their local community and activities on offer and are uniquely placed to help people get support from a range of sources. Carers centres can benefit from working with social prescribing services if an unpaid carer has needs that are separate to their caring role.
- Carers centres can help social prescribing services by training link workers on carer awareness and how to refer to unpaid carer support services. This means that link workers are more able to support unpaid carers, and more unpaid carers are able to be identified and signposted to help, information and support.

#### **Case Study: Local partners working together to support a carer**

*When Crista visits her GP due to feelings of anxiety and struggles with housing issues, the GP refers her to the local social prescribing link worker, who discusses the roots of her feelings with her. Crista explains that due to caring responsibilities, she struggles to work full-time. In addition, her dryer is broken which she can't afford to fix and this is leaving the house damp. The link worker connects with the local carers centre, who arranges a carers assessment for Crista, which results in her being able to access respite care for her relative, as well as extra financial support. The social prescriber helped Crista connect with her housing provider and apply for a local community grant to replace the dryer. As a result, Crista feels more supported by the community around her and her mood improves.*

#### **Case Study: Sefton Carers Centre provides personalised support**

*Barry is 70 years old and cares for his husband who has multiple health problems. Barry himself is in poor health and has stated he feels isolated; his mental health has deteriorated, and he is lonely. Sefton Carers Centre talked to Barry and a plan was developed to refer him to their Listening Ear and Active Older Carers project. Through this wrap-around support, Barry now attends activities organised by Sefton Carers, such as coffee mornings. Barry enjoys face-to-face interactions, and is now socially connected and the projects give him a break from caring, Barry feels that his confidence has grown, he feels empowered and there has been a significant increase in his overall health and wellbeing.*

## 2 How to Build Partnerships with Social Prescribing Services

As social prescribing is based on local needs, each area will have a different approach to referrals and different services operating. You could contact your local social prescribing service with details of your offer, including referral routes and specialist services, and start a conversation to think about how best to work together. Social prescribing services will be keen to see examples of how your service supports unpaid carers with their health and wellbeing needs, so you might want to

### **Case Study: Sunderland Carers Centre**

*Sunderland Carers Centre is part of the city-wide Sunderland social prescribing project, which brings together providers to deliver personalised and proactive support to a wide range of people. Unpaid carers are identified during triage to the social prescribing service and are referred to the carers centre. This helps with early identification of carers, helping them to get support to manage and maintain their health and wellbeing earlier.*

*The carers centre provides training to the social prescribing team on how to identify carers and their support needs. The carers centre has also partnered with charities from the arts and culture sector to provide young carers and parent carers with creative projects such as art classes and theatre groups.*

*Strong partnership working between organisations and a “No Wrong Door” approach means carers are supported by partners together*

share case studies. Another way you can work together is by suggesting training sessions to link workers on unpaid carer awareness, or your carers centre might benefit from training on community approaches from the social prescribing service.

### **You can find services by:**

- Checking local directories of services
- Contacting your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)
- Contact local GP practices
- Contact your local Integrated Care System (ICS). This might be done through your local Carers Lead or another existing contact at your Local Authority.

### **What Does Good Social Prescribing Look Like?**

Below is an example of social prescribing services and carers centres working together to support carers. More examples of good practice can be found in the [Carers Trust VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance good practice guide](#).

# What Social Prescribing should look like

**Carer referred into any agency for help and support with their health and wellbeing**



**Social prescribing** services connect carers to community groups, activities, and services that support them with issues that affect their health and wellbeing

**Carers centres** provide support to unpaid carers by undertaking a carers assessment and offering information and advice

**Health services** provide specialised medical care and treatment dependent on a patient's health needs



## Useful Resources and Links

[Carers Partnership: Top Tips for Commissioners and Providers of Social Prescribing and interventions combatting loneliness for unpaid carers](#) [carers Partnership: Social Prescribing and interventions combatting loneliness amongst unpaid carers: Good Practice examples](#)

[NHS England: Social Prescribing](#)

[National Academy for Social Prescribing](#)

[Carers Trust](#)

[Carers UK](#)

[NHS England: Supporting carers in general practice: a framework of quality markers](#)

[The King's Fund: What is Social Prescribing?](#)

[Public Health England: Caring as a social determinant of health: a review of evidence](#)

[Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Social prescribing: applying All Our Health](#)

[Herts and West Essex: Training Hub](#)

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This information sheet was developed by the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Improvement, Carers Trust, Carers UK, and local carer centres. It was developed following a [Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#) project focussing on good practice in Social Prescribing delivered by Carers Trust and Carers UK, as the Carers Partnership.

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