



THE SCOOP

The Social Prescribing Newsletter for Well Up North PCN

POWER TO THE PATIENT

by *Miranda Hughes*

One of the important elements of social prescribing is playing an active role in the community, which includes helping to set up groups. Another element is empowering patients to take control of their health and wellbeing, and supporting them to achieve their goals. This summer saw a great example of these two aspects coming together, resulting in a brand new support group, run by a patient and supported by a social prescriber. The patient has Autism and suffered with social anxiety, and was referred in to social prescribing to see if it would help them to manage these conditions, and improve their overall wellbeing. The patient identified that there was a lack of support for adults with Autism, and expressed a desire to set up a peer support group to fill that gap. Through discussion, it was established that the patient's poor wellbeing was partly due to a lack of focus, direction, and the pursuit of something meaningful. The patient came to the conclusion that taking action on this goal to set up a support group would not only benefit the community, but also their own wellbeing and mental health.

The group is now in full swing. It has been named "Anxious To Meet You". A reflection on the social difficulties experienced by people with Autism and/or social anxiety, as well as a light-hearted nod to the location of the group "Pleased To Meet You" on Morpeth High Street. The location was selected to make people feel comfortable - the patient was clear that they wanted the set-up to be as non-clinical as possible, avoiding medical buildings and opting instead for a more genuine, relaxed social set-up. The group meets every Thursday at 1:30pm in the cosy back bar section of Pleased To Meet You, where they share experiences and discuss their conditions. The focus is positive. The group encourage each other and share ideas and stories intended to inspire, and empowerment is always a key focus of discussions.

Although the group is brand new, it has had huge success already, with several regular members forming a strong support network for each other and sharing a wealth of useful information. A goal for the future of the group is to secure some funding to enable specialists to come in as guest speakers to provide more in-depth information about Autism and social anxiety, giving opportunities for Q&A sessions for the participants. If the success of the group maintains and grows, we hope to extend the group to other areas across Northumberland.

Check out the poster for this exciting group on the back page!



To find out more email nencicb-nor.socialprescriberswun@nhs.net

TEAM TALK

We are happy to welcome 4 new members to our team:



Alice Leightley
Cancer Support Worker

"This is a brand-new exciting role which will help cancer patients and their families access the help and support they need in what can be a very challenging and daunting time."



Sophie Guy
Cancer Support Worker

"The Cancer Support Worker is a new pivotal role in actively working with patients and carers to identify and address any worries or concerns after a cancer diagnosis, and supporting individuals to successfully take control of their own care and live well."



Helen Hindhaugh
Health and Wellbeing Coach

"I fully believe in the importance of people being able to access good quality patient centred services, supporting them to feel more in control of their health and wellbeing by making healthier lifestyle choices."



Linda Harvey
Social Prescriber

"It is my passion to be able to support patients to break down barriers so they can access the services they need, to connect patients to the local community and to focus on working with the patient to achieve their own identified positive outcomes."



HEALTH INEQUALITIES

by Karen Gibson

Military Veterans Project



With the data collected by GP practices, who actively encouraged former members of the armed forces to notify them of their service, we can now start looking at how many veterans we have in North Northumberland, what their needs are, and how we can best help them. One of our GP practices is keen to look at the accreditation process for joining the Armed Forces Covenant and we are liaising with them to help them understand this process. We also continue to attend the Northumberland Armed Forces Forum and have linked with 'Step into Health' which is open to all service leavers, veterans, and their families within the North East. NHS employers are working with the Armed Forces community to provide career and development opportunities within the NHS.

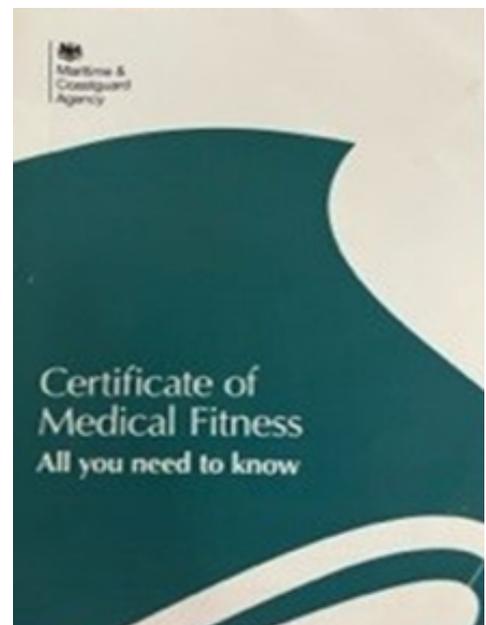
For more information email: stsft.armedforces@nhs.net

Fishers Health Project - Seafit

At the end of May we took a team of health professionals, including the Seafit Programme, Healthwatch Northumberland, Prostate Cancer UK, and the North of Tyne Diabetic Eye Screening Service, to Amble quayside for our 3rd event of the year to offer advice and support to active and retired fishers and their families. Lots of people visiting stopped to talk to us about the work we were doing.

Grateful thanks are also due to the Family Hub at Hadston, who popped along on the day as it was half-term week, to offer free activities for the children of the fishing community. The fresh fruit kebab making was particularly delicious!

In addition to health checks, information was available on the new medical the Government (via the Maritime and Coastguard Agency) brought into law for all fishermen - "The Certificate of Medical Fitness". The law states that by the end of November 2023, fishermen working on a UK vessel must have a certificate of medical fitness, either the ML5 or ENG1. Skippers must attend a Maritime & Coastguard approved medical, but crew can book their medical at their GP practice. Due to the time required to complete this assessment, and the limited availability of appointments, we encourage members of the fishing community to book their medical as soon as possible, to ensure they meet the deadline. If you require the "Certificate of Medical Fitness", please don't wait until November to book your appointment - schedule it in NOW!



Farming Community Health Project – Northumberland Farm-fit:

A group of local farmers (both livestock and arable farmers) were invited to attend a focus group meeting at Alnwick Medical Group in June. Issues with healthcare in the farming community were discussed and three main themes emerged.

1. Access to services – Health Checks
2. Mental health risks amongst all of the community, but in particular for young farmers (issues discussed included isolation, loneliness, Brexit, loss of subsidies)
3. Transportation in a rural community – getting to GP and hospital appointments.

All themes were equally important, but the group were in agreement that services needed to be brought out into the community, with engagement happening outside of GP practices, in village halls for example. Another issue which needed addressing from the group's perspective, was that farmers were not aware of the new ARRS roles within GP practices. These new roles needed highlighting more via the marts and markets. Therefore, we will be attending the local farming sale marts at both Wooler and Acklington in the very near future, handing out information and undertaking engagement work with the farming community.

Do you agree with the above?

Have your say by visiting our online survey at
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FarmingandFamilies>

If you or anyone you know is working on a farm, a small holding or have a role within the farming industry, a retired farmer or a family member of a farmer, and you want to have YOUR say and help us understand the wider farming community's needs, please complete the survey. Thank you!





COACHES CORNER

Health and Wellbeing Coaches

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"Comparison is the thief of joy"

Theodore Roosevelt, 1898

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We are all guilty of making comparisons between ourselves and others in all aspects of life. Whether it's that summer 'beach body' you saw on telly or social media (and hoped to have by this point in the summer season), the fancy house down the street, career milestones or anything you strive for. As President Teddy rightly pointed out over a century ago; by constantly comparing to others, we can often overlook and downplay what we do have, what we have achieved and what we can achieve going forward. We can end up on this relentless wheel of always striving for more.

It is difficult not to fall into the comparison trap; advertising, social media etc. can further push us into that habit and it is a difficult one to just switch off. What we can do, and what I would encourage everyone to do is to think of the bigger picture. What we see on that Instagram feed or the fancy car next door is just a snapshot, behind that snapshot is the full story. Because we only see the positive outcome, we can over-simplify the life behind it.

Whichever way you judge success and whoever you consider successful - their lives are just as complicated as yours and full of compromises, different priorities and their own insecurities. We are not comparing 'like for like' because each person, their circumstances and priorities are unique. The same goes for those thoughts of 'it could have been better' when achieving something, it isn't a fair representation of the reality of the journey.

So what can we do to stop comparison robbing us of joy?

Try to recognise when you are caught in that 'comparison trap'. What pulls you into comparing yourself to others?

Look behind the snapshot of success. There is a full story behind it including sacrifices, compromises and priorities that are likely different to yours.

Practice some self-compassion. Don't downplay what you have, what you've achieved and what you can achieve going forward. Take a step back and appreciate the positives.

It is not something that is going to happen overnight and there are influences out there to draw us back in but just be mindful and try, so you can prevent yourself from being robbed of joy as much as possible.

by Tom Henderson (HWBC)



Patient feedback...

Last year, a patient was referred into the Health and Wellbeing Coaches (HWBC) after being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

In their first session they set 3 small achievable goals - being mindful of what they are eating, starting a food diary and carb counting. I supported the patient in researching and planning on how to get started. After some initial difficulties with their original goals, they revisited their goals and made changes to make the transition smoother. The patient's motivation increased, and they bought books about diabetes to bring in and discuss in our sessions. The patient ended up losing just under two stone and their HbA1c number has reduced from 52 to 47 in only 3 months. Rather than telling the patient what to do, I helped them to establish small realistic goals, and then we headed together on the journey of diabetes remission education. The role of the HWBC is not to guide people in one direction, but to make a difference through listening to what matters to them.

In the first session with a patient I always listen to their story, which helps to get to know them better. Open questions make people think of the answers beyond yes or no, therefore allowing the behaviour change to begin. Building up that relationship makes the journey easier and as I offer a 45 minute appointment, this really helps people to relax, and make the appointment about them. Their journey, whether it be to make lifestyle changes for their blood pressure, weight, mood, bereavement, or anything else impacting their health and wellbeing, is my journey too. The first session can end with no goals being set and that is fine. By the second session, they may be ready to think of a change. A non-judgemental space and a flexible set-up make this perfect for those who need that support to prioritise what matters to them.

by Rebecca Hall (HWBC)

"My weekly appointment gives me permission within my busy life to have some 'me' time. Menopause has impacted my life in a variety of ways. My HWBC listens and supports me during our appointments. The service is a massive benefit to me and I look forward to off-loading!"

"An absolute lifesaver and changer, extremely important service as mental health problems are on the increase and help from other avenues seem to be on the decrease."

"I've appreciated so much all the non-judgemental support you've given"

"Has saved not only my mind, but also my life"

"I do love seeing you and have been so grateful for your encouragement on my diabetes journey."

"How this service isn't advertised enough I don't know, it's been an absolute lifesaver, a non-judgemental space to chat about my life no matter why I was referred. Not everything is about weight, it's being asked that question of what is most important to me - that made me think"

Friends of Percy Court

by Linda Harvey

Lisa and I attended Housing 21's retirement housing scheme, Percy Court in Alnwick, who were celebrating their 40th Anniversary. They were also being judged for their national 'In Bloom' gardening competition. It was a lovely day of celebrations and a chance to share the support available via social prescribing to the residents and other attendees.

People in photo: Mayor Geoff Watson, Linda Harvey, Social Prescriber and Claire Nicol, Housing 21 Locality Manager.



Courtyard Project

by Natalie Arnold



The Courtyard Project at Amble Health Centre continues to go well. We are rather pleased with ourselves for installing a working water butt!

People in photo: Natalie Arnold, Social Prescriber and member of the Courtyard Project.



Social Tarriffs

Martin Lewis Money Expert recently highlighted that providers offer a social tariff for people on benefits, and I was able to share this with one of my patients and help them access this support via their provider TalkTalk. A link was provided to upload proof of entitlement and contact was then made to discuss what discount could be offered.

Having internet access is becoming more and more of a necessity these days, so its really important that people can access this social tariff if they can.

For more information and to check current provider options visit:

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/compare-broadband-deals/broadband-social-tariffs/?feature=socialtariffs>

Bereavement Support

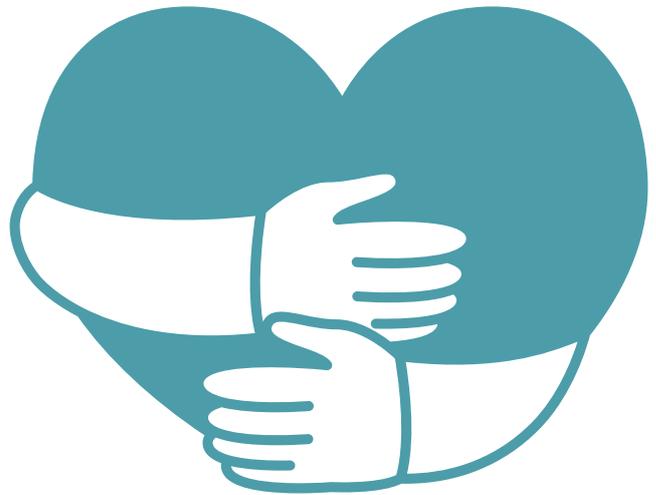
by Carol Gunn

When a person is suddenly bereaved and left alone it may feel like the end of the world, especially if they have done everything with their partner. They do not want to burden their family as they too are grieving for their loved one. As a Social Prescriber we can be a "listening ear" and let the person talk openly about how they really feel, without the need to be fearful of upsetting anyone. It can often be a comfort talking to someone who is not related. People can "offload" and talk about their feelings and also have a good cry. We can also offer to signpost to other services to make this difficult time a little easier.

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You have been a great support to me over the past few months and have given me the strength to carry on. It has been lovely talking to someone who was not directly involved.

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"Don't waste your time on me!"

by Lisa Baker



A patient recently tried to cancel their initial appointment with me, because in their words they didn't want me to "waste my time" as there was nothing that could be done to help them. I reassured the patient that they would not be wasting my time and encouraged them to meet with me just once. We had a lovely chat about what mattered to them and I offered options for support they might like to try.

They are now applying for Attendance Allowance, which can help to pay for taxis to groups they previously attended but had stopped going to when they could no-longer drive. They have seen a First Contact Physiotherapist from the surgery about exercises to help with ongoing mobility issues and I've linked them to an online exercise class with Age UK to help with the motivation to do these. The best outcome was a match with Wag and Co where they now have weekly visits from a gorgeous labrador who provides lots of excitement and slobbery kisses!

They were surprised about the support available and so pleased I was able to spend time talking to them about their options.

Talking to a Social Prescriber is never wasting our time!



Photo: Obi-Wan,
Wag and Co volunteer befriender



Working Together by Lorna Chappell

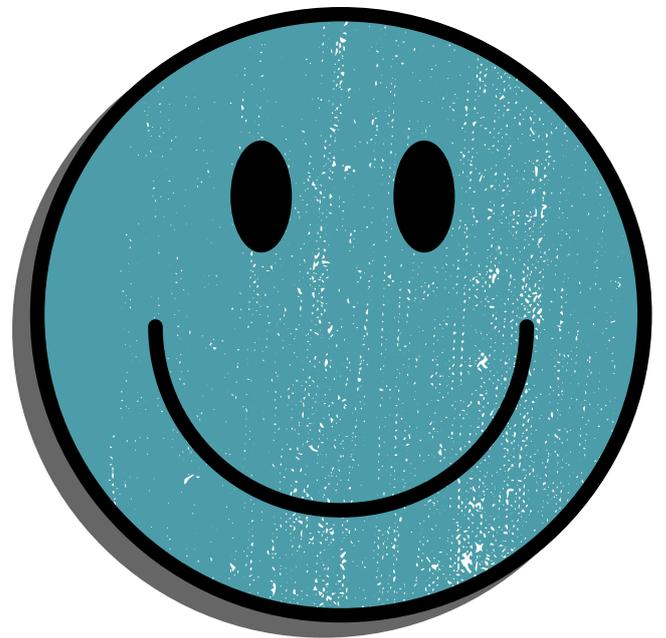
I visited a patient at home who finds processing verbal communication very difficult these days. They asked me to call the surgery for results of a recent scan. We did this together and their GP agreed to call them while I was still with them to provide support, as face to face communication is much easier for them.

Supporting the patient to engage with the GP in this way made communication much easier for the patient. They were also able to ask questions about their medication and mention some marks on their skin which were of concern. Their prescription was amended and they agreed to me taking photos of their skin concern to email to the GP. The patient was very happy, and working together this way also helped the GP and made the whole process quicker and smoother for everyone!

Positive Changes

by Natalie Arnold

A patient who hadn't left the house for over 7 months was referred to social prescribing, and I was able to support them on their first trip out. I continue to help them to build confidence and requested adult social care involvement for ongoing support needs, support to seek housing in a different area and linked them with a peer support group. I also worked alongside the PCN pharmacist to help the patient get advice regarding their Vitamin D intake. It has been great to see someone begin to have hope for the future again.



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*I always come in feeling depressed but
always leave feeling so much better.*

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"You've got your hands full!"

by Veronika Cuthbert,
Maternal Mental Health Link Worker

Your heart is full.
Your brain is full.
Your to-do list is full.
But your cup is empty.

Being pregnant or a mum to a new baby can be tough. That's why we exist. To help you through those times when everything feels like a struggle.

You might be asking 'But am I struggling enough to get help?' Then we would like you to know that we're here for all of you who might feel like you are floundering, or lost, or have days where you feel like you're not coping. We pride ourselves on offering early intervention, which is a really effective way of nipping issues in the bud before they feel even harder or grow even bigger. So please don't sit pondering.....we love to help!

Don't underestimate the power of talking things through, being heard and understood, and having someone there to listen. It's often easier to talk to a stranger and our Maternal Mental Health Support Service is there to help. The sooner you reach out, the better.

You absolutely don't need any mental health diagnosis to work with us. Maybe you just feel stressed, tired, isolated, grumpy, agitated, tearful. You don't even need to know what to say, or what you want help with. We will work together with you to help you better understand and identify the areas you want to change. All it takes to start is a 'hello'. This can all be done over the telephone from the comfort of your own home at a time that suits you, because we know how tricky it can be to get out of the house with small children!

We can support anyone who is, or has been recently pregnant, up until 2 years after your due date. This includes women who have experienced pregnancy or baby loss.

You don't have to struggle in silence. It's ok to say things don't feel good. We and others want to help. Get in touch with your GP, midwife, health visitor, social prescriber, primary mental health worker, and they can refer you into our service.



"Thank you for helping me to feel prepared for what it might be like after the baby is here . It's hard to know what is normal when you've never done this before. I've been given lots of facts about what might be happening for the baby, but I didn't know all the things that might change for me. Like how my body will be different. How my mood might change. What's normal and what isn't. I'd rather know. I'd have been a bit frightened if you hadn't helped me understand these things."



"I can't tell you how good it feels to be able to walk down the street with the baby now and be able to respond to people who ask me how I am and say 'I'm doing well thanks' and for it to be genuine for the first time in years. When I first started working with you, I never thought there'd be a day when I could honestly say that. Everything looked so bleak, and it was hard to see ahead to a day when it might not feel like that anymore, but I've reached it. I feel like I should have a medal. I've come so far, it's like there should be a graduation ceremony for coming out of post-natal depression. I can't thank you enough for getting me there. Do you know what did it. You being impartial. And listening. Actually listening".



GLASTONBEARWICK

by Lisa Baker

To rival Glastonbury, Memory Laners joined pupils at St Mary's Primary School in Berwick in June to hold their own bear themed festival - "GlastonBEARwick". Everyone enjoyed lots of singing and dancing as usual but with a 'bear' twist, with a special performance of Goldilocks and the 3 Bears. The 'Road Crew' children helped search the school for hidden bears in a treasure hunt and there was a Teddy Bear Aunt Sally and Bear Quoits for everyone to have a try. All the highest scorers were awarded their own stuffed bear! A wonderful teddy's bear picnic was provided with a visit from the local ice-cream van too.

For all the support St Mary's Primary School have provided and continue to offer, Memory Laners presented the school with a stunning wood burned plaque of a bear for display at the school.



GlastonBearwick III

Presented by the Memory Laners
to
St Mary's First School
28th June 2023

ANXIOUS TO MEET YOU



THURSDAYS @ 1:30PM

A place to belong for people
with social anxiety/autism and
their family/friends

Billy Mitchell 07894211046 

Pleased To Meet You, Morpeth 

