



THE SCOOP

The Social Prescribing Newsletter for Well Up North PCN

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING DAY 2024

by Miranda Hughes

March 2019 marked the first ever Social Prescribing Day, and since then thousands of local and national organisations, Social Prescribing link workers, medical professionals, academics and students have taken part. The day serves as an opportunity to highlight the impact Social Prescribing has had on the health and wellbeing of the nation, as well as to educate people on what Social Prescribing is and how it works.

The impact of Social Prescribing on the nation's health, but also on the economy, is widely researched. For example, one study on diabetic patients in the North-East found a £77.57 reduction in care cost per patient, per year, for those who engaged in social prescribing. (Source: The National Library of Medicine). The study also found even greater reduction costs for those with higher levels of engagement.

The National Academy for Social Prescribing conducted a study that reported a statistically significant reduction of 0.76 GP appointments per patient after three months of participating in social prescribing, which when applied on a national level would equate to 5 million fewer GP visits annually. Given that almost a fifth of GP appointment time is spent on non-medical problems such as loneliness, relationship issues or stress related to money or housing, this is significant. Not only does social prescribing make people happier, healthier and more resilient, it consequentially saves the NHS time and money too.



#SocialPrescribingDay



We think Social Prescribing Day is worth celebrating! This year, it will be on Thursday 14th March. The more people who are aware of its significant positive impact, the more funding will be allocated to providing this service across the country. Hence, we will be shouting from the rooftops about this innovative model of non-medical care that is improving people's lives all across Northumberland and beyond.

Well Up North has a team of twelve staff working in personalised care across the surgeries, including seven Social Prescribing Link Workers (three specialising in dementia), three Health and Wellbeing Coaches and two Cancer Support Workers. Any medical professional or community worker can refer into social prescribing, and self-referral is also encouraged. This does not have to go through a GP, referrals can go straight to the Social Prescribing link worker, or patients can request an appointment via reception.



Social Prescribing link workers will offer an initial consultation, followed by any signposting, referrals, or follow-up appointments as needed. The set-up can be flexible – some patients may only need one session to find out some information, others may need continued intervention to work through more complex issues. Up to 12 sessions of support can be offered in total.

Keep an eye out on March 14th for your local Social Prescribing Link Workers, who will be out and about sharing information about the service and answering any questions you may have.



Memory Laners Memories

by Jan Casson



Our music for dementia group continues to grow, and flourish with exciting plans and creative ideas, all ably led by Sam Lord our musical lead. From GlastonBerwick 2024, to plans for a 71st Wedding Anniversary Summer Party, a Masquerade Ball and a Beauty and the Beast Ball.



At the beginning of 2023 we had a Flash Mob on the steps of the Guild Hall in Berwick, we invited our members to arrange themselves around the area, produced the musicians and all danced the Hokey Cokey, much to the bemusement of two American tourists. Greggs even let us use their chairs for much needed sit downs.

We held a cabaret concert at the Radio Rooms in Berwick, a chance for people to get up on a stage and to sing, or dance or whatever else took their fancy.



Photo:
Left to right - Chris and Walter having a
chat at a quiet moment



Photo:
Our 2023 Masquerade Ball

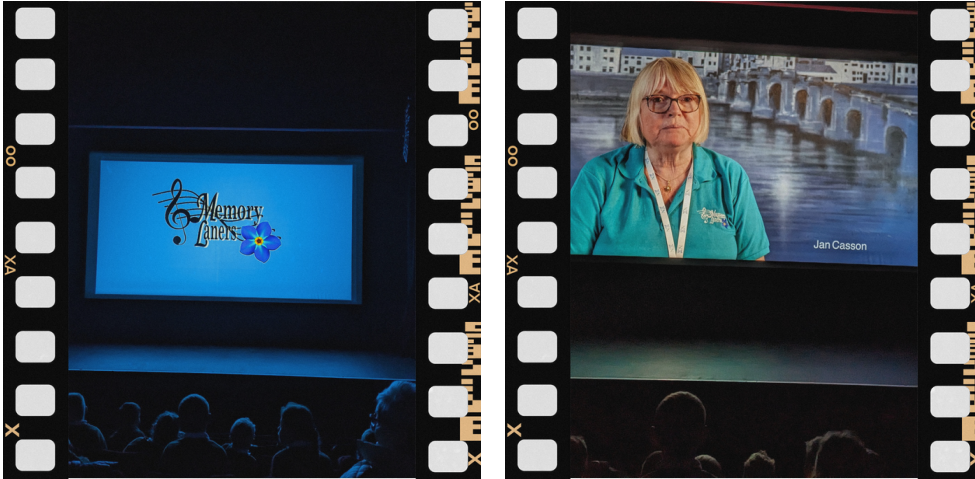


Photo:
Left to right -
Memory Laners The Movie Shots

The 14th November 2023 saw the World Premier of Memory Laners The Movie, with 103 invited guests, and the generosity of the Maltings allowing us to use the main theatre. St Marys First school paid for the refreshments, and 56 children joined us for an exciting morning. We laughed, shed more than a few tears and marvelled at our wonderful Memory Laners, as they described their feelings and talked about what the group meant to them.

The 6th December was our Christmas party, held at Spittal Community First School. With the help and support of the wonderful Head Teacher Wendy Kiff, her caring staff and amazing children. We didn't have enough big people chairs so Carol and Ben helped us move 40 chairs from Spittal Bowls Club to the school (thank you Shunters). We had a quiz, played bingo, danced and sang, and finished off with hot chocolate, squirty cream and marshmallows.



Photo:
Left to right -
Christmas Party at Spittal
Community First School



The 20th December was our Christmas concert, and we were back at Spittal Community First School. We had a community choir (Thursdays), Gary on the bagpipes and guitar, Young Singing Leaders Faith and Lara, and the fantastic children from the school, who sang their hearts out for us. We sang Carols, and Christmas songs, danced and as usual demolished plates of mince pies, washed down with more hot chocolate. The two hours flew by, and soon we were wishing everyone a merry Christmas and heading for home.

Photo: Christmas Concert at Spittal Community First School

20
24

Coming soon!

The 31st January will be our panto, no rehearsals, just a script crafted by Sam, some willing volunteers, dressing up clothes and our 'give it a go' Memory Laners. Chaos and mayhem will be the outcome, but everyone will leave with a smile on their faces.

We have put our video on YouTube, thanks to the expertise and support of Bader Media Entertainment, and we hope other groups will be encouraged to think about how much joy music and friendship can bring to peoples lives, and be inspired as I am inspired, by our wonderful folk who turn up to every session, and have fun!



www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6u79pZx40s



We have been busily fundraising to ensure this magical group goes on, from bucket collections at the panto (Thank you Maltings) to donations from Ballinger (£500) and we have our fingers crossed for another Lottery grant from Reaching Communities.



Photo: Poppy Dog,
complete with Memory Laners regalia

This group with its 26 members, 12 volunteers, visiting guests and musicians and Poppy dog, is built on music, dance, creativity, and love.

To find out more about the support our Social Prescribing Link Workers can provide to patients with a diagnosis of dementia and their families please speak to someone at your surgery or email the team at nencicb-nor.socialprescriberswun@nhs.net



COACHES CORNER

Health and Wellbeing Coaches

by Tom Henderson

SELF-LOVE IS IN THE AIR



In the month we celebrate Valentine's Day we are encouraged to make a loving gesture to important people in our lives; chocolates, flowers meals out etc. But when was the last time you made a loving gesture to yourself?

It can be in our nature to put others' needs before ourselves; whether that's family, friends or even pets. We often put ourselves quite low, if not bottom, of the priority list. Not only that but we can also be our own harshest critics, especially if we haven't stuck to our goals.

Self-love and self-care are vitally important to our physical and mental health and wellbeing. When I'm discussing this with patients, their response is often along the lines of 'I need to be more selfish', which, while along the right lines, also comes with heavy sense of negativity. The word 'selfish' suggests no consideration for others when in reality, often taking care of yourself and showing yourself some self-love is not only for your own benefit but also for others in your life. The better your physical and mental health and wellbeing are, the better you are able take care of and be there for others.

As with all goals in Health and Wellbeing Coaching, we're not expecting to suddenly change from putting others first to putting yourself first. Even slightly bumping yourself up the priority list is a start and you will feel the benefits. A first step is being kind to yourself, that could be through positive self-talk rather than criticising or putting yourself down. Next could be making time for yourself to revisit an old hobby or treating yourself to something, or even just doing nothing – whatever you want!

Think about what will help to make this possible;

- Do you need to block out your calendar to schedule yourself in?
- Are there tools out there that might help? – journals, positivity diaries, timers
- Do you need to silence your notifications? – free yourself of outside distractions
- Do you need support of others to make it possible? – can others take over some of your responsibilities temporarily

Whatever works for you – I encourage you to show yourself some love this Valentine's!



"To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance!"

Oscar Wilde



As always the Health and Wellbeing Coaching service is here for you if you would like further support with this or other lifestyle and behaviour changes, just contact your GP practice to refer yourself.



SUPPORTING WITH THE SETTING UP OF NEW GROUPS

by Linda Harvey



Part of my role as a Social Prescribing Link Worker is to support the set up of new groups where there is a 'gap' in provision. In my work in Alnwick, patients with Autism and who experience social anxiety told me they would like to meet with other adults who share the same experiences in a supportive environment but were unable to find a group locally to do this.

Billy Mitchell runs a successful group in Morpeth called 'Anxious To Meet You', which takes place every week in a local coffee shop. Some patients from Alnwick had been travelling to Morpeth to attend this group and from this came the fabulous idea of Billy setting up a second group in Alnwick.

Billy considers the success of the group in Morpeth is around 'keeping it simple' and wants to follow the same process in Alnwick. Billy describes the essence of the group as being, "friends meeting for coffee and a chat in a public place."

The setting up of the group is currently in its planning stages and there were 7 people attending the first planning meeting on 3rd January 2024 in a hotel in Alnwick. The second planning meeting is scheduled for later in the month.

I don't want to give too much away at this stage except to say that it is expected the group will be fortnightly and in an accessible public coffee shop / venue in Alnwick.

Myself and the rest of the planning group are very excited about what is to come. Watch out for further information coming soon!



Eleanor, Mick and Billy
(left to right in photo)
attending the first planning
meeting of Anxious To Meet You.



THE CANCER SUPPORT SERVICE

by Alice Leightley and Sophie Guy, Cancer Support Workers

The Cancer Support Service will be fully up and running within all our surgeries by the end of this month. This is very exciting as it has been quite the journey to get to this point. As we have started developing this service from scratch, it has enabled us to gather various information to help us understand what the patient with a cancer diagnosis truly wants from a service like this. This has allowed us to create a more person-centred approach which has in turn created a lot of positive feedback. We are both looking forward to engaging with patients across the whole of Well Up North to be a supportive role in what can be a very daunting time.

"Alice has really helped to take the load off my family and I during what is a very difficult time both mentally and financially. Since my diagnosis I have had to stop working due to feeling so unwell. My partner also suffers from a chronic condition and is also having to take time off work. Alice did a referral to our local food bank which has been accepted and we are now receiving regular food parcels. She also referred me to Macmillan Citizens Advice team who have since started applications for various financial help I am entitled to."

"It is very reassuring to know there is a service like this available for someone in my position. Living rurally I have found it very difficult to find something that allows me time to talk one to one with someone about my feelings and also answer questions I have relating to my journey."

"Having someone to offload to who isn't a family member or a friend has been so helpful in keeping my mind straight. Sometimes I feel as though my family and friends are worried enough about me and my diagnosis without burdening them when I am feeling anxious or emotional."

'I LOVE MY BABY, BUT I MISS MYSELF' REDISCOVERING YOURSELF AFTER MOTHERHOOD.

by Veronika Cuthbert, Maternal Mental Health Support Service



Having a baby can change your life in wonderful ways. But some women struggle because they feel they have lost their identity as an individual, which has been replaced by their identity as a mummy. New parents can sometimes feel they have lost their value as a working professional, lost their financial independence, their social life or time for hobbies, their old friendships.

Some new mums may notice that it has been months or years since they even did anything substantial for themselves. When you're caring for a baby, it's easy to forget about caring for yourself. So many parents neglect themselves in favour of what their baby needs. With reduced time for self-care, some new mums can feel a big loss in their confidence and lose sight of who they are anymore.

One woman experiencing such difficulties, was referred to the Maternal Mental Health Support Service as her loss of self of sense, and loss of confidence was impacting upon her mental well-being. Already a mum to 3 busy boys under the age of 5, she was made redundant at the beginning of the pandemic. She felt she had truly lost a piece of herself in the process of an abrupt and unexpected end to her career. Together with the Maternal Mental Health Support Service, we thought about something she would like to do for herself and make a plan for how she could be supported to achieve it. She identified that going back to work part time might be a really good way of feeling like herself again.

The MMHSS linked her with a variety of community organisations to support her in meeting her goal, ranging from setting up appointments with an organisation who provide neurodiversity consulting and employment support to individuals with dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autism. An employment hub and a skills restart course, supported her with her job search, completing job applications, and helping with interview techniques. The MMHSS also referred her to a charity which supports North East women into employment through the power of high quality interview clothing and coaching. Our mum was offered 'Career Coaching' to identify tangible next steps to secure an interview, followed by 'Interview Dressing & Preparation Service', once she had been offered an interview.

"I went to the place you referred me to last week. They were brilliant! I was able to talk through my literacy difficulties with them and they helped me put together my CV. They sorted me with an outfit for my interview too. Even if I don't get the job, it was such a treat to get to wear something nice, to have a moment without the kids, to feel like me again, not just someone's mum. You forget you're your own person when you're a mum, forget who you were, or who you are. This was such a special occasion. I felt like an individual. One that deserved something good. It really gave me confidence, so thank you for getting me there. I'd have never of known this kind of thing existed".



WHO CAN RESIST A WAGGY TAIL?

by Lisa Baker

As a dog lover, I understand how much difference a cuddle with my pooch can change my day and how lost I would be not to hear the noise of paws running around the house. That's why one of my favourite things to do as a Social Prescribing Link Worker is help match dog lovers with a volunteer dog befriender from Wag and Co. The immediate joy of someone getting their first slobbery kiss from a gentle giant of a black lab or a greyhound gently lying on their toes to keep them warm is an absolute pleasure to be a part of. That's why when I am asked to share a positive example of the work we do as social prescribers these moments are the first to come to mind.

If you miss being covered in dog hair and drool please speak to your Social Prescribing Link Worker to find out more about Wag and Company North East Friendship Dogs.



Photo:
A chilled out Nell
on her matching visit
with a patient.

WELL UP NORTH BOOK CLUB

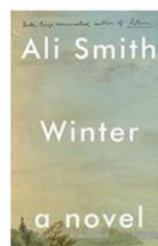
The Well Up North Book Club is open to all patients from associated surgeries.

We meet monthly, on the 2nd Thursday of the month on Zoom to discuss books kindly provided by Alnwick Library.

To find out more please email or speak to your surgery's Social Prescribing Link Worker.



WELL UP NORTH BOOK CLUB



The next meeting will be on
Thursday 8th February
at 4.00pm via Zoom.

We will be discussing
"Winter"
by Ali Smith

If you would like to join in please email:
nencicb-nor.socialprescriberswun@nhs.net

TEAM TALK

WHO ARE WE....

Team Manager



Becky Bass

Cancer Support Workers



Sophie Guy



Alice Leightley

Health & Wellbeing Coaches



Rebecca Hall



Tom Henderson



Helen Hindhaugh

Social Prescribing Link Workers



Natalie Arnold



Lisa Baker



Jan Casson



Lorna Chappell



Carol Gunn



Linda Harvey



Miranda Hughes

To contact team members email: nencicb-nor.socialprescriberswun@nhs.net