

# Providing excellent community and primary care in partnership with others

## Tower Hamlets Social Prescribing Service

### How do we support primary care?

Each GP practice within the borough has an allocated Social Prescriber who receives referrals from GPs, nurses and other practice staff.

The team also accepts referrals from non-primary care services (within healthcare or otherwise), as well as self-referrals.

In Tower Hamlets Social Prescribers can be employed directly by the GP Care Group, by Primary Care Networks and other partners such as the Bromley By Bow Centre. Regardless of who a Social Prescriber is employed by, they all work together to form a collective in order to standardise procedures, identify gaps in training and share knowledge, all to ensure they are equipped to best serve the local community.

### Population served

Our service is open to individuals living in and registered to a GP practice within Tower Hamlets, who require support with non-medical issues.

### Tower Hamlets Social Prescribing Service

The Social Prescribing service addresses the social factors affecting health and wellbeing by connecting Tower Hamlets residents to non-medical support available within the borough. This support can consist of local charities, community groups and statutory services.

Sometimes people don't know where to turn to for support with non-medical concerns such as, social isolation, financial problems, housing issues, employment etc. If such issues are not addressed, they can have a significant impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.

Social Prescribers work with service users to understand their needs and find the appropriate local support they require. Our team strives to create a friendly environment that enables individuals to express their concerns.



### Key principles of the Social Prescribing service

By addressing the wider social factors affecting health and wellbeing, the team helps to prevent the development of associated complications when such factors are left unaddressed.

Empowering residents to play an active role in their health and wellbeing, by developing a greater understanding of the local social support available, and by building residents' confidence in accessing such support.

### Innovative highlights from the service

#### SP Innovators Men's Project

The Social Prescribing Service and St Margaret's House secured funding in a joint bid for the Social Prescribing Innovators programme, to work towards increasing men's engagement with social prescribing as they make up approximately 40% of service users.

A series of engagement workshops have been conducted to better understand the barriers men experience, and the areas of need that require addressing. This initiative has now moved on to the co-production stage where they are working alongside men to coproduce and design projects that they would like to access soon.

#### Tower Hamlets Connect: A stronger cohesive partnership across front line roles

The team works with Tower Hamlets Connect (THC), the borough's digital portal that links residents with information and advice on health and social care, local events, and community services. The work relates to service users with social care needs who are triaged for statutory assessments. We started this piece of work as a referrer to THC with the hope of reducing 'inappropriate referrals' and developing a greater understanding between our services. Following an initial joint workshop held in March with Age UK THC leads, we will now be linking this work with the Care Act and focusing on developing alternative pathways for residents. A key outcome of this work will be that it can benefit other referring organisations by sharing the alternative pathways work, helping manage the demand for adult social care, minimising delays for residents and minimising duplications in care. This work now forms part of the Adult Social Care Transformation work under frontline integration plans.

### A measures of success

More and more residents are being referred to Social Prescribing each year, with over 9,000 residents being referred to the team for support between April 2022 and March 2023.

### What do our residents say?

A service user was referred to the social prescribing service as she wished to join a local gym to help her mental health and manage her long-term health condition, but due to the costs involved she felt that this was out of the question. The service user experienced domestic abuse and was going through a divorce which contributed to her mental health struggles.

After discussing her concerns with a social prescriber, the service user was linked in with Better Gyms who now provides her with a voucher every month for subsidised membership.

Since gaining access to exercise facilities, she reported an increase in confidence and was seeking to enrol into a college course.

She shared her feedback: "I was very lucky to find out about your services. I feel that I am one step closer to achieving my goals. You helped me to get back on track with my independent life and to feel better after diagnoses of my long-term health condition."



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