



8 Use social prescribing

External service

Rotherham social prescribing service

The service helps people with LTCs to access a wide range of services and activities provided by voluntary organisations and community groups in Rotherham. Funded by the CCG (initially through non-recurrent funding), it is part of the wider case management initiative in Rotherham that brings together health, social care and voluntary sector professionals for people with LTCs.

The idea

Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) employs and manages 5 VCS link workers (known as VCS Advisors) - they attend GP Long Term Condition MDT meetings, visit patients and refer on to appropriate VCS services. Only patients referred to VCS Advisors by participating GP Practices are eligible for social prescribing. GPs select patients for social prescribing using a risk stratification tool. A single VCS infrastructure organisation (VAR) manages the contract with CCG and multiple funding contracts with VCS providers. An independent

funding panel decides grant/block funding allocations. A bespoke VCS database / MI system has been developed for the project.

Impact

People with LTCs and their carers benefit from access to additional, non-clinical support options via primary care - they experienced positive outcomes associated with their health and well-being (78% reported progress on at least one outcome area), and becoming less socially isolated and more independent (69% reported being less isolated and 54% more active). Other benefits include a reduction in costly hospital episodes (47% of referred patients attended fewer outpatients appointments, 38% had fewer A&E attendances and 40% had fewer hospital admissions), and the development of new and innovative community based services that complement traditional medical interventions.

Implementation tips

Explaining the model to GPs is important, as they then readily recognise the importance of social support as an alternative to medication.

Simple referral processes for GPs are very helpful, allowing this new service to fit into existing ways of working.

Encourage providers of care and support to regard these services as a route to greater independence for users, rather than as an end in their own right.

It is helpful to establish a local multi-agency coordination and oversight group, including voluntary sector providers, healthcare teams and local commissioners. This facilitates setup as well as sustainability of the new service.

It may be necessary for the NHS to provide additional funds to support recruitment, training and coordination work being undertaken by voluntary sector groups.

Link(s)

www.learnenv.england.nhs.uk/pinboard/download/id/228