

DEVELOPING A SOCIAL PRESCRIPTION PATHWAY FOR EAST SUSSEX

Example of collaborative working between Statutory and VCS sectors



Southdown



In East Sussex a number of 'social prescribing' services have been commissioned/developed by statutory and VCS providers. Models include; GP and health professional-linked Care Navigators; VCS Mental Health Community Connectors/Navigators; Proactive Care Practitioners; Health Coaches and Locality Link Workers. Alongside these there are wider community based health, wellbeing advice and guidance services that GPs can refer to as part of a social prescription.

Social prescribing covers a number of the ESBT Planning and Design Groups (Personal and Community Resilience, Community Services and Mental Health), but there has not previously been a single commissioning or service development strategy. An unintended consequence of this has resulted in a level of confusion for referrers, GPs, clients, carers, providers and staff. There were also some client groups whose needs are not being met.

In late 2017 a core group of VCS providers already providing social prescribing services (Southdown, Age UK East Sussex, Care for the Carers and SCDA), with the support of 3VA and statutory commissioners, came together to initially respond to a DoH funding opportunity. Although this funding bid was not successful, a positive outcome of partnership working was joint recognition of the need to improve the accessibility and consistency of social prescription in order to reach more people, to reduce social isolation and improve health and wellbeing outcomes. This resulted in a VCS led proposal to establish an **Integrated East Sussex Social Prescribing Pathway**.

Key aims of the Pathway are to; agree a consistent definition of social prescribing services and roles; establish a consistent referral and support pathway; develop shared impact measures; systemise workforce resources and competences across VCS and statutory services and use evidence and learning to shape and influence the redesign and commissioning of future services.

The core group of VCS social prescribing providers presented their proposal to ESCC/CCG leads in June 2018, including presentations at the Personal and Community Resilience and Community Services Design and Planning Groups. Formal agreement to develop the Pathway was obtained and the the key initial activities up to the end of 2018 are:

- Monthly meetings of the **VCS Core Group** to project manage development of the Pathway
- Establishment of a **Social Prescribing Pathway Project Steering Group** with representation from both the VCS core group to provide strategic leadership and support to ensure the Pathway is fully integrated into systems across health, social care and the voluntary sector
- Establishment of a **Social Prescribing Pathway Reference Group** open to all other interested parties
- Submitting a bid the Big Lottery Partnership fund to seek additional dedicated project resources.

Although the Pathway is led by the Core Group of five VCS organisations, the aim of the project is to adopt a 'generous leadership' approach to capacity build within the wider VCS sector and offer opportunities for a wide range of VCS providers to be linked into the Pathway.

The social prescribing Pathway acts as a good example of how, by statutory and VCS sectors working in closer collaboration and more equal partnership, it is possible to share knowledge, expertise, assets and resources to develop new innovative service delivery models that best meet the local needs and priorities of East Sussex.

For more information please contact Neil Blanchard, CEO of Southdown (neil.blanchard@southdown.org) or another VCS core group provider CEO.

N.B. In 2017 SpeakUp, the East Sussex network of VCS organisations, established a VCS Alliance Development Group to consider and take forward new models of increased collaborative working. An initial 15 VCS organisations have now agreed a Memorandum of Understanding. The Alliance has identified a number of priority workstream areas, one of which is the development of the Integrated East Sussex Social Prescribing Pathway.