

Frequently Asked Questions

What is social prescribing?

Social prescribing is a service that helps people improve their health and wellbeing. We see a broad range of people with differing social and emotional needs, helping them access the right services and groups. Link Workers work closely with clients to help them set goals and then offer a range of options for groups and services that can support them. Link Workers go beyond simple signposting by facilitating referrals that encourage clients to try something new and access the right support. They can make appointments, help fill in forms and offer detailed information to support the clients' needs.

The Social Prescribing service aims to:

- ☀️ **Link clients** with **sources of social, practical and emotional support** that can help improve their health and wellbeing and quality of life
- ☀️ **Promote self-management** through the use of **person-centred** methods and an **empowering approach** that involves them in decisions about the support they access
- ☀️ **Provide a bridge between Primary Care** and sources of health and wellbeing support offered by the **Community and Voluntary Sector**.

What types of services and groups do Link Workers refer to?

Link Workers can support referrals to a range of services, including: befriending services, benefits or housing advice, Age UK services, advocacy services, peer support groups, exercise classes, food banks, The Carer's Centre, adult learning centres/colleges, day centres with social activities and outings, community transport, arts and crafts groups, lunch clubs, gardening groups...

Who should be referred to Social Prescribing?

Individuals who: are socially isolated; are frequent attenders; want to take up a social activity or hobby; are experiencing problems with benefits, housing or debt issues; have *mild* depression, anxiety or stress; want to volunteer or return to work; have *mild* learning disabilities; are carers; have a long-term condition; or need support with healthy eating and physical activity. [See the 'Referral Guide' for all criteria.](#)

Who cannot be referred to Social Prescribing?

A person who is unlikely to engage effectively or appropriately with a Link Worker to make decisions about next steps, e.g. people with very complex needs, who are eligible for support from secondary care mental health or a recovery worker, have a dementia diagnosis, have just been released from prison or are known to be violent. [A full list of screening questions is available at the top of our referral form and if in doubt, please call us.](#)



Social Prescribing

Can individuals self-refer?

Yes, from March 2020. However, we recognise that individuals with support needs may need input from a professional to ensure that the referral form is completed and includes sufficient information for us to triage effectively.

Who can make a referral and how?

Any professional can refer to us using our referral form, but we ask that those wishing to make a referral do so in line with our criteria. We are happy to discuss possible referrals via telephone if referrers are unsure whether our service is suitable for a client.

External agencies can request a referral form from our team by emailing socialprescribing@togetherco.org.uk. We hope to add the form to our website soon.

How does social prescribing help?

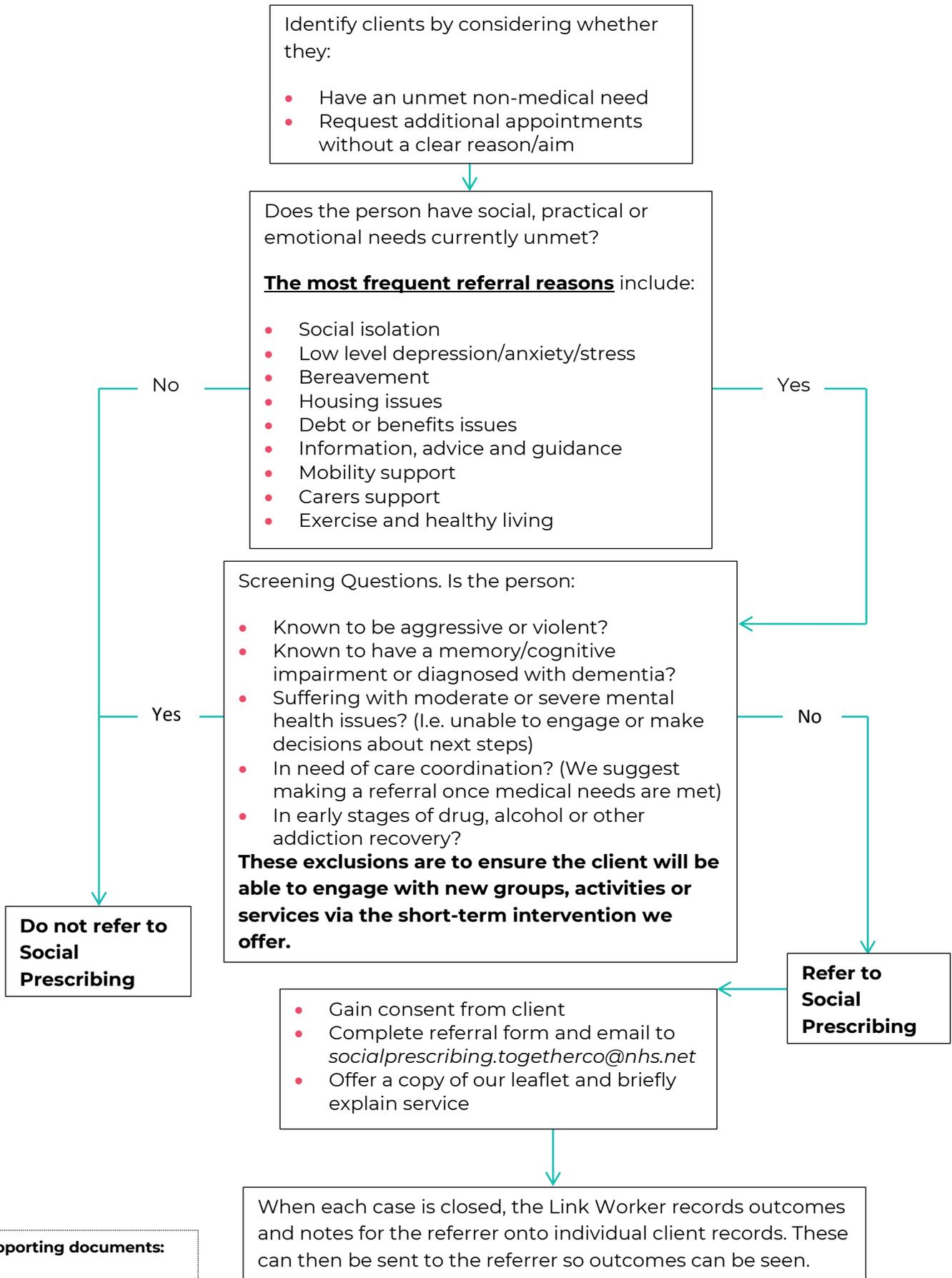
There is a growing body of national research on social prescribing with an emerging evidence base of clinical and patient centred outcomes. Social prescribing not only improves clients' lives but also saves time and costs across health and social care systems. We are part of a national social prescribing network and have a commitment to high quality, evidence-based practice. Using a range of questions and indicators, we demonstrate that clients achieve:

- ⚙️ Improved independence
- ⚙️ Reduced risk of, or actual, isolation
- ⚙️ Improved wellbeing and quality of life
- ⚙️ Improved resilience
- ⚙️ Receiving the best possible person centred care and support

You can read about our impact in brief here: <https://togetherco.org.uk/the-latest-from-together-co-social-prescribing>

“**The first meeting was tough because I didn't want to change at first, but at the end of the session with the Link Worker my attitude had changed and I was open to trying things out.**”

Referral Criteria



Supporting documents:

Together Co leaflet

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<p>Initial telephone assessment with a Link Worker</p> <p>Face-to-face visit arranged if required</p> <p>Occasional direct onward referral (e.g. housing support, Wellbeing Service, Adult Social Care)</p>	<p>Social Prescribing first session</p> <p>Face-to-face visit with a Link Worker</p> <p>Person-centred assessment and action planning</p> <p>Advice on available services</p>	<p>Social Prescribing follow-up sessions</p> <p>Follow-up sessions via phone or face-to-face</p> <p>Action planning</p> <p>Facilitated onward referrals to services</p>	<p>Additional support to engage</p> <p>Accompanied visits to groups and services agreed as necessary</p>

“ It’s given me a bit of space for myself – makes me feel better in myself and less stressed. It’s given me a bit more self-confidence. ”

John is 55 and has a mobility impairment following an accident

John was struggling to leave his home and couldn't get to his appointments. His Link Worker successfully applied for a grant for a mobility scooter, which meant John could get out more easily and reduced the need for home visits from medical professionals. He was also referred to a benefits advice agency, who helped him claim a heating grant and apply for PIP. John can now afford to attend social events in his community, is making new friends and feels more positive about his future.

Sylvia is 76 and recently moved to the area to access sheltered housing

Sylvia was unable to read about events posted on the notice board in her new accommodation due to cancer affecting her eyesight and mobility. She had thought about ending her life because she felt so lonely, and often worried about not being able to walk her dog. Her Link Worker organised a volunteer dog walker, spoke to the housing scheme manager to ask that they told Sylvia verbally about any activities that had been arranged, and linked her in with a telephone advice and befriending service. Sylvia now says she feels much more cheerful, and has started attending the local community café.



Social Prescribing

Renée is 84 and had started to feel disconnected to her community

Renée had lost touch with her church, which had been her main source of social interaction, and had stopped taking part in local activities. She had become withdrawn and struggled to speak to her Link Worker at first. Renée then explained that she would prefer to communicate via email, so her Link Worker took this on board and sent information about local events digitally. This gave Renée the chance to look into the events before making a decision. Her Link Worker also found the details of the new vicar at Renée's church and passed these on. With this information, Renée felt able to start attending church again and chose to start taking part in a social group for the over 50s. She told us she felt like she had become reconnected to her local community and really appreciated the Link Worker's flexibility when contacting her.

Anthony is 46 and has a rare condition that affects his nervous system

Anthony told his Link Worker that he felt very low and isolated. He was worried about his health deteriorating further and started feeling as though there was no point in getting out of bed as he had no purpose in life. Anthony's Link Worker helped him to find out about social events happening locally and supported him to look into activities he might find interesting. Anthony is now volunteering at an animal rescue centre every week and has been linked in with a support group for people with sight loss. He also took a course on healthy eating and hopes to pick up more courses in the future. Anthony says he loves volunteering and feels more optimistic about his life.

“It's made me feel a lot happier, I don't feel so depressed as I was. They encouraged me to be more independent.”



Creating connections
to change lives