

Bromley by Bow – Micro-commissioning in practice

BACKGROUND

The Bromley by Bow Centre piloted a cancer-specific social prescribing service, funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and delivered across primary and secondary care in four East London boroughs from 2015 to 2019.

Through ongoing service improvement from embedded feedback, the team identified a gap in provision for people living with cancer in their area in terms of creative activities and low-impact relaxing exercise. Macmillan signed off on use of the budget to fill this gap enabling the service to meet the needs of its clients in a truly holistic way.

THE APPROACH

Through use of client feedback to develop the service, the Macmillan Social Prescribing team micro-commissioned three small community organisations to provide activities for social prescribing clients:

- Chair-based yoga and relaxation classes
- Women-only dance and movement class
- Film-making course which resulted in a collaborative film

“
It was wonderful to see the
impact the activities had on our
clients and the space it created
for connections to be made.

- Bianca Karpf, Social Prescribing
Link Worker

TOP TIPS

- **Find opportunities to gather data on gaps in provision** or areas where services aren't as effective as they could be in meeting clients' needs.
- **Think outside the box.** When commissioning on a small scale, use the opportunity to test out new and creative approaches.
- **Provide opportunities for connection** as an additional benefit to direct participation in activities provided.

THE BENEFITS

Opportunities for connection and growth

What emerged from all of these activities was a strong sense of community and peer support, strengthened by participation in an activity with others with a shared background. Clients fed back that they really appreciated the opportunity to meet other people living with cancer in a setting in which cancer was not the primary focus. The yoga and dance classes were particularly useful settings for clients' to cautiously experiment with movement and gentle exercise as a means of strengthening and relaxing after cancer treatment. The film-making was a unique offer in which clients could express themselves while gaining tangible skills.

Seamless experience

Through micro-commissioning, the Macmillan Social Prescribers could be certain that appropriate activities existed, that they could refer into them with ease and that they could work with facilitators to provide a seamless offering into a service built to meet their needs.

Test and learn

By working on a small scale, micro-commissioning gave the chance to test out new approaches with minimal risk to see what worked most effectively for the client group.

CASE STUDY CONTACT

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This case study has been produced by the [Bromley by Bow Centre](#) and [Healthy London Partnership](#) who are working together to support the development of social prescribing in London. For more information or to put forward your scheme as a potential case study, please contact hlp.socialprescribing@nhs.net

THE CHALLENGES

The key challenges were around identifying the highest priority areas to target spending in order to have the greatest impact, however this was overcome through effective use of client feedback enabling increased clarity on the areas of most acute need for the target group.

“
The people coming along to the class aren't people that would come to a yoga class. Many haven't thought about using yoga to treat physical or mental health issues

- Yoga Teacher
”

“
It has done a great deal for my self-esteem, fed into my feeling that I can access these [services] and they are helpful. Remembering all the amazing support helps you feel better equipped

- Client
”

THE OUTCOME

The key learning from this process was the success of a social prescribing service in shaping the activities they referred in to, to meet the needs of its clients in an accessible way. The service used the Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing (MYCAW) patient-centred questionnaire that allows clients to identify and quantify the severity of their 'concerns' and 'wellbeing'. The service saw changes in wellbeing and concern level which were considered clinically significant (any changes from 1.5 to 2.0), with the areas seeing the biggest drop in concern level being socialising (from 5.3 to 1.7), emotional wellbeing (from 5.3 to 3) and physical activity (from 4.8 to 2).

RESOURCES

Macmillan Social Prescribing

To read more about the MacMillan Social Prescribing service at the Bromley by Bow Centre, click [here](#).

Macmillan Cancer Support

For more information on Macmillan Cancer Support and its work, click [here](#).

London Case Studies Database

For more case studies and great examples of best practice, click [here](#).

London Social Prescribing Toolkit

Join the FutureNHS Collaboration platform, click [here](#).

London Social Prescribing Film Series

Watch inspiring films with Social Prescribing colleagues from across London sharing their experiences, ways of working and how they support their communities, click [here](#).

Regional Facilitators – London

Support is available to help you connect with social prescribing networks across London and your local area, for more information please contact: suzi.griffiths@nhs.net and dan.hopewell@bbbc.org.uk



For information and resources to support social prescribing schemes across London, please visit: [Healthy London Partnership](#) and [Bromley by Bow Centre](#).

For information on how to join the London Plus social prescribing network, click [here](#).

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