

## Training Social Prescribing Link Workers during Covid-19

### BACKGROUND

The Social Prescribing Link Worker (SPLW) roles were rolled out across West London CCG from March 2020, at which point the COVID-19 pandemic hit. To support the newly appointed SPLWs, at a time when limited training was available and having to hit the ground running to support GPs with welfare checks for the 'shielding' patient cohort; the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) worked closely with the third sector provider of the SPLWs and our Primary Care Network (PCN) Clinical Directors leading on SPLW to develop a training programme.

### THE APPROACH

We developed in-house training on specific issues that were coming up frequently and hosted weekly reflective practice sessions with the SPLWs, PCN Clinical Lead and Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) lead to support emerging needs and provide guidance.

Training areas covered were how to have supportive conversations in lockdown; cancer awareness; diabetes awareness; cultural competencies; mental health and housing.

### THE CHALLENGES

Conflicting priorities for GP practices due to the pandemic, however these were overcome by the SPLWs being very flexible and meeting the needs of primary care services and the community.

### THE OPPORTUNITIES

The SPLWs adapted to working in a pandemic and had the ability to plan for the future, looking at addressing health inequalities, through rising risk factors for patient population groups.

### THE OUTCOME

We were able to recruit, induct, train, and support the SPLWs during the pandemic.

Reflective practice has now moved to monthly sessions being led by the third sector provider with the CCG Social Prescribing Lead and CVS Lead attending for part of the meeting to provide advice and guidance.

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## TOP TIPS

- Ensure people are given protected learning time.
- Training needs to be relevant and relatable for Social Prescribing Link Workers e.g., population based, local needs etc.
- Include follow up sessions into your training plans.
- Invite guest speakers to share expert knowledge that will support the Social Prescribing Link Worker function and develop their key competencies.
- Build skills within your GP practice; invite staff in other roles who may benefit from this learning too.

Clinical Leads have all agreed to deliver training to build relationships and embed the SPLW roles within primary care coming out of the pandemic.

### RESOURCES

#### Training materials

Bespoke training slide packs were created for training sessions. The subjects covered were based on the Social Prescribing Link Workers and PCNs priority needs. Examples of content include:

- How to have supportive conversations
- How to make behavioural changes
- Clinical topics, including background of subject areas i.e., Cancer, Mental Health, Diabetes etc.
- How to create and use links to local resources and contacts.
- Local organisation directory ([view here](#))

#### Partnerships

Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (KCSC) and Age UK Kensington and Chelsea are key partners to the monthly reflection sessions, also led by the CCG. Visit the KCSC website for more information.



### 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 about this case study or to put forward your scheme as a potential case study, please contact [hip.socialprescribing@nhs.net](mailto:hip.socialprescribing@nhs.net)