

April 2021

E-Zine



ALL IRELAND
SOCIAL PRESCRIBING
NETWORK

Welcome to the first edition e-zine from the All-Ireland Social Prescribing Network bringing you updates, developments and best practice in social prescribing.

The All-Ireland Social Prescribing Network

We are a network of people who are connected by a shared belief in the potential of social prescribing as a force for good. We believe social prescribing reduces health inequalities and improves wellbeing by targeting the social determinants of health. Our purpose is to champion social prescribing so that it is valued, understood and sustained across the island of Ireland.



Social Prescribing Projects in Ireland

Welcome by Co-Chair Tony Doherty



Click on the play button to watch

Network events

The network steering group organised a number of events since the network was set up, see some of what has happened over the past while.



March
2018

ST. JAMES CONFERENCE

The group hosted the first ever All-Ireland Social Prescribing Conference at St James Hospital in March 2018.

DÁIL PRESENTATION

May / July
2019

Co-Chairs Tony Doherty and David Robinson along with Cecily Maher, Social Prescribing Co-ordinator, Waterford delivered a presentation on social prescribing to cross party representatives in the Dáil on 8th May 2019. Tony and David also attended the 2nd International Social Prescribing Network Conference *'From system to local'* in July 2019 presenting on SP developments across Ireland. In early March of this year, David and Orla Walsh presented at the 3rd International Social Prescribing conference which was attended virtually by over a thousand people.



November
2019

WATERFORD CONFERENCE

The second conference hosted by the network, titled *'Advancing Social Prescribing in Ireland: North and South'* took place in Waterford in November 2019. The event brought together health and community organisations, funders, policy makers and researchers to identify how to main-stream social prescribing in order to make it available to everyone in local communities.



What's next for the network?

In more recent times the network steering group participated in a facilitated development process. A draft strategy was produced afterwards outlining the next steps for the network. Three working groups were established to deliver on the key actions identified within the strategy. Each group has a priority area of focus that

includes, Governance and Resources, Identity and Branding, Communications and Network Activity. The groups are working on developing a website, building the network membership, sourcing funding to support the growth of the network and planning further events related to social prescribing.

Social prescribing activity across Ireland

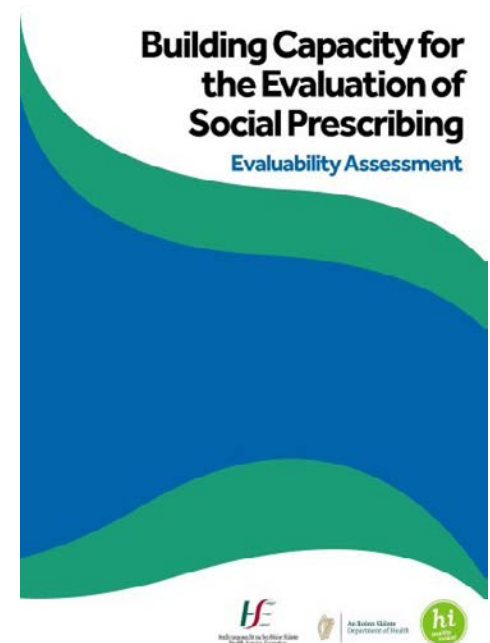
Medical students learn about social prescribing

SPEx-Social Prescribing Experience for Medical Students, is an initiative set up for 4th year students at Queens University Belfast to broaden learning on the social determinants of health. Students shadow SPRING Social Prescribers in their day to day work with clients. The pilot demonstrated a positive learning experience in terms of developing insight to health inequalities and community led health. During lockdown, medical students will participate in the award winning Healthy Living Centre Alliance - Pain Management support programme which is currently held online for people living with long term conditions.



HSE launch framework report

On September 30th 2020, HSE Health and Wellbeing and the National Office for Suicide Prevention hosted a webinar entitled: **Social Prescribing in Ireland: Building the Evidence Base**. The purpose of the webinar was to launch an evaluability assessment and minimum outcomes evaluation framework report for social prescribing in Ireland, commissioned by HSE H&W and NOSP. There was huge interest in the webinar and 497 people registered to participate on the day. Click on the link to view the report or watch the webinar. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/social-prescribing-evaluability-assessment.html>



Project Echo for social prescribing



In 2019, the Health and Social Care Board NI set up a Project Echo for social prescribing. The initiative brings together all social prescribing projects across NI as a community of practice and is a platform for shared learning. After an initial successful nine session programme, the project is now in its second year. An All-Ireland Echo session was held in June 2020 which enabled projects from all corners of Ireland to come together and share learning on the innovative ways they supported clients during Covid-19.

Minister visits Waterford social prescribing service

On his visit to the South East prior to level 5 restrictions, Minister of State Frank Feighan with responsibility for Public Health, Well Being and National Drugs Strategy visited the Sacred Heart Family Resource Centre in Waterford to hear about the invaluable work of the Waterford Social Prescribing Service.

Pictured: Tracy Nugent, Niamh Flavin, Josh Proper, Minister of State Frank Feighan, Fiona Laffan, Heather Kiely.



Research and Evaluation

Many social prescribing projects are carrying out evaluations on the impact of their services on the health and well-being of individuals attending social prescribing. Some evaluations are carried out by the service itself and many are being undertaken as part of funded research projects in collaboration with Universities including Trinity College, Dublin, Royal College of Surgeons and Queen's University Belfast. Research and evaluation is important for the development and sustainability of social prescribing in Ireland. The All-Ireland Network are interested to hear about current research and evaluation of social prescribing so please contact deirdre.connolly@tcd.ie about research projects in which you are involved.

Vigour project drives forward social prescribing in NI



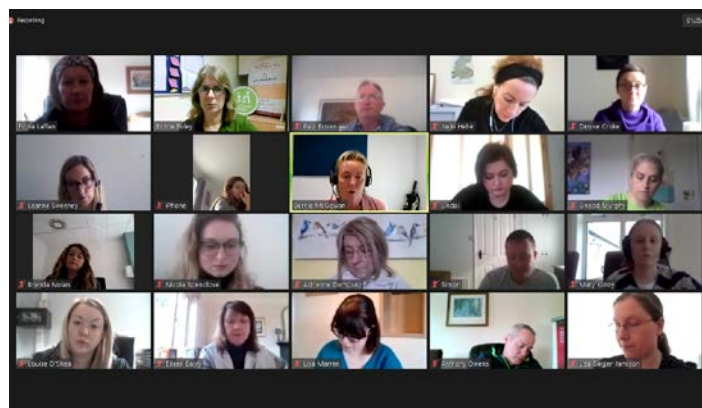
The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and the Public Health Agency (PHA) are both participating in the 'VIGOUR' project which aims to utilise evidence-based guidance to scale-up integrated care in Europe. Work will be taken forward across the whole of Northern Ireland to share learning about 'Social Prescribing' and to put in place a framework to support scale up and spread.

The VIGOUR project is co-funded by the European Union's Health Programme and involves 15 regions across 7 European member states. VIGOUR is a three-year project, which will run from January 2019 to June 2022.



Peer network goes from strength to strength

The Irish Social Prescribing Peer Network is a peer-led network of social prescribing practitioners in the Ireland. It started in 2019 and has grown ever since. In this forum, which meets three times a year, network members have an opportunity to share learning, discuss challenges and offer support and guidance to each other. A planning group was established recently that due to the growth of the network, will look more formally at the organisational structure.



Celebrating International Social Prescribing Day



On March 18th we celebrated everyone who has come together to maintain and grow the social prescribing movement in what has been a very challenging year for all. Have a look at just some of the inspiring work that happens to listen, connect and support people who link in with social prescribing services.

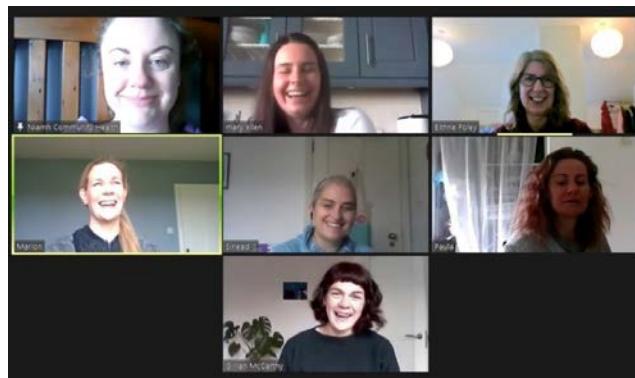
mPower deliver tablet devices to clients

mPower is a five-year project supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. The project created a cross-border service for older people (age 65+) living with long-term conditions across the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Like many social prescribing teams during Covid-19, mPower have been helping clients access health and wellbeing supports through the use of technology. The service has provided some clients with tablet devices which includes free wifi.



Zoom Cafés in Cork & Kerry

The Health and Wellbeing Community Referral project based in locations across Cork and Kerry have been offering Zoom Cafés in response to Covid-19 restrictions. The cafés are a great avenue for clients to socialise, have fun, and learn some wellbeing tips each Wednesday. Each week there is a theme, for example around walking, healthy eating or exercise. There is plenty of opportunity for everyone to get involved, participate and chat throughout the sessions.



Social prescribing for those affected by cancer

Connected Community Care is a citywide social prescribing service in Belfast. The service works in partnership with statutory, voluntary and community partners to support people in local communities who have been affected by cancer, dementia, social isolation or chronic conditions. Megan Power, Macmillan Community Link Worker delivers Pamper Hampers to her clients.

"The Connected Community Care for cancer service helped me so much it was an immense relief to have accessible expert advice and support readily available. Getting a cancer diagnosis is hard enough to take so having this kind of support is invaluable. I don't know what I would have done without it."



Hearts for Heroes at F2 Centre

Participants from the F2 Centre in Rialto offered 450 home-created Hearts to frontline workers in St James Hospital on St Valentines Day as a token of appreciation for the work that frontline workers carry out on their behalf in a creative project called '*Hearts for Heroes*'. Local people including social prescribing participants at the centre, knitted, created, drew the hearts which were hung up around St James Hospital. The initiative was a great success particularly as it happened during lockdown when people couldn't attend the F2 centre in person.





What the doctors say about social prescribing

Laura McDonnell a GP in Irvinestown, Fermanagh has been offering her patients the option of being referred to social prescribing since early 2019 and has seen great benefits from both a patient and professional perspective.

Laura says *“Social Prescribers have more time to build that relationship, sometimes it’s also easier [for patients] to talk to someone they don’t know about those issues than their primary caregiver who has known them all their life”.*

Client experiences

There are so many positive stories being shared by people of all ages who avail of social prescribing services. Here, Sharon and John talk about their personal experiences.

Sharon linked in with the Donegal Social Prescribing service



I am retired and accessed the social prescribing service after picking up a leaflet at my previous place of work. The Social Prescribing Co-ordinator was very knowledgeable about what was happening in my local area. She listened attentively and signposted me to various activities including a personal development course. I contacted the service again during lockdown as I had been bereaved and felt alone and isolated. The Co-ordinator supported me to link in with the HSE bereavement line and I received the help I needed through this difficult time. I have since attended various online workshops including a cooking programme that helps me manage my diabetes. I am looking forward to joining a poetry and prose group coming up soon. I enjoy talking to the Social Prescribing Co-ordinator and we are able to chat about lots of things. I feel this is a very valuable service especially during COVID 19.

John from Newry was referred to SPRING Social Prescribing



Click on the play button to hear John's story

Get in touch!

The network steering group is looking forward to working with members to bring forward our collective ambitions to develop social prescribing across Ireland, North and South.

We welcome you to join the network

✉ allirelandsocialprescribingnetwork@hscni.net

🐦 Follow us on Twitter @ireland_social

Featured in this edition:

SPRING Social Prescribing - Leanne McBrearty



Email: leanne@bbhealthforum.org

Connected Community Care - Ciara McClements

Email: Ciara.McClements@belfasttrust.hscni.net



mPower - Aidan McCabe

Email: Aidan.McCabe@southerntrust.hscni.net



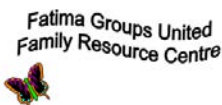
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Fatima Group - Roisin Ryder

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Waterford Social Prescribing - Fiona Laffan, Nicola Spendlove

Email: socialprescribing-county@sacredheartfrc.ie



Health and Wellbeing Community Referral

Web: <https://thewellbeingnetwork.ie/community-referral/>



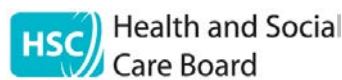
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