



Social Prescribing Newsletter

Welcome to the second Highland Social Prescribing newsletter of 2025. This is an opportunity to update the wider Social Prescribing Network on relevant developments since the last newsletter.

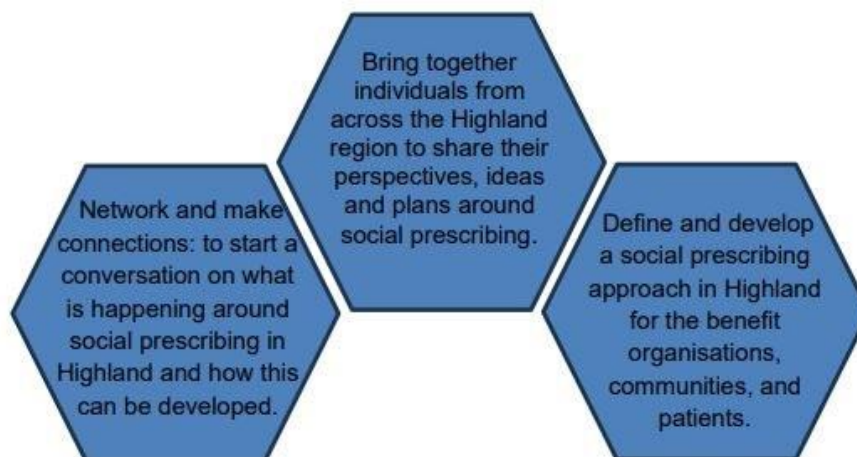
Social Prescribing Co-ordinating Group Update



The Co-ordinating Group has continued to meet bi-monthly and has been focusing on developing the following:

- A social prescribing training matrix detailing what training should be mandatory and what might be for personal development. A descriptor of the training and where it can be accessed have also been included. Additional information on other or organisation specific training has also been included.
- A competency framework including social prescribing values, framework levels and 4 competencies areas which include: engage and connect with people, engage and support people, establish relationships and networks and safe and effective practice has also been developed.
- A mapping of job descriptions specifically related to link worker roles has also been undertaken and a generic job description outline has been reviewed and will be developed further.

Social Prescribing Events Update



Two events were held in 2023 and a report on the workshop discussions and learning was developed. This report can be found:

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/media/kdspcfpb/developing-social-prescribing-in-highland.pdf>.

Two years on from these events, it felt timely to review the report and feedback to the wider network on progress in terms of:

- **Opportunities To Mainstream and Move Forward with Social Prescribing in Highland**
- **Barriers And Challenges to developing Social Prescribing in Highland**
- **Next Steps**

Opportunities To Mainstream and Move Forward with Social Prescribing in Highland	
Area	Update
• Increase access to and visibility of Social Prescribing	Visibility - NHSH social prescribing page, bi-yearly newsletter Access - Waiting Well Link Workers for targeted secondary care waiting lists. Community Appointment Days lead by physiotherapy Co-ordinating group activities and NHSH social prescribing page, bi-yearly newsletter.
• Develop a shared understanding of Social Prescribing & best practice	Scotland's Population Health Framework - Develop a National Social prescribing Framework for Scotland. Population Health Framework
• Implement National Framework guidelines on Social Prescribing and the different approaches	Waiting Well Link Workers for targeted secondary care waiting lists.
• Widen referral routes from e.g. secondary care and social care staff	Destinations - Directory of Services (DOS) Highland DOS
• Increase knowledge and understanding of social prescribing routes/destinations.	Co-ordinating group
• Increase multi-agency working	NHSH social prescribing page - including the Vyon animation. Promotion of social prescribing day
• Develop public messaging/ownership - help people accessing services to understand the benefits of social prescribing using evidence; social media; role models	Included as a core aspect of the competency overview
• Be person centred, ensuring recognition of the priorities of service users even if different to practitioner	CLW service now available in all 62 GP practices.
• Embed link workers into every GP practice	No progress
• Support with long-term funding	UHI Remote and Rural CLW service evaluation. Gathering case studies.
• Measure impact & support with evaluation	To be considered when the framework is more fully formed
• Ensure the voice of lived experience is included	No progress
• Build more resilient communities.	Implicit as part of the overall development of the framework.
• Reduce inequalities and give people opportunities to thrive.	

Barriers And Challenges to developing Social Prescribing in Highland	
Area	Update
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness and knowledge of what social prescribing is and the various approaches and levels. 	NHSH social prescribing page, bi-yearly newsletter. Development of online module.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services struggle to move beyond crisis and focus on prevention. 	A core driver for developing the framework to encompass how many roles can include social prescribing as a competent before crisis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting practitioners to value social prescribing alongside other interventions. 	Waiting Well work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of link workers in Highland, or models of social prescribing out with primary care. 	Waiting well link workers, custody link workers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of long-term consistent funding - short-term funding makes it difficult to 'embed' in community 	No progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragility within the third sector due to short term funding 	No progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of the role of the third sector: e.g., 'overwhelmed' / inappropriate referrals to services. 	No progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rurality & transport (access/ digital access) 	No progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stigma and Culture, especially within smaller communities: 'everyone will know' 	No progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources 	Development of the DOS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity – recruitment & retaining staff 	Highland DOS No progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications between NHS teams 	Waiting Well work – including workshops

Next Steps		
Area	Action	Update
Recognised & integrated into Health and Social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social prescribing to be recognised across Highland as an integral part of Health and Social Care where practitioners are encouraged and supported to incorporate social models of health into practice. 	Development of online module
Guidance / Framework Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidance and/ or a framework to 1. Support practitioners' services and systems to develop and implement social prescribing into clinical and care pathways. 2. Promote best practice across all sectors for those delivering social prescribing services. 	1. Co-ordinating group activities 2. NHSH social prescribing page and bi-yearly newsletter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and support services delivering Social Prescribing that do not need involve Link Workers to implement evidence based social prescribing approaches. 	Community Appointment Days lead by physiotherapy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the link worker model beyond primary care where person centre conversations are already currently built into assessments. 	Waiting Well link workers
Standardised Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver standardised training to upskill staff and equip as many people as possible to incorporate social prescribing into practice. 	Training matrix currently being developed. Social prescribing online module currently being developed.
Highland Social Prescribing Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Highland Social Prescribing Network. 	Newsletter shared with Network in May 2025.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop methods for sharing learning opportunities and key developments in Social Prescribing both locally and nationally, ie bulletins, seminars and conferences and future networking events. 	NHSH social prescribing page. Promotion of social prescribing on social prescribing day in March 2025.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a cross-sectoral group to coordinate efforts to develop practice, pathways and approaches. 	Co-ordinating group has been meeting every 2 months since April 2024 with good attendance and continued engagement.

Scotland's Population Health Framework 2025 - 2035



The Population Health Framework was published in June and includes a commitment to developing a social prescribing framework for Scotland as part of the focus on Places and Communities.

Develop a National Social Prescribing Framework for Scotland will include:

- provision of referral links to health and wellbeing support in local communities
- developing a shared definition of social prescribing in Scotland
- supporting effective models of social prescribing based on existing good practice, including community link working
- improving equitable access and consistency in delivery regardless of the setting
- supporting workforce development and enabling better data sharing

- ensuring social prescribing supports ongoing efforts to tackle social isolation and loneliness

Community Appointment Day - Lochaber



Following the Community Appointment Day held in Inverness in February, the NHS Highland Musculoskeletal (MSK) Team—supported by our Community Colleagues, Highlife Highland, and Third Sector partners—delivered a holistic event at Lochaber High School for patients on various physiotherapy waiting lists.

A total of 350 patients were invited to attend, where they received assessments and support from the Physiotherapy team, alongside advice from a wide range of specialist NHS services and partner organisations. These included NHS Pharmacy, Dietetics and Nutrition, Occupational Therapy, Pelvic Health, Smoking Cessation, and Screening Services, as well as Connecting Carers, Change Mental Health, ALLenergy, Arthritis UK, and the Samaritans.

Highlife Highland offered free seven-session passes and provided demonstrations and guidance on exercise and physical activity. Patients were also screened for early signs of frailty and received advice on early interventions and falls prevention.

Thank you to everyone involved in organising and delivering the event. As well as offering a holistic approach to care for the people of Lochaber, the day provided a valuable learning

experience for staff. It highlighted the importance of collaborative working and the role of partner services in improving patient outcomes and enhancing the overall quality of care.



Outcomes for the day

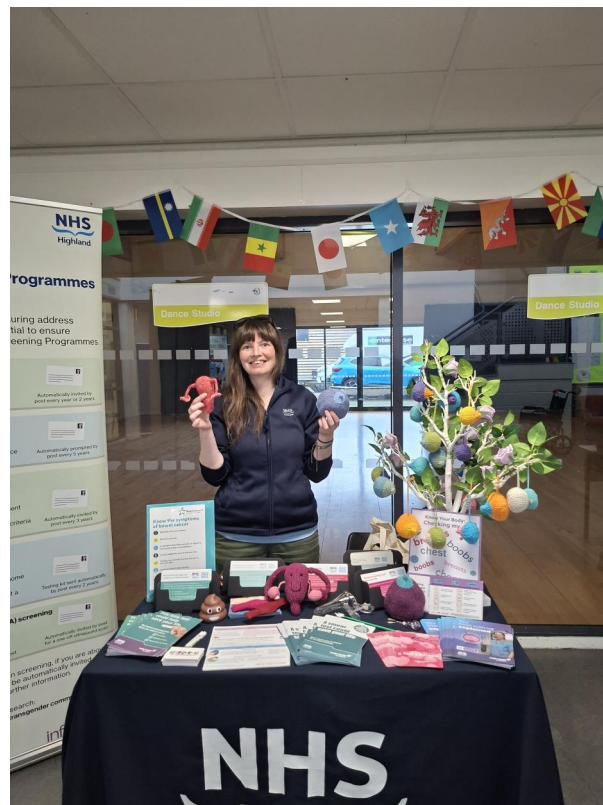
- 350 people were invited from Lochaber and Skye area from routine MSK, chronic pain, falls physiotherapy waiting lists.
- MSK Physiotherapy Waiting list reduced immediately from 8 months to 7 weeks, post event.
- 28% Required No further physiotherapy appointments, discharged or discharged with 3 months opt in.
- 99% of those that attended felt their concerns and what mattered most to them, were addressed on the day., showing wider multiagency conversations were patient centred.
- 4% Patient required onwards referrals to other services not present at event including: neurology, pain and orthopaedics.
- People engaged with a mixture of NHS, third sector and MDT services on the day with 35% engaging with more than one other service in the room.
- 42% People who attended reported they were able to manage their condition independently after the input at the event.

Patient feedback

- Testimonials: " The appointment was great, and I now feel equipped with the tools I need to recuperate. Everyone I met was so welcoming and lovely. Thank you "
- How you rate the event overall out of 5 stars – **Average rating score 4.86 out of 5**

Staff feedback

- Staff Feedback has been overwhelming positive for this model of delivering services not just for patient care but for the learning and developing of staff, away from silo working, MDT discussions, networking and sharing knowledge and seeing people in one space allowed understanding of wider services role and the event acted as a "live CPD opportunity".
- Access to senior colleagues gave the skills and confidence to tackle more complex presentations / conversations and assessment together and were able to take these skills away to their own workplace.
- Complex conversations were more effective as people spoke to the right person and services most suited to their needs, rather than waiting on multiple services.







Waiting Well Link Workers



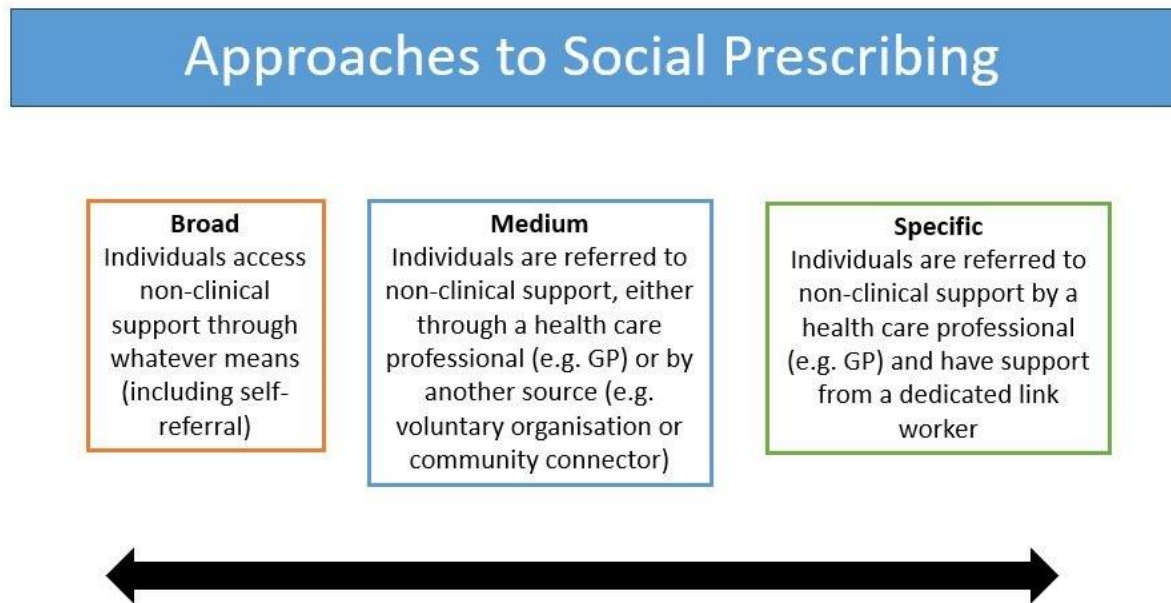
The Waiting Well Link Workers are continuing to support patients on three targeted NHS Highland waiting lists while they wait for tests, surgery and further specialist care.

- It is a preventative and proactive phase to ensure people's health and wellbeing does not deteriorate.
- It aims to stabilise, enhance and improve health and wellbeing.

- Collective responsibility with people themselves being central.
- Supports people to access good information, signposting and local services.

Data and case studies are being gathering and are showing positive results. More details on the work will be included in future newsletters.

Social prescribing e-learning module



Coming Soon: Turas E-learning on Social Prescribing

A new Turas e-learning module is being developed to help anyone involved in supporting health and wellbeing feel confident in social prescribing. This training will help to fill gaps in understanding referral pathways, local community supports and explore the evidence behind this approach.

Aligned with [Scotland's Public Health Priorities](#) and the [Population Health Framework](#), this resource will support our shared vision of vibrant, healthy communities.

By making social prescribing easier to understand and apply, the aims are to:

- Deliver person-centred care
- Improve outcomes for individuals and communities
- Reduce pressure on health care services

Launch expected Spring 2026 – watch this space for updates!

Highland Directory of Services



The Directory will help you find out more about support, services, activities and clubs in Highland, to support social prescribing.

Click on the following link to access the Directory: [Highland Directory of Services](#)

Social Prescribing Presentations



Members of the Health Improvement Team have recently delivered 2 presentations on social prescribing, one to UHI Prescribing for Health Care Professionals course and the other to NHS Highlands Registered Nurses Annual Update Day.

National Social Prescribing Day 2026



National Social Prescribing Day 2026 is on the 26th March so it isn't too early to start to think about how you might promote it. For ideas, use the link below or share some of the items in the newsletter.

<https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/what-is-social-prescribing/social-prescribing-day-2026/>

Thank you for reading the newsletter

For more information on social prescribing visit:

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/health-and-wellbeing/social-prescribing/>