



Developing a Social Prescribing Shared Investment Fund

Background

At the National Academy for Social Prescribing, we are actively working to improve investment in social prescribing. Over the next six months we have the opportunity to shape a transformational new model to enable the expansion of social prescribing in a way that will make a significant difference to communities: helping to tackle inequalities, strengthen the local social prescribing offer and support overstretched NHS services.

The availability of activities, advice and information forms the backbone of social prescribing, however current funding mechanisms are highly fragmented and limited. They leave smaller providers at risk of exclusion and make community provision vulnerable. This hinders the potential for social prescribing to strengthen communities and address people's unmet health and wellbeing needs.

Our evidence review of different investment models for social prescribing concludes that the most effective models and approaches to support VCFSE organisations to scale up social prescribing activities are those where a range of local partners work together, on a Shared Investment model, to draw investment from across the private, public and charitable sectors.

We have recently been awarded a development grant from the National Lottery Community Fund to co-design a Social Prescribing Shared Investment Fund over a six-month period to the end of March 2024. During this time, we will undertake stakeholder engagement to shape an evidence-led approach which addresses these challenges and achieves increased and more effective investment in local social prescribing systems and service provision, ultimately enabling better health and wellbeing outcomes for people and communities.

Roundtables

As part of this work, we wish to convene a number of roundtable discussions with senior experts from across the VCFSE, health, public and business sectors. These discussions will enable us to co-design better investment options for social prescribing.

Outputs

The primary output of this scoping work will be a report detailing options for a co-designed shared investment model of funding for social prescribing that is separate from but aligned with ICSs. The options presented will seek to address the challenges and barriers facing small community organisations providing social prescribing activities.

The report will also include a proposal to co-fund a pilot in a number of ICS areas around the country and will identify ICS's willing to participate in the trial who can use the pilot funding to leverage investment from other partners into a shared investment fund for social prescribing. The proposal will also set out costs and governance arrangements.

Intended impact

This project will enable the development of model options for sustained investment in community based social prescribing activities and infrastructure. During this phase NASP will be working directly with commissioners, providers and potential investors. Impact on individuals and communities will come later through the roll out of a shared investment fund programme.

NASP expects this development work to garner significant support for shared investment models of funding for social prescribing and secure commitment from commissioners and stakeholders from the public, private and philanthropic sectors to contribute funds to a pilot phase of work which will significantly benefit local people's health and wellbeing, community connectivity and cohesion, grassroots provider organisations, pressures on NHS healthcare and create capacity in the system to grow and develop robust social prescribing systems.

We will measure impact utilising a short evaluation mechanism at the end of the project in which all stakeholders who engaged in the process will be asked about the quality and impact of their involvement.