What is Social Prescribing?
Welcome to our first newsletter. Age UK national, through the Department of Health Strategic Partners Programme, has funded Age Concern Support Services (Yorkshire and Humber) to pilot the GP Primary Care Liaison Project to measure the effectiveness of social prescribing by primary care staff for older people with depression.

Social prescribing is a mechanism for linking patients with non-medical sources of support within the community (i.e. befriending, social activity, exercise class etc) and can be developed as an alternative response to mental distress.

1 in 4 older people in the community have symptoms of depression that require treatment.

Some Early Case Studies
An 88-year-old lady living alone but supported by her son. She had previously been independent with a busy social life. However, after admission to hospital following a fall, she became insecure and depressed. Age UK are visiting her on a regular basis to help rebuild her confidence. Age UK also assisted her son to apply for Carers Allowance and will provide additional support while the son is on holiday.

Another patient explained during the initial assessment visit with Age UK that her husband had died a while ago and she was very upset that the garden, which had been her husbands pride and joy, was now so untidy. Age UK organised for another local charity to visit on a regular basis to help with the garden.

Participating GP Practices
- City View Medical Practice, Leeds
- The Whitfield Practice, Leeds
- Shafton Lane Surgery, Leeds
- Kilmeny Group Practice, Keighley
- Farfield Group Practice, Keighley
- Holycroft Surgery, Keighley
- Townhead Surgery, Settle
- Clifton Medical Practice, York
- North Street Surgery, Ripon
- Woodstock Bower Group Practice, Rotherham
- Dr Chowdhury, Bransholme, Hull.
- Park View Normanton and Ferrybridge Medical Centre, Wakefield & District (Bridge Bereavement Project)

Thank you to the GPs, Nurses, Practice Managers and all the practice teams who are supporting the project.
Interventions to increase social participation, physical activity, continued learning and volunteering, and reduction in fuel poverty can prevent depression, particularly in older people.

**More Early Case Studies**

A lady was referred because she was feeling very lonely and isolated. Her husband is out at work all day and they live in a very small rural community. She has no access to transport, which made accessing the local Age UK services difficult. However, the Age UK team discussed volunteering in the local community with her and she has since organised a garden party for older people in her area. Age UK planned a trip from their main office and so many clients were able to enjoy the day out.

Depression is more than seven times more common in people with two or more chronic physical conditions.

**Examples of Age UK Support**

- Opportunities to socialise: meet new friends and try new hobbies
- Learning new skills e.g. computing / IT courses: keep in touch with family and friends, do your shopping online
- Fit as a Fiddle Programme: Keep active, improve fitness and learn about healthy eating
- Swimming, walking, Tai Chi, carpet bowls, dancing, extend exercise and much more
- Befriending schemes
- Volunteering opportunities
- Information & Advice on Pensions, Benefits, Housing, activities, events and more
- Home Services: DIY Services, home adaptations, spring-cleaning services, gardening services
- Traders Register: Approved and monitored trades people
- Equipment loans

**Age Concern Support Services GP Primary Care Liaison Project**

We are working with 13 GP Practices across Yorkshire and Humber. We have agreed an appropriate referral system with each practice and, in a small number of surgeries, the local Age UK team are holding weekly practice based clinics. We already have some excellent examples of how social support provided by Age UK can improve an older person’s mental well-being. Referral numbers are still small at the moment, so when you see an older person in your clinic or during a home visit please consider whether Age UK could support them.
Project Evaluation

We will publish a full project evaluation in December 2011. The evaluation will include a Social Return on Investment study (SROI), quantitative, qualitative and comparative data. SROI is a measurement framework designed explicitly to inform the practical decision-making to optimize social impacts. It is based on an adjusted cost-benefit analysis and considers benefits to range of stakeholders e.g. individual patients and their families, GPs and primary care, wider communities and others.

The impact on the individual patients will be assessed and monitored using the Warwick Edinburgh Scale of Mental Well-being (WEMWBS). WEMWBS is used as an assessment of positive mental health, or wellbeing. Service users report their feelings over the previous two weeks using positive descriptions such as ‘I’ve been feeling confident’ and ‘I’ve been feeling relaxed’. The questionnaire can be repeated to allow comparison over time.

Qualitative evidence of the impact of the project will be sought from:
- Older people participating in the project
- General Practitioners, Primary Health Care staff and Practice Managers
- Managers, staff and volunteers at the local Age Concern offices
- GP, PCT and Local Authority Commissioners

Thank you to the participating local Age UK teams in Bradford & District, North Craven, Hull, Leeds, North Yorkshire, Rotherham, Wakefield District and York

The risk of depression increases with age - 40% of those over 85 are affected.

Want to know more about Social Prescribing?

Social Prescribing for Mental Health: a Guide to Commissioning and Delivery- this guide published by the Care Services Improvement Partnership provides a good overview of Social Prescribing and examples of successful Social Prescribing Services

http://www.nmhdu.org.uk/silo/files/social-prescribing-for-mental-health-.pdf

If you have not already seen it, you may find this fact sheet on the management of depression in older people in primary care interesting.


To contribute to the next newsletter or for more information about the GP Primary Care Liaison Project please contact Heather O'Donnell, Project Coordinator:

Email: heatherodonnell01@gmail.com
Telephone: 0113 244 1860
Mobile: 07824 416 973

For more about Age Concern Support Services (Yorkshire and Humber) or local Age UK services in your area please go to

http://www.ageconcernyorkshireandhumber.org.uk/