**District Dispatch**

There may be times in our lives where we find ourselves experiencing an issue that is not medical, but is having a serious impact on our health and wellbeing. You might be feeling isolated, having financial worries, experiencing housing problems, or dealing with a traumatic event such as bereavement.

Trying to find a way forward through these problems on our own can sometimes be difficult, but I want all of our residents to know that our Social Prescribing Team is here to listen and work with you to plan the next step.

You may not be aware, but our Social Prescribing service began six years ago, and the nine-strong team supports individuals across the district, providing personalised care. The service is all about connecting people to activities, groups, and services in their community to meet the practical, social and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing.

The team also includes our specialist Youth Connections social prescriber who looks after clients aged 13 to 19. One social prescriber is based in each GP practice across the district so that doctors can identify any patients who could benefit from the service and to make the service easily accessible. In addition, residents can now also refer themselves to the service.

The team makes a huge difference to people’s health and overall quality of life. Over the last year they have supported 1,200 people, which shows that there is a real need for this practical and emotional support. The prescribers come from a variety of different backgrounds, including social care as well as addiction, homelessness, and carers support. This huge breadth of experience means they can assist people with a broad range of needs and issues.

Our Social Prescribing service is here for anyone, whatever stage of life they are in, whether you are 13 or turning 100. For example if someone is feeling  isolated, one of the team can offer an opportunity to have conversations around how that is impacting on the person’s health and then look at connection them to appropriate groups and activities in their area which will make them feel more connected and as a result, healthier. The first step is for the social prescriber to understand the individual’s situation.

If a teenager is considering their next steps in education, whether going into an apprenticeship or deciding that further education is not for them, then our Youth Connections social prescriber can help steer them in the right direction. She helps those who have a lack of confidence, are feeling lonely or isolated, or are wanting to have a greater sense of connection to the community and friends.

Someone may also be finding it challenging getting back into work after having a family, or a family may be finding things tough because of the cost-of-living crisis. Whatever the issue, our Social Prescribing Team is there to listen and help individuals find a way forward to feeling healthier and more positive about the future.

If you are experiencing an issue which you think the team could support you with, and you feel ready to move forward, then our Social Prescribing Team is here with their incredible local knowledge to help empower you to do that. They are here to listen – being heard and listened are often the first and most important things that people need before they feel able to move forward.

I know that the team find it really rewarding to help people get back on their path, and support people on their journey and they receive some wonderful feedback from clients full of appreciation for the work that they do.

If you or someone you know would find their help useful, I do encourage you to get in touch with the team by emailing **socialprescribers@chichester.gov.uk** or visiting: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/socialprescribing**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/socialprescribing)

Best Wishes

Cllr Tracie Bangert, Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing at Chichester District Council

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