

Welcome to our March newsletter, which focuses on Health Inequalities and Social Prescribing, as well as a recent patient case study.



## Health Inequalities in the North East

- The **gap in life expectancy** between the North East (NE) and the rest of England is widening and there is substantial variation between the most deprived and the most affluent areas within the NE <sup>1</sup>
- COVID-19 pandemic has hit the country unevenly with a disproportionate effect on the NE - **increasing** regional health and economic divides <sup>2</sup>
- **10% more hospital beds** were occupied by COVID patients in the NE, compared to the rest of England <sup>2</sup>
- A **55% increase in the presence of minor psychiatric disorders** in the North (an increase from 19.2% in 2018/19 to 29.7% in 2020) compared to a 50% increase in the rest of England (an increase from 16.2% in 2018/19 to 24.2% in 2020) <sup>2</sup>



## Health Inequalities and Social Prescribing

Social Prescribing supports individuals with social, emotional and practical challenges they are facing. This can help bridge the gap and reduce health inequalities through the following:

- **Spend more time with an individual, focusing on what matters to them, and take a holistic approach to their health and wellbeing** <sup>3</sup>
- **Reduces pressures on clinicians and the NHS** <sup>3</sup>
- **Links people to appropriate support in the diverse community outside of the health service, working alongside the other medical treatments they may be having** <sup>3</sup>

Link workers and care coordinators often work with groups that can be most impacted by health inequalities, including individuals living with multiple long term conditions, disability, frailty or who are from ethnic minority communities.



1. Corris, V., Dormer, E., Brown, A., Whitty, P., Collingwood, P., Bamba, C., & Newton, J. L. (2020). Health inequalities are worsening in the North East of England. *British Medical Bulletin*, 134(1), 63-72. <https://academic.oup.com/bmb/article/134/1/63/5847891?login=false>
2. Munford, L., Khavandi, S., Bamba, C., Barr, B., Davies, H., Doran, T., ... & Wickham, S. (2021). A year of COVID-19 in the North: Regional Inequalities in health and economic outcomes. [https://eprints.ncl.ac.uk/file\\_store/production/277257/0E43D1D4-F87D-4637-A097-54848D43D458.pdf](https://eprints.ncl.ac.uk/file_store/production/277257/0E43D1D4-F87D-4637-A097-54848D43D458.pdf)
3. J, John. (2022). Social prescribing as a way of tackling health inequalities in all health settings. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/social-prescribing-as-a-way-of-tackling-health-inequalities-in-all-health-settings/>

*Social prescribing can demonstrate its value in linking people to community-based services that provide coordinated, integrated, and proactive care* <sup>3</sup>

*Here we share a case study of a successful outcome for a patient following an intervention with one of our Link Workers.*

## **Background**

'Jo' was referred into the service in July 2021, to support with low mood, reduced motivation and isolation, following bereavement of her husband. The pandemic had heightened her pre-existing anxiety, resulting in her not wanting to talk about her feelings.

## **Intervention**

Through regular contact with her Link Worker, Jo was able to identify coping mechanisms and activities which promoted wellbeing. A solution-focused approach was used to explore what mattered to her, which led her to explore social options. For Jo, this meant increased contact with her friendship group and talking more about how she was really feeling.

## **Outcome**

Jo returned to work in September, which had a positive impact on her emotions and increased structure, meaning and purpose. She now feels more motivated to complete daily tasks and last month she felt able to complete her journey with her Link Worker, as she felt much better emotionally.

***“[It] feels as though I can see the light at the end of the tunnel”***  
***“Stuff isn’t getting on top of me as much”***



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*If you have any feedback about this newsletter, please send a message via EMIS or email [ntpcn@firstcontactclinical.co.uk](mailto:ntpcn@firstcontactclinical.co.uk)*