

Evaluation of HALE Community Connectors Social Prescribing Service 2017

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Executive Summary

Chris Dayson
David Leather

Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research
Sheffield Hallam University

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Introduction

Hale has been delivering the Community Connectors Social Prescribing Service in Bradford since March 2017. This report provides the findings of an independent evaluation of the early stages of service by Sheffield Hallam University. The key messages are as follows.

1. The reach of Community Connectors

The Community Connectors Service has achieved considerable reach into the community during its first 9 months, with 703 local people referred for support by their GP. The service was accessed by more women than men, but service users were relatively evenly distributed according to age and key Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, including the local Pakistani community.

People tended to be referred to Community Connectors to address social issues such as anxiety and low mood and social isolation. However, a significant proportion of service users were also in poor health, with more than three-quarters reporting at least one long term health condition and almost a third reporting more than three long term conditions.

2. The impact of Community Connectors on health, well-being and wider outcomes

The evaluation measured Community Connectors service users' distance travelled against a number of outcome measures in the three months following referral to the service. The initial signs are positive:

- **Health:** the overall self-reported health of many service users improved following their referral. Improvements were most pronounced for anxiety and depression, followed by usual activities and pain and discomfort. This pattern was replicated for those service users who reported severe or extreme problems for each measure.
- **Mental well-being:** the mental well-being of almost three-quarters of service users improved following their referral.
- **Trust:** the overall level of trust service users had in people in their community improved following their referral.
- **Social connectedness:** the social connectedness and social relationships of many service users improved after they were referred to social prescribing. There were increases in the proportion of service users content with their friendships and relationships, saying they have enough people the feel comfortable asking

for help at any time, and saying their relationships are as satisfying as they would want them to be.

- **Self-care:** service users' reported improvements in various aspects of their ability to self-care after being referred to social prescribing, including a reduction their reliance on their GP and pharmacists for treating 'common' minor ailments.

In addition to positive outcomes, service users' experience of Community Connectors was almost universally positive. Almost 100 per cent of service users were satisfied with the support received, felt support was tailored to their needs, and would recommend Community Connectors to family and friends.

3. Implications for primary and secondary care

It is too early to assess the impact of Community Connectors on demand for primary or second care with any certainty. However, the initial signs are positive, with service users recording up to nine per cent fewer Accident and Emergency and up to seven per cent fewer GP attendances after referral to the service. Importantly, Hale and the CCG have developed protocols for logging and tracking social prescribing referrals on GP data systems, which means that service users' primary and secondary care use can be monitored over the longer term.