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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Issued on behalf of Mid and south Essex Health and Care Partnership**

**For immediate release: Thursday, 6 August 2020**

**LOCAL RESIDENTS TO BENEFIT FROM SOCIAL PRESCRIPTIONS AS NEW LINK WORKERS JOIN GP PRACTICES TO IMPROVE LOCAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Video embed link for websites:

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/NgiVu-z0iOY" frameborder="0" allow="accelerometer; autoplay; encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture" allowfullscreen></iframe>

People visit their GPs for a range of different reasons and sometimes these issues can be caused by non-medical matters such as loneliness, anxiety, unemployment, bereavement or other concerns.

Social Prescribing Link Workers, also known as a Social Prescribers, will soon be / or are already working in partnership with all GP practices locally and the voluntary sector to help people to access appropriate support in the community to help them make positive changes to their personal wellbeing. They are being introduced across GP practices as part of NHS Long term Plan ambition.

Social prescribing is targeted at a range of people, including those who are socially isolated and those with long term physical and/or mental health conditions. People will be encouraged to take control of their health and wellbeing through referral to non-medical ‘link workers’ who will focus on their health and wellbeing needs and prescribe individual solutions to support them to take back control. Emerging evidence suggests that social prescribing can improve people’s health and wellbeing and reduce workload for healthcare professionals and demand for secondary care services.

Often people’s social situation can lead to depression and other health problems, which takes them to the GP for medical help, but sorting out the personal problems and empowering people to take back control often results in a reduction of medicines and less need for a GP’s help.

Annette Christmas, who benefited from a social prescription said:

“I found the social prescriber very assuring and surprisingly helpful. The appointment was wonderfully friendly and everything was explained.”

And, Phillip Aitchison said:

"I was feeling very down about my situation, the GP referred me to a social prescriber, I didn't know about this service when they booked it for me at the surgery but it’s been brilliant. They empowered me to see what was out there to support me and get the help I needed.”

Dr Anna Davey, GP and chair of Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, said:

"The role isn’t just about sign posting people to services it is about ensuring people get the right support from relevant community resources. Through personalised support, Social Prescribing Link Workers can help people who don’t necessarily require clinical treatment, by referring them to community groups and voluntary organisations running a range of activities from benefits advice, singing and cooking classes, to sports activities, gardening and housing help. This will help ease pressure on GPs to make more time available for patients with more complex health needs”.

A short video has also been produced to explain the role further and has also been promoted via social media.

The video can be accessed by visiting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgiVu-z0iOY&feature=emb_title>

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editor:**

**What do Social Prescribing Link Workers do?**

Key responsibilities will include taking referrals from GPs, co-producing personalised support plans with individuals, their families and carers. This service will enable people to take control of their wellbeing, live independently and improve their health outcomes. It will also provide an understanding of when it is appropriate or necessary to refer people back to other health professionals/agencies, for example when there is a mental health need requiring a qualified practitioner. This way local people can link with their Link Worker representative in their doctor’s surgery directly on any issues that they feel are appropriate to their wellbeing and which are non-clinical.

Link workers are available for interviews subject to request.

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For more information about NHS Castle Point and Rochford CCG visit:

<https://castlepointandrochfordccg.nhs.uk/>

For more information about NHS Southend CCG visit:

<https://southendccg.nhs.uk/>

For more information about Mid Essex CCG visit:

<https://midessexccg.nhs.uk/>

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https://www.thurrockccg.nhs.uk/