

# Brief summary: Social prescribing for mental health

This guidance describes the use of non-medical interventions, sometimes called 'social prescribing' or 'community referral', to improve mental health and wellbeing. Social prescribing supports improved access both to psychological treatments and to interventions addressing the wider determinants of mental health.

This guide:

- describes social prescribing and its benefits;
- outlines the policy context and evidence base for social prescribing;
- gives guidance on commissioning social prescribing;
- provides information on interventions and how to deliver social prescribing; and
- describes the findings of a social prescribing development project commissioned by Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) North West.

Overall, the guidance aims to support localities in developing, implementing and evaluating social prescribing schemes, with a special focus on mental health and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> It will be of particular interest to those with roles in commissioning services for the treatment and prevention of mental health problems and the promotion of mental health, and for managers and practitioners wishing to set up social prescribing initiatives. It will also be of interest to community and voluntary sector organisations and those working in sports, leisure, arts, education and sustainable development.

This guidance is a result of the CSIP North West Social Prescribing Development Project with East Lancashire Primary Care Trust (PCT), North Lancashire PCT, Sefton PCT and Stockport PCT. It has been jointly funded by the CSIP North West Development Centre and the CSIP National Primary Care Programme.

1 This guidance draws centrally on research carried out by Lynne Friedli for two publications: Friedli L, Watson S (2004) *Social prescribing for mental health*, published by the Northern Centre for Mental Health, and the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health (2007) *Developing social prescribing and community referrals for mental health in Scotland*, a report commissioned by the Scottish Government and written in partnership with the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health ([www.sdcmh.org.uk](http://www.sdcmh.org.uk)). See [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/health/mental-health/section25-31/communityprescribing](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/health/mental-health/section25-31/communityprescribing). We are grateful to the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health for permission to reproduce this material.