

## A different kind of prescription

Hilary Cottage Surgery is one local practice that is continually searching for ways to provide the best care and support for patients. Whenever we go to see the doctor or the nurse, we are looking for a medical solution to our problem. However, problems



such as anxiety, depression and feeling we can't cope can be triggered by social situations such as debt, unemployment or not knowing who to turn to in time of trouble. This is where Social Prescribing might help.

### What is Social Prescribing?

This is a way of linking patients with sources of support within the community. It gives doctors the option of talking to a patient about a non-medical referral that can operate **alongside** existing treatments to improve health and well-being. It is based on growing evidence that people who have a strong network of social support, are more likely to take their prescribed medicines, develop active social lives and enjoy better health than those who do not. This applies to all ages from our teens to old age!

### How does this work?

Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group has funded a team of Social Prescribers. This means that your doctor **can** refer you for additional support **if you agree this might be useful**. The Social Prescriber for Hilary Cottage Surgery is Nikki Rowe, who is based at the practice every Friday morning.

### What does our Social Prescriber do?

Nikki has been working at Hilary Cottage Surgery since the end of April 2016. So, with 3 months already completed, the Patients' Participation Group thought it was a good time to talk to Nikki about her work.

#### Question : What does your work here involve?

My job is about providing support to patients to help them improve their overall well being. Lots of us have social needs that are not clinical but can have a serious effect on our overall health and well being. Some of the areas where I have worked with patients to provide help include anxiety and depression, feeling lonely and isolated, dealing with family disputes and problems, worries about finance and benefits. I can also help find support for a range of addictions.

#### Question: Are you a doctor or some kind of nurse?

No. I do not deal with clinical or medical issues. Patients who are unwell should see a doctor or nurse.

#### Question: How does a patient get to see you?

Currently, you have to be referred to me by your doctor, a Practice nurse or District nurse. They will arrange for me to contact you either at the surgery or over the telephone.

**Question: Is this confidential?**

Reply: Yes. I work under the same confidentiality procedures as all the surgery staff.

**Question: How many times can a patient see you?**

Reply: It depends on his/her need. I may see a patient just once. If more support is needed, I will arrange to see the patient over a few weeks

**Questions: Do you need any help from us?**

I am building up lots of information about social activities, support groups, advice centres etc. but this is a very active area and I am not sure I know about all the groups and how they can help. The more groups I know about, the more help I can offer. So if someone belongs to a local group that may help with my work, simply leave a message at Reception to tell me about the group.

**And finally...**

If you belong to a local voluntary group, from a large national charity to a small specialist provider offering e.g. sport/leisure or artistic opportunities or simply friendship, and think you could help others contact Gloucestershire Voluntary Community Sector Alliance (GVCA). Your group may qualify for a Kite Mark by simply completing a questionnaire indicating your group's credentials. If you have any questions, would like more information, or guidance for completing the Kite Mark questionnaire, please contact [Jem Sweet – Project Officer, Social Prescribing at jem.sweet@glosvcsalliance.org.uk](mailto:jem.sweet@glosvcsalliance.org.uk)