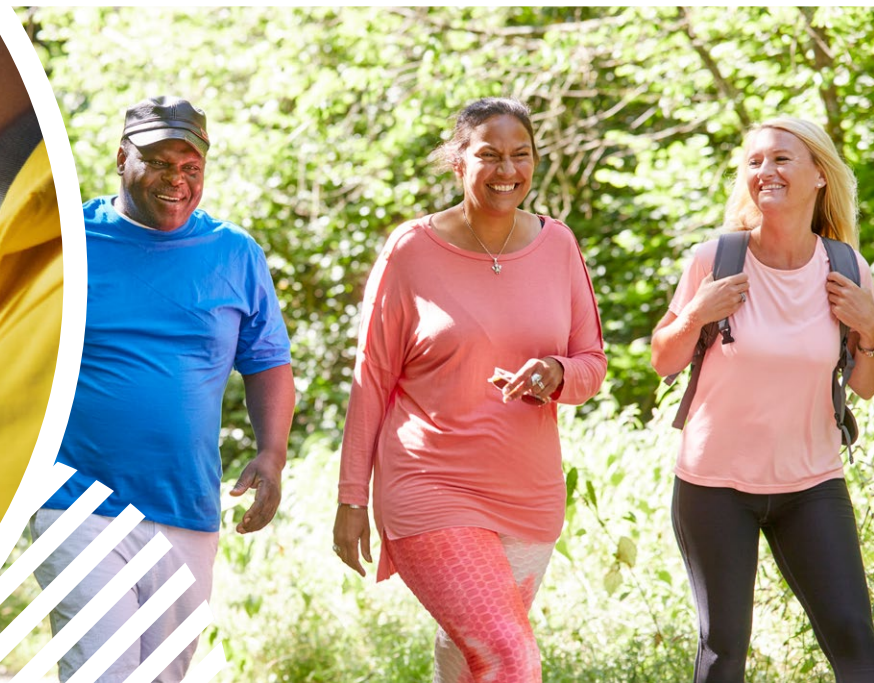


# National Academy for Social Prescribing

Annual Review  
2021/22





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“There’s a famous saying, the opposite of addiction is connection... for me, creative endeavours are key. Before I was consumed by addiction, I was a head singer in a choir but I let a lot of that lapse... I just want to engage again, have some sort of semblance of a life.

“I think social prescribing is integral to what people need. You need contact with people who are different from you. Every different type of person you come across is a lesson.”

Dale lives in North London and has recently joined the Men’s Woodwork Group, run by St Margaret’s House who received a grant from NASP’s Thriving Communities Fund.



# Welcome from our Chair and CEO

The past year has continued to be a challenging one for all organisations, not least those working in fields which seek to improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities. Within this challenging context we are incredibly proud of what we've achieved at NASP during 2021-2.

Through our Thriving Communities programme, we've supported thousands of grassroots organisations and funded 36 truly amazing local partnerships. From walking football to aerial silks, bicycle-powered Shakespeare to art lessons, financial wellbeing workshops to cooking classes, these projects have changed the lives of people experiencing loneliness, mental health problems or those people living with long-term health conditions.

One person who took part in a Thriving Communities project in Sunderland told us: "This is the only time in the week I laugh. I don't know what I would do without this group." Crucially, the fund has also provided a blueprint for how social prescribing initiatives can not just work but also thrive in practice, which should open the door for future investment opportunities.

Through our Accelerating Innovation programme, we've brought together more than 90 national and regional organisations to focus on how social prescribing can tackle health inequalities. Together, we want to connect the voluntary sector more effectively to the health system, and explore the best new ways of working collaboratively.

We've recruited Social Prescribing Champions to spread the word about social prescribing across the NHS, and we've supported a remarkable network of Student Champions in medical colleges to harness support from future health leaders.

We've worked with Social Prescribing Link Workers - the people at the heart of the NHS social prescribing process - to create resources to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of what they do.

Of course, it's vital that the growth of social prescribing is informed by evidence. That's why we've worked with some of the country's leading academics to collate the most robust research and to identify where the gaps are. The evidence briefings we've published show that social prescribing can have a positive impact on a very wide range of outcomes and that it can save costs for the NHS. We've also drawn up a roadmap for future research.

We've raised the profile of social prescribing. In the media, on social media and through our Ambassadors, we've spread the word that social activities and advice services can have a major impact on health and wellbeing. This has created a huge interest in social prescribing across communities, industry and Government at both a national and local level.

Social prescribing is fast becoming an international movement, and we've brought together colleagues in more than 20 countries to grow the Global Social Prescribing Alliance. From Canada to Brazil to Singapore, we're joining forces across the world to help people live the best lives they can.

We realise that with the breadth of the current national challenges that impact on people's health and wellbeing, that there is far more to be done. But we firmly believe that social prescribing can play an important role in preventing health problems, in combating loneliness and in ensuring people can get the practical support they need with the long-term health conditions that they are living with. As we continue to mature as an organisation, we want to champion the people that make social prescribing thrive and to make a lasting difference to communities across the country.



**Professor Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard,**  
Chair



**James Sanderson,** Chief Executive



# About us



Social prescribing is a way of connecting people to activities, groups and services that improve their health and wellbeing.

**We are an organisation dedicated to the advancement of social prescribing through promotion, collaboration and innovation.**

We work to create partnerships across the arts, health, sports, leisure, and the natural and historic environment, alongside other aspects of our lives, to promote health and wellbeing at a national and local level. We champion social prescribing and the work of local communities in connecting people for wellbeing.

We were launched in October 2019.

## What are our objectives?

- **Make some noise - raising the profile of social prescribing**

In order to expand social prescribing, we need to get the message out there - connecting people for wellbeing is vital for people and communities.

- **Find resources - develop innovative funding partnerships**

We recognise the challenges faced by social prescribing link workers, the local voluntary community, the social enterprise and the arts sector and we will seek to improve resources to realise their social prescribing goals.

- **Build relationships - broker and build relationships across all sectors**

Social prescribing relies on strong, mature relationships at national and local levels across multiple sectors.

- **Improve the evidence - shape and share the evidence base**

There is already an evidence base for social prescribing, but it is not comprehensive. We need to build a consensus about what we know and don't know and improve the accessibility and visibility of evidence.

- **Spread what works - promote learning on social prescribing**

We will share what is good, what has been learnt and draw from multiple sources to ensure the continued development of social prescribing.



# The Social Prescribing System



There are a wide range of social activities, services and opportunities that can benefit our health and wellbeing, which people connect to in different ways.

Many people connect to these opportunities independently: for example, they may decide to sign up to an exercise class to lose weight, join a gardening club to make new friends, or call a debt advice charity to get help managing their finances.

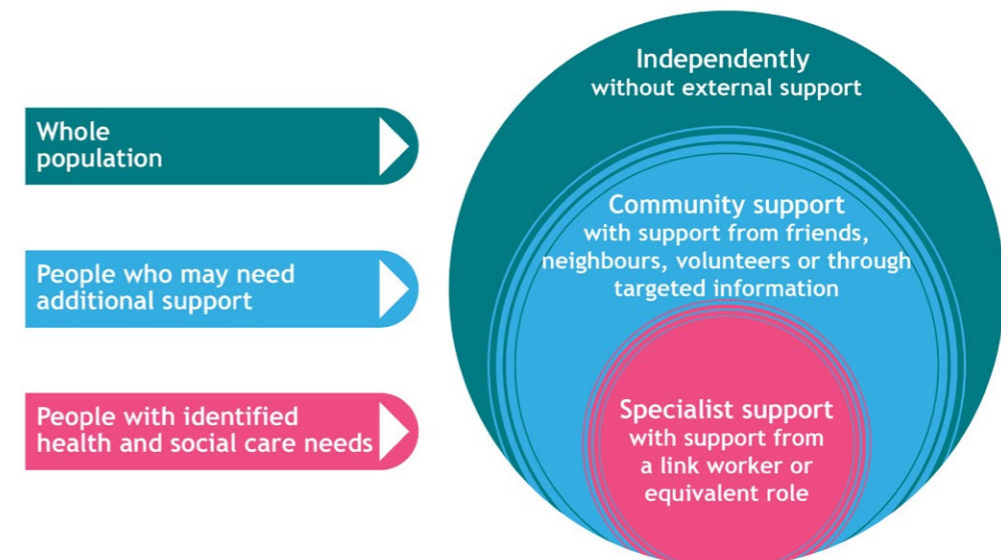
Other people need support to make these connections. They may be unaware of what exists, lack the time or motivation to engage, feel anxious or self-conscious about participating, or face barriers because of their health, a disability or for financial reasons.

In some cases, this support will come from a friend, a neighbour or a family member who signposts them to an opportunity and helps them to participate. In other cases, it may come from a conversation at a library, a youth club or a place of worship, or from a 'community connector' or volunteer.

For people with more complex needs, the support may come from a Social Prescribing Link Worker, or equivalent role, who gets to know the individual, learns about their unique circumstances and preferences, and helps them to access a service based on their individual needs and wishes.

These different types of connection all form part of the social prescribing system. For social prescribing to be effective, there need to be appropriate assets and services available in communities and across the country - including a sustainable voluntary sector, relevant advice and information services, and spaces where people can access nature and heritage, take part in physical activity and movement, and engage with creative and artistic activities.

*How people connect to activities and opportunities that benefit health and wellbeing:*





# Our work



“

“It has been fantastic to see NASP go from strength to strength over the last few years. NASP has been an important partner in helping Government deliver on its commitments to roll out social prescribing. A number of NASP’s programmes have made significant contributions towards placing the UK at the forefront of social prescribing, from the Thriving Communities programme, to the Global Alliance and the ambassadors programme, among others.”

- Kate Clinton, Department of Health and Social Care

## Thriving Communities

### Supporting grassroots organisations delivering social prescribing

The work of the Thriving Communities programme over the past year has been instrumental in creating an active, connected and high performing social prescribing system at a place-based level. Building on the formation of seven regional teams made up of members of the local voluntary sector as well as representatives from our national partners, the programme is committed to supporting the voluntary sector and those organisations who are receiving social prescriptions.

The **Thriving Communities Network** has connected with over 10,000 people working for Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations to support their work in multiple ways. This included a very successful webinar series, with 12 webinars attended by an average of 395 people each. Topics have included innovative ways of finding funding, wellness and movement in social prescribing, and how to navigate the social prescribing system to build effective relationships with link workers.

Practical learning sessions have also been popular, with our **Learning Together programme** attracting over 1,200 participants. This regionally run programme reacted to the needs of the sector at a local level and offered support on bespoke subjects, using a co-production model with the communities it served.

While this work supporting the sector remains incredibly important and very much at the core of the programme, the impact the **Thriving Communities Fund** has had on local communities is a lasting legacy of the past year. The £1.8 million fund has supported 35 place-based partnerships between VCFSE organisations and made a real difference to the lives of thousands of people. Most of these projects have been able to use the initial investment to secure future funding and continue their good work. We will be publishing a full evaluation of the Thriving Communities Fund in October 2022.

Our commitment to diversity and tackling health inequalities continues, with the Thriving Communities Fund working with projects supporting global majority networks and communities alongside regional teams developing diverse networks at a local level.







“The Thriving Communities Programme provides a platform for anyone in our region that has a stake in making social prescribing work, to come together and share their challenges and successes for everyone’s benefit. Because everyone is welcome it’s allowed us to break down professional walls and enable conversations that may not otherwise have happened. Together we’re learning what works and challenging what doesn’t, actively trying to make sure neglected voices are heard and valued. We want everyone to play a part in social prescribing and Thriving Communities is the way we’re doing it.”

- Tom Watkins, East of England Regional Lead



“We have clearly evidenced the benefits of a structured and facilitated learning programme. It is encouraging to see that the majority of participants increased their knowledge, self-awareness and confidence and were able to take their learning back into their organisations. Being a leader of a small VCFSE organisation can be a lonely place and clearly the peer networking and support generated through Thriving Communities was very beneficial.”

- Jane Hartley, North East & York’s Thriving Communities Regional Lead, VONNE



“To me, all of you have been so supportive, gentle, it was so lovely; I feel like I am being listened to and understood. There is help there, and there is hope there.”

- participant in a Thriving Communities funded project, Luton

## Our regional leads

### North East and Yorkshire - Jane Hartley

1. North Cumbria and the North East
2. West Yorkshire and Harrogate
3. Humber, Coast and Vale
4. South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw

### North West - Christine Blythe

5. Lancashire and South Cumbria
6. Greater Manchester
7. Cheshire and Merseyside

### Midlands - Sarah Paine

8. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent
9. Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin
10. Derbyshire
11. Lincolnshire
12. Nottinghamshire
13. Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
14. The Black Country
15. Birmingham and Solihull
16. Coventry and Warwickshire
17. Herefordshire and Worcestershire
18. Northamptonshire

### East of England - Tom Watkins

19. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
20. Norfolk and Waveney
21. Suffolk and North East Essex
22. Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes
23. Hertfordshire and West Essex
24. Mid and South Essex

### London - Abbie Pascoe-Apaw

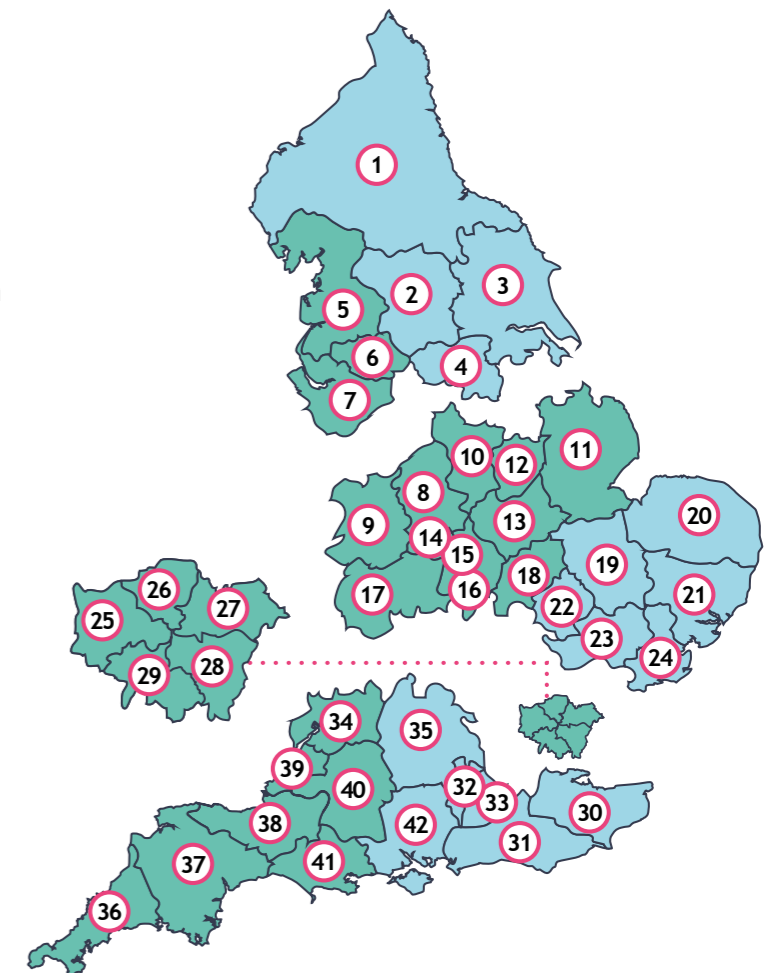
25. North West London
26. Central London
27. East London
28. South East London
29. South West London

### South East - Esther Watts

30. Kent and Medway
31. Sussex and East Surrey
32. Frimley Health and Care
33. Surrey Heartlands
35. Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire
42. Hampshire and Isle of Wight

### South West - James Day

34. Gloucestershire
36. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
37. Devon
38. Somerset
39. Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire
40. Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire
41. Dorset



## Accelerating Innovation in social prescribing

### Supporting national organisations and championing new approaches

This year we launched the Accelerating Innovation Programme. This new partnership between NASP, The Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) and NHS England and Improvement, aims to bring together national delivery organisations across the UK to develop new approaches that make the best use of their knowledge, assets and reach.

The programme builds upon the incredible social prescribing that is already taking place across the country. By connecting national and regional voluntary organisations to each other and to local partners, it promotes shared learning and helps grow new and more effective partnerships that can help reduce health inequalities and support Covid-19 recovery plans.

At the heart of the programme is our **Community of Practice**. This group of organisations from across sectors comes together to learn from each other and build new partnerships. In the first six months we have welcomed over 90 organisations to the community, and built a programme of webinars and workshops around their learning goals.



Our Community of Practice identified several areas of work that had important innovation potential in social prescribing, and we built working groups around these. This year we focused on two of these areas:

- **Housing and social prescribing.** Working in partnership with HACT and HousingLIN, we brought together a working group of housing providers, voluntary organisations, and people working in local health systems to explore how social prescribing could be embedded in housing.
- **Volunteering and wellbeing through social prescribing.** Volunteering expertise links all of our Community of Practice members together. Working with these national organisations, as well as NAVCA members, experts from the Richmond Group of charities, link workers, and volunteers themselves, we are bringing together guidance on how volunteering can provide health and wellbeing benefits through social prescribing.

In the next year we hope to continue to offer opportunities for learning and joint working, as well as nurturing emerging new partnerships that can reach across the UK to support people's health and wellbeing.



“National volunteering charities have demonstrated both a huge interest in, and a commitment to, social prescribing through their engagement with the Accelerating Innovation in Social Prescribing programme. With health inequalities widening and the people we support facing quite perilous circumstances, this desire to work collaboratively to inspire and develop innovative solutions in social prescribing is very positive and hugely welcome. I am convinced that together we will make a much greater impact on those facing the toughest challenges with their health and wellbeing.”

- Catherine Johnstone CBE, Chief Executive of Royal Voluntary Service





“We are delighted to be part of The Accelerating Innovation Community of Practice as it enables Rotary Great Britain and Ireland to work with others at the leading edge of social prescribing. This increases our capacity and effectiveness in helping our local communities throughout the UK and planning for the future.”

- Dr Cheryle Berry MBE PHF OStJ. Co Team Leader Humanitarian Service, Rotary Great Britain and Ireland



“Carers UK are delighted to be part of the Accelerating Innovation Community of Practice and to be engaging in conversations about how we can connect more of the 8 million plus unpaid carers in the UK with vital support.”

- Michael Shann, Head of Membership and Volunteering, Carers UK



## Global Social Prescribing Alliance

### Promoting social prescribing around the world

The Global Social Prescribing Alliance was established in 2021 to support the development and growth of social prescribing on a global scale. Alongside international partners from more than 20 countries, we are working with the World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS), the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Global Sustainability Index Institute (UNSGII) to scale up social prescribing globally and link this to the implementation of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We have successfully developed an **international community of practice** involving representatives from more than 20 countries including Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Finland, Portugal, Wales, Scotland, Brazil, US and the Netherlands. Seven sessions have been delivered to date, and our work has culminated in a joint article in BMJ Global Health Journal providing an overview of social prescribing models around the world<sup>1</sup>.

We have proudly taken part in **international conferences and webinars** in collaboration with our global partners, including the International Longevity Centre Japan Conference on Social Prescribing, hosting a Danish Embassy Ministerial Visit, as well as presenting our work at the SDG Cities event in Davos. Our partners from the WHO and WHIS have spotlighted our work at the World Urban Forum in Poland and several other high-profile events across the world.

This year we have also launched the **International Social Prescribing Student Framework** through a webinar with speakers representing 10 countries, including Singapore, Japan, USA and Australia<sup>2</sup>.

Our ambition is to collaborate with international partners to continue building our global community. In the coming year, we aim to develop a global map of social prescribing across the world, as well as an online platform which includes an international membership to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration between our global partners.

<sup>1</sup> The publication can be accessed here: <https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/7/5/e008524.full.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The published document can be found here: <https://www.gspalliance.com/student-movement-framework>





“The global social prescribing movement ignited by the Alliance is facilitating international knowledge exchange and ensures people across the world have access to practical, social and psychological support as part of their local communities. Art, for example, is the creation of meaning through stories, images, sounds, performances and other methods that enable people to communicate to others their experience of and feelings about their wellbeing, specifically confidence and hope. It is a way to facilitate resilience of people and their self-awareness about the importance of their health. Art invites us to care for all beneficiaries, specifically the most vulnerable and marginalized, and to inspire cohesion between different innovative or under-reached initiatives with strong and sustainable impacts at country level.”

- Isabelle Wachsmith, World Health Organization



“This is a promising alliance for all who want to see change in place: more focus on prevention. The arts, quality food, and access to forests can all help save billions in national health budgets and provide concrete action options for families and friends on all continents.”

- Roland Schatz, CEO, UNGSII Foundation



“One of the things that really spurred the growth of social prescribing in Canada is the support from colleagues within the UK and a true global community of belonging. People were so kind and welcoming - it was a place where I really wanted to be and to volunteer my time to learn from others, to work alongside colleagues from all over the world who are implementing social prescribing in spite of the many barriers encountered. This year we are proud to have launched the Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing and are grateful to NASP for their mentorship and support in helping us get the institute off the ground.”

- Dr Kate Mulligan, Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing





## Link Workers and infrastructure

### Providing resources for Social Prescribing Link Workers

We are proud to work closely with the Personalised Care team at NHS England and Improvement (NHSE&I) with a particular focus on workforce development and infrastructure.

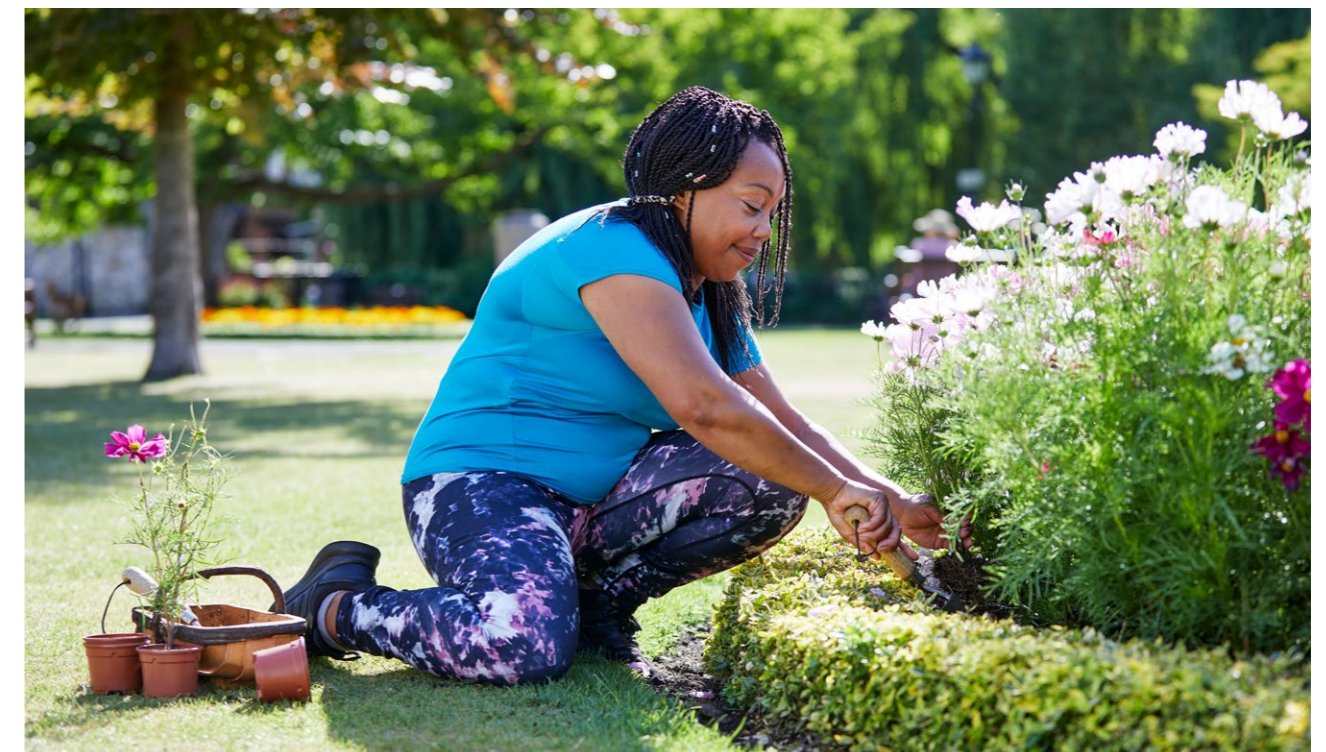
In 2021/2022 NHSE&I commissioned us to develop a **portfolio of evidence for link workers** to demonstrate their skills and practice in line with the draft link worker competency framework. We recruited more than 60 link workers and supervisors across the seven regions to test and feed back on portfolio resources. The portfolio is now available as part of the NHSE&I workforce development framework for social prescribing.

We are keen to develop the support for link workers and we remain committed to working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders to continue this work.

We developed a series of **case studies and videos** showcasing the work of link workers for NHSE&I, as well a detailed briefing on **social prescribing models for children and young people**.

We also contribute to a wide range of groups developing the infrastructure for social prescribing, including:

- NHSE&I Social Prescribing Workforce and Training Advisory Group
- Personalised Care Institute steering group
- Social Prescribing cross government taskforce



“When my son passed away, I was completely bed-ridden more-or-less for five years. Not eating, not sleeping. Then, when my husband died two years ago during COVID, I wasn’t able to have a proper funeral for him, or see family. It was very distressing.”

“[The Cycling Without Age project] gets you out in the fresh air and the volunteers are great... I have made friends, and sometimes we go out on the bikes together. I think social prescribing can help people a lot. Especially people like me or don’t have good mobility and are living on their own.”

Pessi, who lives in Portsmouth, reached crisis when she tragically lost her son and her husband in the space of ten years. Then, through a local community café, she found out about the Cycling Without Age project, supported by NASP’s Thriving Communities Fund. Volunteer cyclists take people out on specially built bikes which allow passengers to sit at the front and see where they are going.



## Social prescribing Champions

### Championing social prescribing within the NHS

In partnership with NHSE&I we piloted and launched the Social Prescribing Champions programme, bringing together clinical and non-clinical NHS staff to promote social prescribing.

The programme was co-designed with support from policy makers and clinicians, individuals with lived experience, and community and voluntary sector organisations, and tested over four months, before being launched in March 2022.

#### What is a Social Prescribing Champion?

Social Prescribing Champions are NHS staff members in England (clinical and non-clinical) working across community, primary, and secondary care to raise awareness of social prescribing within their workplace or profession. They support Social Prescribing Link Workers, ensure consistency of messaging, and ensure busy practitioners consider social, emotional and practical support needs alongside biomedical interventions for patients.

With over 250 applications in March 2022, we have appointed 120 Social Prescribing Champions to date. They are a highly diversified group covering all regions in England and including receptionists, consultants, managers, nurses, pharmacists, occupational therapists, GPs and junior doctors.

To meet the aims of the programme and support newly appointed Champions, we have worked with our partners to develop two support streams for Champions to choose between, including a regular six-weekly community of practice and four-weekly workshops helping Champions build key skills.



### Social Prescribing Student Champions

Building on previous years, we have supported the expansion of the Social Prescribing Student Champion scheme which now includes allied healthcare professional students as well as nursing and midwife students.

This year, we sponsored a total of 22 studentships, acknowledging medical and allied healthcare professional students at the forefront of championing social prescribing within their university and wider region. This national student committee has been able to appoint a total of 116 Student Champions, representing all medical schools in the UK and several universities delivering allied healthcare professional courses.

The students have delivered 97 presentations engaging with an estimated 6,540 healthcare students. In the five years since the establishment of the Social Prescribing Student Champion scheme there have been over 750 presentations at all medical schools in the country and we are proud to say that the subject is part of the core curriculum in most universities within England.

The success of the student scheme has expanded beyond England, with new student schemes being set up in Canada, Portugal, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Singapore, the USA, and Australia.



## Evidence

### Using evidence to advance policy and practice in social prescribing

This year we brought together a unique and collaborative academic partnership to work with us to deliver our evidence aims. We asked people involved in social prescribing what evidence they wanted to understand better, and published our first six evidence summaries on those themes. We also published a set of shorter plain-English briefing versions<sup>3</sup>.

We also established a new International Evidence Collaborative - a network for anyone with an interest in helping us to better understand, share and advance the evidence for social prescribing, both in the UK and globally. There are currently over 260 people from 12 Countries registered<sup>4</sup>.

In an ambitious Evidence Programme, we have developed four strands:

- Identifying priority evidence needs for advancing policy and practice in social prescribing
- Sharing the existing evidence more effectively
- Encouraging collaboration in advancing the evidence base and addressing the gaps
- Providing an evidence service that helps NASP achieve all its aims



“It is often the case that we are forced - through funding processes - to compete rather than collaborate in academia. However, establishing the core Academic Partnership for NASP allowed academics from seven universities across England with programmes of research around social prescribing to work together. Our collaborative not only produced (we hope) policy-relevant outputs, but also a cohort of researchers who can discuss social prescribing evidence in a robust but also supportive and friendly environment into the next rounds of work.”

- Dr Kerryn Husk, Associate Professor of Health Services (Research), Applied Research Collaboration, South West Peninsula

<sup>3</sup> You can find the summaries and briefing at:

<https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/our-work/evidencing-social-prescribing/social-prescribing-the-evidence/>

<sup>4</sup> Find out more about the International Evidence Collaborative and register at:

<https://www.socialprescribingnetwork.com/groups-networks/the-evidence-collaborative>

### The evidence suggests:

- Social prescribing can have a positive impact on a very wide range of outcomes, including decreases in loneliness and improvements in mental health, in social connections and in overall wellbeing
- Social prescribing can reduce pressure on primary care and save costs. NASP estimates that the roll-out of the NHS Link Worker programme could lead to 4.5 million fewer GP appointments per year
- The most effective social prescribing happens when a range of local partners work together



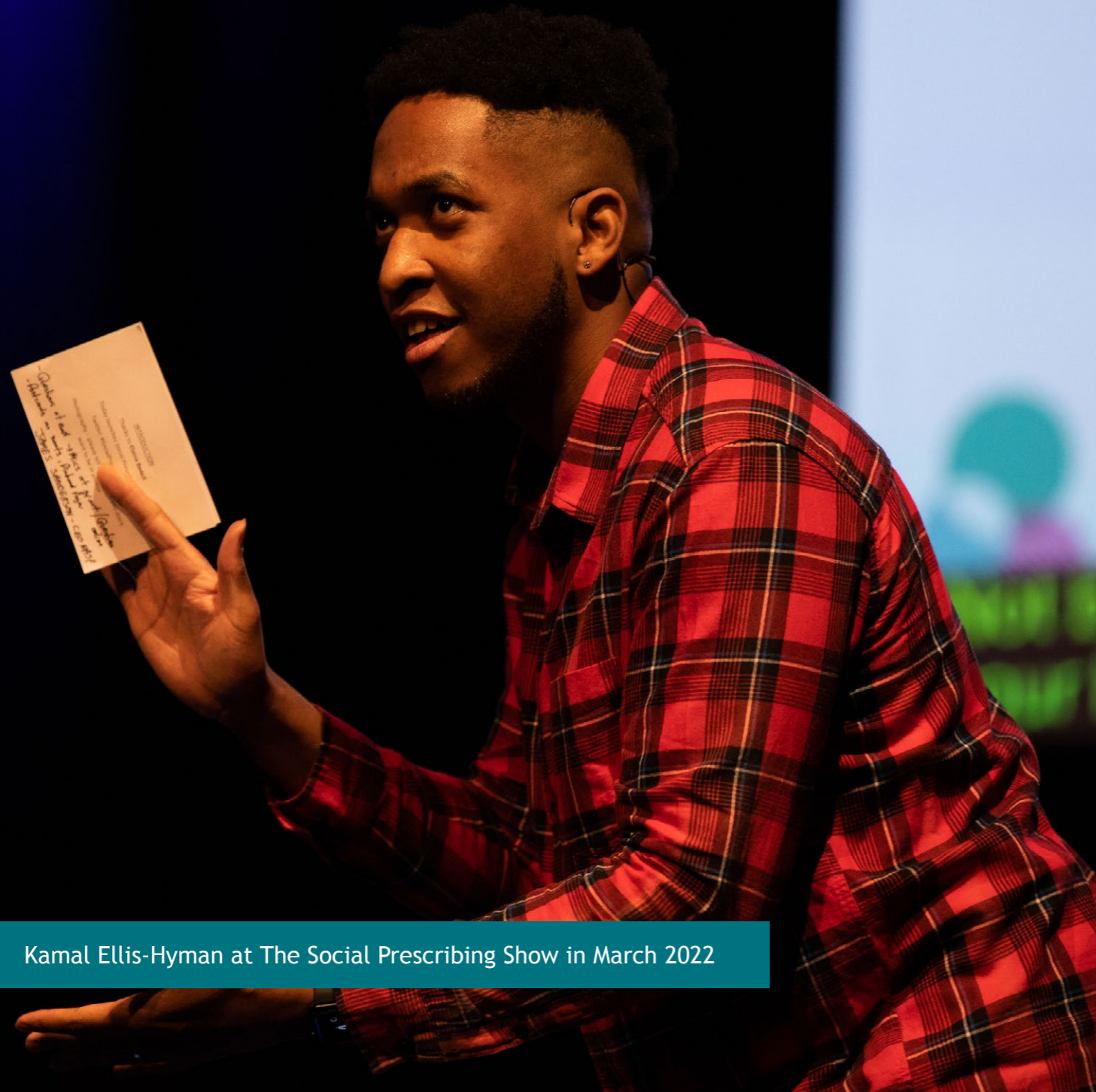
“Collaboration and partnership working are essential in all aspects of social prescribing, including the development of the evidence base. By working collegiately to understand ‘what works’ we can help ensure NASP and its partners have the knowledge and evidence they need to support their own social prescribing strategies and programmes of work.”

- Prof Helen Chatterjee MBE





# Raising the profile of social prescribing



Kamal Ellis-Hyman at The Social Prescribing Show in March 2022

Only around one in eight people in the UK recognise the phrase 'social prescribing'. But many more understand that physical activity, spending time in nature, being creative, getting help with finances and volunteering can benefit our health and wellbeing. Most people also agree that GP surgeries need to be able to connect people to non-medical forms of support and recognise the value of someone having the time to understand the wider circumstances of patients<sup>5</sup>.

## In 2021-2, we helped raise the profile of social prescribing through:

**Podcast on Prescription** - Dr Radha Modgil, our Ambassador Lead, hosted 19 episodes of Podcast on Prescription, with guests including presenters Esther Rantzen and Julia Bradbury, historian Suzannah Lipscomb, urban birder David Lindo, former Loneliness Minister Tracey Crouch and Olympic open water swimmer Kerri-Ann Payne. The podcast focused on a wide range of topics related to social prescribing, including loneliness, heritage, the role of link workers and financial wellbeing, and has approximately 1800 monthly downloads.

**Media** - NASP was mentioned 401 times in UK media and we worked with journalists on features related to social prescribing in a wide range of national and international newspapers.

**Digital** - We grew our social media to more than 12,000 followers and had more than 190,000 page views on our website. We worked with our partners to convene Social Prescribing Week.

**Films** - We worked with spoken word artist Kamal Ellis-Hyman to create a film explaining social prescribing, which has been viewed more than 25,000 times. We have also created films about the work of Thriving Communities and about Green Social Prescribing.

**Events** - Across our programmes, we hosted a wide range of events and webinars, promoting social prescribing to a wide range of organisations and people. These included roundtables with partners and political decision-makers, and The Social Prescribing Show at The Southbank Centre, a celebration of social prescribing.

## Social Prescribing Week

**6** evidence reviews launched

**350** people attended the Social Prescribing Show

**7,500** people downloaded our Podcast on Prescription on link workers

**49,000** people watched our evidence animation

**10 million people** - potential social media reach of #SocialPrescribingDay



<sup>5</sup> Figures based on a YouGov survey for NASP, March 2022



# National leads



Our National Leads focus on specific aspects of social prescribing, including links with the natural environment, physical activity, arts and culture and heritage sectors. Their work has been instrumental in co-developing, testing and promoting social prescribing initiatives and the infrastructure needed to connect people to activities in their communities.

Highlights include the Green Social Prescribing Test and Learn pilots; Art by Post, which brought free creative art to thousands of people across the UK; developing the potential for connectors and buddies in the historic and natural environments; and the inception of More Than a Game, an initiative to develop better social prescribing pathways between Integrated Care Systems and community football trusts.

Towards the end of the year, we appointed a National Lead for Older People to develop social prescribing approaches to improve the health and wellbeing of this specific demographic. We also appointed a Head of National Partners to bring the national leads together as a team and better align the team's collective work with that of our programmes.

## Physical Activity

In April 2021, we created a national Physical Activity lead post in partnership with Sport England. Over the past year we have been exploring the key ingredients required to develop strong collaborations across all our partners with sport and physical activity, encouraging the development of local ecosystems and eclectic partnerships to enable social prescribing to thrive.

We have worked with Sport England to develop a strategic vision that aims to support the physical activity and sport sector to thrive within their local social prescribing landscape. More than 1,000 people registered for a webinar we hosted in partnership with The Richmond Charity Group.

As we move to 2022/23, we will continue to support the Department for Transport as they develop their emerging Active Travel social prescribing pilots, and to explore how physical activity can contribute to green social prescribing schemes. We are also excited to be launching More than a Game, a partnership with Sport England, NHSE&I and the English Football League Trust to develop referral routes to social prescribing activities through community football trusts.



## Natural Environment

We are working closely with Natural England to support and strengthen the links between social prescribing and the natural environment sector, to promote the benefits that a strong ‘nature connection’ offers to the health and wellbeing of individuals.

We are providing £500,000 over two years as a partner in the ‘Preventing and Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing’ Programme, led by NHSE&I with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, Natural England and Sport England. The project aims to build sustainable connections between health systems and activities that grow people’s connection with the natural environment to support their mental health.

In 2021/22 NASP was commissioned by Natural England to deliver:

- Four evidence summaries on the themes of mental health, physical health, nature connectedness and children and young people
- Films and communications products to help raise awareness of Green Social Prescribing
- A workshop to explore the potential for scaling up Therapeutic Horticulture delivery
- Models for establishing local Green Buddies, undertaken in partnership with Nottingham Community Voluntary Service. A ‘Green Buddy’ helps to connect people with nature to improve their health through information, support and activities. Models are intended for embedding in local support systems and enabling them to expand their social prescribing offer and will be subject to further testing in partnership with Natural England and Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service in 2022/23



“Natural England and NASP share an ambition to grow green social prescribing and help more people, from all backgrounds, connect with nature to support their health and wellbeing. Alongside the ongoing work to embed the natural environment as a mainstream community support offer our partnership with NASP over the past year has enabled a significant uplift in our programme of work to grow green social prescribing through evidence, advocacy and a community referral pathway pilot. This collaboration has enabled us to build knowledge, expertise and best practice in green social prescribing and ultimately for more people to experience its benefits. We look forward to another successful year of partnership working as we seek to build capacity and sustainability for green social prescribing.”

- Amanda Craig, Director, People and Nature, Natural England

## Older People

In February 2022, we created a new National Lead for Older People role, in partnership with Independent Age. The aim of this role is to understand how social prescribing can meet the needs of older people, by helping to address inequalities and improve health, wellbeing and quality of life. A key part of this work is facilitating partnerships at a local and national level, informed by evidence-based practice, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for individuals, organisations and systems.

The initial focus for this role has been to develop a strategic approach for social prescribing and older people. Forthcoming work will include an evidence commission and stakeholder questionnaire to produce a snapshot of social prescribing for older people, including barriers, facilitators, gaps, opportunities and examples of best practice. Subsequent future work may involve collaborations with partner organisations to develop a proof of concept for new models of funding and delivering social prescribing for older people.



“Independent Age are delighted to fund the National Lead for Older People within NASP. Through the work led by Dr Emily Cousins we hope to get a better understanding of how social prescribing is working for older people, where some of the challenges and gaps are, and where we can improve the system to better respond to the ever-changing needs of older people. We’re looking forward to working with NASP and other strategic partners to drive forward the vision for social prescribing in England.”

- Mark Hayward, Head of Grants and Programme Development, Independent Age





## Arts, culture & historic environment

### Arts & culture

Supported by NASP, Southbank Centre’s Art by Post initiative brought free creative arts activity booklets through the letterbox to people across the UK. Developed during the first COVID-19 lockdown, the scheme was designed to reach those most isolated due to the pandemic. The project commissioned 17 artists to make 11 activity booklets that were sent to participants. Art by Post built a community of 4,500 people across the UK, from the ages of 18 to 103.

More than 600 poems, drawings, paintings and mixed media works were posted back in response. This led to the exhibition Art by Post: Of Home and Hope, which opened at Southbank Centre in September 2021 before touring to a further five venues across the UK. Indoor and outdoor exhibits were shown, as well as a week-long programme of events.

In addition, we worked with the Southbank Centre to bring Art by Post’s powerful message about the potential role of creativity in people’s health and wellbeing to billboards and bus stops across the UK. Portraits of participants were featured in outdoor displays on the tour, as well as in over 60 public spaces throughout the UK.

A digital gallery of participants’ work is available on the Southbank Centre website with resources for people to participate in the activities<sup>6</sup>. The project is also featured on the Google Arts and Culture Hub, with new artworks, films and testimonials, bringing the project to a new audience<sup>7</sup>.

The Southbank Centre is drawing up a proposal for Art by Post 2.0, which builds on the success of the initiative.



“Working with NASP has really advanced our thinking on social prescribing and helped us to shape our own plans around Creative Health. NASP has an invaluable team with such varied expertise, it’s a real pleasure to work in partnership with them.”

- Amy Vaughan - Arts Council England

<sup>6</sup> Find out more: <https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/creative-learning/arts-wellbeing/artbypost>

<sup>7</sup> Find out more: [https://artsandculture.google.com/story/NQVBIJOVD\\_Swgw?hl=en](https://artsandculture.google.com/story/NQVBIJOVD_Swgw?hl=en)



Images from Art by Post



## Historic Environment

The last year has seen significant progress in the advancement of social prescribing within the heritage and the historic environment sector. Following the launch of the Thriving Communities programme, NASP and Historic England hosted the first Heritage and Social Prescribing webinar in June 2021. This led to many heritage organisations across the country receiving support from Historic England to develop social prescribing pilots<sup>8</sup>.

In addition, a sector-wide working group on wellbeing and heritage was created in October 2021, co-chaired by Historic England and the Council for British Archaeology. The group has now established its own Heritage and Social Prescribing Community of Practice, bringing a variety of heritage organisations together to enhance their knowledge about social prescribing and learn from each other's ideas and practice.

Historic England has developed initial guidance on heritage and social prescribing and is working with the Community of Practice to adapt it for wider use. They are also creating a series of resources and toolkits to support the promotion and scaling up of social prescribing within the sector, including a wellbeing and heritage evaluation framework, a research report, and an evidence summary on heritage and social prescribing.

Historic England's [Wellbeing & Heritage Strategy](#) confirms its commitment to social prescribing and its strategic partnership with NASP. We are working with them to develop the Heritage Connectors scheme, which will train volunteers to signpost and connect people to heritage activities that can benefit their health and wellbeing. This is part of our wider work to develop Community Connectors to support easier access to social prescribing.



“We have seen major progress in furthering our work on wellbeing and heritage in the last year. Historic England is fully committed to making sure that everyone can enjoy the wellbeing benefits of engaging with the historic environment, including through social prescribing. We are very excited about the forthcoming new chapters of our partnership with NASP and working together on modelling innovative approaches to improving people's wellbeing.”

- Dr Victoria Thomson, Head of National Strategy, Historic England

<sup>8</sup> Organisations received support directly through funding and guidance in the case of the [Heritage and Social Prescribing programme in Kirkham](#) and the [Heritage Link worker in Great Yarmouth](#), and indirectly through promotion and networking for projects like [Archaeology on Prescription](#).

## Corporate affairs

2021/22 saw an increase in NASP staffing from 12 to over 30 including key strategic roles such as Director of Communications, and the Heads of our Thriving Community programme, Accelerating Innovation programme, Evidence programme, and Global programme. We also appointed a Head of Link Worker Infrastructure and Workforce and expanded our Fundraising, Revenue Generation, and Communications teams. Such an expansion not only reflected our growth but also marked a milestone in contracting staff as employees and completing our first payroll in Autumn 2021.

During this year we also increased our board membership with six new members joining - Dr Harry Brunjes, Patty Dimond, Gay Palmer, Brad Gudger, Chris Askew and Sarah Metcalfe. In addition to this, we have developed new subcommittees to ensure a further level of governance and risk mitigation. These committees were created to support NASP's governance as the charity continues to grow; we now have a Finance, Audit, Investment and Risk Committee chaired by Patty Dimond, and a Remuneration Committee chaired by Sarah Metcalfe. Both subcommittees are made up of Board members.

Continuing with the theme of Governance, we completed a major policy review this year in conjunction with our legal advisors Beachcrofts, which resulted in a comprehensive and robust Staff Handbook Policy being published. We are very proud of our working culture approach and being a truly 21st Century employer by supporting all staff to be “the best versions of themselves”.

Another key milestone in 21/22 was moving into our Southbank Centre office on 11th November 2021 - a palpable outcome of our strategic partnership with Southbank Centre and a reflection of the social prescribing pillar around Arts and Culture. Finally, we commenced the scoping and delivery of a new CRM system which will ultimately support us to collate, analyse and use data in a more sophisticated and informed way.



# Our people

## Trustees

Chris Askew OBE - Trustee  
 Jonathan Badyal - Trustee  
 Dr Harry Brunjes - Trustee  
 Patty Dimond - Trustee  
 The Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE - Trustee  
 Brad Gudger - Vice Chair  
 Sarah Metcalfe - Trustee  
 Gay Palmer - Trustee  
 Professor Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard DBE - Chair  
 Phoebe Vela-Hitchcox - Trustee

## Staff list - names & roles

Ingrid Abreu Scherer - Head of Accelerating Innovation Programme  
 Dulcie Alexander - Thriving Communities Fund Manager  
 Jared Ashe - Head of Corporate Affairs  
 Lou Baxter - Senior Evidence Specialist  
 Charlotte Bell - Senior Communications Manager  
 Jim Burt - Executive Director of Programmes  
 Dr Bogdan Chiva Giurca - Head of Global Programme  
 Lizzie Cody - Fundraising Consultant  
 Alexis Colón - Administration Assistant  
 Emily Cousins - National Lead - Older People  
 Desi Gradinarova - National Lead - Historic Environment  
 Nick Harrop - Director of Communications  
 Jenny Hartnoll - Consultant  
 Wendy Horrobin - Accelerating Innovation Events and Networking Manager  
 Anne Hunt - Head of Evidence Programme  
 Najnin Islam - Head of Workforce & Infrastructure

Hamaad Khan- Development Officer for Global Social Prescribing Alliance  
 Ish Ladak - Corporate Affairs & Projects Officer  
 Poppy Learman - Thriving Communities Network & Events Lead  
 Nigel Lee - Executive Director of Finance  
 Tracey Lines - National Lead - Physical Activity  
 Dr Radha Modgil - Ambassador Lead  
 Sabah Nazir - Communications and Corporate Affairs Assistant  
 Gráinne Nolan - Head of National Partners  
 Sunita Pandya - Chief Operating Officer  
 Josh Ryan - Head of Thriving Communities Programme  
 James Sanderson - CEO  
 Dave Solly - National Lead - Natural Environment  
 Rosie Stephen - Media, PR and Corporate Affairs Lead  
 Olivia Tilley - Executive Assistant & Board Secretary  
 Alana Tucker - Social Media & Events Communications Manager  
 Beatrice Walker - Corporate Affairs & Projects Officer







“I have been struggling with my mental health and social isolation, in my own personal lockdown, for a very long time. It was great because it was such a happy, safe group. We found strength in each other’s stories.”

“Even the best GPs in the world don’t have half an hour to listen to you but with social prescribing, you’re in it together. I’m on a list of medications as long as my arm and am always trying to cut down. It can be really beneficial to take part in something that you

lose yourself in. It’s only when you lose yourself in something that your body is able to relax. The relaxing things I do have a long-lasting effect on my mental and physical health.”

Maaïke (pictured second from the left) has been housebound since 2012, when a back injury made it almost impossible for her to walk. She attended ‘Women’s Confidence Building’ workshops run by The Heely Trust and The Handlebards in Sheffield, supported by NASP’s Thriving Communities Fund.





National  
Academy  
for Social  
Prescribing



## Get in touch

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