

REPORT

# Supporting the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector to evaluate social prescribing

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SEPTEMBER 2023

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National  
Academy  
for Social  
Prescribing

# About The National Academy for Social Prescribing

The National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) is a national charity that champions social prescribing. We support and connect people, communities and organisations so that more people across the UK can enjoy better health and wellbeing.

## Evidence and Evaluation at NASP

NASP's Evidence and Evaluation team is working to build the evidence base for social prescribing and ensure that social prescribing work is evidence-led. We support research which measures the impact of social prescribing on mental and physical health, wellbeing, and the health system.

## How to cite this report:

Polley, M., Sabey, A., Seers, H., and Chatterjee, H.J. (2023). Supporting the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector to evaluate social prescribing. Report – September 2023. London: National Academy for Social Prescribing.

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ISBN: 978-1-7394565-3-5  
Registered charity number: 1191145  
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## **Author acknowledgements**

We would like to thank everyone who responded to our call out for resources in evaluation and the participants of the roundtable discussion and one-to-one interviews. We would like to thank Dr Anne Hunt, former Head of Evidence at the National Academy for Social Prescribing, for commissioning this piece of work.

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# 1. Introduction

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Evaluation is one of the key priorities identified in NASP's Evidence Strategy and Strategic Evidence Framework. Supporting the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector with planning and delivering evaluations was a strong theme to emerge from the recent evidence reviews, the Thriving Communities programme evaluation, and insight from other NASP programmes such as Skillshare. An initial recommendation was to commission a social prescribing evaluation toolkit, however before committing to this, an initial scoping was carried out to see if there were existing resources available that would support evaluations of social prescribing programmes, particularly for the VCFSE sector. This commission, therefore, was to assess the appropriateness and quality of what already existed to determine whether a toolkit was necessary and to compile any relevant evaluation resources.

Evaluation is a commonly used word and may often be interpreted quite differently by different stakeholders and sectors. In its simplest form an evaluation is an assessment of a service or intervention that is either ongoing or completed. Usually, this evaluation is helping stakeholders make an informed decision as to whether this service or intervention has achieved its desired objectives. Additionally, some evaluations include calculations on the value of the service or intervention. Often evaluations contain suggestions or recommendations for future programme activity or evaluation and monitoring specifications, but this is not always a component of the evaluation process.

When well designed, an evaluation has a clear aim and objectives, and the method or methods of data collection are chosen to enable these aims and objectives to be met. There are many reasons why an evaluation may be conducted, and for each reason listed below there may be different methods used, different types of data collected, differing amounts of data analysis required and, of course, different budget levels available. Some evaluations, therefore, may be carried out by staff already employed in an organisation. Other evaluations may be tendered out to evaluation specialists who have had experience and training in collecting and analysing different types of data whilst adhering to good ethical practice and the Data Protection Act (2018).

Examples of why evaluations are undertaken:

- To understand if an intervention/service is reaching its intended audience.
- To determine how well an intervention/service has been implemented and/or to capture learning from that implementation.
- To determine if a service has had its desired effect.
- To identify what outcomes have occurred as a result of an intervention/service and whether these outcomes have improved.
- To establish for whom, how and why a service has or has not been beneficial.

The list above is not exhaustive, and there may be a range of other reasons as to why evaluation is carried out.

There are many resources that have been produced that can support organisations to develop an evaluation of their intervention/service. Often these are written for a specific sector or audience. Social prescribing requires the collaboration of professionals across many different sectors, and this has created a range of views on how evaluation should be conducted, what measures should be used and how to assign value.

For social prescribing, currently, there is no repository whereby evaluation resources have been reviewed and quality assured. The sector that has least access to staffing or in-house business analysts or researchers is arguably the VCFSE sector. This piece of scoping work was therefore intended to identify what resources are already available to support evaluation in smaller VCFSE organisations involved in social prescribing schemes and understand what challenges they are facing.

Several approaches to mapping and gathering of evaluation resources and opinions about evaluation were used. These approaches are described in the methods section of this report. A series of tables of resources have been produced to accompany this report with an extensive list of evaluation resources that have been identified and reviewed as suitable to support evaluation in social prescribing. They have been organised into topics to make the resources easily navigable and accessible.

This spreadsheet is presented as a series of tables in Appendix A, including:

1. Comprehensive resources, covering the entire process of evaluation
2. Partial resources, giving an overview or covering part of the evaluation process

It also includes resources which address these areas of evaluation:

3. Logic models and theory of change
4. Outcome measures
5. Methods
6. Patient and public involvement
7. Ethics
8. Reporting and dissemination

The qualitative analysis of 1-to-1 conversations and a roundtable are also written up in this report.



## 2. Methods

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Several methods were used to inform the mapping of evaluation toolkits and resources in use in the VCFSE sector, which will be described in more detail below. These methods included:

1. An evidence ‘call-out’ to the social prescribing sector
2. Website and Google searches and a compilation of existing resources used by the research team
3. One-to-one virtual discussions with suggested contacts
4. A roundtable discussion of people working in and leading initiatives around evaluation in the social prescribing, with a focus on links to the VCFSE sector

A simple thematic content analysis was used to categorise the common themes from the roundtable, one-to-one discussions and open text comments from the survey. The research team agreed an initial structure for categorising the data and then the various sources were analysed and compared with each other to establish the recurring themes.

### 2.1 ‘Call for evidence’ to the social prescribing sector

The call for evidence was used to understand what evaluation resources are currently used in the social prescribing sector. The call-out was particularly aimed at those working with or in small community organisations. Questions asked were: what top 3 evaluation tools or resources people used; what methods and measures were in use and reasons for choice; and details or links for resources. We were also interested to know what outputs, outcomes or measures were asked for by funders. Finally, we wanted to know what gaps in evaluation knowledge or skills existed.

The survey was open between 20 February 2023 and 31 March 2023 and was circulated via national evaluation networks, a social prescribing email network, national adult and youth social prescribing networks, two national evaluation organisations, a variety of voluntary sector network organisations, NHS Futures platform, as well as via over 30 contacts of the team in key organisations such as the creative sector. A full list of organisations contacted is listed in Appendix B.

## **2.2 Web and Google Scholar searches**

To find resources available on the internet, the project team first created a list of all the websites they were aware of (due to professional expertise as evaluators) that contained potentially relevant evaluation toolkits and resources. In addition, relevant national level organisations (e.g., statutory sector, private sector) were searched for evaluation resources published on their websites. To supplement the compilation of an extensive range of resources previously catalogued by the expert research team a Google Scholar search was then undertaken using the terms “Evaluation toolkits”, and “Evaluation toolkits for social prescribing”. Results were taken from the first 10 pages of search returns and filtered by “relevance” in Google Scholar.

## **2.3 Direct emails and one-to-one discussions**

Some people chose not to fill in the survey proforma but heard about the call for evidence and directly emailed resources and information. Some emails and contacts were followed up with one-to-one virtual discussions to learn more about upcoming new initiatives and resources in evaluation and social prescribing.

## **2.4 Roundtable**

We then held a roundtable discussion in March 2023 with a wider range of people working in and leading initiatives around evaluation in the social prescribing at the current time, with a focus on representatives of VCFSE organisations or community network leads. The sectors and disciplines represented in the discussions are listed in Appendix D.

Discussion was structured around the following topics: the value of a national level toolkit/repository of relevant resources, particularly for small VCFSE organisations; what topics would be prioritised for inclusion in a social prescribing specific toolkit/repository; any other relevant points people wanted to make.

# 3. Findings

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This project provides insight into the understanding and use of evaluation and the wider evaluation culture within social prescribing and the VCFSE sector including the challenges this can bring especially for smaller organisations. The results of the different aspects of mapping are presented below.

## 3.1 Identification of potential evaluation resources

The following breakdown of details where we found the potential evaluation toolkits and resources for consideration are described below.

### Survey responses for toolkits currently being used (n=4):

Out of 37 responses to the survey only three people identified complete toolkits covering the whole evaluation process and one person listed a resource focused on surveys. There could be several reasons for this - either people are unaware of the many toolkits or resources that exist, people do not feel they need this kind of guidance, they don't have the time or capacity to search for and read available resources or do not find this type of resource helpful. Very few resources or toolkits were specifically targeted to social prescribing which may be an issue and be an additional explanation for the lack of awareness of existing evaluation toolkits.

### Website and Google Scholar searching (n=46):

To add to the survey findings, wider website and Google Scholar searching was undertaken. Known resources identified from the expertise amongst the research team were located and reviewed. A total of 46 resources (when duplicates were removed) were found as shown below. Details of sites are listed in Appendix B and Appendix C.

- Expert team resource compilation of websites (n=42 resources results [Appendix B]);
- Google Scholar search (n=4 “Evaluation toolkits”, and “Evaluation toolkits for social prescribing” [Appendix C]).

## **Resources identified via one-to-one discussions and direct emails (n=24)**

There were a further 24 resources and toolkits sent to the research team directly or were identified during one-to-one discussions.

### **3.2 Inclusion and exclusion of resources**

The total number of potential resources identified as described above (n=74) were reviewed by AS and MP. A resource was included if it could be applied to social prescribing and met one of the criteria below:

- If it was developed by the VCFSE sector
- If the authors judged it to be appropriate for use by social prescribing activity providers, particularly in the VCFSE
- It was a resource from nationally recognised bodies or organisations
- It was recommended or used by people linked to social prescribing schemes

A total of 61 documents and resources met the inclusion criteria. 15 were comprehensive toolkits covering all of the evaluation cycle. 13 were partial toolkits giving an overview of the process for planning or covering only some stages of the cycle. 33 resources focused on just one aspect of evaluation which are detailed in the list below:

- economics/social return on investment (n=9)
- outcome measures (n=8)
- logic models/theory of change (n=5)
- reporting/dissemination (n=3)
- case studies (n=2)
- ethics (n=2)
- patient and public involvement (n=2)
- surveys (n=1)
- qualitative data collection (n=1)

13 resources were excluded for one of the following reasons:

- It was a duplicate
- It was not deemed relevant to social prescribing

- It was from a company providing paid outcome measures
- It was a project report as opposed to specifically designed evaluation resource

### **3.3 Organising the resources**

In total, the accompanying table in Appendix A provides quick access to 61 resources. The resources have been organised using the following headings:

- Comprehensive/entire process of evaluation
- Overview/partial process of evaluation
- Logic models and theory of change
- Outcome measures
- Methods
- Patient and public involvement
- Ethics
- Reporting and dissemination

This table provides a valuable resource capturing the breadth of resources that exist to support individuals and teams looking for guidance on evaluating social prescribing activity.

### **3.4 Analysis of qualitative data from the survey, one-to-one discussions and roundtable**

The one-to-one discussions (n=4) and roundtable discussions (n=10) enabled a deep discussion on how to support and enable evaluation without overwhelming an already stretched VCFSE sector. This section of the report provides the findings and themes that emerged from the qualitative data captured via the roundtable, one-to one conversations, combined with the open text comments from the survey. As data was analysed some clear priorities emerged across three broad themes, which will be explored in more detail:

1. Different language used by different stakeholders and types of resources
2. Culture and context
3. Learning needs and development

### 3.4.1 Language and types of resources

#### Shared language

A clear theme emerged from this work about the need for a shared language around evaluation across the VCFSE sector and especially between social prescribing activity providers and funders/commissioners.

Several participants suggested that a glossary of evaluation terms could be produced and agreed upon between different stakeholders (e.g., through a consensus-building exercise) to promote a shared understanding of the evaluation terminology. Many roundtable participants thought that this approach could improve the clarity of discussions, especially with funders, to establish clear agreement about what is being asked for.

A shared language was felt to be particularly important because social prescribing involves so many different disciplines where different meanings and acronyms can be used, thus having a common language around evaluation would be helpful to facilitate the conversations, relationships and collaboration between partners in the social prescribing field. One roundtable participant talked of a recent initiative to build a community of practice for evaluation of social prescribing among health partners across London, to share what is happening around evaluation and the challenges being experienced, and this was already proving useful as it enabled different stakeholders to share and learn from each other.

Other participants hoped that a shared language would contribute towards a more consistent way of collecting social prescribing data across a region or nationally, as part of influencing decision-makers who hold the budget for evaluation. This could help ensure evaluation is properly invested in.

In the widest sense promoting a shared language and community was seen as a way of assisting organisations in social prescribing, both large and small, to be 'evidence literate' enabling them to provide the leadership for evaluation and challenge those asking for the evidence, if the 'ask' was unrealistic. This could promote more useful and appropriate evaluation activity. These last 2 points link to theme 2 below relating to the wider culture around evaluation

## Evaluation toolkits and other resources

The qualitative data indicated there was not strong demand for another evaluation toolkit as people highlighted that many resources were already available, albeit not directly written for social prescribing. Our mapping exercise, which identified 61 existing evaluation resources suitable for social prescribing, corroborates the view that there are already enough resources available.

People did, however, highlight the need to feel less overwhelmed by all the resources available and to have clear signposting to trusted resources that support evaluation of social prescribing. The idea of having a 'one-stop-shop' webpage to save time in finding quality assured/relevant evaluation resources was considered a practical approach, particularly for supporting smaller VCFSE organisations who do not have in-house research or analyst teams and little capacity to carry out evaluations.

### 3.4.2 Culture and context

A theme emerged from the data analysis about the wider culture of evaluation which is limiting the quality and value of evaluation activity.

#### Unrealistic expectations

Some participants felt that the demands by funders and commissioners in terms of what they expect from very small organisations was unrealistic although it was noted that funders/commissioners may not appreciate what they are asking for is not achievable. As explained by one roundtable participant from the creative sector, there are different cultures from which people approach evaluation. For example, in the NHS commissioned projects, organisations are required to evidence outcomes using validated measures to prove they've made a difference because of the evidence-based practice culture in the NHS. The services, however, are often not working at the scale or the level of experience to do that kind of evaluation which is closer to research. This means that small organisations are being hugely disadvantaged by these expectations which are often unrealistic for them - they don't know how to do the evaluation, they may get it wrong, and it disrupts the way they are running services yet is often required by funders.

Other participants in the roundtable as well as respondents to the survey, echoed this point that smaller organisations are under pressure to show their worth to secure future investment. These smaller organisations don't always know how to evidence their value and there it was felt that there is much uncertainty about how to go about evaluating social prescribing.

### Clarity and consensus for smaller VCFSE organisations

One aspect of the culture of evaluation in social prescribing that was discussed in the roundtable, one to one discussion and was evident in the qualitative survey data was the need for the scale of evaluation requirements to be appropriate to the size of an organisation.

Participants highlighted that for effective and appropriately scaled evaluation of social prescribing, it would help to agree what is needed by or expected of small organisations. Rather than focus on evidencing outcomes participants thought it would be better to draw on existing knowledge about what works, for which there is already plenty of evidence and for small organisations to use their capacity to audit and look at good practice in relation to this existing knowledge (closer to monitoring activity) or explore the process of running their service or understand participant experiences. As one roundtable participant explained, a simple approach to report on how many people attended, who they were and how far an activity has reached, may in fact be all that some funders really want. These smaller scale reporting requirements can be really helpful for small organisations to better understand the mechanisms of change, how the way they work contributes to the outcomes. Another participant highlighted that evaluations in general tend to focus on measuring the benefits and positives of interventions but there is much to be learned from what was tried but didn't work. This is valuable insight that can be missing from evaluation but may be more likely to be documented if this was part of an agreed and acceptable approach to evaluation in social prescribing. These points reinforce the need for more clarity and consensus about what is realistic and expected of smaller services in terms of evaluation.



It was evident from qualitative data in the survey and from the roundtable that the current evaluation culture is being shaped by funders of social prescribing services. The survey identified a wide range of different data expected by funders, from basic data on attendance or events, to quantitative outcome measures using specific tools or to qualitative data and more complex questions about impact, improvement, and social change. It was interesting to note given the comment above about learning from failure, the lack of questions asked about what didn't work. Furthermore, different funding streams asked for different data which adds a burden given the limited capacity for evaluation especially in the smallest organisations. Additionally, many VCFSE organisations have to make multiple funding applications to cover the cost of running their services. This adds further complexity to what data needs to be collected, for which funder. There was support at the roundtable for looking into the possibility to standardise evaluation requirements across funders and to reach agreement on what is appropriate to ask for in terms of evaluation in social prescribing. A consensus could take pressure off the time and resources needed in already very stretched organisations.

As part of this discussion, it was also mentioned that aggregating data about social prescribing across smaller organisations was a desirable ambition. One participant pointed out that having agreed methods and approaches for evaluation of social prescribing would make this easier (and perhaps more likely), which also links back to the need for trusted resources to guide evaluation (theme 1). This would be particularly useful for academic reviews and meta-analysis of multiple data sources, which is currently very difficult due to the broad variation and quality in data collected. Another participant from the health sector reported on their approach of developing the digital means to monitor and evaluate in the VCFSE sector to minimise the burden of data collection and maximise the value of the information collected e.g., by sharing data across other interested parties such as local authorities. This is an emerging field of work in the sector and in time may influence the future direction of monitoring and evaluation activity.

Another suggested way forward for social prescribing evaluation could be to build partnerships between VCFSE organisations and academics/research/evaluators. The VCFSE sector can be trained to do good quality monitoring using existing credible tools, while the academic teams help with the larger scale, more complex evaluations. This model has been tested successfully in the work of the Thriving Communities Fund.

An outcome from this discussion and the wider project is the suggestion to bring key funders together to agree what is acceptable/meaningful to ask of very small organisations in the way of evaluation. Helping funders to think more collaboratively about what they ask for from small organisations would be helpful and support better quality evaluation, and NASP could play a role in brokering discussion of this area.

### **3.4.3 Learning needs and development**

Many participants discussed areas of learning and training that they felt were important for staff designated to undertake evaluations for funders.

#### **Learning needs**

Learning needs in evaluation will inevitably vary across individuals and organisations. This is confirmed by the authors' own experience supporting and teaching evaluation and further informed by the findings of the survey. We asked about gaps in knowledge or skills that participants or their organisation would like help with and 31 out of 37 people responded to this question.

Unsurprisingly, responses revealed a gap around capacity for evaluation in many smaller organisations (n=6 organisations), these respondents explained that the lack of dedicated resource for evaluation brings pressure, and they would value any offers of help. One answer highlighted the value of having national clarity on evaluation approaches to ease the burden on individual projects and two responses mentioned the lack of funding for evaluation.

Knowledge or skills gaps included:

- Using the right methods and measures, including suitable tools for particular groups such as those with limited literacy, children & young people or creative evaluation (n=7)
- Evaluation design such as developing an evaluation framework/asking the right question (n=4)
- Methods of economic evaluation/SROI (n=2)
- Data analysis (n=2)
- How to access evaluation expertise or find academic partners to collaborate (n=2)
- Ethics in evaluation (n=1)
- How to access health service data (n=1)

The lack of capacity to do evaluation combined with gaps in skills and knowledge in evaluation design and methods are potential barriers to good quality and useful evaluation in the VCFSE sector.

Foundational learning:

The roundtable discussion raised the idea that foundational learning for evaluation would help some people and organisations in the sector. As several participants expressed, there is often a fear of evaluation and how to do it. Survey responses showed that many participants feel that evaluation is rarely resourced adequately, and people can become overwhelmed having to manage this in addition to the core job of delivering services. This can cause people to start collecting data using an easy solution like a commonly used outcome tool, when this may not be suitable for the question they are trying to answer or their client group.

Participants at the roundtable discussed the value of foundational learning to come before the point a person is designing an evaluation, to help people first understand several key points, such as why they need to evaluate and to identify the aims, objectives and audience of the evaluation. Furthermore, participants discussed the fact that foundational learning could help people understand the range of approaches open to them and to consider open and exploratory questions for their evaluation - not just those that count and measure.

This would provide more knowledge to design an evaluation that is appropriate for their potential participants. The final point raised was the fact that many people collect data without understanding how it will be analysed or how the responses will or will not answer the evaluation aim and objectives.

Foundational learning could support evaluation design that is appropriately scaled to the size of the organisation, resources available and the nature of the project being evaluated. This would help to deliver more meaningful evaluation which answers questions about how and why something works. This type of basic learning about evaluation is likely to be particularly relevant to smaller organisations with limited capacity for evaluation and has potential to save resources.

### Training and access to it

As discussed above, training may not be needed by everyone, but the roundtable focused on the need for funding for those who do want to access training. This should cover any course fees but also be for releasing the individual from their role to attend. The lack of funding for training and backfill is a barrier for many in the VCFSE workforce. Furthermore, there was emphasis placed on the need for accompanying investment in organisations to do the evaluation that follows, as there is little point in training people who then do not have time to complete the work.

The need for funding to access evaluation training was further supported by the suggestion that any training could incorporate working on an individual's or group's own evaluation. This would enable the learning and progress to be made in a supportive environment, taking more of a structured programme approach than a one-off course. This model has been used with success on a social prescribers' innovators programme across London incorporating peer learning and one-to-one support. This is also similar to the Skillshare and Connected Communities programme already hosted by NASP for encouraging peer learning. One-to-one support and mentoring can be valuable and a way to also cascade expertise within an organisation. Similarly, access to drop-in surgeries hosted by those with evaluation expertise could be a way to access help with problems that arise during projects.

## 4. Conclusion

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This mapping project gives insight into the current evaluation culture in the VCFSE sector who are involved in social prescribing. Collectively, evaluation is seen to be important and there is a strong willingness and commitment to undertake evaluation. It was felt, however, that the value and quality is hindered by the challenges faced. To develop best practice in evaluation and monitoring for social prescribing, it is important that action is taken to reduce the burden on VCFSE organisations and help address the challenges of lack of evaluation capacity.

These burdens arise from the wider evaluation culture which places unrealistic expectations on smaller organisations who are stretched by lack of evaluation capacity alongside delivery of essential services. Many VCFSE organisations are not working at a scale to produce meaningful evaluation results and determining what level of evaluation is realistic and appropriate for the size of the organisation would, therefore, greatly help. Additionally, it is necessary for professionals in smaller VCFSE organisations to have capacity within their roles to conduct proportionate evaluation.

Another systemic challenge identified was access to training, trusted resources and support to develop greater evaluation expertise. Evaluators vary in their skills and confidence and those who seek training lack the support for course costs or to backfill their time to attend courses or complete the evaluation itself. Overall, it was felt that there is a need for easier access to trusted resources and peer networking, as well as evaluation expertise and support. Collectively these areas would strengthen the quality and community in evaluation and encourage sustainable change.

The authors' view is that a deep cultural barrier relates to the lack of clear leadership for evaluation in social prescribing, to influence relationships with funders and commissioners on what is realistic and appropriate in evaluation for the VCFSE sector.

For example, there is a need for a shared language of evaluation between the range of sectors involved in social prescribing, without which working across organisations and partners is much harder.

Standardising the language used around evaluation would promote clarity and community across evaluation partners. Additionally, social prescribing evaluation suffers due to short funding cycles. Establishing longer funding cycles would improve the quality of evaluation by giving sufficient time for real impact to be captured. Organisations would spend less of their funding on the admin associated with short-term funding applications and reporting and more on delivering their services. With clear leadership and accountability, social prescribing evaluation could become the continuous learning process it is intended to be rather than the current situation which is ad hoc or driven by the many differing demands of funders.

There are limitations to this piece of work as the team worked within a short period of time. It is, therefore, likely that further resources exist on websites that weren't identified in this piece of work and that the themes identified do not fully represent all of the views of stakeholders. Further work can be done to update resources and seek further feedback on views around evaluation of social prescribing in the VCFSE sector.

# Appendix A: Evaluation resources

## Comprehensive/entire process of evaluation

Name of resource	Authors	Summary	Link to resource
Introduction to Wellbeing Evaluation	What Works Wellbeing	Web-based resource covering all the steps of an evaluation with a wellbeing focus with the wellbeing measures bank included	<a href="#">Introduction to wellbeing evaluation - Evaluating wellbeing (whatworkswellbeing.org)</a>
Evaluation Support Scotland Resources	Evaluation Support Scotland	Website with searchable and downloadable resources covering all stages of the evaluation process	<a href="#">Resources - Evaluation Support Scotland</a>
Evaluation guidance Heritage Fund National Lottery	National Lottery	Web-based guidance covering all the steps of evaluation, also offered as a downloadable pdf	<a href="#">Evaluation guidance   The National Lottery Heritage Fund</a>
Creative and Credible Evaluation	Jane Willis/WillisNewton.co.uk	A web-based complete toolkit to support evaluation of projects in arts and health	<a href="#">Creative &amp; Credible (creativeandcredible.co.uk)</a>
Impact and Evaluation	National Council for Voluntary Organisations	Webpages covering most aspects of the evaluation process	<a href="#">Impact and evaluation   NCVO</a>
Evaluating new models of care	Healthcare Improvement Scotland	A web-based or downloadable guide covering the essentials to planning and carrying out a healthcare evaluation including a section with links to extensive resources	<a href="#">20170815-evaluation-guide-draft-v1.pdf (ihub.scot)</a>
Evaluation in health and wellbeing	Public Health England	Web pages giving guidance on planning and conducting an evaluation of a health and wellbeing programme or project	<a href="#">Evaluation in health and wellbeing - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
Evaluating Digital Health Products guide	Office for Health Improvement and Disparities	Webpages giving guidance on evaluating a digital health product	<a href="#">Evaluating digital health products - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>

Magenta Book	HM Treasury and Evaluation Task Force	A downloadable pdf guide giving central government guidance on design, conduct, use and dissemination of evaluation	<a href="http://www.gov.uk">The Magenta Book - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
I want to evaluate my work	Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance	Webpage signposting to other online resources and toolkits to support evaluation of creative projects	<a href="http://culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk">I want to evaluate my work... (culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk)</a>
NHS Evaluation Toolkit	Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board/NIHR ARC West/West of England Academic Health Science Network	A web-based evaluation toolkit for evaluating health services and other health projects and interventions	<a href="http://nhsevaluationtoolkit.net">Home - Evaluation Works (nhsevaluationtoolkit.net)</a>
West Midlands Decision Support Unit Evaluation Guide	West Midlands Decision Support Unit (part of Midlands and Lancashire CSU)	A web-based evaluation toolkit to support commissioning, designing and/or conducting a health service evaluation	<a href="http://midlandsdecisionsupport.nhs.uk">Midlands DSC Guide to Evaluation Design, Principles and Practice (midlandsdecisionsupport.nhs.uk)</a>
Making Sense of Social Prescribing	Polley M et al.	A downloadable guide giving practical advice on how to do an evaluation in Social Prescribing from start to finish	<a href="http://socialprescribingnetwork.com">Making-sense-of-social-prescribing 2017.pdf (socialprescribingnetwork.com)</a>
Better evaluation: Evaluation Methods and Approaches	Better evaluation	Web-based guidance on choosing and using different evaluation methods and approaches	<a href="#">Evaluation Methods and Approaches   BetterEvaluation</a>
look, I'm priceless! Handbook on how to assess your artistic organisation	International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts	General guide, pdf	<a href="#">Look, I'm priceless! Handbook on how to assess your artistic organisation   IETM</a>



## Overview/partial process of evaluation

Name of resource	Authors	Summary	Link to resource
MRC guidelines for process evaluations	Medical Research Council	A downloadable pdf guide covering process evaluation only	<a href="#">MRC-291121-PHSRN-ProcessEvaluationSummaryGuidance.pdf (ukri.org)</a>
UKES Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation	UK Evaluation Society	A downloadable pdf providing general guidelines on planning, principles and conduct (including ethics), and reporting of evaluation.	<a href="#">Good Practice Guidelines - UK Evaluation Society</a>
WHO - A toolkit for how to implement social prescribing	World Health Organisation	A downloadable pdf providing guidance on how to implement social prescribing in a community context, with a section on evaluation	<a href="#">A toolkit on how to implement social prescribing (who.int)</a>
Centre for Cultural Value Research and Evaluation Practice	University of Leeds	Webpages with online and downloadable guides for evaluation in the cultural sector on principles including co-creation, case studies, infographics	<a href="#">Research and evaluation practice - CultureHive</a>
Evaluating Improvement	NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement	Web-based or downloadable guide to planning an evaluation of a service improvement	<a href="#">ILG-1.5-Evaluating-Improvement.pdf (england.nhs.uk)</a>
A guide to programme evaluation in quality improvement	Healthcare Improvement Scotland	A web-based or downloadable powerpoint guide outlining the steps for planning and designing a programme evaluation in quality improvement, with onward links (e.g. Better Evaluation)	<a href="#">PowerPoint Presentation (ihub.scot)</a>
The Complexity Evaluation Toolkit	Centre for the Evaluation of Complexity Across the Nexus	Web-based and downloadable pdf guide to commissioning, designing and managing a complex evaluation	<a href="#">Toolkit-2021-vJul-2022.pdf (cecan.ac.uk)</a>
Impact Evaluation Guide	Department for International Development	A downloadable pdf guide to assessing, designing or managing an impact evaluation	<a href="#">impact_evaluation_guide_0515.pdf (bond.org.uk)</a>

Evidence informed guidance for robust evaluation and evidence synthesis	Cunningham et al	Academic article giving guidance for robust evaluation of the connection aspect of social prescribing schemes	<a href="#">Progressing social prescribing with a focus on process of connection: Evidence-informed guidance for robust evaluation and evidence synthesis - ScienceDirect</a>
Evaluation: what to consider	Health Foundation	A downloadable guide covering commonly asked questions about evaluation of quality improvement in health care	<a href="#">Evaluation: what to consider - The Health Foundation</a>
Tools to help you gather and use evidence and learning	National Lottery	Web-based guidance from the National Lottery on tools and guides on measuring wellbeing and links to other resources	<a href="#">Tools to help you gather and use evidence and learning   The National Lottery Community Fund (tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)</a>
CHEW - Charities Evaluation Working group	CHEW	Forum for VCSE researchers and members to join for best practice in evaluation	<a href="#">Charity Evaluation Working Group (chewgroup.org.uk)</a>
NPC: Starting to measure your impact	NPC	Web-based four step guidance to the cycle of good impact practice	<a href="#">Starting to measure your impact - Charity Experts (thinknpc.org)</a>

## Logic models and theory of change

Name of resource	Author	Summary	Link to resource
Setting Standards for Theory of Change	Centre for Theory of Change	Webpage with lots of downloadable publications about theory of change and examples in different contexts	<a href="#">Publications - Theory of Change Community</a>
Your Guide to Using Logic Models	NHS Midlands and Lancs Commissioning Support Unit	A downloadable guide to theory and practice of using logic models	<a href="#">Your guide to Logic Models.pdf (strategyunitwm.nhs.uk)</a>
Using Logic Models in Evaluation	NHS Midlands and Lancs Commissioning Support Unit	A downloadable guide to developing a logic model for an evaluation	<a href="#">Using Logic Models in Evaluation- Jul16.pdf (strategyunitwm.nhs.uk)</a>

Defra Theory of Change Toolkit - SD1421	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	A set of downloadable guidelines to support the production of theories of change for evaluation of programmes across Defra's policies	<a href="http://defra.gov.uk">Science Search (defra.gov.uk)</a>
Theory maker	Theory Maker	A web-based tool to make Theory of change diagrams	<a href="#">Theory Maker</a>

## Outcome measures

Name of resource	Author	Summary	Link to resource
Evaluating Arts, Culture and Health projects pilot evaluation toolkit	Birmingham City Council	A downloadable spreadsheet being piloted as a template to capture simple process data from arts, culture and health community projects	<a href="#">Evaluating Arts, Culture and Health projects   Arts, Culture and Health   Birmingham City Council</a>
Thriving Communities Measures Bank	What Works Wellbeing	A downloadable spreadsheet linking to the thriving communities measures bank	<a href="#">Thriving-Communities-measures-bank.xlsx (live.com)</a>
UCL Creative Wellbeing Measures Toolkit	University College, London	A downloadable booklet of measures for assessing psychological wellbeing arising from participation in creative activities	<a href="#">Culture Nature Health Research - UCL Wellbeing Measures - University College London</a>
A Guide to Selecting Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) in Social Prescribing, London, University of Westminster	Polley M and Richards R (University of Westminster)	A downloadable guide to outcome measure selection for social prescribing project with accompanying excel resources	<a href="#">a-guide-to-selecting-proms-for-sp-2019.pdf (socialprescribingnetwork.com)</a>
Social Prescribing Learning for Linkworkers: Keeping Records and Measuring Impact	NHSE E-learning for Healthcare	Part of the NHS e-learning training for Link Workers: a module on Keeping Records and Measuring Impact covering the use of outcome measures	<a href="#">HEE elfh Hub (e-lfh.org.uk)</a>

Outcomes framework guide	National Lottery	Web-based guide to outcome frameworks and standalone measures for evaluation in different sectors. It can be filtered to find relevant tools and resources.	<a href="#">4.2-Outcome-frameworks-and-standalone-measures-database.xlsx (live.com)</a>
Outcome and Experience Measures	Child Outcomes Research Consortium	Web-based resources for how to measure children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing with access to measures	<a href="#">Outcome &amp; Experience Measures (corc.uk.net)</a>
Which tool to use? A guide for evaluating health and wellbeing outcomes for community growing programmes	Sustain	A downloadable guide to tools for evaluating health and wellbeing outcomes for community green and nature-based programmes	<a href="#">Which tool to use?   Sustain (sustainweb.org)</a>

## Methods

Name of resource	Author	Topic	Summary	Link to resource
A guide to using storytelling to evaluate impact	Arts at the Old Fire Station	Qualitative data	Webpage with downloadable guidance on the use of the storytelling method for evaluating impact in the creative arts	<a href="#">Storytelling Evaluation Methodology   Old Fire Station, Oxford</a>
Questionnaires	Impactosaurus	Surveys	Webpage with links to 17 different questionnaire based tools for use in evaluation	<a href="#">Questionnaires   Soft outcomes</a>
Guide to effective case studies	What Works Wellbeing	Case studies	A downloadable guide to constructing a case study of a project or activity	<a href="#">Guide to effective case studies - What Works Wellbeing</a>

How to write a learning case study	Centre for Cultural Value	Case studies	Web-based or downloadable guidance on how to communicate the learning from a project using a case study approach, including a headings template	<a href="#">How to... write a learning case study - CultureHive</a>
Measuring and managing toolkit	Mantell Gwynedd Health Board	Economic evaluation	A downloadable guide and accompanying spreadsheets for measuring social value (need to register)	<a href="#">Mantell Gwynedd</a>
A guide to wellbeing economic evaluation	What Works Wellbeing	Economic evaluation	A web-based resource covering the stages of an economic evaluation with proposed methods for economic evaluation of wellbeing programmes	<a href="#">A Guide to Wellbeing Economic Evaluation - What Works Wellbeing</a>
Economic evaluation in Quality Improvement: a starter guide	Healthcare Improvement Scotland	Economic evaluation	A web-based or downloadable pdf guide on the steps for carrying out an economic evaluation of a quality improvement initiative	<a href="#">a-starter-guide-to-economic-evaluation.pdf (ihub.scot)</a>
Developing wellbeing cost effectiveness measures in the charity sector	ProBono Economics	Economic evaluation	A downloadable guide giving a seven-step approach to assessing the wellbeing cost-effectiveness of a charitable intervention	<a href="#">Developing wellbeing cost effectiveness measures in the charity sector   Pro Bono Economics</a>
The guide to SORI	Social Value UK	Economic evaluation	A downloadable guide to measuring, managing and accounting for social value	<a href="#">Standards and Guidance - Social Value UK</a>

UK Social Value Bank	Housing Associations Charitable Trust	Economic evaluation	Webpages giving access to resources to enable the measurement of social and environmental impact through improvements to wellbeing and savings made to the state (register to use)	<a href="#">UK Social Value Bank   Demonstrating Social Value   HACT</a>
ICECAP tools	University of Bristol	Economic evaluation	Webpage giving access to measures of wellbeing (for different age groups) for use in economic evaluation, related to an individual's ability to 'do' and 'be' the things that are important in life (register to use)	<a href="#">ICECAP   Bristol Medical School: Population Health Sciences   University of Bristol</a>
The Carer Experience Scale	University of Bristol	Economic evaluation	Webpage giving access to the Carer Experience Scale to measure caring experience, in terms of care-related quality of life, for use in economic evaluation (register to use)	<a href="#">CES   Bristol Medical School: Population Health Sciences   University of Bristol</a>
A Guide To Health Economics For Those Working in Public Health: A concise desktop handbook	University of Bangor	Economic evaluation	A web-based guide introducing and defining key economic terms and types of economic evaluation	<a href="#">guide-handbook-en.pdf (bangor.ac.uk)</a>

## Patient and public involvement

Name of resource	Author	Summary	Link to resource
Guidelines for involving people with mental health issues in heritage projects	Burnell et al (Solent/Winchester/Bournemouth Universities and Historic England)	A downloadable guide to best practice guide to involving people with mental health issues in heritage projects designed to support mental wellbeing	<a href="http://solent.ac.uk">Guidelines for involving people with mental health issues in heritage projects (solent.ac.uk)</a>
Guidelines for PPI in Evaluation	NIHR Applied Research Collaboration, West	A downloadable guide to embedding patient and public involvement into evaluation activities	<a href="http://nihr.ac.uk">Microsoft Word - Guidelines for PPI in Evaluation v5 Feb 2020 (nihr.ac.uk)</a>

## Ethics

Name of resource	Author	Summary	Link to resource
Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research	British Psychological Society	A downloadable guide to ethics for online research or evaluation	<a href="#">Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research   BPS</a>
Best practice in the ethics and governance of service evaluation: quick guide	NIHR Applied Research Collaboration, West	A downloadable guide to best ethical practice in evaluation in health and social care	<a href="http://nihr.ac.uk">Microsoft Word - Ethics in evaluation guidelines leaflet v6 Feb2020 (nihr.ac.uk)</a>

## Reporting and dissemination

Name of resource	Author	Summary	Link to resource
Revised Standards for Quality Improvement Reporting Excellence	SQUIRE	Webpage with a format for simple reporting of quality improvement projects in healthcare	<a href="#">SQUIRE   SQUIRE 2.0 Guidelines (squire-statement.org)</a>
How to create infographics with impact	Nifty Fox/Centre for Cultural Value	Web-based advice on how to design and make an infographic as a visual way to communicate the findings of an evaluation	<a href="#">How to... create infographics with impact - CultureHive</a>
Result! What good impact reporting looks like	NPC	A downloadable guide to producing an impact report	<a href="#">Result! What good impact reporting looks like - NPC (thinknpc.org)</a>



# Appendix B: Detail of methods

## Where did the evidence call out get circulated?

- Social Prescribing Network (SPN)
- NASP International Evidence Collaborative database
- Evaluation Online Network (JISC email network)
- Social Prescribing (JISC email network)
- Evaluation Network Scotland
- S. London Social Prescribing Network
- Social Prescribing Youth Network
- NHS Futures platform
- Charity Evaluation Working Group
- Creative Health and Wellbeing Alliance
- National Centre for Creative Health
- Streetgames
- Q evaluation community
- Cancer 52
- Penny Brohn UK
- VOSCUR
- NIHR ARCs newsletters

Plus 30 personal contacts of the team working in social prescribing.

The evidence call was promoted on twitter by NASP and SPN and cascaded by many other tweeters.

All of the networks listed above circulated the survey link to their database of contacts.

## Which websites were searched?

Expert team resource compilation of websites (N=37 resource results)

- Introduction to wellbeing evaluation - Evaluating wellbeing ([www.whatworkswellbeing.org](http://www.whatworkswellbeing.org))
- I want to evaluate my work... (culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk)
- NHS Evaluation Toolkit <https://nhsevaluationtoolkit.nhs.uk>
- West Midlands Decision Support Unit Evaluation Guide [https://www.midlandsdecisionsupport.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ABJE\\_12053\\_Rebranded-Interactive-PDF-Evaluation-Guide-for-DSN\\_v6.pdf](https://www.midlandsdecisionsupport.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ABJE_12053_Rebranded-Interactive-PDF-Evaluation-Guide-for-DSN_v6.pdf)
- The UK Social Value bank ( to measure your social and environmental impact through improvements to wellbeing and savings made to the state) <http://www.hact.org.uk/social-value-bank>
- Health Foundation (Evaluation: what to consider) [Evaluation: what to consider - The Health Foundation](#)
- Social Value UK (The guide to SROI) [Standards and Guidance - Social Value UK](#)
- The Carer Experience Scale (profile measure of the caring experience for use in economic evaluation. The CES focuses on 'care-related quality of life' <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/projects/HaPS/HE/ICECAP/CES/index.aspx>
- Rockwood Clinical Frailty Scale <http://www.cgakit.com/fr-1-rockwood-clinical-frailty-scale>
- NHS Surveys - Focused on patients' experience
- Guidelines for PPI in Evaluation <https://arc-w.nihr.ac.uk/training-and-capacity-building/evaluation-best-practice-and-guidelines/>
- Centre for Theory of Change <http://www.theoryofchange.org/>
- Your Guide to Using Logic Models <https://www.strategyunitwm.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2018-03/Your%20guide%20to%20Logic%20Models.pdf>
- Using Logic Models in Evaluation- Jul16.pdf (www.strategyunitwm.nhs.uk)
- UCL Creative Wellbeing Measures Toolkit Culture Nature Health Research - UCL Wellbeing Measures - University College London <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/biosciences/culture-nature-health-research/ucl-creative-wellbeing-measures>
- Guide to effective case studies Guide to effective case studies - What Works Wellbeing
- A Guide to Selecting Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) in Social Prescribing, London, University of Westminster. <https://www.socialprescribingnetwork.com/media/attachments/2022/02/03/a-guide-to-selecting-proms-for-sp-2019.pdf>
- Making Sense of Social Prescribing <https://www.socialprescribingnetwork.com/media/attachments/2022/02/03/making-sense-of-social-prescribing-2017.pdf>
- Social Prescribing - Learning for Link Workers programme E learning programme. Module. Keeping Records and Measuring Impact <https://portal.e-fh.org.uk/Component/Details/608408>

- Outcomes framework guide <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk%2Fmedia%2F4.2-Outcome-frameworks-and-standalone-measures-database.xlsx%3Fmtime%3D20190729084950&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>
- Tools from the National Lottery to help you gather and use evidence and learning | The National Lottery Community Fund (www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk ) <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/managing-your-grant/learn-from-your-project/data-and-evidence>
- Sopact Monitoring and Evaluation Tools <https://www.sopact.com/monitoring-and-evaluation-tools>
- Better evaluation - whole website <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches>
- CHEW - Charities Evaluation Working group <https://www.chewgroup.org.uk/>
- Conducting a survey <https://doi.org/10.1136/sbmj.0105143>
- Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research | BPS <https://www.bps.org.uk/guideline/ethics-guidelines-internet-mediated-research>
- "A Guide To Health Economics For Those Working in Public Health A concise desktop handbook" <https://cheme.bangor.ac.uk/documents/guide-handbook-en.pdf>
- How to design a questionnaire doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/sbmj.0106187>
- "look, i'm priceless! Handbook on how to assess your artistic organisation" <https://www.ietm.org/en/resources/toolkits/look-im-priceless-handbook-on-how-to-assess-your-artistic-organisation>
- Guidelines for involving people with mental health issues in heritage projects <https://www.solent.ac.uk/research-innovation-enterprise/research-at-solent/projects-and-awards/documents/march-plus-guidelines-report.pdf>
- NPC: Starting to measure your impact <https://www.thinknpc.org/starting-to-measure-your-impact/>
- "Defra Theory of Change Toolkit - SD1421 <https://randd.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectID=20910&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=theory%20of%20change&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10>
- RESULT! WHAT GOOD IMPACT REPORTING LOOKS LIKE <https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/result-what-good-impact-reporting-looks-like/>
- Theory maker <http://theorymaker.info/>
- "UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit" [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/sites/culture/files/ucl\\_museum\\_wellbeing\\_measures\\_toolkit\\_sept2013.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/sites/culture/files/ucl_museum_wellbeing_measures_toolkit_sept2013.pdf)
- "VALUATION OF PAYMENT BY RESULTS (PB)" [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/248656/wp40-planning-eval-assessments.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248656/wp40-planning-eval-assessments.pdf)

- Useful guide to children’s and young people’s mental health and wellbeing measures <https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/>
- "Which tool to use? A guide for evaluating health and wellbeing outcomes for community growing programmes"  
<https://www.sustainweb.org/reports/whichtooltouse/#:~:text=Which%20tool%20to%20use%3F%20A%20guide%20for%20evaluating,and%20helps%20them%20to%20choose%20appropriate%20evaluation%20tools.>
- SQUIRE guidelines SQUIRE 2.0 Guidelines ([www.squire-statement.org](http://www.squire-statement.org))
- Evaluation in health and wellbeing  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/evaluation-in-health-and-wellbeing>
- Magenta Book <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book>
- NCVO - suite of evaluation resources <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/impact-evaluation/#/>

## Google Scholar search

Search terms “Evaluation toolkits”, and “Evaluation toolkits for social prescribing”

N=4 resource results.

NB: Only resources not already identified by searching websites were added from the Google Scholar searching.

- Evaluation guidance Heritage Fund National Lottery  
<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/evaluation-guidance>
- "UKES Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation"  
<https://www.evaluation.org.uk/professional-development/good-practice-guideline/>
- WHO - A toolkit for how to implement social prescribing  
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789290619765>
- What works Wellbeing - a guide to wellbeing economic evaluation  
<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/a-guide-to-wellbeing-economic-evaluation/>

Which sectors and disciplines were represented in one-to-one discussions or the round table event?

Discipline	Roles/Aspects
Health - NHS	Personalised Care and Social prescribing
National Academy for Social Prescribing	National Leads for: Community Connections Older People Historic Environment East of England Lead for Thriving Communities
Good Faith Partnership	Social Impact of Faith organisations
Oxford University University College London University of East London University of Exeter University of the West of England University of Bristol	Green social prescribing Children and young people's social prescribing Gardens, Libraries and Museums social prescribing Social prescribing for older people Evidence reviews Evaluation design
Independent Evaluation specialists	Evaluation design in: Health and care sector Creative sector VCFSE sector Implementation Science Outcomes and measurement Evaluation training