



## **THE ONE CROYDON SOCIAL PRESCRIBING SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In responding to the Covid-19 pandemic Croydon has come together as a borough to support local people – by working in partnership across the sectors and with local communities, as evidenced by the growth of the mutual-aid movement. Another area in which Croydon has taken the opportunity to innovate and collaborate more effectively is social prescribing. This report outlines how CVA has supported Croydon’s Social Prescribing Link Workers to reach their fuller potential – both as sign-posters and community connectors playing a key role within the integrated framework of community support that has mobilised itself in response to Covid-19. The report describes how One Croydon’s Social Prescribing Support Programme has developed between January and July 2020 through its training programme; the convening of a Croydon Link Worker Forum; and a stronger alignment with CVA’s delivery of asset-based community development (ABCD) practices.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

CVA hosted the first Croydon Link Worker Forum before the outbreak of Covid-19 for the purposes of initiating a borough wide approach to Social Prescribing through shared learning, peer support and inclusivity. At the first meeting in January 2020 we heard from all 14 Link Workers about the current picture in Croydon and their training needs. Those who were unable to join the session were contacted separately so that all Croydon’s Link Workers were given a voice. All Link Workers stated they'd find it beneficial to connect with colleagues in similar roles - so we invited the Care Connectors, Personal Independence Coordinators (PICs), Community Builders, Family Guides and Social P Coordinators to join in on the training and networking sessions.

### **3. THE ONE CROYDON SOCIAL PRESCRIBING TRAINING PROGRAMME**

One Croydon’s Social Prescribing Training Programme was based on the training needs analysis of Croydon’s 14 Link Workers. Along with ‘Getting to know the local VCS’ initial training themes identified by Link Workers in early 2020 included: Housing, Benefit and Debt Advice and Domestic Abuse. Tragically these themes became increasingly significant in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. Social Prescribers requested training that both connected them to local charities and their offers for longer term support whilst equipping them with the skills and knowledge to be able to respond and support people in the first instance. The first sessions were held at Croydon Town Hall and then, following lockdown, hosted online. All ten training sessions have been followed with full notes, presentations and contact information circulated to all Social Prescribers. The training has been well attended throughout (averaging 20 attendees per session) with testimonials of thanks

received from partner organisations including Croydon Council, Surrey Physio and Age UK Croydon. We've had regular attendance from Link Workers, the BME Forum, Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association, Asian Resource Centre, Age UK Croydon's Personal Independence Coordinators (PICs), Croydon Covid-19 Mutual Aid leaders, DWP, Social Workers and New Addington's Localities Manager.

### **3.1 THE PROGRAMME – SESSION BY SESSION**

Ten sessions were listed on the subjects listed below, each one with a clear set of purposes:

#### **Croydon Context & training needs analysis - CVA**

Bringing Link Workers together to find out what practices and approaches are being used across Croydon's PCNs. The facilitated session initiated peer support and mapped the similarities and differences across Croydon to date, working towards borough wide consistency for Social Prescribing.

#### **Housing - [Croydon Council](#), [South West Law Centre](#) & [Expert Patient Programme \(EPP\)](#)**

This session explored how to support people who are vulnerably housed

#### **Benefit & Debt Advice - [Citizens Advice & Gateway](#)**

Identifying what support is available to people on benefits (incl. Personal Independence Plans PIP) & where to go for debt advice

#### **Macmillan Cancer Support on living with cancer - [Macmillan](#)**

Croydon's Macmillan GP provided support for Social Prescribers in delivering personalised care for people living with cancer – with case studies and cancer care reviews also discussed

#### **Mental Health - [Mind in Croydon](#) & [Centre for Change](#)**

This session explored how to respond to someone struggling with their mental health and the longer term support available with Mind in Croydon and The Centre of Change; and how to become a part of Croydon's ambition to train a further 1000 people in supporting better mental health

#### **Domestic Abuse - [Family Justice Centre](#)**

An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) from The Family Justice Centre hosted this session for social prescribers to recognise and understand signs of domestic abuse including coercive and controlling behaviour

#### **Understanding & Responding to Sexual Violence - [Rape & Sexual Assault Centre](#)**

Rape Crisis London ran this course, over two 3 hour sessions - participants considered the myths and realities of sexual violence and developed a deeper understanding of how societal attitudes impact survivors, as well as of the law surrounding rape, sexual assault and consent. Participants also learned about a model of best practice on how to respond to disclosures sensitively and appropriately, whilst taking into consideration the impact of sexual violence

#### **Bereavement & After Care - [Rowland Brothers Foundation](#)**

On being better able to provide bereavement aftercare with Rowland Brothers Foundation; <https://rowlandbrothers.com/rowland-brothers-foundation/>

**Why we are medicalising social problems? - World Federation of Mental Health**

The discussion was led by professor Henk Parmentier, Croydon GP for 20 years, who has a keen interest in Primary Care Mental Health and Social Prescribing. <https://wfmh.global/>

**Partnership working through Covid-19 - Mutual Aid, CVA, Age UK Croydon, CNCA & Council**

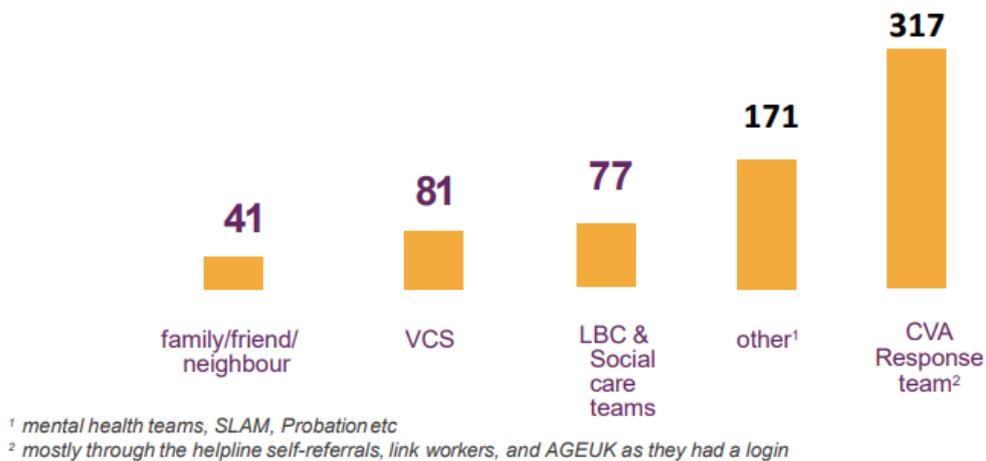
This session considered who to refer people to and how to best connect with Croydon's wider community support active in lockdown. It referenced the tiered approach designed by partners (see figure 1 below):

<b>Most vulnerable</b> <b>Croydon Council</b>		
<p><b>0208 604 7787</b>  <a href="mailto:covid19support@croydon.gov.uk">covid19support@croydon.gov.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:CroydonCouncilShieldingTeam@croydon.gov.uk">CroydonCouncilShieldingTeam@croydon.gov.uk</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who GPs and Age UK have registered as the most vulnerable.</li> <li>• Individuals/ families already known to council services (who should contact those services directly).</li> <li>• Individuals or families reporting emergency situations e.g. domestic abuse.</li> </ul> <p>Croydon council is also filling in gaps in central government support for "shielded" individuals.</p>		
<b>More vulnerable</b>		
<p><b>Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)</b></p> <p><b>020 8253 7076</b>  <b>Mon-Fri 10am-4pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any specialist need above CCMA level, supporting a wide range of individual and family needs</li> <li>• Stop-gap emergency support (e.g. food parcels)</li> <li>• Can refer under-50s to AUKC if they meet PIC criteria.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Age UK Croydon (AUKC)</b></p> <p><b>020 8686 0066</b>  <b>Mon-Fri 10am-4pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50+ years old</li> <li>• Needs above CCMA level, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dementia, disability and or care needs</li> <li>○ Health, social and community care</li> <li>○ Signposting to other local services</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association (CNCA)</b></p> <p><b>AUKC will refer to CNCA as appropriate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80+ years old</li> <li>• Totally isolated</li> <li>• Any complex need above CCMA level</li> </ul>
<b>Least vulnerable</b> <b>Croydon COVID-19 Mutual Aid (CCMA)</b>		
<p><b>020 3322 8379, 8am-8pm daily</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals or families needing someone to pick up shopping because they are self-isolating</li> <li>• Those in need of a friendly chat because they are lonely</li> <li>• Those needing simple, routine tasks such as dog walking or picking up prescriptions</li> <li>• Helping to distribute food for foodbanks</li> </ul>		

Figure 1

In coordinating Croydon's community response to Covid-19, CVA was able to integrate Croydon's Link Workers as part of our Covid-19 Response Team - as shown below in the referrals received in the first quarter, April - June 2020 (figure 2):

## REFERRALS WERE RECEIVED FROM



## WE HAVE FACILITATED/SUPPORTED

Figure 2

### 4. CROYDON LINK WORKER FORUM

CVA's training was complemented by the networking that took place through the newly-established One Croydon Link Worker Forum. Providing a safe space for peer support to look at case studies, share information and build relationships with key agencies and groups, the Link Worker Forum met weekly during lockdown and then every other week - a total of ten times to date with an average 9 of Croydon's 12 Link Workers attending. The One Croydon and GP Collaborative Social Prescribing Leads, along with Dr Agnelo Fernandes, have joined the meetings and our Guest speakers have included the BME Forum, Croydon Covid-19 Mutual Aid, Resident Associations, Age UK Croydon- PICs, NHS England, Bromley by Bow, London Southbank University School of Health & Social Care, National Academy of Social Prescribing and London Plus.

### 5. COMMUNITY BUILDING

The One Croydon Social Prescribing Support Programme has also invited Link Workers to consider how ABCD methodologies can assist them in their evolving role - and in how they relate both to people in local communities and the wider Voluntary and Community Sector in Croydon.

The South Bank University guidance on Asset Based Health Inequalities (see figure 3) was introduced at the start of the year and in February CVA arranged for each Link Worker to have a **Walk about** with a Community Builder within their PCN to connect them with key VCS organisations and connected people.

Since then Link Workers have been able to connect with Community Builders in the areas they work to make connections across the VCS and nurture community led initiatives.

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The Asset-Based Health

## Social Prescribing: What it is and what it isn't

It is: Independence creating	It isn't: Dependence creating
Local knowledge	A service
Increasing connections so people have good friends and people to call on and gift too	What you already do
A conversation where you listen to people's needs	A pad
A commitment to meet need not shift the burden or pass the buck. 'Zero tolerance for flailing around' (Tim Anfliegoff)	A database
Open access (not just GP referral but self referral)	A referral
Deep knowledge of the local community, the things going on and how to connect them to that	An asset map
A community builder that has a home base (organisation) that facilitates local volunteers to connect people with needs and their community	Signposting to overburdened services with no investment
A long term relationship	A short term post
A way of addressing inequality	Provision for those that generate the most demand
Part of a new way of delivering all of primary care	An addition to the traditional model of general practice

The Asset-Based Health

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Figure 3

In addition to being sign-posters, Link Workers have found that they can play an active community development role – as evidenced by their contribution to the wider civil society response to Covid-19. This was well captured by Lynda Graham, the Community Link Worker for Surrey Physio:

***“We have realised that people, especially communities, can move mountains. The proof was our community’s response to the pandemic and I think we should remember that”***



Lynda’s role was celebrated in the article ‘In Your Area’ on 13 July – included here: <https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/p/83906caa-1bf9-43c1-a0a0-7cc33843c940/>

## 6. EVALUATION

Based on an average 6 of the current 12 Link Workers responding, all training sessions have been considered Good to Excellent (see figure 4 below):

How would you rate the courses you attended? (from 1 poor to 5 excellent)

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

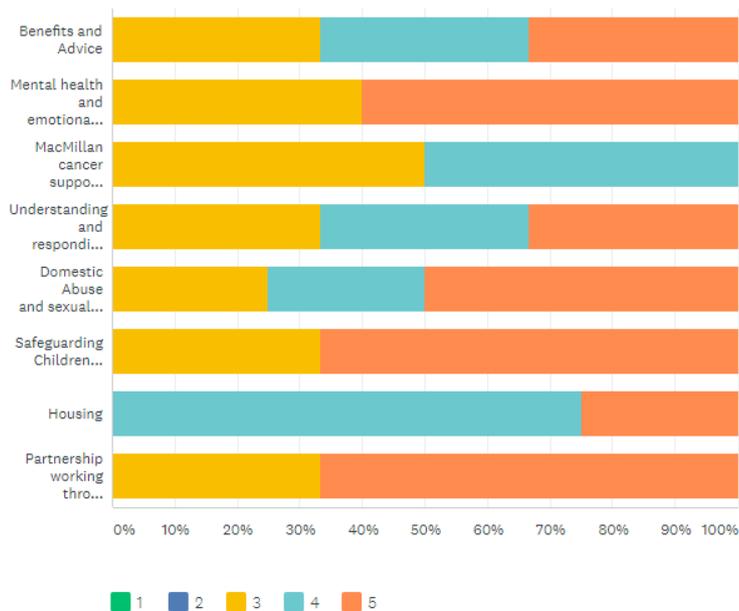


Figure 4

### 6.1 TESTIMONIALS:

Here we give our colleagues the last word:

*"Croydon-wide, I have been very impressed by the weekly, now fortnightly zoom call that CVA have organised. It has been a really good opportunity to **bring everyone together, to share key info, case studies and lessons learnt**. As it has now become a fortnightly session I hope it will continue to develop. There is so much amazing work going on, **Practices, PCNs, LW, and the army of volunteers**. That, from my perspective, has been the most positive outcome of the awful Covid situation. I hope that this is the beginning of effective cross-organisation working".*

**Alison Lawton, SP Lead at GP Collaborative**

*"I found the forum really useful. Was great to touch base with the other types of social prescribing workers in Croydon and understand their roles better. Additionally, it was really useful to understand how my team could better liaise with the council and SWL Law Centres - as housing is a key wellbeing concern for my team's patients. I'm really looking forward to the upcoming Gateway talk."*

*“Can I add our newest Link Workers (CCd) to your email list please, as the info is really valuable to our team :)”*

**Luke Woodward, FCP/SPLW Business Development Manager at Surrey Physio**

*“I had really positive feedback from the team about the forum yesterday. Thank you so much for arranging and coordinating it. I will pass the slides onto all the attendees and look forward to working with you all more”*

**Lois Walters, Personal Independence Coordinator and Reablement Link Team Service Manager (interim) Age UK Croydon**

*“Gwen (Richards- Locality Manager) has spoken about how much she has benefited from the mental health training that was put on by the CVA last week and has asked if future training can be made available to other VCS organisations.”*

**Dawn Richardson, One Croydon**

## **7. INTEGRATED WORKFORCE**

With One Croydon’s support CVA has facilitated a borough-wide approach to Social Prescribing in 2020, providing Link Workers with training, a strong peer support network and initiation in a community-led approach underpinned by the principles and practice of *Community Connecting and Building*.

The success of the One Croydon Social Prescribing Training Programme has resulted in statutory colleagues requesting invites on behalf of their teams. If the Training Programme is supported to continue from September 2020 it can form part of Croydon’s plans to develop an integrated workforce, skilled in working with local residents and in enabling them to play a bigger part in their own communities.

**Sarah Burns  
Croydon Voluntary Action  
July 2020**