

# Social Prescribing for Mental Health

JO PAINTER - NURSE CONSULTANT (RDASH)

# AIMS OF THE SERVICE

- Increase social activity
- Reduce social isolation and dependence
- Improve confidence and self esteem
- Focus on quality of life, positivity and happiness
- Support healthy and sustainable discharges from services and create capacity

# POSITIVES

- A positive and productive partnership has been developed between RDASH and VAR
- We have a service that empowers teams to be more recovery focussed
- The individual outcomes of participants so far has been well beyond our expectations, and in some cases truly remarkable
- The opportunities that have been resourced via the CCGs commissioning of voluntary groups are diverse, exciting and delivered with infectious enthusiasm!
- We have no doubt that this is one of the best developments in service provision in a long time – it works!

# CHALLENGES

- We have underestimated the cultural shift required in both staff and service users to embrace the service and understand the opportunity that it provides – this has meant a slower referral rate than we hoped for but we are working hard on this
- The process of preparing service users for this new journey can be labour intensive, and this has created work pressures
- There are still barriers to moving on, regardless of rate of recovery (117, depots etc)

# John

- Chronically anxious for most of his adult life. Fears death daily, becomes overwhelmed easily. Has tried all available treatments
- “John, you’re always going to be anxious, why don’t we focus on having a good quality of life despite your anxiety?”
- Through social prescribing John rediscovers a love of art, and begins an over 50s social group - “ I can’t explain to you why, but for three hours I was loving it so much, I forgot to be anxious”
- At his 10 week review, he encourages me to cut short my visit – “I don’t want to throw you out, its just that I don’t want to be late for my group”
- Discharge: “You hit the nail on the head when you said the words ‘quality of life’, that’s what I’ve got now”

# Helen

- Gave birth to a severely disabled daughter as a teenager.
- Cared for her 24/7 until she had no choice but to put her in to care 20 years later.
- Having struggled with her mood throughout – this decision plunged her further in to despair.
- Taken multiple medications over the years, and is still on a vast regime.
- House has been repossessed due to issues with her husband's gambling.
- Self – esteem is non existent and she is overwhelmed by guilt.

# Helen

- Persuaded Helen that it was time to invest in herself – and she agreed to be referred. After a positive initial meeting – VAR advisor Dianne informs me that second meeting was less positive and she was not confident she would get to the chosen group. Dianne decides to take her.
- Helen reluctantly attends a group focussed on relaxation and well-being.

# Helen

- 10 Week Review: “ I was terrified about going back on my own – but I had loved it, so I had to go”
- “ There are steps up to the building, by the time I got to the top I was so anxious that I couldn’t feel my legs- but I did it, and I’ve kept going “
- Discussed with Helen what she might do going forward.
- “ I want to be a helper at the group – I want to be the person at the top of the steps smiling, telling people that they don’t need to be frightened about coming in”