

# Come and talk with us about how we can help local people be socially active?

## East Berkshire Community Partnership Forum – 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Social isolation is a killer. Research shows that it increases mortality risk by around a third as well as being consistently linked with everything from heart disease to depression and cognitive decline.

Given this, it's no surprise that programmes able to reduce isolation and connect people to a community also serve to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs [3].

As Mark Hyman MD wrote

***“The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital”.***

‘Social Prescribing’ attempts to harness that power. Put simply, it's a process by which individuals are referred (often from primary care) to groups, clubs or services in their local community.

These may range from walking groups through to sports clubs, craft sessions and advice or support services. As such, aside from reducing isolation, these referrals can also address other causes of ill-health such as physical inactivity or emotional stress.

In East Berkshire we now have social prescribing services in all three local authority areas: Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, and most recently, Bracknell Forest.

Of course, just as a doctor's prescription can only improve health if the patient has access to a well-stocked pharmacy, so social prescribing schemes depend on a well-stocked community.

There needs to be a wide range of identified, local community groups and services that will offer a warm welcome to anyone referred.

In Bracknell Forest, our Public Health team have developed a “Community Map” of local groups that serves as a key resource for social prescribing.

We have also sought to build an ongoing relationship with those groups through our '[Warm Welcome' programme](#). We currently work with over 400 initiatives including those offering accessible walks, woodwork, knitting, reading chess and singing. The support offered to community groups ranges from the production of promotion films and social media campaigns, to training in IT skills or fundraising.

In Slough, there is a range of support on offer to community groups. For example, [29 Church Street](#) is a resource centre where those involved in community initiatives can mingle with other voluntary groups, access WiFi and printing services, and have meetings (up to 50 people).

There's also a lot going in Windsor & Maidenhead. For example, the [Community Database](#) aims to make it easy to link up with community initiatives allowing people to search by area or find out to volunteer their time.

But there's plenty of room for improvement...

### **Key Questions**

- 1) What is missing among our local community groups? What type of group do we need more of?**
- 2) What are some of the barriers to people getting involved in community groups? How can we reduce those barriers?**
- 3) How can social prescribing be improved? How can we involve local people more in promoting and running social prescribing services?**