

A photograph of two men in a garden. The man on the left is wearing a blue beanie and a denim jacket, looking down at the ground. The man on the right is wearing a straw hat and a striped polo shirt, also looking down. They appear to be engaged in a community activity like gardening. The background shows green foliage and garden supports.

**Creating social prescribing
spaces to improve
community wellbeing**

About Social Prescribing

Social prescribing involves connecting people with mental or physical health challenges to community services like support groups, activity groups, employment support and adult learning. The aim is to help them tackle the root causes of their ill health and improve their overall wellbeing.

What are the benefits?



Social prescribing has a range of **social, economic and physical benefits** for patients. These include reducing social isolation, developing new skills, improving confidence and improving fitness.



Social prescribing can generate **social value from vacant space** across the estate.



Social prescribing can **reduce health inequalities** by giving people opportunities, skills and tools that help them with their specific circumstances.



By helping patients in non-medical ways, social prescribing takes **pressure off primary care services** by reducing the demand for GP appointments and prescriptions.

Find out more about social prescribing and the benefits from [NHS England](#) or [National Academy of Social Prescribing](#).



Our Social Prescribing Programme

As the biggest estates and facilities provider to the NHS with a national portfolio, NHS Property Services is in prime position to support the growth of social prescribing.

Since 2019, we've developed 75 social prescribing sites and will have completed 100 in total by the end of financial year 2023-2024.

How do we create social prescribing sites?

We transform vacant indoor and outdoor spaces in health centres, GP practices and hospitals across England into community hubs.

We partner with ICBs, Trusts, GPs, the voluntary sector and local communities to identify and develop sites, ensuring that each space positively addresses the local health and social needs.

Spaces are used, free of charge, by voluntary and community organisations connected to social prescribing networks.

Take a look at our [interactive map](#) to see where we have social prescribing sites and find out a bit more about each one.

What makes a good social prescribing site?

There are opportunities to develop spaces for social prescribing all around us...



When developing our sites, we look for spaces that:

- Have no other immediate use.
- We have the intention of retaining in the medium-long term.
- Are in buildings where we have the freehold so we have more freedom to transform the space.
- Have commitment from the customer to manage and maintain the space e.g. a hub manager for internal spaces and a maintenance plan for green spaces.

And we look for locations that:

- Have high levels of health and social care needs so that a community hub would add real value.
- Have a social prescribing network, community groups and/or charities that we could partner with.
- Have access to facilities such as bathrooms and kitchens.
- Are accessible e.g. near public transport and with good parking facilities.

Get inspiration for how different indoor and outdoor spaces can be used for social prescribing with our [infographic](#).

Case Studies

Michael Burke Wellbeing Centre, Hartismere Hospital, Eye

What did we do?

We converted the decommissioned birthing unit in an underutilised rural community hospital in Suffolk, into a dedicated social prescribing space. Working with the CCG, local authority and representatives from the community sector, we created a space for a range of services connected to the emerging social prescribing network.

The centre provides indoor space for community groups to host large (20-30 person) sessions and smaller one-to-one meetings. There is also office space for the commissioned link worker for the local area. Other facilities include a small kitchen, children's play area and accessible toilets. Outdoor space at the site has been turned into allotment beds, a sensory garden and an outdoor gym.

What was the impact?

The centre hosts ten regular user groups that run a range of health and wellbeing activities including weight management sessions for women recovering from breast cancer, stop smoking workshops, Stroke and MS support groups, and 'painting for pleasure' sessions to reduce isolation in the elderly, as well as ad-hoc bookings.



[Read the full case study](#)

The Unity Centre, Whitton Clinic, Ipswich

What did we do?

Whitton Clinic is in a deprived area of Ipswich and the building was not well utilised in some areas. We partnered with the NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group's estates team to reconfigure the underused areas to create a community hub called The Unity Centre.

Internally, we delivered a new community café run by Combat2Coffee (recovering veterans) who provide rehabilitation support alongside delicious food and beverages. Space previously used for dental treatments was converted into one, fit-for-purpose kitchen and seating area with new equipment and flooring. Two offices that were previously used separately have been reconfigured into one large room for use by the service. Externally, the area outside the clinic was refreshed and raised beds installed for recreational use.

What was the impact?

The hub is home to several local organisations to connect with and deliver their services to people in West Suffolk. These organisations include P.H.O.E.B.E which provides information and advocacy to BAME women; Fresh Start New Beginnings, offering therapeutic support to children and young people who have reported sexual abuse and their families; Active Suffolk, which promotes sports and physical activity and Suffolk Refugee Support, offering practical advice and support to refugees and asylum seekers.



[Read the full case study](#)

Project FOOD, Axminster Community Hospital, Axminster

What did we do?

As part of a project to redevelop space at Axminster Hospital to provide high quality wards for patients, there was still a void kitchen within the hospital building. We worked with Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the occupier of Axminster Hospital, Royal Devon & Exeter NHS Trust, to find a solution. They supported the initiative to refurbish the kitchen for use by local charity, Project FOOD, as part of our Social Prescribing programme. Project FOOD offers a programme of food education courses for young families and vulnerable people across Devon. Project FOOD aims to improve their diet and develop new skills so they can enjoy better physical and mental health.

We refurbished the void kitchen space, ensuring it would be safe and fit for purpose for the charity. Royal Devon & Exeter NHS Trust and Devon CCG helped to fund the project, donating cooking equipment for the kitchen and contributing towards running costs.

What was the impact?

The kitchen has helped people of all ages including those that have recovered from strokes, are affected by nutrition related conditions, people with dementia and isolated people. They learn about the links between a sustainable diet and good health and develop the skills they need for a healthier diet. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Project FOOD extended its services to include meals on wheels and cookery classes via video call.



[Read the full case study](#)

Talke Clinic, Talke Health Centre, Stoke on Trent

What did we do?

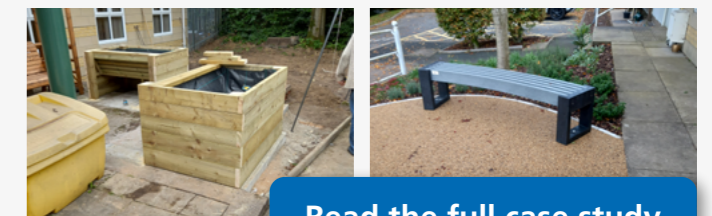
Mental health struggles and loneliness are common themes within the Talke community. The Patient Participation Group (PPG) at Talke Health Clinic saw the site as somewhere that could be used to make a difference within the community, giving people a safe space to come to.

We worked with the PPG and Groundwork to transform the garden area. We replaced bushes and shrubbery with soft fruit trees and raised beds for community planting and caring for vegetables.

What was the impact?

The garden allows for the 'People and Places' group to extend their offering and help to reduce feelings of isolation amongst the people of Talke. The space gives communities a safe, fit for purpose space to come together, learn gardening skills, reflect and enjoy the outdoors.

The impact of COVID-19 has given greater importance to this project as space to improve the communities' mental health and combatting loneliness has become increasingly important for the local area.



[Read the full case study](#)

More information

For more information about our Social Prescribing programme, visit our website: www.property.nhs.uk/socialprescribing.

If you'd like to discuss potential sites for development within your area, please get in touch with your local NHS Property Services contact or our friendly Customer Service Centre on **0808 196 2045** / customer.service@property.nhs.uk.

