



**A guide to help you  
create a space for  
social prescribing**

# Creating space for Social Prescribing

Identifying and transforming spaces for community use isn't easy, but together with our partners we've learned a lot about what it takes to create impactful community spaces.

After delivering **over 75 sites since 2019**, we're keen to share what we've learnt to help others think differently about how their space is used. So, whether you're a customer of ours about to embark on a project with us or you are thinking about creating and managing your own social prescribing hub, **this guide is for you.**

## How to use this guide

Projects begin and take shape in different ways - no two are the same. But there are eight key areas that we'd recommend you to consider when creating a hub for social prescribing or community use.



Ask yourself and others the questions to help make thorough and well informed decisions.

### 1 Engage all partners early

Good engagement and strong relationships between the ICS, landlord, healthcare provider and voluntary sector are key to creating impactful spaces. Bring everyone together to clearly scope out and develop a plan for the project before undertaking any work.



Have you spoken to all the relevant stakeholders early on to agree objectives, discuss options and agree roles and responsibilities?



Have you engaged with the people in the community to find out what they want from shared space?





## 2 Identify user groups

Every successful project must have at least one user group who will benefit from the space. User groups could be charities, patient groups or community groups.

Understanding their needs and desired outcomes is key to identifying exactly what sort of space and refurbishment works are required to create the most impact. Sometimes it isn't all about bricks and mortar; some well-judged furniture and material changes make spaces work for local needs.

### You'll want to find out:



What are the main health and wellbeing issues facing the community?



What community groups exist in the area?



What sort of services are regularly used or requested by the community?

### To do this:



Head to your local café, ask community groups, and speak to people in the waiting room to gather ideas.



Appoint or find a representative in the local area to conduct some primary research.



Speak to the local hospital manager, GP receptionist and practice managers. A lot of practices have social prescribers working in conjunction with the GPs so speaking with them could help you provide a much-needed service if a gap exists.

**Find out more** about what ten different community groups (often those with poorer health outcomes) want from community spaces with our research report from The Health Creation Alliance.

[Read it here >>>](#)

### 3 Ensure the space is suitable

It's very important that you choose a suitable space for the project and in a good, accessible location.

#### Think about spaces that:



You have the intention of retaining in the medium-long term.



Are in buildings where you have the freehold so you have more freedom to transform the space.



You know will be managed and maintained e.g. they have a hub manager for internal spaces and a maintenance plan for green spaces.



Have access to facilities such as bathrooms and kitchens.

#### Think about locations that:



Have high levels of health and social care needs so that a community hub would add real value to groups and/or charities.



Are accessible e.g. near public transport and with good parking facilities.





## 4 Leasing and agreements

Depending on the type of project, you may need a lease or a light touch agreement which states the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. Ensure you speak to all parties and consider where responsibilities sit. Get it agreed and signed before undertaking any works.



Who will be the lead for taking on the space?



Are all of the organisations familiar with the licences? Leave enough time to bring together the occupancy agreement just in case, even if they are 'light touch.'



Is there rent to pay for the space? If so, whose?



Who pays for bills including heating, electricity and water?

## 5 Facilities management

Your indoor or outdoor spaces need to be maintained. Where possible, include the facilities management responsibilities for the space in the lease or agreement. Facilities management and maintenance needs with costs must be understood from the beginning. Public buildings have statutory testing requirements for life saving services such as fire protection, water, electrics, heating and cooling and accessibility needs.



Will the space need maintaining?



Will seasonal maintenance be required, especially for outdoor spaces?



Who will organise a cleaner or gardener, or will a community group take on this work?

## 6 Refurbishment/reconfiguration

If your space needs refurbished, extended or reconfigured, scope out the requirements; from designing and constructing to furnishing and maintaining; costing it all up to make sure the projects are within budget.



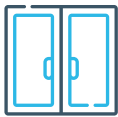
Is the space fit for purpose, or does it need a lot of work?



Does the space just need redecorating and some new furniture?



Does the space need to be reconfigured or extended?



Is the building generally in good shape with only internal refurbishment requirements? Or may there be leaks or old windows that are inefficient?



Is the heating adequate?



Is the budget sufficient for your plans?



How can you make it welcoming and non-clinical?



Does the user group want the space to be neutral or identifying?



Could the service grow quickly? If so, it would be wise to start with some of the smaller/essential changes and break the project into phases as popularity and use grows.

It's important to consider if rooms can have flexibility built into them as end-user requirements often change during different hours e.g. a reception space may double up as a multipurpose meeting room after hours.





## 7 Booking and access

Some sites might be solely for one occupier while others may have multiple user groups which run sessions from different organisations such as mental health charities, local food banks and local patient participant groups, for example.



If the space is going to be used by multiple groups, who and how will you ensure there's no double booking?



Do some groups need access at weekends/early mornings/evenings?

## 8 Ongoing support

Once you've created the space and activities are up and running, it's important to measure the impact the spaces have on communities and help them fulfil their potential.



Do you have resources to support any improvement works to the space if they're needed?



What impact do you want to see and how will you track it?

### Want more insight?

We partnered with The Health Creation Alliance to interview 10 different community groups to find out what they want and need from community spaces. The findings found 8 common themes that ran across most of the groups. You can also find separate case studies to learn more about each group in detail.

[Read it here >>>](#)

## Get in touch

If you would like more advice, please get in touch with our Customer Service Centre who will be happy to help you.



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