

## Arabic Speaker K

4 visits to SIS Drop-In Service between June 2016 and June 2017

### **Social Prescribing Support**

- K was concerned about a large sum of rent arrear and costs of water supply to her Housing Association home.
- K has a history of anxiety and depression which her housing concerns were aggravating.
- K was referred to Moneyworks for support with managing finances. A CAB appointment resulted in a repayment agreement being successfully set up with the Housing Association avoiding the threatened eviction and consequent input from Housing Services.
- The VL was also able to make a call on K's behalf to the water supplier and confirm that utility costs should be covered by benefits.
- K recently returned for additional support regards completion of PIP application form and issues regards home adaptations to suit her disabilities.
- A further referral to Possability People is being made and a recommendation received from the Housing Association for K to ask her GP for a referral to Occupational Therapy

### **Impact of Social Prescribing**

- K feels much more confident and clear about her financial situation.
- K feels listened to and that her opinion and needs are important. She feels less isolated and alone with her problems because she knows there is help available twice a month from SIS.

### **Comment from the Service User**

*"I had come to the SIS Service User Day in 2012 where we had suggested SIS should develop a Drop-In service, I am delighted that SIS listened to us and this service is now up and running. I usually have to access support services where there is no Arabic speaker which is very difficult and I'm never confident that I've explained my situation properly or understood what is being done on my behalf.*

*I suffer from depression and receiving a letter, such as the one from the Housing Association, really increased my anxiety levels. It was wonderful that I could bring the letter so quickly to SIS and the volunteer could help me understand it better and reduce my anxiety immediately. The drop-in is a very good service for helping people, face to face. My quality of life is greatly improved by accessing the service."*

### **Lessons learnt**

- Timely intervention prevented an escalation of issues
- Accessible and understandable communication between people with language needs and support agencies are difficult to establish and maintain.
- The regularity of the SIS Drop-In is important for reassurance and peace of mind of SUs.

- Good record keeping is essential because SUs may make repeat visits to the SIS Drop-In over long periods of time.

## Mandarin Speaker X

6 visits to SIS Drop-In Service between January 2017 – June 2017

### **Social Prescribing Support**

- X initially attended with concerns about her immigration status (no recourse to public funds) and associated financial issues.
- X was referred to Brighton Voices in Exile (BViE) for specialist immigration advice. Her status was successfully changed so that X was entitled to apply for public funds (benefits and/or tax credits).
- A further referral was made to Money Advice Plus (MAP) for specialist financial advice. X has now provided all the correct and up to date details to HMRC and completed her tax credit application.
- X also needed help liaising with utility suppliers to ensure that bills were in the correct name and payment plans were monthly rather than lump sum.
- Appointments at BViE and MAP were funded by the CCG via a discretionary allocation for community and voluntary sector organisations.

### **Impact of Social Prescribing**

- X has a confirmed status in the UK reducing her risks of exploitation and/or poor health care. She feels confident about her rights and responsibilities.
- X has been able to take control of her finances is no longer vulnerable to destitution.

### **Comment from the Service User**

*“Because of the language barrier, I can’t read, understand or respond to official letters such as those from NHS, Home Office, HMRC and utility providers etc. At the SIS Drop-In there is always a helping hand; the volunteers can interpret the letters for me, make appointments and arrange interpreters. All the volunteers are absolutely amazing, they are really knowledgeable and can find the right service and get the accurate information I need for any day to day issues or complicated ones.*

*The service is all free of charge! I hope that SIS can carry on doing the Drop-In sessions. It has really helped to improve my quality of life.”*

## Spanish Speaker P

3 visits to SIS Drop-In plus additional telephone support

### **Social Prescribing Support**

- P attended the SIS Drop-In with multiple support needs. P was initially concerned with some financial issues particularly regarding utilities and private rental.
- The VL was able to liaise on her behalf with utility providers which resulted in a nearly £400 rebate and confirmation of bill payment so that her

private rental deposit could be repaid.

- VL gave information about the Tenancy Deposit Scheme which would provide more financial security for future private rentals.
- VL made a referral to Moneyworks who placed P on the Warmth for Wellbeing Scheme providing peace of mind regards future utility supply issues.
- P had additional needs around claiming for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. The VL made a referral to CAB for accurate information about eligibility and making a claim.
- Additional issues around P's tax return emerged and a subsequent referral to the "Needs Extra Support Team" at HMRC resulted in a special advisor meeting P to help with completion her tax returns.
- P attended the TDC BME Wellbeing event in April 2017 and used the event and organisations represented there to engage with "The 5 Ways to Wellbeing".
- P asked about ESOL provision and VL provided a SIS summary sheet of providers, locations, dates, times and costs for English learning.

#### **Impact of Social Prescribing**

- P feels much more confident and clear about her financial situation.
- P feels less isolated and alone with her problems because she knows there is help available twice a month from SIS.
- P has improved mental wellbeing and has been able to avoid a referral to health services with regards depression.

#### **Lessons learnt**

- The high value of Social Prescribing, provided in a first language, to build confidence, reduce isolation and empower people to cope better with the challenges presented by life in an adopted country.
- It is essential to support the resolution of acute social support needs e.g. housing, immigration, finance (including benefits) before health promotion work can be effectively undertaken.

#### **Comment from the Service User**

*"I am very happy with the support SIS has given me. Me and my two kids are eternally grateful for the help with benefits, tax issues, housing issues and others. The staff have been extremely caring, supportive and empathic. Thank you so much. Crucially for me, as a single mother in very low waged work, the help was free of charge. It allowing me deal with very complex issues without the additional worrying of cost. This is something I would not have been offered in my home country of Spain.*

*I feel much less isolated and alone. The myriad difficulties that I had in my life upon arriving in Britain have been largely resolved with the help given to me. It has changed my attitude to living here in England. I feel much less constricted and cornered by my problems and the isolation that I had experienced here for so long. Moreover, the support I received from SIS has made me open up socially - I feel much more able to trust people here, which is very difficult as a single mother with little knowledge of the language and the culture.*

*When I first came to the Drop-In, I had been in a deep depression, but the experience with SIS helped to give me the motivation I had lacked for a long time; renewing my purpose and drive for life. I feel less fear, more confident, able to develop myself professionally, to work hard and build a life here with my family. My kids are doing well in school, I am working, learning English and enjoying myself in Brighton."*

### Farsi speaker M

M made 3 visits to the SIS drop-in service

#### **social prescribing activity**

Help to challenge a Penalty Charge Notice.

Help with Utilities because of difficulties paying

- completing online “Essentials Tariff form” to receive reduced water bill in line with low household income and receipt of benefits
- supported query re Warm Home Discount Scheme application
- support to cancel TV licence payment commitments

Help with managing debt

- form filling re payment plan for debt arrears
- support contacting debt collection company
- support making application for Discretionary Social Fund

#### **What difference or impact did social prescribing support make?**

*“I am under a lot of pressure. I have a lot of things to do within my family; I have to support my husband who has a long term health condition and I have a teenage son to look after. I can’t speak to organisations with my level of English and family commitments therefore SIS has relieved a lot of this pressure for me.*

*I feel consistently less stressed as I have regular support from SIS. I feel more connected and more supported- this is very important for me and my family as a whole.*

*My family and I rely on the support from SIS as do other people from my community. I think the support offered is varied and I have had all my requests dealt with professionally and empathically. Many different people at SIS have helped me at times with urgent, stressful situations like my council tax, emergency accommodation, benefits and bills. This support has been vital and timely and made my family more secure.*

*I have more confidence with using public services and organisations in the city. A big, positive life change has been complimented by the support from SIS. My son is doing well in school and I look forward to building our lives now that we are in a much more stable and positive position than before.”*

#### **Lessons learnt**

- Increased awareness of the services
- Increased confidence about how to find and where to go for help

### Arabic speaker B

B has accessed the drop-in 6 times

**Description of social prescribing activity**

- ESOL: Signposted to the Migrant English Project
- Dentistry: Helped with filling in surgery registration form
- Letter reading: correspondence regarding hospital appointments
- Benefits: explore eligibility for PIP and Attendance Allowance. Referral to Age UK for help with HC1 application form (Interpreter booked)
- Employment : research to take the CSCS test for construction industry work in Italian or Arabic. Fill in Driving licence application form

**What difference or impact did social prescribing support make?**

*“SIS has provided a great help in many ways – being able to access other services, knowing where to go for help. The referrals to the CAB and Age UK have been useful. SIS has also helped me to develop a plan although this has been thwarted somewhat by my struggle to find work in my chosen profession.*

*You provide a great service to those people with a language need. It would be valuable to have the support of a bilingual advocate – to have someone who can help to make referrals but then also attend the appointments with me and speak on my behalf because I am worried and sometimes confused.*

*However, the support has helped me to feel generally more confident – to have the help to make phone calls in English in order to solve problems has been a great help. Life in a new country can lead feel quite isolating at times; the VL support has reduced this considerably.”*

**Lessons learnt**

The SU is very appreciative of the help which Volunteer Linguists provide through the drop-in. However, we agreed that the support of a Bilingual Advocate would also be very useful for this SU to go beyond the remit of the Volunteer Linguist role. The SU commented that he would like an advocate to go to appointment and be able to speak on his behalf.

**Arabic Speaker S**

Came once to the SIS Drop In

**social prescribing activity**

- We helped the Service User (SU) to carry our first stage of a Personal Independence Payment(PIP) application over the phone
- Referral St Luke’s Advice service with an interpreter for further help with PIP

**What difference or impact did social prescribing support make**

*“I came to the SIS in a state of depression and feeling isolated – I was suffering both emotionally and physically. It made a massive difference to me to feel that people were listening carefully and genuinely wanted to help. The help led to a vast improvement in my emotional state; I had been feeling very stressed and this was adding to my physical ailments by creating psychosomatic symptoms and I needed to see the GP frequently.*

*The help I received from SIS led me to think that life isn’t so bad; there are still people here to help. It wasn’t just the that the successful PIP application which eased the financial strain, it was also that I felt that I was being listened to.*

*I really appreciated the follow up call from the Volunteer Linguist to check on progress of my case- this showed that SIS was still thinking of me. More services like this are needed - it makes a real difference. I wish SIS every success moving forward, making people happy and enabling them to move on with their lives."*

**Lessons learnt from the case study about the social prescribing service (100 words)**

- We can clearly see the importance for someone to feel that they are being listened to and taken seriously.
- It is also clear that following up to check on the progress of someone's situation is also very important
- The timing of when help is provided is very important and can really help to prevent a rapidly worsening escalation of a service user's situation
- The whole process of applying for PIP would have proved extremely challenging for this service user without this kind of support

**Russian Speaker L**

L has attended SIS drop-in 4 times May –July 2017

**social prescribing activity**

- Volunteer Linguist (VL) spoke with Housing adaptations team from the council re the bathroom adaptations which the SU needs to be done to help him with living with a disability. VL found out that there is a waiting list of 3 weeks for the initial assessment which will be done by phone
- SU needed to make repayments to DWP – volunteer arranged for these to be made through deductions from the SU's PIPs.
- VL rescheduled an appointment at Brighton General Hospital and requested a CI.
- VL called Southern Water, ordered Paypoint and set up monthly payments. Also secured 20% discount to the bill due to the SU receiving Pension credits
- VL called BHCC environmental services - it will cost £80 to have someone come round to deal with flea infestation.
- VL signposted SU to Bartholomew House for help with new Housing application

**What difference or impact did social prescribing support make?**

- The support has helped the SU to feel much more confident because they have been able to gain access to sound, clear information.
- This confidence can sometimes be eroded when trying to access services in the city and not being able to due to the language barrier.
- The SU stated that without the support from SIS, one can be passed from agency to agency without really achieving anything.
- When the SU has accessed the drop-in, they have either been able to obtain the information which they need straightaway or the VL has liaised with the appropriate specialist service.

**Lessons learnt from the case study about the social prescribing service (100 words)**

- It is very important for the SU to have the regular ongoing access to support.
- The SU also commented that it is great to be able to come to SIS and receive information on a variety of topics and access a variety of services

**Comment from the client**

*"It is great that the service is helping people continuously – that we know that the drop-in will be there twice a month for us to be able to access this help. It is a pleasant all round experience to turn up at the drop-in too because the VLs have a positive, empathic attitude and are always willing to help.*

*I feel that SIS has a more action-orientated approach – there is not too much bureaucracy to go through before receiving the necessary support  
I see SIS as the centre point that links me to all the other services in the city. As long as this service exists, it will be so much easier for residents to navigate the city; without the service, there can be so much stress for the service users and their families.”*

[www.sussexinterpreting.org.uk](http://www.sussexinterpreting.org.uk)