

Background: Social prescribing (SP) involves referral of patients with social, emotional or practical needs to a Link Worker for patient-centred support. The NHS Long Term Plan includes a commitment to increase access to SP across England to over 900,000 people. As such, SP provides an opportunity to deliver health behaviour change advice to a wide-ranging population. To capitalise we need to ensure the SP workforce is knowledgeable in, and confident when, providing advice and support on health behaviours. For that reason, in collaboration with London Sport, a theory-based training package for Link Workers to support improvements in physical activity was designed and piloted.

Methods: The training package design was based on the COM-B model and included foundation Motivational Interviewing techniques. 51 Link Workers attended a one-day interactive workshop with a follow-up session at 6 months. Evaluation data were collected using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data via questionnaire at baseline (pre-workshop) and at the follow-up session, measuring knowledge, motivation and self-efficacy. Qualitative feedback via semi-structured interviews, using Framework Analysis to identify common themes.

Expected results: Preliminary findings suggest the training improved knowledge and understanding about physical activity and confidence to offer brief advice. Interpretations should be tentative as based on small sample (n=30).

Current stage of work: The training package is being rolled out by Sport England nationally. Evaluation data continues to be collected alongside and will feed in to ongoing analysis.

Discussion: Findings will inform the national Link Worker training programme, ensuring behavioural science approaches are embedded in SP.