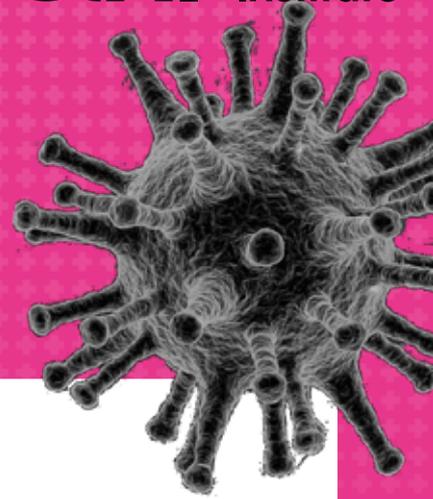


Community Nursing Covid-19 Innovation/Best Practice

CASE STUDY

Treacle - a Social Prescribing Resource Website for the Community



1/

Personal details

Name: Helen O'Connell

Job title: Advanced Nurse Practitioner

Employer: Haworth Medical Practice, West Yorkshire

2/

Please describe your practice innovation.

I have built a new digital platform - www.treacle.me – where anyone from the local community can go, to quickly and easily find resources for physical health, mental health, financial and emotional needs. This is not just for the time of national lockdown, but will endure as an invaluable source of social prescribing information for the clinical staff at work, in addition to the local community. I started building the site a few months ago, initially out of a frustration that I knew there were groups and resources out there that could help my patients, but there was no easily accessible way of either myself or my patients finding them. Our social prescribers are over-subscribed with long waiting lists and I wanted a way to use the information that they have access to, so patients could get help whilst they were waiting to see them. There was always a wealth of local services, from Mums and baby groups, to walking groups for the elderly, shed clubs for men's mental health and cooking clubs for young families, but I could never keep track of them all, so many were not used to their full extent.

Just before building this website, I set up a food bank in the village where I live and work, and was amazed that the people who needed the services the most had no idea they were there. It was an upsetting realisation, that some of the sickest people in our community would not consider coming to see anyone at the GP surgery to ask for help. It was clear that we needed to take the concept of health out of the medical centre and into the community. Obviously in recent weeks and months, all the local groups have had to be put on hold, so for now, Treacle is going to act in a far more dynamic way, directing people to the sort of help they need specifically in relation to Covid-19. However, as the lockdown eases and groups restart, one database, where all the relevant groups are listed and kept up to date will be a real asset to the local community.

It is my hope that as this becomes widely used and appreciated over the Worth Valley area, then expanded into Keighley and then further into Bradford. There is no reason why every local community cannot have its access to its own, individual services and groups via Treacle. I fully appreciate this is a long way off, and for now my focus is trying to find funding to advertise the site on a local level.

3/

How has this enabled you to treat/support patients /residents/families/carers more effectively and safely?

This will mean that patients can be directed to an easy-to-use source of information without needing a face to face visit. It means that instead of seeing a GP or nurse, then being on a waiting list to see a social prescriber, our patients can easily find the information they need to help with problems such as debt, depression or loneliness.

4/

How has this enabled you to work more effectively with colleagues/partner organisations?

Open access to the services on offer will encourage engagement and so forge links between social prescribing services and the community at large. Clinicians working in General Practice can keep track of what is going on in the community and be able to direct patients there quickly. It will also expose gaps in provision and so will work to inform commissioning.

5/

Do you see this new way of working as a temporary adaptation to current conditions, or a permanent/evolving change?

This website was on the drawing board before Covid-19 hit the UK. Since then, the need for people in our local community to be able to quickly and easily access a wide range of services without having to search the internet has been even clearer. Clinicians' time is precious, and spending large amounts of time dealing with issues such as loneliness and food poverty is draining on a very limited resource. I very much see this as an evolving and growing way of communication with the local community, and I hope it will be a permanent addition to the way we work.

6/

Please describe any particular challenges you had to overcome.

There was the initial financial challenge of building the website, the initial cost of which was met by Haworth Medical Practice. I also needed to find a web builder who I could work with; I wanted someone from the local community, rather than a big agency somewhere. The only other barrier to getting it done has been managing to find time to do it in between working as an ANP, and having two children at home to home school during lockdown.

↳ Our social prescribers are over-subscribed with long waiting lists and I wanted a way to use the information that they have access to, so patients could get help whilst they were waiting to see them.

Helen O'Connell

7/

Please describe any continuing challenges you would like to address.

The next challenge is to raise funds to advertise and market the site heavily, to ensure that everyone in the local community knows about it. In time it would be wonderful to be able to roll this out to a larger area. There has already been a huge amount of very positive feedback from all over the country. Many nurses are already asking when they can have it live for their area. This is a huge step forwards in reducing inequalities in health by giving people the information they need.

8/

Please list any websites, online platforms or apps that have helped you.

I initially did lots of research around social prescribing databases, but was unable to find anything user friendly and that could be used and recognised easily.

9/

What are the main pieces of IT or other equipment you need (e.g. digital camera, phone, laptop, iPad).

I invested in a laptop when I started out on the journey of creating the web-site; I could not have managed without it.

10/

Please give any individual examples, quotes or other information.

There has been a huge amount of positive feedback from local GPs who are very grateful to have a resource like this at their fingertips. It just needs some further investment so that it can quickly be rolled out further. I am now filling in lots of applications for grants to try and make it happen.

