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## CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

### **Social Prescribing in Practice: Implementation in the Australian Setting**

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Many patients, particularly those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, present to GP's with a range of issues that are non-medical, but which impact their health and wellbeing. Social prescribing is an integrated care approach that is designed to complement traditional health care by providing social prescriptions to assist people to address these issues and build their capacity to self-manage. The approach is widely implemented in the United Kingdom in General Practice. Early evaluation has shown these programs to have some benefit for patients. To date there has been little development of SP models in Australia. A test model of Social Prescribing is currently being trialled by IPC Health, in partnership with the Northwest Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) and the Brimbank Collaboration (Brimbank City Council and Australian Health Policy Collaboration, Victoria University)

IPC Health is a General Practice and community health centre in Melbourne's West. In this model, referrals from GPs, nurses and Allied Health staff are made to a Community Linkworker, a new position, who works with the client to understand their needs and goals, and to develop a plan around these goals, and facilitate local sources of support. These support services may include but are not limited to local community groups, legal or financial services, group exercise classes or parenting support. Referrals may also come from service agencies and individuals in the community. The Linkworker maintains contact between the client and the GP to ensure consistent, and integrated care, rather than simply referring to external services.

This trial project is comprised of three stages: research, testing and a full implementation at IPC Health Deer Park community health centre. The aim of the project is to develop the service pathways by understanding the client journey through referrers, Linkworkers and community partners, and to identify the most effective interventions and connections for relevant population groups.

The project will be delivered to IPC Health patients in the testing phase and will then be expanded within the Brimbank area.

Project Timeline: 01 July 2018 - 30 June 2020

To date the project has completed community asset mapping (identification and engagement of local community-based services) and has commenced direct client support.

The testing phase will support the development of a sustainable model of care that will underpin the full implementation of the model for all patients who meet the inclusion criteria and wish to participate.

It is anticipated that this project will test a model of social prescribing in an Australian setting which can be transferred to other regions.

To date the project has established a strong partnership to support development of the pilot model and connections with community assets necessary to appropriately prescribe social and community connections and interventions. Early client engagement is beginning to shed light on the practical implementation of social prescribing. More will be known by November 2019.

Lessons learned will focus on themes such as the development of service pathways, developing/updating internal processes to support Social Prescribing, and the client cohort, their needs and their journey through the service.