

Merton Social Prescribing

October 2019 – March 2021

Merton Connected is the trading name of Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC)



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PATIENT WELLBEING SCORE



77.63%

The wellbeing score of patients who have been referred to SP has improved by

We have used the following wellbeing tools:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS), personal well-being questions

The Patient Activation Measure (PAM)

1835



Number of new referrals received

REASON FOR NEW REFERRALS

REFERRALS INCLUDE DEALING WITH:

81 PHYSICAL INACTIVITY 

 **757** MENTAL HEALTH

540 SOCIAL ISOLATION 

10 RESPIRATORY

1 T1 DIABETES

16 T2 DIABETES

6 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

6 POST CANCER

 **7** POST STROKE

3 POST HEART DISEASE 

96 LOW SELF ESTEEM /CONFIDENCE

6 
MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

27 FALLS PREVENTION

4 PREVENTION OF CHRONIC DISEASE 

73 DEALING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

18 ATTENDANCE

29 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

42 
SUBSTANCE MISUSE

122 COVID 19

190 
BENEFITS ADVICE

474 OTHER


238 HOUSING

103 WEIGHT REDUCTION 

Report

October 2019 - March 2021

*The data for these infographics has been sourced from Elemental software

3680



NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS DELIVERED

WELFARE CALLS



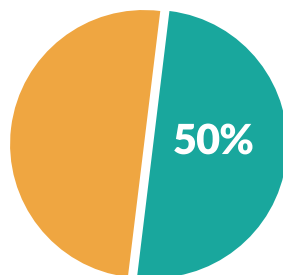
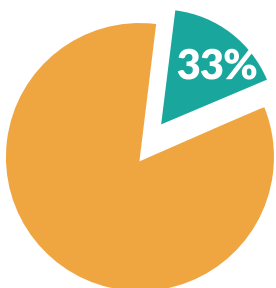
NUMBER OF TELEPHONE CALLS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE FIRST LOCKDOWN

6573



Calls were made to shielded and vulnerable patients and to book residents for the vaccination programme.

REDUCTION OF GP APPOINTMENTS AND A&E ATTENDANCE



Pre COVID data showed reduction of patients' GP appointments by 33% and their A+E attendances by 50%.

This data has been collected and analysed by the Commissioning Support Unit, NHS

ACCESS TO MEDICATION SERVICE

298

ISOLATED HOUSEHOLDS GOT ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTION AND MEDICATION DURING LOCKDOWN



NUMBER OF TRAINING SESSIONS COMPLETED BY THE TEAM

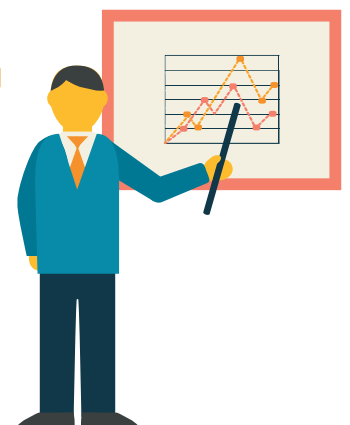
108

BETWEEN APRIL 2020 AND MARCH 2021 OUR TEAM HAS COMPLETED 108 DIFFERENT TRAINING SESSIONS

EACH COLLEAGUE HAS COMPLETED AN

AVERAGE OF 31

TRAINING SESSIONS DURING THIS PERIOD



Merton Connected

After over 35 years as MVSC, Merton Connected is our new trading name for 2021. This reflects how we continue to operate, evolve, and innovate as an organisation, supporting the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector in the borough; ultimately supporting residents.

Merton Connected is proud of not only helping to develop social prescribing in Merton but supporting all 22 GP practices and their teams. Support is not only from our team, but also the range of largely voluntary, community and faith organisations that social prescribers refer to.

The last year has thrown up additional challenges for the team, but along with NHS colleagues, they have remained fully functional, albeit using additional remote methods to support residents. This has involved directly supporting the Community Hub, which has provided valuable services since the start of the pandemic to thousands of residents.

As evidenced in this report, team performance has remained impressive throughout the pandemic, considering the associated challenges for social prescribers, their customers and organisations providing ongoing support following referral. Teamwork at its best.



Simon Shimmens
CEO, Merton Connected



The Nelson Medical Centre

Case Study

1. When and why did you see the Social Prescriber? What challenges did you face?

I knew the SP as I was referred to her by a GP the previous year with a similar issue.

At the beginning of the lockdown, I asked her if she could help me again.

My disability benefits were cut and lost my motability car after a benefits' review. After the decision, I felt stuck at home. I could not walk. I was no longer able to make ends meet. I started to despair.

The SP referred me to Merton CIL*, which decided to take on my case and was allocated a supervised volunteer to appeal the decision at the tribunal. At that time, the council welfare benefits department was not able to help me. The SP liaised with some of the services to get evidence for the appeal and wrote a compelling supporting letter. She also called regularly for updates. I was worried that if I had lost the appeal, I would no longer be entitled to financial support. Unfortunately, I could no longer afford to pay all the bills, watch television, use the internet, buy food and so on.

The SP referred me to the Wimbledon dons. Every Friday two lovely volunteers turned up with a grocery parcel, which included dog food. These ladies saw how depressed I was. They turned up even on a Sunday to give me puzzles and crosswords books. They cheered me up. They saw that I returned some food items and I explained that my cooker had been broken for 7 years.

On the day of my birthday, one of the volunteers turned up with her husband. They had arranged to install a new cooker and took away the broken one.

The volunteers also invited me to their social club at Dorset Road to make friends, as they realised that I was a rugby fan and even suggested that I could play my music there. So, I am really looking forward to watching live sports with them.

2. How have you benefitted from Social Prescribing?

Social prescribing, the local charities and the volunteers have made a big difference. I have won the PIP** appeal after waiting for 9 months. I developed a good relationship with the Wimbledon Dons and the volunteers. I have felt I could socialise again and able to make friends. They made me feel like I was an ok person - more of a member of society and the community than I believed I was. I have had many doubts in the last years if people would want to be around me.

3. What words would sum up Social Prescribing for you?

A social prescriber is a person with an all-round knowledge and contacts that can help. Every time I asked for help, the social prescriber has come up with the right words, information, and services to help me. I cannot tell you how much her help has meant to me.

4. Tell us a bit about yourself? Anything interesting you would like us to know?

I love my dog – she comes first. She gives me something else to care about other than myself. I started to play music again after many years. I am a gentleman and want to be kind to other people and repay the kindness that has been shown to me. Once I have recovered from the stress of the last few months, I will be able to make more changes to improve my health and social life.

This case study has been written by Paul, a patient from Nelson Medical Centre with the support of his Social Prescriber, Marina Caroli. Paul has given his consent for this case study to be published. Paul is not his real name.

*Merton Centre for Independent Living

** Personal Independence Payment

Providing support and stability to patients while dealing with constant change

In October 2019 3 Social Prescribers (SPs) were already based in 12 GP Practices across Merton. At the end of November 2019 6 more SPs were employed, again with help of Healthwatch Merton. After their mandatory training and induction was completed all 9 Social Prescribers supported patients from January 2020 in all 22 Practices across Merton. The team of SPs has been funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group Merton and by the 6 local Primary Care Networks. The team has been managed by Merton Connected.

A SP can be seen up to 6 times by a patient and each consultation can last up to an hour. A person-centred view and strength-based approach are used to empower the patient to engage with activities, to improve their life quality and to reconnect with the wider community. SP is not only a signposting service. The SPs often provide emotional support for patients who are on waiting lists for counselling or therapy. This short-term intervention is often helpful to stabilise patients and to reassure them that help and support is available to them. That allows professionals to have the time and resources to understand their issues from a holistic point of view.



Ben Halschka
Head of Social Prescribing

Since the first national lockdown in March 2020 the SP team had to work mostly from home and supported patients remotely. The team has been able to support patients efficiently by consulting most patients over the phone and by joint working and cross-sector collaboration. Furthermore, the SP team has been linked to the Merton COVID-19 Community Response Hub and more vulnerable and isolated residents have been identified and supported. The team has also taken up additional tasks since the beginning of the pandemic: Giving isolated residents access to prescription and medication, welfare calls for shielded and vulnerable patients, booking residents for the vaccination programme, face-to-face consultations when necessary and an additional SP within the Merton COVID-19 Community Response Hub was also appointed by Merton Connected. To ensure we engage, support, and consult with all patient groups in Merton, we have created 5 Advocate roles within our team; (i) Children and Families, (ii) Young People, (iii) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, (iv) Mental Health Support and (v) Wellbeing.

LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE IN SOCIAL PRESCRIBING



? What is it?

The SEG Awards Level 3 Certificate in Social Prescribing is a nationally recognised qualification. It prepares learners for a role in social prescribing and provides those already working in this area with a deeper level of knowledge and understanding.

The content is based on key areas related to social prescribing environments, including delivering community based solutions, offering vulnerable adults holistic support, managing caseloads and measuring outcomes to improve support mechanisms.

Who is it for?

This course is aimed at those working within or looking to move to a role where elements of social prescribing are used as part of their work; such as public sector agencies, healthcare and the voluntary and community sector. It enables learners to broaden their skills and knowledge, to support individuals to access services in the community, that are appropriate to their needs.

£ How much does it cost?

The cost of the full programme is £1375 per person, which includes all fees, registration costs, access to learning resources, live tutorials and assessments.

☑ Length of course

This qualification usually takes 4-6 months to complete and is delivered through face to face classroom sessions or online distance learning, via our e-learning platform.

Assessments are carried out via our online e-portfolio, independent study and tutor assessment of learning. The full qualification is awarded once all units and coursework is completed and passed.

Our online distance learning programme, is supported with bi-weekly live tutorials and webinars. Our Face to Face programme comprises of a morning session devoted to teaching and learning of the subject topic, with the afternoon given over to an Action Learning Sets.



Endorsement and Partnership's

Wimbledon Guild

Social Prescribers provide a lifeline between GP surgeries and Wimbledon Guild. 40% of referrals to our Wellbeing Support team came via Social Prescribers in 2020-21. The close working relationships between our staff and Social Prescribers across Merton mean each party has a good understanding of the support on offer to clients.

Working with Social Prescribers makes all the difference to client outcomes. They know us and what we do so well, that we can work together to offer the best possible treatment path for clients.

We find that Social Prescribers have the time to really listen and understand clients, getting to know them, their family and their support network. This means that Social Prescribers can pick up on problems which clients may not explicitly state, and which would otherwise slip through the net.

Social Prescribers allow us to get to the root of the issue and work holistically across Wimbledon Guild to provide practical help and support, knowing that any medical concerns will be addressed by the Social Prescribers with a GP.

We have had instances where a client has presented with physical ailments, which have disappeared once they've received appropriate support from our team, be it Grief Support service, Financial Assistance, or Wellbeing Support.



Wendy Pridmore
CEO, Wimbledon Guild

Elemental Software

The role of the Social Prescribing Link Worker has never been more important than now.

Having the ability to be safely and securely referred by a health and social care professional, or to self-refer yourself to someone who has the time, the local knowledge, and the ability to meet with you again to discuss progress, is something everyone should have access to.

One of the places that stands out to me most as a social prescribing exemplar is Merton. I have listened to the GPs, Social Prescribers, Service Commissioners, volunteers, and the community themselves talk about the immense sense of community spirit in Merton and it really does feel like a united, collaborative, and caring place. The region was one of the first leading lights in the social prescribing space in the UK.

Champions such as Dr Mohan Sekeram, Clinical Lead Social Prescribing Wandsworth and Merton, Barry Causer, Head of Strategic Commissioning, London Borough of Merton Ray Hautot, Senior Social Prescribing Coordinator and now Simon Shimmens and Ben Halschka and the team, make all the difference. The decision for the local PCNs to work in partnership with Merton Connected and bolster the Social Prescribing Link Worker team, was a move that other regions aspire to. Elemental is so proud to be Merton's digital social prescribing partner. Everyone knows how much of a difference partnership working, compassion and connected communities can make to people's lives. Now the region has the data to prove it too.



Jennifer Neff
CEO, Elemental

Key factors of success



Recruitment and career development

Further team development and quality assurance has been progressed to ensure that the overall quality of our service in the future continues to deliver excellent wellbeing scores for residents. We invest in a successful and high performing team with competitive salary, excellent terms and conditions, including an extensive training budget for continued professional development. This has allowed us to build and sustain a team who are recruited with professional backgrounds in Psychology, Counselling or Health and Social Care.

We have also appointed 3 Senior Social Prescribing Coordinators within our team. The senior colleagues are facilitating peer support sessions and they are helping to improve our service. The senior roles are also an opportunity for our colleagues to develop their career and to prepare themselves for managerial roles.



Team support

Providing our SP team with the best support available is crucial during these challenging times.

Therefore, all team members have access to the following internal and external support mechanism; Clinical supervision, coaching sessions, internal peer support, external peer support, supervision, and team meetings.



External validation and analysis of data

Merton's SP data has been collected via the Elemental software and has been shared regularly with the Merton and Wandsworth Clinical Commissioning Group. The data is also regularly analysed by the Commissioning Support Unit, NHS.



Awards and celebrations

In October 2020, our team was awarded Highly Commended for the Social Prescribing Programme of the year award by the National Association of Link Workers.

To celebrate and acknowledge local organisations, partners, and their services, our team decided to present SP community awards. On National SP Day, 18th March 2021 our team presented the following awards:



Merton Social Prescribing Community Awards 2021

Category 1:

Outstanding Voluntary Organisational Support

The winner: Age UK, Living Well Service

Category 2:

Innovative Community Service

The winner: Studio Upstairs Online Art Group

Category 3:

Community service in response to the pandemic

The winner: Dons Local Action Group

There is such a wealth and diversity of voluntary organisations and faith groups in Merton. The winners of these 3 award categories truly deserve the acknowledgement and appreciation because they have delivered innovative and crucial services to residents throughout the pandemic. These 3 organisations are great examples of the many colleagues who have dedicated their services to enhance the life quality of residents in the borough.



Primary Care Network

The new Primary Care posts of Care Coordinators and Health and Wellbeing Coaches are working very closely with the Social Prescribers. This multi-disciplinary approach ensures that patients receive a personally tailored service and the best possible care throughout their primary care patient journey.



Francis Grove Surgery

Case Study

1. When and why did you see the Social Prescriber? What challenges did you face?

I am 32 years old and a patient at Francis Grove Surgery. One of the GPs referred me to Social Prescribing towards the end of November during second lockdown, for support with rehousing issues and mental health, as I was living at the YMCA.

At my first appointment with Sarah, we talked for an hour and I gave her the background to my 'mental breakdown': my relationship with my partner had broken down after the birth of our 2nd daughter and we split up. I visited my daughters for a while, but my partner suddenly moved with the kids to another part of the country without warning. I started drinking and eating to excess, had the stress of running my own business, mixing with the 'wrong' friends, self-destructive behaviour. This resulted in me suffering a psychotic episode and being hospitalised in 2018. After that, I became homeless and that was how I came to be emergency housed in the YMCA.

Shortly afterwards, I was excited to be moving into my own flat in Mitcham. LWSS (Mitcham Council's Local Welfare Support Scheme) had provided me with a bed, cooker, fridge and washing machine. I was able to source a nearly new sofa and other items from Freecycle.

2. How did the Social Prescriber help you?

Sarah listened to me and to what was important to me now:

Work: I have lots of creative ideas, including a lifestyle app. Sarah listened and encouraged me. I also recognise that I need to earn, so I would be applying for anything in the meantime.

Community: I said I was interested in supporting my local community and told her that. In the past, I had helped build a sensory garden for the visually impaired. Sarah signposted me to Sustainable Merton for possible future involvement as a Community Champion and in projects for growing your own food, like the one at Phipps Bridge Allotments.

She also signposted me to Volunteer Merton website for other volunteering opportunities. I was particularly

interested in being a volunteer befriender and intend to pursue this post-lockdown. Sarah told him about the befriending schemes at Wimbledon Guild and Age UK.

Healthy eating and exercise: I also said I was interested in eating more healthily and exercising and Sarah sent me a link to the One You Merton website for healthy eating tips and wellbeing.

Family: Now that I am settled in my own flat, my next goal is to renew contact with my 2 daughters. At my most recent appointment, Sarah signposted me to South West London Law Centre to help me navigate this complex area.

3. What words would sum up Social Prescribing for you?

I must say that I am truly grateful for the support Sarah my Social Prescriber has offered me. It's good to be able to talk your plans out with someone and have someone believe and help make them a reality. I have now been discharged, as things are better than ever for me and it is time for Sarah to support someone who was in my shoes, but I did not want to leave without giving my feedback. Thank you, Sarah, and everyone at Francis Grove for caring about me when at times even I do not do that.

4. Tell us a bit about yourself? Anything interesting you would like us to know?

I love my flat and feel part of a community. I am in a good place mentally. I am now getting regular work from a construction work agency, which is beneficial for my physical and mental wellbeing.

I still have my long-term dreams for the future and am determined to achieve these.

This case study has been written by Amos, a patient from Nelson Medical Centre with the support of his Social Prescriber, Sarah Hannigan. Amos have given his consent for this case study to be published.

Francis Grove Surgery

Working initially with Kelly and then also with Sarah has been an easy and positive experience so far. Both are so responsive, amenable, and adaptable and have done a wonderful job at supporting our patients and our practice. They have both embedded themselves within the practice, Sarah entirely remotely to date and are incredibly flexible. Their willingness to try to support some of our most complex and vulnerable patients is noted and appreciated. It is clear when you speak to Kelly or Sarah, the rapport they have built with patients, the knowledge they have about their situations and the difference they make through their interventions. Their breadth of knowledge about local support and services is also fantastic.



Lynsey Buckles
Practice Manager, Francis Grove Surgery

Evaluation Findings

Data collected from April 2019 -March 2020 has recorded 71% of female patients and 29% of male patients have engaged with SP. During the last financial year, the ratio of male patients has increased to 41% and female patients has decreased to 57%. During the same period 0.5% of patients identified as trans* and 1.5% of patients recorded their gender as other*. Apart from a more inclusive gender data collection we have welcomed the increase in more men utilising the SP service. The increase of more referrals for male patients might have occurred from the wider promotion of the SP service across Merton, but may have also occurred due to local and national conversations about men's health and men's mental health.

These are the age groups of patients who have been referred to SP between October 2019 and March 2021:



Age (on referral date)

Up to 14.....	18
15 to 18.....	16
19 to 24.....	128
25 to 34.....	277
35 to 44.....	267
45 to 54.....	323
55 to 64.....	256
65 to 74.....	185
75 to 84.....	209
85+.....	156

The Merton SP team is currently only supporting patients over the age of 18. However, our team supports parents with children. We do not directly support children and young people, but we offer support, advice and guidance to parents and families across the borough. The Children and Families' Advocate and the Young People's Advocate roles have also helped to engage with these cohorts of patients.

*Transgender people have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the sex that they were assigned at birth.

conclusions

The positive partnership working in Merton, involving the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Local Authority and the voluntary, community and faith sector, has allowed Social Prescribing to flourish and innovate year on year. Our team of Social Prescribers have provided excellent service before the pandemic, remained flexible and adaptable during the pandemic, and as a team are working closely with health colleagues to look at some new approaches remaining as part of future delivery, post pandemic.

Meet the Team

Our talents

All members of the Merton Social Prescribing team were chosen for their qualifications, work experience, their personality, and their course of life. All share their talents generously with our residents and the team is deeply passionate about the empowerment of patients.

Ben Halschka

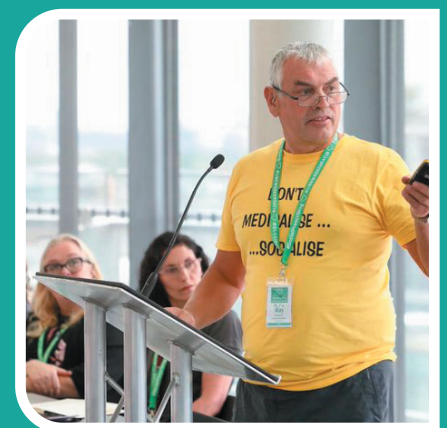
Head of Social Prescribing

Ben has gained over 20 years of work experience in education, health and social care in Belgium, Germany, Israel, Palestine, USA, and the UK. Among other fields Ben has worked for history compensating projects, child protection services, bilingual educational programmes and as a Best Interest Assessor - Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). Ben has been a senior manager for over 10 years for the statutory and voluntary sector and he has dedicated his career to social change, community cohesion and inclusion.

Ray Hautot

Senior Social Prescribing Coordinator

Ray has gained over 30 years' experience of working in the voluntary sector. He managed an independent living project in Wandsworth, and he was the CEO of Mind in Lambeth and Southwark and Mencap in Croydon. Ray has also spent 14 years as a Director at St Marks Family Centre in Mitcham. Ray enjoys working in different teams each day of the week and seeing the changes in people as a result of them accessing services in the community.



Marina Caroli

Senior Social Prescribing Coordinator

For the last fifteen years, Marina has been providing one-to-one and group wellbeing interventions in a variety of settings. They have included educational establishments, the NHS and the third sector.

In addition to her working experience, Marina has gained a range of qualifications that have well equipped her with the skills needed for her current role. They have included: information, advice and guidance, psychology, psychotherapy, mindfulness and movement-based therapy, business and finance, and adult teaching. Marina enjoys seeing people making long-lasting behaviour and life changes, which improve their health & wellbeing



Kelly Walker

Senior Social Prescribing Coordinator and Young People's Advocate

Prior to her current role Kelly's career has been within health, social care and childcare. Her previous roles include support worker roles for children and adults with SEN and physical disabilities, families with young children, substance misuse support, management within childcare settings. Giving people the time to talk and feel listened to, linking them to services they possibly were unaware of and providing options for support has been a joy and a privilege for Kelly.

Kemi Oyebode

Social Prescriber and Children and Families' Advocate

Kemi's professional background is physiotherapy; she has worked in the NHS for many years in acute care and rehabilitation settings and in the community. Kemi worked for five years as a health advisor helping people to improve their lifestyles before becoming a Social Prescriber. Kemi loves to support people and to improve their participation in society and minimise their personal challenges.





Nicole Lau

Social Prescriber and Wellbeing Advocate

Before becoming a Social Prescriber, Nicole supported patients with sight loss across three hospitals in Surrey. Nicole also used to run a disability information centre where she supported people with social issues and referred and signposted them to the right services to meet their needs. Furthermore, Nicole has worked for 15 years for two different university libraries. It has been extremely rewarding for Nicole to meet patients regularly who have had positive health and wellbeing outcomes as a result of her support.

Mel Palachandran

Social Prescriber and Mental Health Advocate

Mel used to work as an Assistant Psychologist across various NHS services and prior to this role, she was working for the Wellbeing team at Sutton Uplift alongside, Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services and delivering 1:1 and group support. In her current role Mel really enjoys the conversations with patients, and that she can make a positive difference for patients and their families.



Charesse Miller

Social Prescriber and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities' Advocate

Prior to this role, Charesse was working for the Wellbeing team at Sutton Uplift alongside Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services, delivering 1:1 and group interventions. Charesse also provided reception, administration, and secretarial support across various primary and secondary care health services in both Merton and Sutton. Charesse really enjoys to 'lighten the load' of her patients and she is grateful for the many training opportunities which are key for both personal and professional development.





Sarah Hannigan

Social Prescriber

Sarah has worked in Merton's voluntary, public and community sectors for 20 years. As Head of Volunteering at Merton Voluntary Service Council until 2018, she ran projects encouraging Merton residents to engage in volunteering as a pathway to improving their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Sarah joined Merton's Social Prescribing Team during the pandemic and has found her role challenging and rewarding. She enjoys being able to apply a person-centred approach, allowing each patient time to pinpoint the issues that are important to them and helping them navigate potential solutions and sources of support.

Janet Watkins

Social Prescriber

Janet is a qualified and experienced teacher of adults and she has worked as an adult community learning practitioner. Before becoming a Social Prescriber, Janet was responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of educational programmes working in various inner London boroughs. Janet also gained work experience within social care supporting a range of people from children, young people and their families, adults with disabilities and older people. Janet has been able to build rapport, if only for a short period by supporting and enabling patients to explore their issues and giving them hope in these uncertain times.



Adrianna Jones

Former Senior Social Prescribing Coordinator

Adrianna has worked for MVSC, now Merton Connected from 2018 until April 2021. She has helped to build and define the Merton model of Social Prescribing. Hence, we do not want to miss the opportunity to thank her again for her contribution to the success of Social Prescribing in the borough. We wish her the absolute best for her future endeavours.





South West London
Clinical Commissioning Group

