

# Social and Physical Exercise Support Group

For People Living with Chronic Pain

A Summary Of The Pilot Group, Shrewsbury: February – August 2023



# Organisational Profiles Involved:

**Shropshire Community Leisure Trust** runs 4 Leisure Centres in Shropshire;



- Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre
- Shrewsbury Sports Village
- Market Drayton Leisure Centre and
- Oswestry Leisure Centre

The Trust has invested in a small Community Engagement Team to strengthen the links between the Leisure Centres and local communities - a priority of which is to support the Social Prescribing Programme with health partners. The Shrewsbury Sports Village hosts the group and is co-facilitated by Wendy Marston, Community Engagement Lead.

**Community Resource** is a charity that is committed to making life better for people and communities facing challenges in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin. They deliver this work across three main areas:

- Wellbeing & Care
- Community & Support
- Funding & Advice



They help people stay active, keep connected and maintain their health and independence. They give grants to those in need and work with local groups offering advice and support so they can support their own communities. The community development aspect of the Social Prescribing Programme for Shrewsbury, is delivered from Community Resource and the group is co-facilitated by Natalie Jackson, Social Prescribing Community Development Officer.



**Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin** is a charity and one of 43 Active Partnerships in England, funded by Sport England. They collaborate with local partners, organisations and the voluntary & community sector to help tackle inequalities through the benefits of physical activity and moving more. Their work includes developing and managing programmes within Health & Social Care, schools and education; distributing funds, developing people and infrastructure support and building resilience in the voluntary & community sector and creating a social movement to support their ambition to eliminate inactivity. Working in conjunction with Sport England, Energize supported the pilot to access £2716 through The Together Fund.

# Early-Stage Project Development:

- Gap in provision was recognised for chronic pain patients, identified by Healthy Lives Advisors (HLAs) within social prescribing programme
- Key stakeholders from VCS, Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury PCN involved from inception
- Location decided as Shrewsbury Sports Village (pictured) – accessible and easy to travel to. Available meeting room and quiet gym space to use as a combined approach to support those living with pain
- Trial funding of £2716 from Sport England/Energize allocated for project costs – room hire, quiet gym use, Personal Trainer time, specific exercise equipment, refreshments and guest speakers
- Funding secured a project timeline of 22<sup>nd</sup> February '23 – 9<sup>th</sup> August '23
- Great example of community-based organisations coming together to provide support to this specific demographic – Community Resource charity, Shropshire Community Leisure Trust and Energize Shropshire Telford Wrekin.

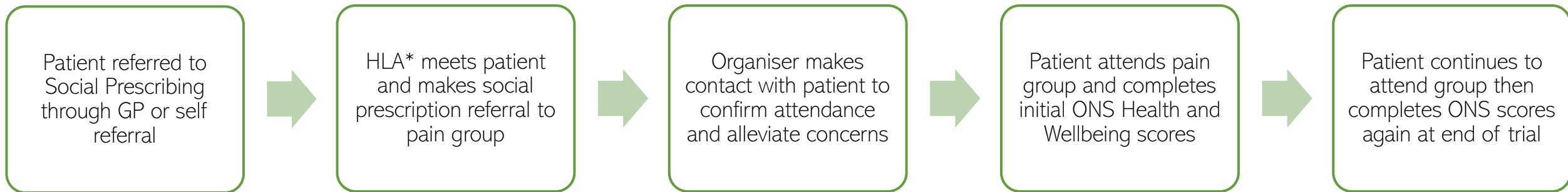


# Patient Profile Identified As:



- 90% referrals were women in their middle stage of life (approx. 40 – 60+)
- Low levels of mental health and overall wellbeing (ONS supported data)
- Prescribed multiple medications - including use of opioids
- Weight gain due to medication and lack of movement related to condition
- Lonely and isolated on a day-to-day basis
- Didn't feel seen or heard by both professionals and society - '*an invisible disability*'
- Lacked faith in clinical interventions after '*trying it all*'
- Been in pain for years with one or multiple conditions
- '*At end of tether*' with how to manage pain and live life

# Referral Pathway:



\*HLAs are based (mostly) out of GP Practices funded by PCNs and managed by Shropshire Council.

# Early Implementation Findings:

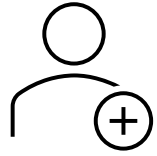
*Initial observations from the first few weeks of the trial*

- A 'test and learn' approach to the group worked well. Meeting structure was flexible based on their physical and emotional needs. They stated; "*We need a welcoming group which feels supportive, and a safe space to talk and share information*".
- 1.5 hours was an adequate amount of time for a loose agenda comprising of: welcome / subject matter discussion / gym time / close
- ONS health and wellbeing questionnaire (undertaken at beginning) revealed low levels of life satisfaction and high levels of anxiety across all individuals
- Guest contributors were a welcomed addition to the group: e.g. Shrewsbury Town Foundation, HLAs, seated Pilates Instructor
- Wider interest has gathered from I.C.B Opioid Reduction Programme, West Midlands Academic Health Science Network and other local clinicians
- Clients expressed positive feedback right from the beginning and have valued being contributors to the evolution of the pilot with the intention for it to continue and spread across the county

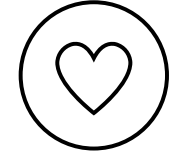


# Organically Defined Group Objectives:

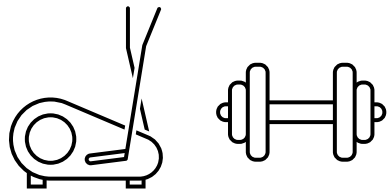
*Derived from early findings, remained true throughout the trial.*



Build social support and friendships routed in a shared experience



Provide an encouraging and non-judgemental environment to discuss their pain



Provide the opportunity for gentle movement to ease pain symptoms and improve mental health



Empower individuals to take control of their pain and share strategies to help to manage their health

# The Group in Action:



Patients embracing the information and handouts distributed as a result of the Live Well with Pain training that NJ and WM attended.

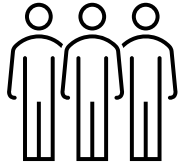


Patients taking advantage of the quiet gym area, to move their body under the careful supervision of WM. Patients returned to the rest of the group feeling proud that they'd moved their body.

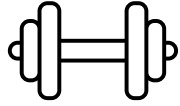


Patients who didn't wish to participate in physical exercise stayed in the meeting room and chatted amongst each other with NJ. Hints and tips are often shared and noted.

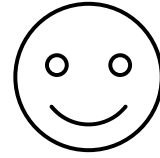
# Group Outcomes:



- The group had a total of **13** regular attendees out of a population of 33 referrals from the social prescribing service.



- **7** patients regularly used the quiet gym at the meeting to achieve (and even exceed) their movement goals. **4** became paying members of the Leisure Centre.



- Mental health improved after attending the group: suicide risk was overcome in one individual, hope and worth has increased in all and anxiety levels reduced.



- Friendships formed, e.g. sharing lifts to group, meeting up outside of the group and chatting on phone for support.



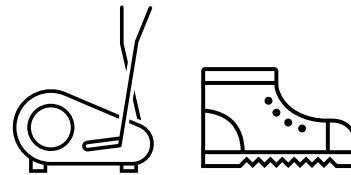
- Patients stopped displaying outward signs of pain as much as first weeks of the pilot, and mobility visibility improved across many of the patients



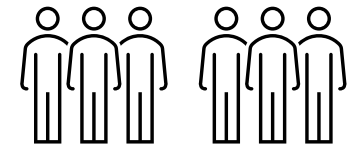
- Implementing the *Live Well with Pain* patient information worked well as a resource to take away with the potential to use in clinical appts



- Patients reported a reduction in their medication as a result of attending the group and social prescribing overall. One patient halved Gabapentin prescription from 360mg to 180mg



- Referrals into other socially prescribed activities increased after promotion of the service: e.g. military hub, EoR at STFC, Attingham walks, buddy scheme at Community Resource



- Monthly attendance vs capacity increased over the months and always operated at least one third full. This is considered a success due to the nature of their conditions and number of medical appts to attend



# O.N.S Data Results – Before and After:

*Based on 7 key case studies*

ONS Data Questions	D			K			H			J			N			I			HP		
	Before	After	Result	Before	After	Result	Before	After	Result	Before	After	Result	Before	After	Result	Before	After	Result	Before	After	Result
Overall how satisfied are you with life nowadays? (0 lowest, 10 highest)	0	6	+6	0	9	+9	4	9	+6	1	6	+5	0	6	+6	3	7	+4	5	7	+2
Overall to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile? (0 lowest, 10 highest)	2	4	+2	3	9	+6	4	9	+5	1	5	+4	1	6	+5	4	6	+2	8	9	+1
Overall how happy did you feel yesterday? (0 lowest, 10 highest)	2	6	+4	0	9	+9	2	9	+7	0	5	+5	1	6	+5	3	5	+2	6	8	-2
On a scale where 0 is 'not at all anxious and 10 is completely anxious, overall how anxious did you feel yesterday? (reduction score is good)	5	3	-2	10	6	-4	10	2	-8	10	8	-2	4	0	-4	5	4	-1	2	0	-2

- All patients increased their satisfaction with life from attending the group
- All patients felt more sense of worth since they started attending the group
- Happiness levels have risen since the group started
- Anxiety levels significantly decreased from the initial data capture

# Patient Feedback:

“I have halved my prescription of Gabapentin from 360mg to 180mg since going through social prescribing and coming to this group”

“I am exercising and moving my body for the first time in years”

“Without social prescribing and this group, I wouldn't be here now. You have saved my life”

“I am agoraphobic, and I can't leave the house without someone, but I am determined to come to this group because I really enjoy it and it's important to me. *H (a fellow group member)* picked me up this week, and we came together”

“I come here and just think; go on, just give it a go, so I head to the gym and do a few minutes”

“I won't miss coming to the group, it is the highlight of my fortnight”



“This group has changed my life – I have made new friends as a result”

“I find that the group has been helpful to talk about pain experiences with others”

“I'm done with clinical interventions; we need groups like this for us to get better”

“I have come off my morphine since going through the social prescribing programme and coming to this group”



“I like sharing hints and tips with the other ladies of the group to help them”

“I don't want to exercise initially, but as soon as I get there, I feel like I can do it and want to go and do it, *for me*”

“Please keep this group going – it has really helped me and has made a big difference to my life by attending”

# What Next?



- Funding has officially ended for this phase and trial results have been collated
- Shropshire Community Leisure Trust have permitted the group members to continue to meet in the same place, at the same time, each fortnight and use the coffee shop without entry charge. Gym use will be at a concession rate if they wish to use it during that time.
- New referrals will still be accepted under the provision that the referred individual knows it is a social gathering with no facilitation.
- There is a desire to expand the peer support group model into Oswestry (as part of SCLT portfolio) and across the wider county (with CDO support)
- Members of the group have expressed they all want the Shrewsbury group to continue, and we are open to funding suggestions and opportunities to create a sustainable provision to support this demographic of people.