

Northern Ireland's Healthy Living Centre Alliance (HLCA) and Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing (SCHW) have come together as a partnership to deliver the Social Prescribing Project. SCHW and HCLA each represents a network of community-led health organisations working to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes with and for local people.

Many of these community-led health organisations have a successful track record of delivering social prescribing projects. The Social Prescribing Project will build on their experience, as well as on many years of accumulated knowledge working with local people and in local contexts.

Social prescribing at its best is not a signposting exercise or indeed a referral direct to a community service/activity etc. It involves building relationships, taking a holistic approach and engaging individuals at the heart of the process.

The Social Prescribing Project will bring together partners from across Scotland and Northern Ireland. The largest coordinated project of its kind, it will synthesise learning from across two regions of the UK for five years. Over 16,000 people will co-create a social prescription and engage in at least one of the many interventions delivered by our network of experienced community-led health improvement organisations. In 5 years, we will deliver 192,000 interventions. Working at this scale will build robust evidence of the impact of social prescribing – essential for influencing health care spend.

The Project will influence policy makers at all political levels. Our aim is to change the way that healthcare budgets are set, shifting the focus towards preventative spend and influencing spending on health and wellbeing in the community.

In short, Big Lottery Community Fund will allow us to take an already proven approach to health improvement – social prescribing – and transform it to a nationally accepted means of delivering better health care. (See Updates for more information on the Social prescribing project.