

Social Prescribing Resources

Social prescribing is the practice used by health professionals to connect people with local community groups to address the social determinants contributing to poor mental health. It is becoming increasingly popular as an evidence-based, affordable, non-clinical adjuvant to more conventional treatments. This approach fits perfectly with QAMH's belief that human distress does not always need a medical response. Below you will find resources detailing the latest evidence behind this emerging trend.

Resource Links

- **The Missing Link: Social Prescribing for Children and Young People**

[The Missing Link: Social Prescribing for Children and Young People](#)

In England, children and young people are having to wait for months – even years, in many cases – to get the help and support they need when they are struggling with their mental health. As can be expected, their condition often just intensifies whilst their names sit on long waiting lists. To address this, children's charity Barnardo's has suggested in a recently published report that social prescribing could be one effective way of addressing this demand. They've called on the government to introduce a national social prescribing strategy to offer children and adolescents a community-based, non-clinical alternative to traditional mental health services.

- **Support for "Arts on Prescription" Growing**

Arts on prescription is an innovative practice that seeks to improve overall wellbeing by including arts engagement as part of health treatment plans. It is something that QAMH has advocated for at both state and Commonwealth level including in our [National Cultural Policy submission](#). In a move that shows that the idea of Arts on Prescription is gaining policy traction, Creative Australia has recently published two important new research reports on creativity and wellbeing.

[Creating Wellbeing: Attitudes and engagement with arts, culture and health](#)

This report provides powerful evidence of public support for the idea of arts and creativity benefitting health and wellbeing, including that:

- Most people agree that engaging in the arts can have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing, including mental health (89%), social health (84%), physical health (70%), family life (72%), community life (75%), and knowledge and skills (82%).
- Most respondents are open to arts on prescription. Almost nine in ten respondents are either 'very open' (42%) or 'somewhat open' (43%) to arts on prescription for mental health conditions.
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Creative Solutions: Training and sustaining the arts for mental health workforce

This report identifies the professional development needs and support structures required to ensure that this work is safe and sustainable for all involved, including that:

- There is an urgent need for models of professional supervision and/or a community of care. At present, independent practitioners are often working in isolation, without organisational support or sufficient pastoral care, and in environments that are highly challenging and complex.
- Mentoring is a highly valued source of training in arts for wellbeing practice, providing a structured means of sharing knowledge with attention to the specifics of program context. Mentoring is currently a common source of training for many arts and wellbeing practitioners and could be scaled up and formalised with additional support.

An International and Local Exploration of Social Prescribing

- <https://www.qamh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/An-International-and-Local-Exploration-of-Social-Prescribing-QAMH-Report.pdf>

This 2023 QAMH report explores the concept of social prescribing, reviewing international examples of social prescribing and projects currently happening in Southeast Queensland. The report provides a useful catalogue of local and international initiatives and will be used to inform future social prescribing projects that are developed by QAMH with the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector.

Determinants and Early Intervention

- [Loneliness and Mental Health | Lived Experience Australia](#)

This research from Lived Experience Australia, in collaboration with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, is based on a survey of 322 people across Australia and New Zealand in 2022. It aims to better understand loneliness and its effects, particularly in relation to mental health, physical health, families, and wellbeing. It also explores what supports people felt may help overcome their loneliness.

Social Cohesion

- [Pandemic spike in social cohesion starting to decline - ANU](#)

This study from the Australian National University, in partnership with the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, has found that social cohesion in Australia is declining due to a weaker sense of pride, belonging and social justice. This has major implications for individual and community wellbeing.

- **School Connectedness**

[The role of school connectedness in the prevention of youth depression and anxiety: a systematic review with youth consultation | BMC Public Health | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#)

This article from BMC Public Health suggests that ensuring students feel a strong sense of belonging and connection to their high school can protect against the development of depression and anxiety.

Social Isolation and loneliness

[Social isolation and loneliness - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

This snapshot report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has some useful facts and figures on the incidence, demographic distribution, risk factors and impact of social isolation and loneliness in Australia.

Ending Loneliness

[Ending loneliness together](#)

Ending Loneliness Together is a national network of organisations committed to reducing social isolation and loneliness in Australia. Their website is a treasure trove of reports, research articles, webinars, podcasts and more – all focussed on addressing this critical issue.

Social Connectedness

[139532_BCEC-Stronger-Together-report_WEB.pdf](#)

This report from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre examines the patterns of social connectedness in Australia and provides an assessment of connectedness among different segments of the society. The report also sheds light on the patterns of loneliness and identifies the groups at greatest risk of loneliness and social isolation. The breadth of people's social experiences through the COVID-19 pandemic is a special focus of the report, which tracks changes in social connectedness, participation and trust before and after the pandemic.

Social Prescribing Pilot Study

Aggar, C., Thomas, T., Gordon, C., Bloomfield, J., & Baker, J. (2021). Social Prescribing for Individuals Living with Mental Illness in an Australian Community Setting: A Pilot Study. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 57(1), 189–195. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-020-00631-6>

[Social Prescribing for Individuals Living with Mental Illness in an Australian Community Setting: A Pilot Study - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

This study evaluates Australia's first social prescribing pilot program for individuals with mental illness. The program, which was conducted in Sydney in 2016/2017, included 13 adults who were assessed at baseline and at a six-month follow-up. Outcomes included self-perceived quality of life, welfare needs, health status, loneliness, social participation, and economic participation. Results indicate significant improvements in quality of life and health status and demonstrate that social prescribing may improve participant outcomes.

Research on a Social Prescribing Service

[Woodall, J., Trigwell, J., & Bunyan, A.M. \(2018\). Understanding the effectiveness and mechanisms of a social prescribing service: a mixed method analysis. BMC Health Services Research, 18, 604. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-3437-7](#)

This research focusses on a social prescribing scheme in Northern England, using 'Wellbeing Coordinators' to offer support to individuals and provide advice about local groups and services in the community. It looked at the outcome measures of the service and concluded that social prescribing has the potential to address unmet health and social needs of individuals.

The Role of Arts in Improving Wellbeing

Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019). *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. WHO Regional Office for Europe. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553773/>

[What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?: A scoping review \[Internet\] - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

This report synthesises the global evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing, with a specific focus on the WHO European Region. Results from more than 3000 studies identified a major role for the arts in the prevention of ill health, promotion of health, and management and treatment of illness across the lifespan.

Australia Council for the Arts

[Arts, Creativity and Mental Wellbeing Policy Development Program - Australia Council for the Arts](#)

This webpage provides a summary of the Arts, Creativity and Mental Wellbeing Policy Development Program, a four-month series of discussions that ran from February to May 2022. This program sought to better embed arts and creativity in government programs to support mental health and wellbeing. The program engaged people from the arts, mental health sector, community organisations, research, policy and various portfolios of government to develop a series of policy proposals and/or recommendations. A report on the program is due to be made available in August 2022.

Social Prescribing Roundtable

[Social-prescribing-report-and-recommendation.pdf \(racgp.org.au\)](#)

In 2019, the Consumers Health Forum of Australia and The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners co-hosted a roundtable on social prescribing. The purpose of the roundtable was to harness the emerging interest in social prescribing as an approach to improve outcomes, overall efficiency of delivering population level care, consumer satisfaction and experience and provider satisfaction. Recommendations on the merits of social prescribing and how it could be supported in a more systematic way in Australia were put forward.