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Emotional Wellbeing  
& Mental Health  
Lles Emosiynol ac  
Iechyd Meddwl

# Community Connections Engagement Report

December 2022

**CYPF**

Children, Young People  
& Family Health Services



**PPIT**

Gwasanaethau Plant, Pobl  
Ifanc ac Iechyd Teuluol



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**CARDIFF & VALE  
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## Introduction

### What is social prescribing?

Social prescribing is a more practical type of support to help **improve a person's health and wellbeing**.

This involves meeting a person, getting to know them, learning about the challenges they face, their interests and goals and **working together to develop a plan**.

This plan can involve connecting them to **local services, groups and activities** within their community to improve their emotional and physical wellbeing.

(National Academy for Social Prescribing, 2021).

The groups, activities and other opportunities that young people could access through social prescribing include:

- Helping people to make new friends
- Volunteering
- Exercising or being more active
- Getting out into nature
- Exploring new hobbies or interests.



There are not many social prescribing services available for children and young people in Wales. It is very important to learn what young people think about social prescription and **share what we learn** with young people, families and other professionals.

This is a report to share the feedback and opinions we have heard from young people as of December 2022.

## The project

[Cardiff and Vale University Health Board](#) have received funding from **NHS Health Charities Together** to run a social prescribing pilot within [Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health](#) services for children and young people. This pilot service is for young people aged 11-18 years old who are facing low level challenges to their emotional wellbeing.

The project is an opportunity to test out whether a social prescribing service is useful for young people referred to Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health, and whether it has a positive impact on their emotional wellbeing.



The service will be known as the **Community Connections** team. The pilot includes funding for a project lead and two community connectors.

Staff joined the project between August 2022 and November 2022. The aim is to start working directly with young people in January 2023. Funding is due to run until the end of March 2024. Part of the team's role will be to collect information and data about the impact of the service to determine whether social prescribing is a good way to use resources in the future.

## Engagement work

Before we started running the Community Connections service, we wanted to hear from young people about their views on social prescribing.



Hearing and including the views of young people is important when creating new services because:

- Staff better understand **what would work for young people** and can design services to meet young people's needs
- Young people are **aware of new services on offer**, and can ask to access them or help spread the word.

We have listened to young people in two main ways:

- We have visited different **youth groups** across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan to get feedback on our ideas for the project, as well as to hear young people's views about how best to run the service.

- We have also developed a section on Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board's [participation website](#), allowing people to give feedback and opinions online, either alongside or instead of attending the in-person sessions.

We will continue to gather feedback from youth groups and the engagement platform throughout the life of the project.

### **Our thoughts going in**

Before engaging with young people, we hoped that the sessions and engagement platform would be effective ways to get opinions from a wide range of young people.

We hoped that young people would feel comfortable sharing their views with us and would have useful feedback on our ideas.

In engagement sessions, we assumed that the young people attending would all know each other and would feel comfortable talking and sharing their opinions in front of each other. We found that sometimes this was the case, but not for all groups. Several young people told us that their anxiety made it difficult to take part fully.

We have some ideas to improve how we run these sessions in the future (see 'Next Steps' for more detail).



**Image 1: Photo from Cardiff and Vale Youth Board engagement session.**

## Engagement work

### Engagement sessions – Youth Groups

As mentioned above, one of the main ways the Community Connections team has listened to young people has been by visiting local youth groups and organisations.

In October and November 2022, the Community Connections team delivered engagement sessions to four youth groups across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan consisting of 47 young people in total (Table 1).

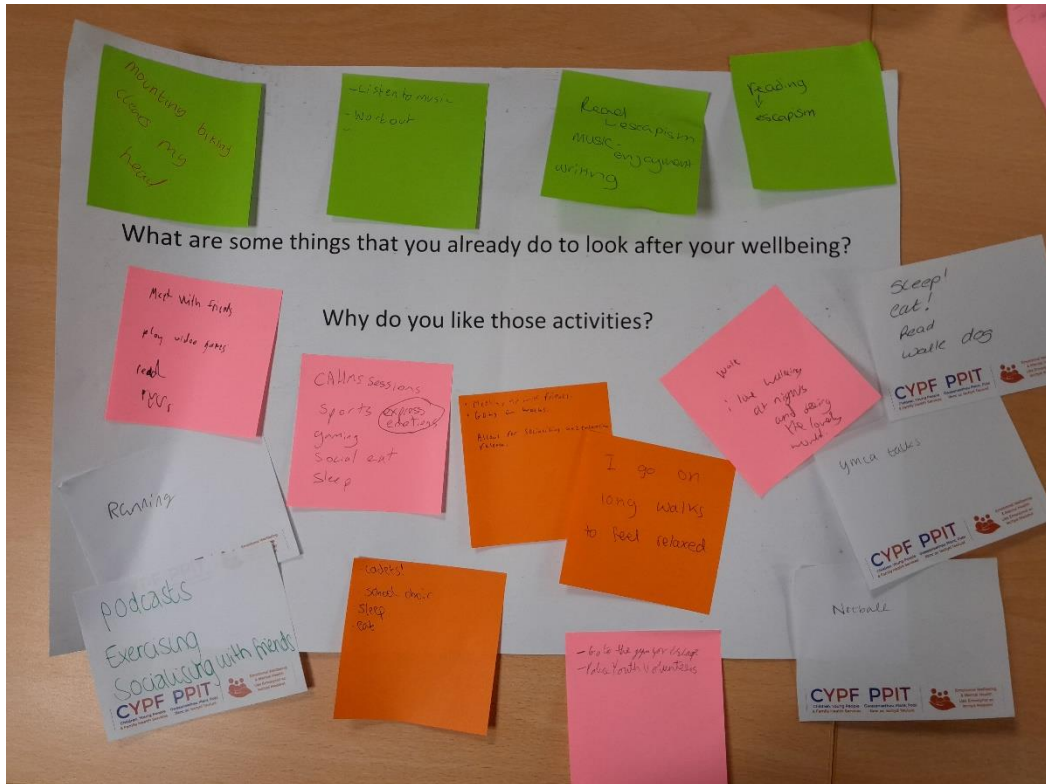
<u>Date</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
26 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	Vale Youth Council	9
7 <sup>th</sup> November 2022	Cardiff and Vale UHB Youth Board	14
9 <sup>th</sup> November 2022	Police Cadets Youth Group	14
17 <sup>th</sup> November 2022	Urdd Youth Group (Welsh medium)	10

**Table 1: A summary of engagement sessions run between 26/10/22 and 17/11/22.**

The aim of these sessions was to introduce the concept of social prescription to young people and to **hear their views** about our plans for the service.

We started the engagement sessions by trying to understand if young people already knew about social prescribing and whether they thought it would help them or other young people. We asked them about activities that they already access in their community.

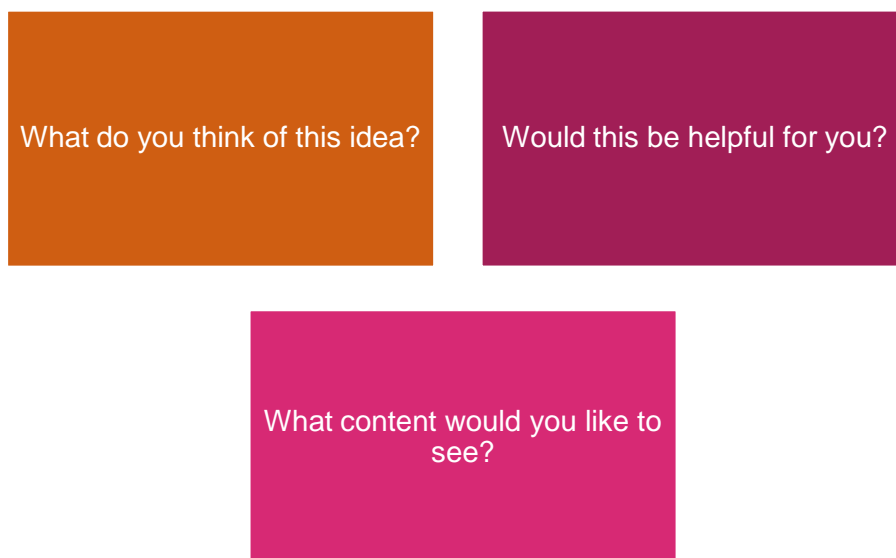
We were interested to hear about how different young people already act to look after their wellbeing, as well as what they would like to see in their local area that either does not exist or they do not know about (Image 2).



**Image 2: Photo of Post-It note exercise from Police Cadet Youth.**

Whilst in the developing stages of the project, we had the idea of creating a wellbeing journal. This journal would be a tool to support young people alongside their time with a Community Connector.

We asked specific questions about whether a journal would be useful and what content we should include (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Questions asked during the engagement sessions regarding the development of a wellbeing journal.**

## Engagement Platform



The other method we have used to hear the voices of young people is a section on the Cardiff & Vale Regional Partnership Board's participation website: <https://participate.cavrp.org/social-prescribing>

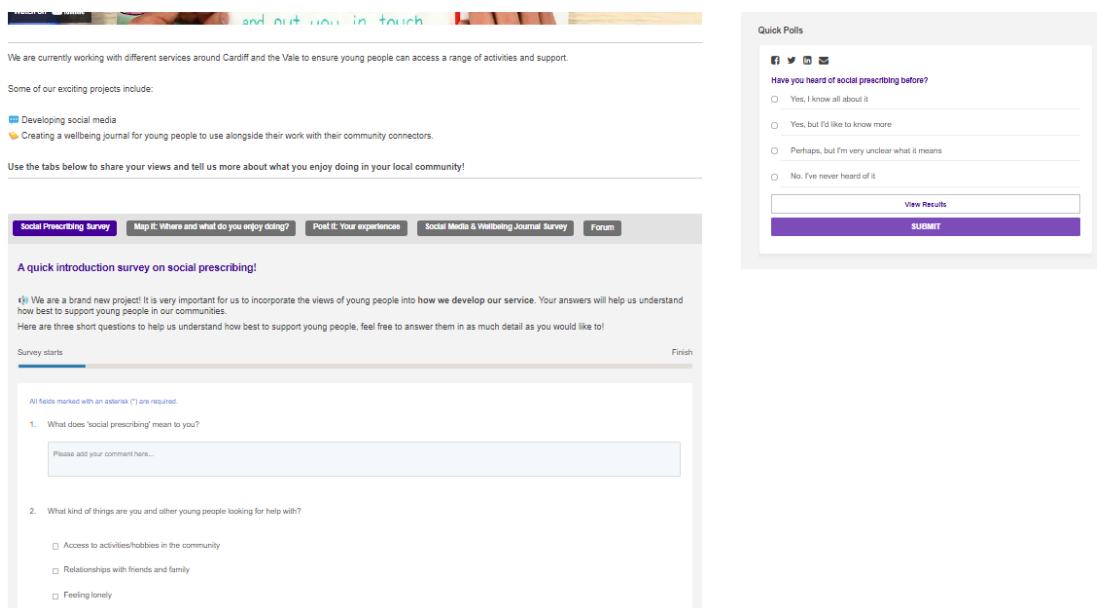
The webpage includes several different ways for young people to share their views.

### This includes:

- **Surveys** to measure young people's initial thoughts on social prescribing (including the service name), their expectations of any social media and the development of a wellbeing journal.
- **A map** where young people can pin where they go to do activities in their local area and what they do.
- **A virtual post-it page** to post ideas about what activities they enjoy and what would they like to see
- **A forum** to share more detail about the barriers young people might face that make it difficult to take part in groups or activities.



We wanted our own section on the engagement platform so we could reach young people who we were unable to talk to in person, who feel less comfortable sharing in larger groups or those that think of ideas after sessions. In total, 17 people have engaged with us on the platform.



**Image 3: Screenshot from the social prescribing section on the CAV RPB's engagement platform.**



## Findings

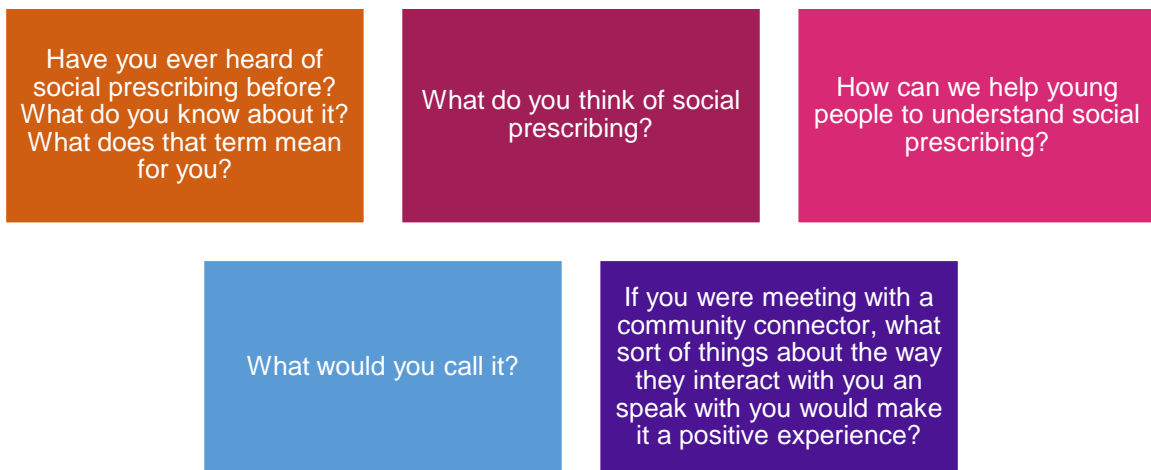
We have split our findings from the engagement sessions with youth groups and the engagement platform into four different sections:



- 1) Young people's understanding of social prescribing
- 2) Accessing and interacting with the service
- 3) Wellbeing journal
- 4) Wellbeing and young people

### Young people's understanding of social prescribing

We asked young people different questions about their understanding of social prescription (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Questions we asked about the idea of social prescription.**

We started by asking young people if they had heard of social prescribing. For most young people, this was a new term – **they had not heard of it before.**

After showing them a video to explain what social prescribing looks like, young people in all of the groups felt positive about it and thought it would be a useful way to **help some young people look after their wellbeing:**

- The groups felt the video we showed them explained the idea to them well: [What is social prescribing? - YouTube](#) (Healthy London Partnership, 2018).
- All groups suggested making a video including and more tailored to **young people**, as the specific video we used focuses on adults and the challenges they face.

How a service is presented has a big impact on how people feel about it – **the name** is a very important part of this. Our service is about getting to know young people, listening to them and working together to create a plan that meets their individual needs and wishes.

We asked young people about what we should call our new service.

- Young people **did not** want the service to be called social prescribing.
- They said ‘prescription’ sounded too clinical and as if they were being told what to do rather than **being listened to** and **being part of a team** to develop a plan.
- Young people liked the word ‘community’ and they wanted the name to focus on that as it sounds more like a service where **people work together**.
- Across the different groups, young people liked the suggested name ‘Community Connections’.

We asked young people about what would make a positive experience when working with our service. We did not receive many specific answers on this, but young people generally mentioned that they wanted:

- To be **listened to** and to **not be judged** on their thoughts and feelings
- To access support personal to their **individual needs and wants**
- For any meetings or groups to be **accessible**, in terms of cost, time, inclusive nature and physical access
- To know who Community Connectors are **before meeting** them
- In some cases, to have a **parent or carer** with them
- To **feel safe**

### Accessing and interacting with the service

In both the in-person sessions and on the engagement platform, we asked young people about **how they would prefer to access** the service and the best way for **us to interact** with them.



Several young people mentioned they would like to access the service through **school or local services** instead of a GP. Reasons for this include:

- They **did not feel comfortable speaking** about how they are feeling or what they are experiencing to a GP
- It **takes time** to see a GP

- It can be **difficult to get** to a GP
- A GP may require a **parent/carer** to be involved for the young person to get support
- It is easier to access via places **they already go** (such as school) or people they already know (e.g. wellbeing officer).

Young people suggested that using **texting and messaging apps** such as WhatsApp would be the best way to interact with them.



Some young people were worried that in some cases, parents or carers might be able access to the young person's phone and see private and confidential messages with their Community Connector.

This can be an issue if the young person's wellbeing concerns are caused by or relate to their parents, carers or other family members.

Many young people use **social media** to get information and advice, interact with friends and organisations and for entertainment.

On the engagement platform, we created a survey to ask about **which social media platforms** young people would want to interact with us on. Answers included (in order of popularity):

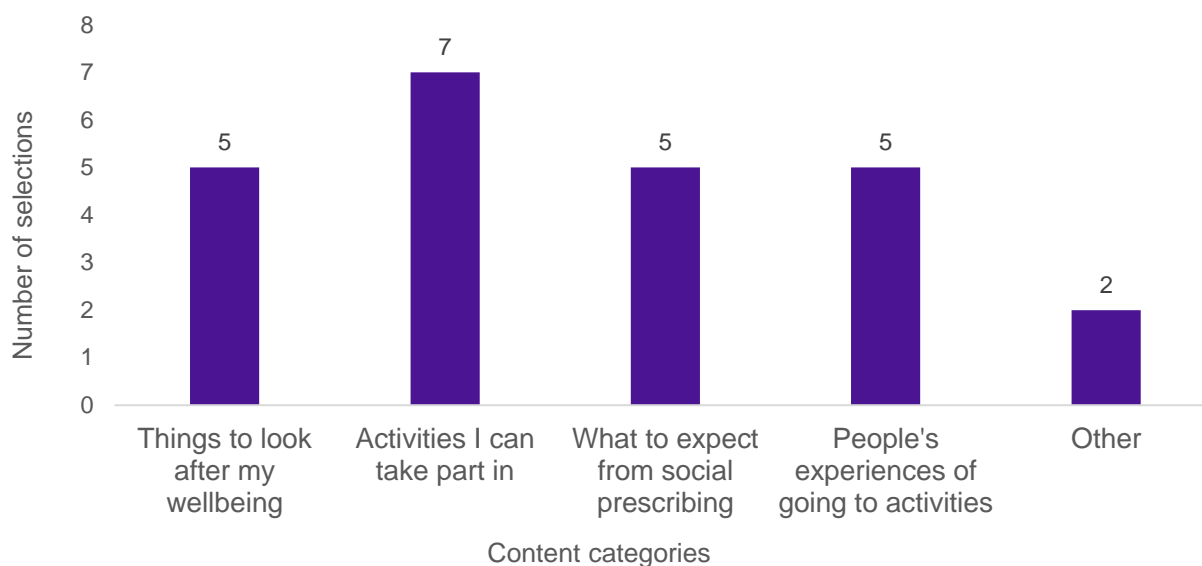
- **Instagram** (10 responses)
- **YouTube** (5 responses)
- **Twitter** (5 responses)
- **TikTok** (3 responses)
- **Snapchat** (1 response)

The vast majority of young people requested us to post content on a **weekly basis**.

We also asked young people what kind of content they would like us to make and gave them a choice of options (Figure 3).

- **Activities to take part in** was the most common answer with things to look after my wellbeing and people's experiences of going to activities also being popular.
- One person also mentioned explaining the **benefits of social prescribing** compared to medicinal treatments.

### What kind of content would you like to see on social media?



**Figure 3: Responses to a question on the engagement platform about social media content.**

#### Wellbeing journal



Based on what we have seen from other services, we thought a **wellbeing journal** with resources and reflection space could be helpful as part of a young person's journey with our service.

We asked young people whether they liked the idea of a wellbeing journal and **what content** they felt would be useful.

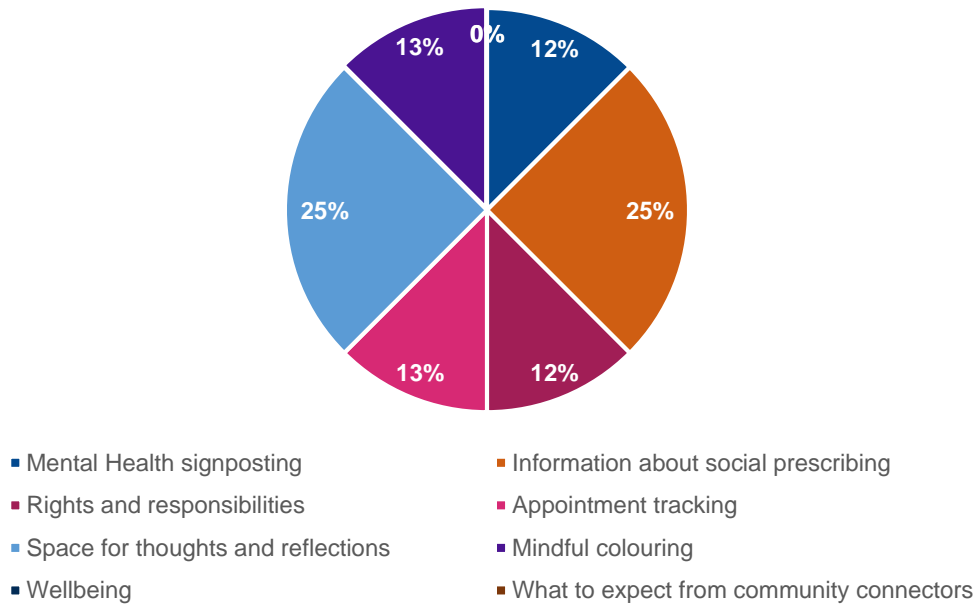
Youth groups agreed that the journal **would be helpful** as part of a young person's journey. Each group had different content suggestions.

These ideas included:

- Having an **evaluation form** to provide session feedback
- **Mindfulness** exercises
- Spaces to **reflect and debrief** at the end of a session
- Space for **gratitude**
- **Habit** trackers
- General wellbeing **tips**

Figure 4 shows the results of a survey on the engagement platform about the kind of content young people would like to see in the wellbeing journal.

### What kind of content would you like to see in a wellbeing journal?



**Figure 4: Results from a question from wellbeing journal survey on the engagement platform demonstrates what young people want to see in the journal.**

The most commonly picked items were information about social prescribing and a space for thoughts and reflections. Mental health resources and appointment tracking were also popular responses.

## Wellbeing and young people

An important part of our engagement work is understanding what young people **already do** to and **want to be able to do** to improve their wellbeing.

During engagement sessions and on the engagement platform we asked young people questions relating to this topic (Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Questions about young people and what they do for their wellbeing**

The most popular answers for what young people already do to help their wellbeing were:

- Going for walks
- Reading
- Seeing friends
- Going to the gym
- Listening to music



Young people said they would like to see sports (particularly team sports) and creative activities in their local area.

When asked when they would like to access activities, there were mixed responses.

- Some young people said they would prefer to meet **during school**, and others preferred to meet **after school**.
- Certain young people would prefer to access groups **online**, though we expect most of the services we will be suggesting will be in person.



## Next steps

### Service launch

We will launch our social prescription service in January 2023.

This means:



- We will start accepting referrals from the **Single Point of Access**
- We will **start meeting with young people** and connecting them to groups, activities and services in the community.

We will launch the service with the name **‘Community Connections’** in line with the suggestions and feedback from young people.

### Engagement opportunities

We will continue listening to young people throughout the project - this is very important for a service centred around young people.

Feedback from young people will help us to provide the best service possible to meet young people’s needs.

The engagement platform will remain active throughout the project. We plan on:

- Asking new questions
- Linking the platform to our social media to increase the volume of responses

We know there are things we can do to improve **how we listen** to young people. In future engagement sessions we will:

- Use **ice breakers** for young people to get to know each other and feel more comfortable
- Ask **more specific** questions
- Ask **less open-ended** questions
- Add in **different** activities
- Approach **different groups of young people** from various backgrounds



We will also plan on creating a new video to **explain and promote the service** to young people with the help of other young people who we have engaged or will engage with, including service users.



## Wellbeing journal



We are developing a wellbeing journal to support young people throughout their journey with our service.

This will be ready for when we start working with young people in January 2023.

We are including ideas from engagement sessions to make sure the content is helpful while being accessible and visually appealing. We plan on showing a draft to a group of young people to get direct feedback.

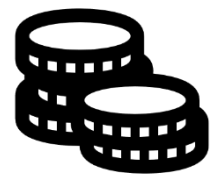
In response to points raised in engagement sessions, we will develop a **digital version** as some young people said they would prefer this.

We want to continue to learn from young people's experiences of using the journal by asking for direct feedback from **people accessing the service** and taking it to youth groups to hear their opinions.

## Funding for activities

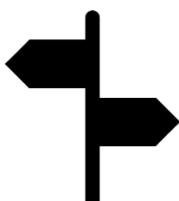
We know that **cost** can be a barrier to some young people accessing services in the community.

We want all young people who work with us to be able to take part in the activities they choose. We are exploring different ways to ensure this happens.



We are open to applying to funding ourselves or supporting existing organisations in their applications.

## Access routes into the service



When the service launches in January 2023, most of our referrals will come from the **Single Point of Access (SPOA)**. These referrals mainly come from GPs but also other health and social care professionals.

Many young people said that they would like to be able to access the service through **their school** and during the day (during school time).

Once we launch and have a better understanding of how many referrals we get from the SPOA, we will develop a process to receive referrals from our other services – including the **School In-Reach team** and our **Early Help practitioners**.

We are also open to collaborating with other services and new referral routes in the future.

### Running the service

Young people gave feedback on where and when they would like to meet with a Community Connector.

They gave mixed responses so we will continue explore what times work best for young people. We want to be **open to young people's preferences** so we will offer both during and after school to work around each young person's wishes.



Young people also mentioned wanting to take part in sports (particularly team sports) and creative arts. We will keep **connecting with organisations** in these sectors and expanding our network.

### Social Media

As young people have suggested to us, we are planning to develop our own social media platforms. We are waiting for approval to set up our own Instagram, Twitter and YouTube pages.



We will plan to make content on different topics in line with what young people have said they want to hear from us.

**We will ask for feedback on this regularly** – via the platform, engagement sessions and directly from those accessing our service.

We are hoping social media **increases awareness** about social prescription so young people know we are an option for support. We also plan to interact with other organisations in local communities to expand and **strengthen our network**.

## Conclusion

This report is a summary of our engagement work and what we have learnt so far from young people.

- We have learnt that young people **like the idea of social prescription** and our project. They had positive reactions to developing a **wellbeing journal** and regular **social media** content.
- Young people did have concerns about the **challenges** young people might face when accessing our services and the way we communicate with them. We will do our best to combat and prevent these when we can.

We will launch our social prescription service, start receiving referrals and seeing young people in **January 2023**.

Throughout the project, we will continue learning and developing the service with young people through different types of engagement work.

We are looking forward to creating an update to this report in the future.

## Thank you

We would like to say a huge thank you to the young people who have shared their views with us on the engagement platform and in engagement sessions. Particularly to those involved with:

- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Youth Board
- Cardiff Police Cadets Group
- Urdd Youth Group
- Vale Youth Council

Thank you to those who put us in contact with these groups and helped to facilitate the sessions. We appreciate your support!

Thank you to Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board for supporting us to use their engagement platform to hear the voices of more young people.

Thank you to NHS Health Charities Together who are funding our project.

And finally, thank you to the [Wales School for Social Prescribing Research](#) for your support and resources.

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