

Global Social Prescribing Workforce Development & Opportunities

A Strategic Roadmap to Strengthen Capacity, Expand Careers, and Transform Health Systems Worldwide



Global
Social
Prescribing
Alliance



Advancing Access, Quality, and Innovation in Social Prescribing

Foreword

Across the globe, health systems are evolving to meet the needs of 21st-century communities shifting from a narrow focus on medical treatment to a broader, person-centred model of wellbeing. Social prescribing lies at the heart of this transformation, connecting people to community-based, non-clinical support that enhances health, reduces loneliness, builds social capital, and addresses the root causes of ill-health. In doing so, it redefines what “healthcare” means in communities from Oslo to Ouagadougou, Sydney to São Paulo.

Link workers those trusted professionals who bridge clinical pathways and community assets are central to this shift. Yet too often they lack clear routes for training, professional growth, and recognition. This document sets out a Global Social Prescribing Workforce Development Roadmap a framework designed to help link workers progress from foundational understanding through advanced practice and leadership, supported by practical skills, ethical standards, and a global community of practice.

The need for investment in care-oriented roles has never been clearer. A major report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) finds that greater investment in care services including community and social care roles could generate nearly 300 million decent jobs globally by 2035. This growth would not only strengthen health and social outcomes but also expand economic opportunity and gender equality at scale.

Social prescribing is part of this broader care economy one that creates meaningful work while enhancing the quality of life for individuals and communities. By investing in workforce development, countries and organisations can harness this potential, building resilient systems where preventative, community-led support is valued, sustainable, and accessible to all.

This roadmap is a call to action to policymakers, educators, health leaders, community partners, and funders to invest in the people who deliver social prescribing, and in doing so, help realise healthier, more equitable societies.

Executive Message

Gareth Presch, CEO, Global Social Prescribing Alliance

Across the world, we are witnessing a profound shift in how health and wellbeing are understood and delivered. Social prescribing is at the forefront of this transformation connecting people to community-led, non-clinical support that improves health outcomes, reduces inequalities, and strengthens resilience.

Link workers are the backbone of this movement. They are the trusted guides who navigate complex health and social systems to ensure people access the right support at the right time. Yet many face barriers to training, development, and professional recognition. This roadmap seeks to address that gap, offering a clear, structured pathway for workforce development from foundational knowledge to advanced practice and leadership.

Our vision at GSPA is ambitious but achievable: to build a skilled, confident, and globally connected social prescribing workforce, capable of transforming care and empowering communities. The potential impact is enormous. According to the International Labour Organization, expanding care services could create up to 300 million jobs worldwide by 2035 meaningful, sustainable employment that strengthens economies while improving health outcomes.

By investing in our workforce, we are investing in healthier, more resilient communities. This roadmap is not just a guide it is a statement of intent. It reflects our commitment to equip link workers with the knowledge, skills, and support they need to thrive, while enabling health systems globally to embrace prevention, holistic care, and social innovation.

I invite governments, healthcare organisations, educators, community partners, and investors to join us on this journey. Together, we can harness the transformative power of social prescribing, building a future where wellbeing, purpose, and opportunity are accessible to all.

Gareth Presch
CEO, Global Social Prescribing Alliance

What is Social Prescribing?

Social Prescribing is a holistic approach connecting people to non-clinical community services “prescribing a life, not just medicine.”

Types of social prescribing include:

Green – Nature-based activities for mental & physical wellbeing (e.g., community gardening, nature walks, forest bathing).

Blue – Water-based activities for health benefits (e.g., wild swimming, coastal walks, river mindfulness).

Arts & Culture – Creative engagement to support emotional health (e.g., art classes, music therapy, theatre, museum visits).

Physical Activity – Tailored movement and exercise (e.g., walking groups, yoga, swimming, dance).

Social & Community – Reducing isolation through connections (e.g., friendship clubs, volunteering, peer support).

Mental Health & Wellbeing – Non-clinical mental health support (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, resilience workshops).

Work & Skills – Building confidence, skills, and purpose (e.g., job clubs, mentoring, skills workshops).

Practical Support – Assistance with daily challenges affecting health (e.g., housing, debt advice, food banks).



Why This Matters

Link workers are the frontline of social prescribing, improving health and wellbeing by connecting individuals to the right community resources. Yet barriers to training are common:

- 36% don't know what training is available
- 41% have no access to a training budget
- 47% are unsure if one exists
- 70% want to grow their skills

The GSPA Training & Development Roadmap addresses these gaps, supporting link workers at every stage of their career.

The GSPA Roadmap: A Clear Path for Development

Developed in collaboration with World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS) and world-leading academic partners, our roadmap provides structured career pathways:

- 1 Landscape – Build a foundation: understanding the social prescribing ecosystem
- 2 Practice – Core skills for delivering programmes effectively
- 3 Advanced – CPD and enhanced specialist capabilities
- 4 System – Leadership, transformation, and systems-level impact

Five Key Skill Categories:

- Practical Knowledge – Digital skills, documentation, outcome tools
- Working with People – Empathy, communication, trauma-informed practice
- Cross-Sector Collaboration – System navigation, teamwork, referrals
- Health & Wellbeing Support – Holistic care, prevention, health equity
- Professional & Personal Wellbeing – Resilience, boundaries, supervision

How Leaders Across the World Can Start to Build Local Social Prescribing Approaches

GSPA: Our Vision, Mission & Principles

Vision: Thriving communities driving a social revolution in health and wellbeing

Mission: Advance social prescribing globally through collaboration, innovation, and advocacy, aligned with UN SDG 3 – Good Health & Wellbeing

Core Principles:

- 1 Redefining Health & Wellbeing – Sustainable, high-value care
- 2 Clinical Leadership – Global network of healthcare champions
- 3 Community Development – Partnering for impactful solutions
- 4 Building Blocks – Arts, Nature, Exercise, Knowledge
- 5 Workforce Solutions – Address shortages, create meaningful jobs
- 6 Digital Innovation – Empower patients through technology and goal-oriented care

7 steps to develop good social prescribing and the 4 zones of social prescribing (Arts, Nature, Physical Activity, Practice Help and Knowledge).

Global Adoption – Countries Advancing Social Prescribing Through GSPA Collaboration:

United Kingdom, Ireland, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Poland, Greece, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, India, Pakistan, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Argentina.

Partnerships & Ecosystem

Building strong collaborations with key stakeholders to enhance healthcare quality, research, and innovation.

Collaborative Network

Government & Regulators:

Ministry of Health programs,
public health initiatives

Research & Clinical Partners

Clinical trials, new
treatment development

Academic Partners:

Joint research, student
training programs

Investors & Innovation

Funding for digital health
platforms and pilot projects

Strategic Impact

Collaboration strengthened service quality, expanded research capabilities, and improved organizational resilience, enabling us to deliver better patient outcomes and support long-term healthcare innovation.

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