

Study update, December 2021

The link worker role in primary care

Welcome to our first study update. This document is to inform our project partners, public contributors and other interested parties about our progress on the **research** we are conducting to answer important questions around implementing link workers in primary care to sustain outcomes.



Our research:

When implementing link workers in primary care to sustain outcomes – what works, for whom, why and in what circumstances?

This study, funded by the **National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)**, is led by **Stephanie Tierney** and **Kamal Mahtani**, both of whom work at the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford.

Below, you will find key updates from this study.

Researchers working on this project:

We have three researchers working on the study. They will be collecting data from a range of people – including link workers, patients and GPs.



I am Debra Westlake. I originally trained as a Speech and Language therapist but have been an applied health services researcher for over 20 years. I have worked in universities and with health and voluntary sector organisations, doing mixed methods research on a wide variety of topics from family health to emergency care. I now specialise in person centred care and social prescribing research and am interested in developing involvement of members of the public and practitioners in co-designing and interpreting research.



I am Amadea Turk. I have a background in biological and medical anthropology. I have worked in primary care health services for five years across a range of projects using qualitative and mixed-methods. I have a strong interest in social prescribing and other initiatives aimed at tackling social factors that can affect people's health. I am also undertaking a DPhil that focuses on social prescribing in socio-economically disadvantaged settings.



I am Jordan Gorenberg. My background is in bioethics and medical anthropology, specialising in mental health. I have worked recently on a project looking at the role of the cultural sector as part of social prescribing for older people. Outside of this project, I am undertaking a DPhil in Anthropology at the University of Oxford, focusing on the social interactions and use of online support groups for depression.

Stakeholder meetings

- **Sept 2021** – we met with our patient and public involvement group, which will ensure that our findings are relevant and accessible to people who might use social prescribing.
- **Oct 2021** – we met with our advisory group, composed of people with an interest in social prescribing. They will offer advice and feedback on study materials, on our emerging understanding of data, and ensure that recommendations we produce are useable and useful to those involved in social prescribing.
- **Nov 2021** – we met with our study steering committee, which has oversight of the project. This group will monitor how we carry out the research, will question how it is advancing, and will act as an independent source of advice.

Update on data collection

We started data collection at our first two sites in November 2021. The GP practices and link workers at these sites have been really supportive in helping us to set up the study. We are enthusiastic about beginning our observations and interviews with health care professionals, link workers and patients. Further details about the data we are collecting will be presented in future updates.



New blog: Understanding the implementation of link workers in primary care: A realist evaluation to inform current and future policy

We will be producing regular blogs about the project and its progress. Our first one has been published and can be read on our **webpage** for this project.

Our full project team

Stephanie Tierney, Kamal Mahtani, Amadea Turk, Debra Westlake, Jordan Gorenberg, Geoff Wong, Catherine Pope – University of Oxford

Kerryn Husk – University of Plymouth

Joanne Reeve - Hull York Medical School

Sabi Redwood – University of Bristol

Caroline Mitchell – University of Sheffield

Beccy Baird – The King's Fund

Tony Meacock – PPI Contributor

Stay in touch

If you would like any more information about this project, please see our **project page** or do not hesitate to contact:

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this document are those of the authors and not necessarily those of their host institution, organisations mentioned or the study's funder.

