

House of Commons Event: WHO Collaboration with the Centre for Social Prescribing- Palace of Westminster

On the 26th of March 2026 I took a train from Durham to London Kings cross to be a representative for the Northeast Social Prescribers to attend the launch of the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) as a new WHO Collaborating Centre for Social Prescribing Policy and Development. The event took place on Social Prescribing Day 2026, at the Houses of Comms in Westminster, reinforcing the UK's leadership role in advancing community-based, preventative approaches to health and wellbeing.

The event marked an important milestone for NASP and for the development of social prescribing globally- as the WHO representative remarked '*This is a moment we will look back on as genuinely significant for global health*'.

As a newly designated WHO Collaborating Centre, NASP will now work in partnership with WHO to support health systems globally to develop effective social prescribing programmes around the world.

The host, Dr Beccy Cooper MP recognised the incredible power of social prescribing and its importance in the UK and around the world;

"Social prescribing stands as a central pillar in the evolution of neighbourhood health. Because social prescribing is not simply an add-on to traditional healthcare — it is an essential part of the government's Neighbourhood Health plans. It is helping health systems tackle deep-rooted inequalities, strengthen communities, and improve lives in ways medicine alone cannot. Make no mistake: social prescribing is a success story for the NHS. Its achievements are being recognised globally, and its principles are increasingly being adopted by health systems around the world."

The House of Commons setting highlighted the importance of political leadership and cross-sector collaboration in addressing the social determinants of health, including loneliness, social isolation, financial insecurity, and housing challenges—factors that cannot be resolved through clinical interventions alone yet can greatly impact on people's health both physically and mentally which in turns impacts our health services.

Key Themes and Discussions

Discussions at the event focused on the growing international momentum behind social prescribing and the role of policy in supporting its scale and sustainability. Key themes included:

- **Global collaboration and knowledge exchange**- enabled through the WHO Collaborating Centre, to support governments and health systems in developing evidence-informed social prescribing models.
- **The UK's leadership experience**- being the first country to embed social prescribing within national health policy, with thousands of link workers now operating across England and over one million people referred annually.
- **Prevention and community-based care**- highlighting social prescribing as a practical mechanism for shifting health systems from reactive treatment toward proactive, person-centred and preventative approaches.
- **Reducing health inequalities**- by strengthening links between primary care, voluntary organisations, and community assets, particularly for people experiencing complex social and emotional needs.

Significance and Next Steps

The House of Commons event marked more than a ceremonial announcement. It reinforced a shared commitment between policymakers, the WHO, and the social prescribing sector to:

- **Strengthen the global evidence base for social prescribing.**
- **Support international policy development and implementation.**
- **Promote community-led solutions as core components of resilient and equitable health systems.**

As WHO accelerates efforts to address the root causes of poor health across its regions, the collaboration highlighted at this event positions **social prescribing as a critical tool** in improving wellbeing, reducing pressure on health services, and building healthier, more connected communities.

Personal reflections

I felt very honoured to be a representative of Social Prescribers from the North east and although it was a (very) long day, it was well worth the ability to mix with and talk to lots of influential heads of services, MP's and of course, other Social Prescribers to discuss our passion and enthusiasm for the job, but also shared difficulties faced, such as; local transport, financial stability of services and our jobs. It was very affirming to speak to a few GP's who stated, "*I couldn't do my job now, without a Social Prescriber in our practice*".

A particular highlight for me was the speech by Angela Rippon and her love for Dance, her message was to "*get everybody dancing and moving*" for health prevention, physical and mental wellbeing and connection with our local communities. See website for details- [Let's Dance! – Join the UK's National Campaign to Embrace Dance](#)

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