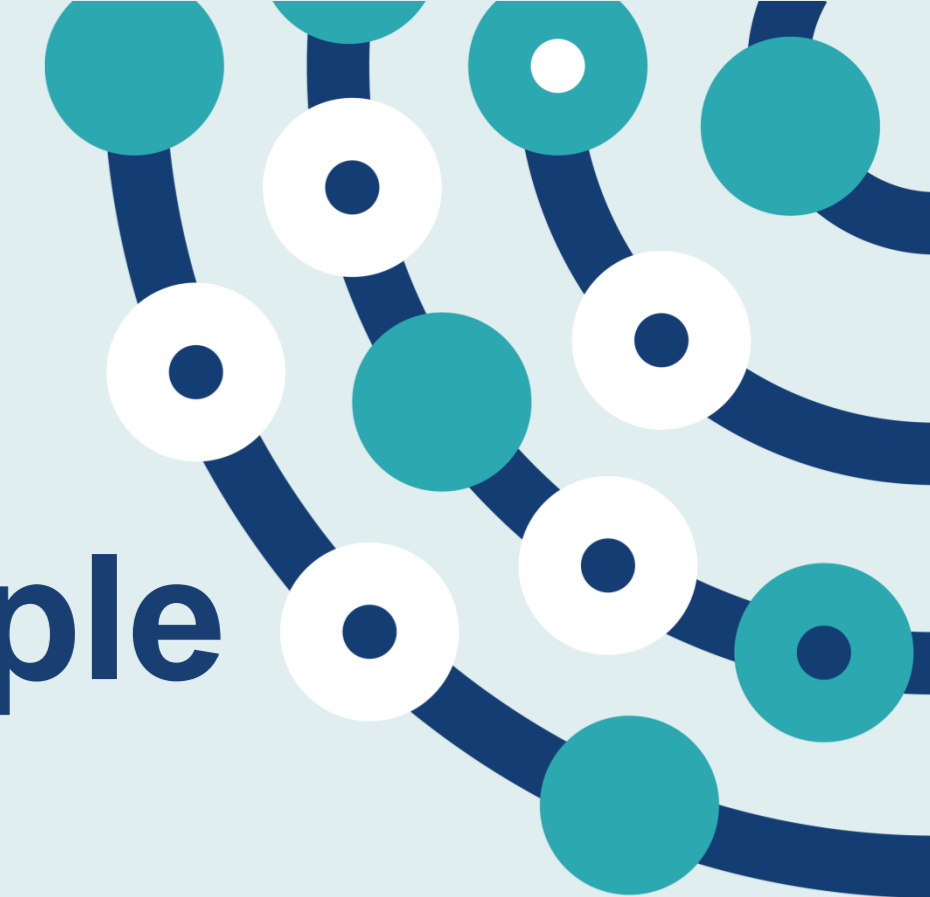


# Understanding social prescribing pathways for children and young people

Siobhan Mitchell, Research Fellow, University of Exeter\*  
Alex Gude, Research Assistant, University of Exeter  
Lucy Cartwright, Research Assistant, University of Exeter  
\* Corresponding author, s.b.mitchell@exeter.ac.uk



## Aims of project:

- Explore how social prescribing (SP) pathways operate in assisting children and young people (CYP) to access and connect with community activities;
- Understand how diverse types of community-based support can promote healthy social and emotional development by early intervention and potential prevention of mental health issues.



## Introduction

- Many CYP are experiencing mental health difficulties, and services are struggling to cope with the demand.
- The use of community based activities, through social prescribing pathways, is one potential way to prevent and address mental health difficulties in CYP.
- These routes potentially reduce health inequalities by engaging with CYP in disadvantaged communities with high rates of mental health problems.
- Existing knowledge on social prescribing is primarily about adults.
- There is little research examining how social prescribing might work for CYP, and whether it improves mental wellbeing.

## Methods

The project consists of two work packages and involves working with six existing social prescribing sites for young people aged up to 24.

### Work Package 1 includes:

- A review of existing literature and data, mapping how young people seek help for mental health, and the agencies and pathways involved.
- Interviews with staff, CYP and carers in each social prescribing site to help us understand how links to community activities are made, who makes them and how successful they are.

### Work Package 2 includes:

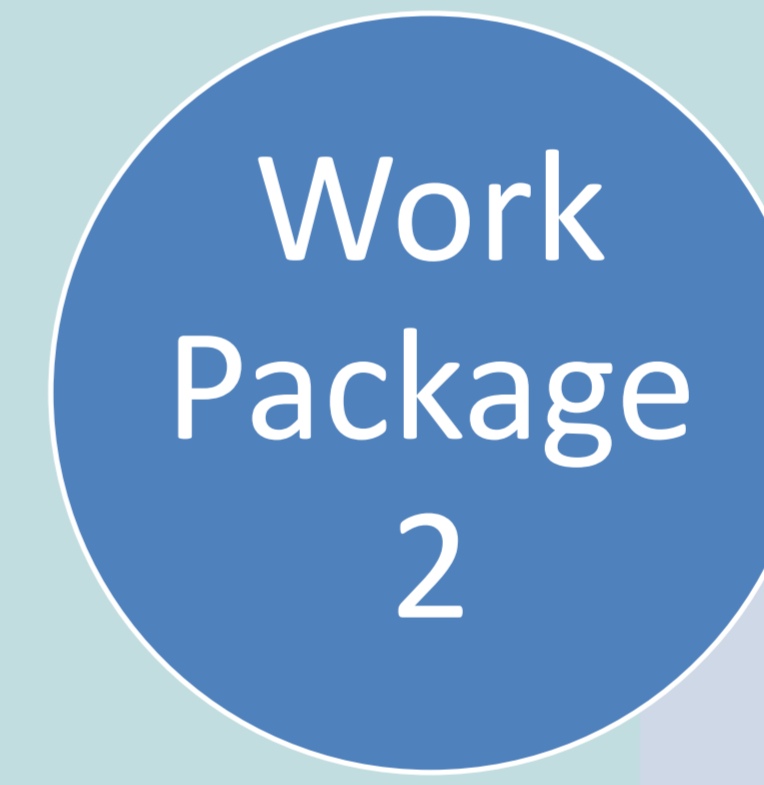
- Community workshops in each site to explore CYP's understanding of 'community'.
- Interviews with CYP and practitioners to map networks of community organisations.
- A rapid literature review of qualitative research about the value of community support for CYP's mental health.

## Progress to date



Search completed – 14,516  
Initial screening underway  
Grey literature search also underway

Lessons learned:  
Challenges with defining search terms around CYP and 'mental health';  
Challenges in defining 'community assets'



Potential partner sites approached, positive feedback and interest  
Policy and Practice Advisory Group and Youth Advisory Group in process of being formed.  
Advisory groups will be integral to project delivery

Initial progress:  
Better understanding of organisation structure for partner sites  
Links being expanded with sites and those involved in SP for CYP

## Project timeline

October 2021 – October 2023



## Project leads and collaborators

**Vashti Berry, Principal Investigator, University of Exeter**

**Kerryn Husk, Co-Principal Investigator, University of Plymouth**

**Jane Smith, University of Exeter**

**Paul Jarvis-Beesley, StreetGames**

**Marcello Bertotti, University of East London**

**Daniel Hayes, Anna Freud Centre/University College London**

## Next Steps

- Complete mapping review (WP1)
- Interviews to understand pathways to community assets in more depth
- Integrate all info to produce conceptual map of how CYP access community assets
- Start work with partner sites to develop understanding of how CYP view community support, what works and what needs to change, in relation to supporting mental health and wellbeing

