

Social Prescribing in Sunderland: A Holistic Approach to Health and Wellbeing



William Koloc, 2025, English and Pre-Health

University of Sunderland Health Sciences and Wellbeing Department, Sunderland, England

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Introduction

- The University of Sunderland Health Sciences department work to combat health inequalities on a community level
- Colleagues include doctoral students, volunteers, and community leaders
- Special interest in voluntary organizations

Objective of Internship

I worked to foster health and wellbeing in Sunderland through social prescribing—a holistic treatment model relying on communal support to improve mental health rather than drug-based clinical treatment.

Work profile

- Evaluate voluntary organizations on their ability to help improve health through social prescribing
- Direct field work (helped set up events), data-based research, and interview-based evaluations
- Had a chance to contribute to PhD-level research papers

Reflection

- My contributions to interviewing and researching voluntary organizations in Sunderland will allow the University to have a **clear vision** of the **current state of social prescribing** and take further steps to improve this up-and-coming treatment model



Pictured: Will Koloc setting up for a Salvation Army Jubilee afternoon tea. photo credit, Vicky Neal

- Beyond just the experience of learning about a different healthcare system than the United States, I was also able to immerse myself in the culture of Sunderland
- I am so thankful for the opportunity to engage with a novel approach to health and wellbeing and enrich my worldview



GP Alliance Sunderland social prescribing logo. source, Sunderland GP Alliance

- I learned that health and social isolation can be drastically improved by fostering a sense of community pride (for example, holding events like a jubilee tea, pictured on the left)
- The importance of **building a network** of different organizations that work well together and can refer patients to one another cannot be overstated

Looking ahead

- As I apply to medical school, I hope to continue taking holistic approaches to health like social prescribing into consideration when I practice medicine

Questions

- How could the United States move towards having something like social prescribing, and where would the funding come from?

Conclusion

- Relying on one's community to promote health and wellbeing can provide incredible results, and social prescribing is the future of health research.

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