



# Ways to Wellness Evaluation

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## Researching during COVID-19

In these difficult and strange times we have continued with our research, like yourselves, working from home and getting used to Zoom, Teams and endless telephone calls. At the start of the lockdown this involved making some rapid changes to our procedures. Face to face fieldwork ended and switched to relying on telephone, skype and WhatsApp. The EQ5D (health-related quality of life) questionnaire follow up continued, but to ensure participant safety, we switched to telephone questionnaire completion. We finished the follow-up on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2020 and are delighted to say that the follow up response rate is **73%**. This gives us a large dataset to analyse the impact of Ways to Wellness social prescribing for the clients who completed a baseline and follow up quality of life questionnaire between July 2018 and June 2020. We believe this will be the largest 12 month follow up study of social prescribing in the UK to date. At the moment, we are busy cleaning and analysing the data. We would like to offer our ***sincerest thanks*** to all who contributed to achieving this response, it really is impressive.

## Researching the impact of COVID-19 for people with long term conditions

Between May and July 2020, we took the opportunity to 'piggy back' another interview study onto the EQ5D study. We asked participants if they would be willing to take part in a further interview about the effects of COVID-19 on themselves, their households and communities. This has also given us the opportunity to examine the role of Ways to Wellness social prescribing during lockdown. We have interviewed 30 individuals from a range of ages, circumstances and health conditions and are currently busy analysing the very rich qualitative data that we obtained. People were very forthcoming about the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and we feel that this work provides some very important insights into what it has been like living with long term conditions during the lockdown, as well as the role of social prescribing over this period.

## Study progress

We now have a large amount of data from the various parts of the study. A quick reminder about what we are looking at. Work packages one and two are using a very large datasets of GP records and hospital episodes to measure the impact of Ways to Wellness social prescribing for people with Type 2 diabetes on hospital admissions, and on the following outcome measures: HbA1c (marker of blood glucose concentration), blood

pressure, cholesterol, weight/body mass index and smoking. Work package three involves observations and interviews to build a detailed picture of how clients are engaging with Ways to Wellness social prescribing over an 18 month period. Work package three also uses observations, interviews and focus groups with link workers to examine the complexities of the link worker role. We are about to begin work package four which draws all the findings together to build a detailed picture of social prescribing and address the key question of what impact does Ways to Wellness social prescribing have for people with Type 2 diabetes. It's a lot of very valuable data and we have a big task on our hands.

## **Staff changes**

We have some staff changes to announce. Dr Jayne Jeffries who joined the team in June 2019, left the project in July this year to go on maternity leave – so congratulations to Jayne. We are delighted that we have been joined by Dr Bethan Griffiths, who has stepped in to complete the link worker study. You may remember that Bethan was undertaking her PhD observational study of Ways to Wellness social prescribing from the perspective of primary care practitioners, so brings a great deal of relevant experience to the team. In addition, we are very pleased to welcome Dr Steph Morris who will be undertaking analysis of the COVID-19 interview data. Finally, we are very pleased that health economist Dr Wael Mohammed joined the team in May this year, and is working closely with Dr Jo Wildman and Professor John Wildman to progress work package one.

## **What will be happening over the next few months?**

We are going to be VERY busy analysing and integrating all of the data that we have collected. We will also be busy preparing to disseminate the findings. COVID-19 has obviously impacted on plans to hold meetings with yourselves to inform you about the findings. However, we will be organizing ways to ensure that you find out about the research. The project ends on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021, at which point we will submit a report (it will be big!) to the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) who funded the study. NIHR will send the report out to a number of experts in the field to peer review the report and then some months later, we will be given the opportunity to revise the report. It will then be published by NIHR and will be freely available via the NIHR website. We will, of course, keep you informed about presentations and publications from the study.

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