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Please read this policy with our Stroud u3a Safeguarding Policy alongside it.

Stroud u3a Committee will appoint a Social Prescribing Lead who will work as necessary alongside the Link Person and Buddies (see below) our Safeguarding Lead.

Our Social Prescribing Lead is:	Dilys Warren
And they can be contacted on:	socialscrip@stroudu3a.org.uk

This document describes Social Prescribing and the way Stroud u3a will participate in this process where it can and when approached by an appropriate organisation or medical professional. Stroud u3a does not deal directly with patients unless they have first been referred to us. It is for the prescriber and the patient together to determine whether or not participation in our activities will be beneficial. It is also for them to assess any risks specific to the individual being referred and, if relevant to make Stroud u3a aware of those.

Stroud u3a does not Socially Prescribe itself nor participate in any decisions to “prescribe” our organisation for any individual.

Social prescribing has been around for almost a decade. The thinking behind it is some people who present to their GP, most commonly those suffering with anxiety and depression, very frequently report social isolation as a major problem. They may have withdrawn from social contact for some time becoming ever more isolated from friends and the community they live in.

For the last seven years GPs have had the option of referring patients on to a social prescribing team, instead of, or as well as, prescribing medication. In Stroud and Berkeley Vale, the **Independence Trust** deliver this service. They have funds to pay for things such as Gym or other memberships and fees. Independence Trust staff assist people to find suitable placements.

Stroud u3a expects that membership fees will be funded either through the prescribing process or by the individual and therefore any member referred to us, once they and their prescriber have decided that we are the right “prescription” is no different to any other individual member of Stroud u3a. If there are any additional costs, e.g. contributions to refreshments or hall hire specific to a group then the arrangements for paying for those would be the same as for any other member although funding may or may not be provided via the prescriber. In cases of genuine hardship, then in the first instance, please talk to the Membership Secretary who will bring forward any appropriate proposal to the Committee for case-by-case consideration. This applies to anyone not just those coming to us through Social Prescribing.

Cheltenham was one of the first u3as to be recognised as a referral choice for social prescribers. There is great value and potential health benefits in social relationships and mental stimulation.

Every individual who is referred to us via Social Prescribing (“the prescribee”) will have a link person assigned to them (normally from the Independence Trust). Should Stroud u3a, or anyone in Stroud u3a have any concerns about the prescribee at any time they should refer the concern back to the link person via the Social Prescribing Lead. You may also wish to bring it to the attention of the Stroud u3a Safeguarding Lead.

As we are approached by the prescriber/link person/individual it would be of enormous benefit if existing members could initially help in supporting the referred person. In Cheltenham these members are known as “Buddies”. Referred people will need to be assisted to identify a suitable group (or groups) and then to make the initial contact with the Group Coordinator etc. The idea is not to do everything for them but to support them and advise them when necessary. There may be level of social anxiety for the individual at first. Of course, we encourage everyone to be welcoming, to feel welcome and to together to learn, laugh and live. The Buddy system is an opportunity to demonstrate how well we do those things! Please do consider volunteering for this role. More information about the role is below and interested members can approach any member of the Committee for further information or guidance.

Anyone who does consider the Buddy role will be supported by the Committee and our Social Prescribing Lead.

If we can improve the quality of life for even only a few people each year, it will be well worthwhile and a great thing for Stroud u3a to be involved in.

Buddy Support and Advice Role Description

*The overall aim will be to facilitate the personal growth of the individual by helping them to **help themselves** by exploring u3a options, problem solving, making informed choices; selecting group/s and attending them.*

- 1) To communicate with referred person to assess their u3a group options. This may or may not include meeting face to face depending on the needs of the referred person.
- 2) To signpost to Groups and other Stroud u3a activities of interest and facilitate first contact with group coordinator (involving the Groups Secretary where appropriate).
- 3) To maintain short term supportive contact.
- 4) To monitor on-going progress in order to supply feedback to The Independence Trust. This can be facilitated by communicating with the appropriate Group Coordinator and/or discussion with the referred person.
- 5) To liaise with u3a Social Prescribing Lead as and when planned or as required. This may include personal support and supervision.

Further notes to help and guide Buddies :

- Feedback any issues or concerns to Stroud u3a Social Prescribing Lead. Their roles are to provide a bridge between Stroud u3a and the Link Person at Independence Trust and to support Buddies. Even small concerns to please be flagged up.
- Confidentiality - All personal disclosures to normally be treated with absolute confidentiality. There only exception to this will be where there is a perceived risk of harm to any person including the prescriber. If in doubt, talk to the Social Prescribing Lead.
- Safety is always our first concern.
- Maintain clear and firm boundaries. While acting as a Buddy, no close personal relationship with the prescriber should be entered into. Sharing your own personal information should be kept to a minimum. Do not become involved with: Medical concerns, unless they relate to mobility and group access issues; personal financial or family issues etc.