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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Social prescribing: Your doctor's office is a new gateway to community wellbeing**

**Toronto – December 6, 2018** – What exactly is a social prescription? For patients, it can take many forms. Ukulele groups. Dance lessons. Karaoke singalongs. [Museum visits](#). Coffee talk tables. Community gardening. [Even Bingo!](#) It might be a small group or just a couple of people connecting to go fishing together. For people who need a little boost connecting with their community, or don't know where to begin in taking care of their own health and wellbeing, social prescribing provides a new pathway to community support: your doctor or nurse practitioner's office.

For health care providers, social prescriptions are a new, exciting tool they can use to ensure every point of contact their patients have is a gateway to better overall wellbeing. People trust their doctor's advice; social prescribing builds on that trust to help guide people toward activities that will promote health and wellbeing far beyond what can happen during a standard medical appointment. But doctors and nurse practitioners don't need to be experts in making connections to community resources for their clients to make this happen – they can leverage the support of link workers, health care teams, and the wider community to fill this critical gap. That allows clinicians to get back to spending time on the medical issues they're best positioned to address.

As health care evolves, we can and should expect more from our health care providers than simply being the place to go when we're sick. For health care systems that are increasingly faced with tough decisions due to limited resources, health care must be transformed into a pathway to wellbeing.

Social prescribing is ushering in a revolution in how Primary Care is delivered in the United Kingdom, [showing promising results](#) at achieving positive outcomes for clients, healthcare providers, and the general community. Supporters of the now nation-wide initiative [include the U.K. Prime Minister](#). Social prescribing is also garnering buzz in Canada – where an ambitious project is underway in Ontario to unlock the potential of Community Health Centre staff to guide clients to connect with their wider community and each other.

In Ontario, social prescribing enables healthcare providers to implement, in a systematic and evidence-informed way, what we know anecdotally – that people are healthier when connected to social and community supports. Lessons learned from the pilot will inform the healthcare sector, improve quality of life, create a more people-centred healthcare framework, and build a healthier, more interconnected, and more resilient community.

“People can be their own best resource for their health and wellbeing, when they're connected to each other and the right services,” said Kate Mulligan, Director of Policy and Communications at the Alliance for Healthier Communities. “Social prescribing changes our lens from seeing individuals as patients with conditions, to understanding them as people with gifts.”

To learn more about social prescribing and the Ontario project, check out [our website](#), this [backgrounder](#), and [our video](#).

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