



Focus On... arts therapies at the heart of social prescribing ethos at Kentish Town Health Centre

CHP Building:

Kentish Town Health Centre
Camden, London

Organisations Involved:

Kentish Town Improvement Fund/Free Space Gallery
James Wigg GP Practice
Camden CCG
Community Health Partnerships
Camden & Islington Community Solutions LIFTCo

Social prescribing

- Arts and creative therapies working alongside GP services as part of a social prescribing ethos at Kentish Town Health Centre
- Innovative approach links patients with sources of non-clinical support within the community
- Tailored services delivered for patients with Parkinson's disease, Aphasia and mental health conditions

Kentish Town Health Centre:

Opened in 2008, the £10 million Kentish Town Health Centre is an award winning, integrated care facility serving a diverse patient catchment area in Camden, north London. Developed by Camden and Islington Community through LIFT Public Private Partnership (PPP), the centre receives around 450,000 visits each year.

High quality primary health and social care services available include:

- James Wigg GP Practice
- Camden Social Services
- MOSAIC – Camden Council Children's Services
- St Bartholomew's Hospital Trust
- Emergency dental services
- Audiology, ECG and ultrasound
- Breast screening

Arts therapies at the heart of holistic social prescribing ethos:

Social prescribing is about linking primary care patients with sources of support within the community. It provides GPs with a non-medical referral option, operating alongside existing treatments to improve health and well-being.



Since 2010, the Free Space Gallery, supported by the Kentish Town Improvement Fund charity, has delivered a range of artistic and creative services as part of a holistic social prescribing ethos originally developed by Dr Roy Macgregor of the James Wigg GP Practice.

Practical arts and well-being activities take place in two ground floor rooms. There is also a regular series of exhibitions by national and local artists, and an artist in residence programme, based in a first floor gallery. Artworks and graphics, often with health care themes, feature prominently throughout the centre.

A number of activities are tailored to specific needs, such as Dance for patients with Parkinson's, Drawing for people with Aphasia, a Sing For Joy choir which acts as a support group for patients with chronic conditions, and a Silver Circle counselling group. Others, such as art therapy, aromatherapy massage, Baby Singalong sessions, cycle maintenance workshops and the Well-Being Garden, cater for a wider range of health-related conditions.

All programmes are structured to aid health and well-being. Patients are referred by their GP or can self-refer for some classes. In 2015 a pilot scheme locating social services at the centre allowed effective and timely cross-referral, monitoring and reporting between GPs, the arts therapies and social workers. The immediacy and continuity of the approach has many advantages in delivering integrated health and social prescribing services.



Dance classes for people with Parkinson's allow patients to work with professional dancers and express themselves through music.



Baby Singalong offers group support and signposting to maternity services



Drawing for people with Aphasia: workshops with speech and language specialists for patients with language loss due to stroke or head injury.

Melissa Hardwick, Director of the Free Space Gallery, explains the benefits of arts therapies co-located with primary care and social services in a community health setting:

“Our arts-based programmes have expanded organically to meet the needs of patients identified in conjunction with GPs and other service providers. With well-established links in the local community, we are able to attract professional artists, singers and dancers to work with us in delivering our programme of workshops, therapies and exhibitions.”

Melissa adds: *“Our arts-based programmes have expanded organically to meet the needs of patients identified in conjunction with GPs and other service providers. With well-established links in the local community, we are able to attract professional artists, singers and dancers to work with us in delivering our programme of workshops, therapies and exhibitions.*

“Although we are not part of the NHS, our services are designed to complement clinical treatments and can open up new ways of dealing successfully with, for example, mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and isolation.

“The holistic approach that encourages medicine and social prescribing to work together is embedded in the culture of the Kentish Town Health Centre, delivering real benefits for thousands of patients across the borough.”

“From the planning stage of the centre we have developed the Arts agenda because we see the benefits for our patients. So many aspects of what Melissa delivers as our Arts Director reflect on outcomes. Uptake of services at the baby clinic increase with our Sing Along group. Flu Immunisations are higher than ever due to the pleasant experience of attending the centre. Access to alternatives allows staff to prescribe non-medical approaches. Young people gain confidence in the bicycle workshop - they may even pick up contraceptives on their visit. We are very fortunate to have such an established and successful programme.”

Dr Roy Macgregor, Kentish Town Health Centre