



Bury Older People's Network (BOPN)

11th February 2026

Bury Unitarian Church

Attending	Jo Mawdsley (chair); David Barnes (Bury VCFA – action notes); Joan Abbott (resident); Angela Badham (resident); Stephanie Boyd (Bury Council); Carol Kemp (resident); Trish Ribchester (Greenmount Cuppa n Chat); Dr Shyamal K. Sarkar (resident); Pauline Smith (resident); Mike Standridge (resident); Barbara Stafford (resident); Ania Stark-Ketcher (Age UK Bury); Jacqui Waite (Bury Council); Jan Wiczkowski;
Apologies	Hannah Crompton; Chris Darrock; Steven Greason; Hilary McColl; Gill James; Rhoda Myers; Jean Pound; Julie Southworth; Shirley Waller; Brian Williams

Matters Arising from 12th November meeting

Noted that having 3 speakers was too many; future meetings will be limited to maximum of 2 guest speakers.

Bury Cancer Support Centre to be invited back again.

Bury Social Prescribing Service

Liz Lawton was welcomed to the meeting and presented on this important and well-regarded service in Bury.

Social prescribers are non-clinical professionals who support adults (18+) and their families to help people live life as best they can.

Social prescribing has a long history in the UK, starting with the Peckham Experiment in the 1920s introducing a holistic approach to people's health. The Bromley by Bow Centre in east London was established in 1984 and is a pioneer of the modern social prescribing model.



In 2019 the NHS integrated social prescribing into its long term plan. The aim was to have 1000 social prescribers by 2021 and this has been exceeded so that by 2024 there were 3600 social prescribers in England, reaching 900,000 people.

Referrals to the service can come from anyone, including self-referral which are supported through 'come and chat' drop-in sessions . There is a central referral system on EMIS where patients can see their own patient records. Referrals are triaged and allocated.

Social prescribing is well supported with a national academy and a GM network. In Bury there are 9.5 social prescribers (9 full time, Liz being part time) who are allocated to GP surgeries. There is capacity for 380 patients, i.e. 40 per social prescriber. The waiting list is less than one month; but it is not an urgent service. In 2024/25, 5850 patients were supported and receive a 100% good or very good rating.

The service measures outcomes in several ways such as the wellbeing score, reduced GP and A&E attendance. Re-referrals are less than 10% (national aim is less than 14%).

Sessions can be by phone, face-to-face or in the community and ideally have around 12 sessions with a patient before closing them to the service, however this is done on a case by case basis. Social prescribers can't drive patients to activities but will meet them at the activity base to introduce them for the initial session.

It is a patient/person-centred service and listening to the person is very important so that there is a good understanding of what they want to do. It can simply be about signposting someone to, say, a Tai Chi session.

The social prescribers work in partnership with a range of agencies including the Staying Well team, Persona, Adult Social Care, Citizens Advice, VCFA, mental health teams and the Royal Voluntary Service (which has a very good virtual service with online groups, including for exercise and book clubs).



Sometimes the social prescribing service is called the 'Yellow Pages of Bury' due to its knowledge of what's on and where.

Social Prescribers attend active case management meetings every 6 weeks at which patients are presented to ensure the best options for response by services. The social prescribing service is also represented at integrated neighbourhood meetings and the Public Service leadership team. The Neighbourhood Hub in Millgate should open soon and will be a good point of contact for the social prescribing service.

Transport is an ongoing issue for people wanting to attend activities. Age UK Bury and Ageing in Place are looking at options for driver recruitment schemes.

Social Prescribers may be working with people that the Staying Well team also work with, the difference being that the Staying Well Older People's team only work with over-50's and without an adult social care package.

Each Social Prescribing location in Bury has a what's on guide. See <https://www.burygpfederation.nhs.uk/social-prescribing-activities-2026/>

Liz is happy for members to contact her with any queries about the topic, at liz.lawton2@nhs.net

Jo Mawdsley thanked Liz for a most interesting and informative presentation.

Awayday Reflections

Jo Mawdsley led a discussion about the awayday in January which was generally received as a well-organised and informative event. Please see the document 'Consolidation of Points Raised' compiled by Jo for a fuller reflection of matters discussed at the Awayday.

Jo said that the network is at its next stage of development and Ms Boyd noted that governance will be clarified so that the reporting up to the Ageing Well Partnership group includes monitoring of the BOPN action plan. Actions will be



further refined to identify tangible outcomes and accountability for completion.

The action plan will continue to be a 12-month plan but will include longer-term objectives.

Discussion ensued, identifying several tangible services for older people including the 6-week hospital discharge programme offered by Age UK Bury; Bury Carers hospital discharge service; a Live Well nutrition service; Ramsbottom Cricket Club nutrition sessions.

David Barnes added that the network will be asked to offer additional support for the network chair and also representatives to attend partnership events on behalf of the network including the Adult Safeguarding Board's new community engagement sub-group.

Any Other Business

Jan Wiczowski highlighted two issues: first, the Prestwich Longfield Centre re-development has two consultation drop-ins, 12th (4 to 7pm) and 16th (10am to 2pm) at the Longfield Centre. It was noted that the Radcliffe development had a very consultative approach.

Second, Bury Cancer Support Centre has a drop-in for anyone on the last Friday of each month, 10.30am to 2.30pm

Next meetings of BOPN

Wednesday 11th March 2026 at Bury Unitarian Church

Wednesday 8th April 2026 at Bury Unitarian Church