

Members will recall that Councillor Moores asked a Cabinet Member question at Council on 10 July 2019 as follows:

“Last week I noticed a number of articles in the press, regarding PCN’s Primary Care Networks. The press statement went on to say, family doctors will lead teams that include pharmacists, paramedics, nurses, physio’s and counsellors, that the initiative was intended to allow GP’s to spend more time with the sickest patients and that there was a deadline for introduction of PCN’s of June 2019. Could the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care please tell us how this fits in with Oldham’s Moves towards the integration of health and social care and the introduction of social prescribing across the borough?”

Councillor Chauhan, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care responded with some information related to the Primary Care Networks and said he would provide members with a full response via email which is as follows:

“In January 2019 the NHS long-term plan included the ambition for practices in England to be part of a local primary care network (PCN) by the end of 2018/19 – a primary care network is a formalised group of primary care practices working together to better service a population cohort of 30-55k and will receive a flow of funding (starting this year with 2 FTE) which increases year on year.

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Over the past few years many practices have already been working together with other local organisations to provide joined-up services covering primary, community, mental health, social care and pharmacy and the formation of the PCNs in Oldham builds on the already existing cluster model (essentially clusters are our version of PCN’s). Our plans for health and social integration are already well developed through Oldham Cares and are achieving much of what the national guidance describes.

PCNs are envisaged as a way to deliver integrated services at neighbourhood level (again that 30-55k population level) and are enabling 5 additional roles to be introduced into each PCN geography over the next few years. One of the first roles to be introduced is a social prescribing link worker who will not only support the links into community groups but also have a key role in community development for groups and activities.

Oldham already has an advanced voluntary led social prescribing offer which has been operating in Oldham West for one year and is currently mobilising across the other 4 clusters. The offer links residents to the >1000 activities and groups offering “more than medical support” for addressing issues like;

- Loneliness and social isolation
- low level mental health
- physical health activity

loss of confidence.

The social prescribing model is based on an innovation partnership approach which puts social value, community development and coproduction at the heart of the approach. The model takes a strength-based approach, by further developing where our residents are already strong and linking them with the assets we already have in the community so that they can support themselves and each other better. The model accepts referrals from several settings of care;

- primary care
- self referral
- social care
- mental health
- acute

And creates connections into that community activity – hand-holding people where needed to ensure that the support is effective.

The future PCN link workers will be aligned with this existing offer to maximise impact for Oldham residents and, as we move to a more localised place-based approach of working on the 30-55k population footprint, this will ensure that health and care services are better aligned to local needs of the community. Any additional resource from the NHS will be used to support our already developed and integrated model.

Training and retaining staff with the right skills to work credibly in community settings and the development of ways to share relevant information about patients will also be critical. This will be needed to ensure that social prescribers and others are able to use information effectively to facilitate the integration of care across the system.