

Hospital to community

Citizens Advice on Prescription

ARC North West Coast

The challenge

People in areas like Liverpool face worsening financial challenges, amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic's economic impact. Problems with low income and debt particularly exacerbated mental health issues, and increased reliance on health services. Health services can, however, play a pivotal role in helping people manage financial problems.

The approach

Citizens Advice on Prescription is a service funded by the NHS and run by Citizens Advice Liverpool. It provides support via health services to reduce financial insecurity. It's the biggest programme of its kind in England, helping around 24,000 people each year at a cost of £1.25 million. The intervention includes a quick referral process with proactive follow-up by case workers. The service is continuously evaluated by ARC North West Coast (ARC NWC).

The outcomes and impact

Evidence has demonstrated that the programme improved mental health of users while reducing GP and A&E visits and antidepressant prescriptions. This saved the NHS ~£36 per person supported, totalling £860,000 a year.

ARC NWC analysis has also identified unmet needs and led to an increased use of the service by people living in deprived areas. It has helped enhance the programme to better reach people living in such areas including mothers and babies, and black and ethnic minority groups.

ARC NWC's evidence supported renewal of the service following the end of the current contract. Other NHS hospitals in the area have either invested in a similar services or have used the evidence to develop a business case to also invest in the service.

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