Can you tell us what a typical working day looks like?

Once I have received referrals from the GP surgery, I will call individuals and arrange to meet them, sometimes in their own home or at a GP surgery. I will then undertake my visits for the day which last an hour — giving people time is very important. This enables people time to unfold. They are often worried and scared about attending activities. Bereavement is a factor I see a lot and the impact of grief. People sometimes cry and feel able to unload. My role is one of listening and reassuring. There are often underlying factors and other issues in their life which impact a lot on their health and wellbeing. I use wellbeing assessment tools which help people to identify what they need help with.

We then work on developing an action plan — identifying what the person can do for themselves. It is a shared responsibility and clients feel engaged in finding the solution. Follow-up appointments are about accountability and looking at progress and next steps.

What’s the best part of your job?

It is the 1-2-1 appointments — sitting with a client and being able to listen. They say, ‘thank you taking the time and hearing me’. It is very powerful and makes a real difference to their life.

What’s the most challenging part of your job?

Linking individuals to services is the most difficult part. Many services are under-resourced and difficult to access in rural areas. There are many isolated people — they want to stay in their own home and have someone come in and have a chat. This is often because they are elderly, frail or worried about leaving their home.

There is a lack of volunteers to help with befriending and transport is difficult. Sometimes it is about trying to link with people, with others in their community or into existing groups. I think it would really help to have more of a focus on young people for volunteering (as part of their gaining experience) rather than just retired people.

The other part that is very difficult is working with people who are struggling with their mental health. There is a large waiting list for the wellbeing services and getting people to the support they need can be challenging. Was previously quite difficult to link people with DWP but this has improved greatly.

What would you say to encourage other health and social care practitioners to practice social prescribing?

It is very important because health and wellbeing is about so much more than just taking medications. Small changes and social changes can be extremely impactful on someone’s life. Collaborative working between the statutory and voluntary sectors can be very effective.

What do you find your job rewarding about your job?
Making a difference to people’s lives. They are often sad at the start of a meeting, but they are smiling when I leave, and feeling much more hopeful for their time ahead.