

## Self Care Forum Self Care Innovations Award 2023

### Award Application Form and Eligibility

*The Self Care Forum is inviting applications of good practise and innovations in self care, personalised care, and social prescribing that have made a difference to individuals, groups, or organisations.*

#### Who can apply?

This invitation is open to everyone, whether you are an individual, a community champion, an employer, GP practice, Local Authority, school, college, business, or services organisation (public, private, or charitable). For a guide, see examples table below.

#### £500 bursary

The winner will receive a £500 bursary to spend on a self care related initiative and the top entries will be included on the Self Care Forum website to share best self care practise and excellence. The winners will be announced during the UK's National Self Care Week (13 – 19 November) as part of its launch and promotional activity.

Closing date for admissions: **31<sup>st</sup> July 2023.**

Examples of possible initiatives	If specific health-related conditions were targeted, they might include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2022's Self Care Week activities</li> <li>• Signposting to services</li> <li>• Protecting mental health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Promoting self care to the shielded population</li> <li>• Self care for the elderly or other specific groups</li> <li>• Self care introduced by employers</li> <li>• Local authority population or community initiatives</li> <li>• Pharmacy initiatives</li> <li>• GP initiatives</li> <li>• Self care education by schools, universities, or community groups such as Scouts, Guides etc</li> <li>• Empowering vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term conditions</li> <li>• Obesity</li> <li>• Diabetes</li> <li>• General health</li> <li>• Nutrition</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Self-treatable conditions/minor illness</li> </ul>

Please use the form below to tell us about your self care initiative.

If you are typing directly into the form, do not worry if the box extends beyond the page – it will continue onto the next one.

## Title and contact details

<b>Title of Initiative (please ensure this is a good description of your initiative in no more than 6 words)</b>  WellAware Health & Wellbeing IAG Network
<b>Name of Organisation and Region (please state context, ie general practice, community care etc)</b>  The Care Forum  The Care Forum is a health and social care voluntary organisation based in Bristol, providing a mix of frontline services and support to individuals, groups and organisations across the South-West of England, empowering people and communities to achieve equality and inclusion in health and care, and enabling community engagement. We are a registered charity (No. 1053817) and a company limited by guarantee (No.3170666).
<b>Name of person/team/individual being nominated</b>  WellAware Service Team
<b>Contact name for entry</b>  Kevin Peltonen-Messenger
<b>Contact email for entry</b>  kevinpm@thecareforum.org.uk
<b>Timeframe and dates of initiative</b>  01/06/2020 – 01/06/2023
<b>Date of submission</b>  30/07/2023

## Problem(s) and how you tackled them

### What was the problem you were trying to tackle? (max 200 words)

Our mission at The Care Forum is to promote health and wellbeing for all, and to challenge health inequalities in policy/services. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a public health crisis, widening socioeconomic and health inequalities experienced by the poorest, most vulnerable members of our community – making it more difficult than ever for individuals to engage in self-care or access services to help manage their physical/mental health and wellbeing. Interconnecting factors such as age, race, gender and geography have created significant barriers to services and information, and there has subsequently been much focus placed, both locally and nationally, on development of programmes that reduce inequalities, prevent poor health, and improve people's opportunities for better health.

WellAware was developed in response to these problems, seeking to empower people at all levels of need/ability and socioeconomic disadvantage to improve health outcomes, independence and quality-of-life, removing barriers to services and information, and providing holistic support for 'high-risk' groups. For example, in Bristol:

- Loneliness in most deprived areas of Bristol significantly higher (11.9% compared to 2.4% in affluent areas), and most prevalent in disabled communities (15.5%)
- Approx. 20,000 people aged 18-64, and 11,400 people aged 65+, experiencing social isolation
- Young people with mental health needs doubled (from 13% to 27%)
- Decreased physical activity in most deprived areas (49.8% versus 84.5%), with BAME groups (59.3%) and older people (49.1%) less likely to be physically active
- Overall poorer health outcomes for women, BAME, people living in most deprived areas, and with preexisting/long-term health conditions

### Please give a brief description of your self-care innovation (max 250 words)

WellAware is an innovative proactive Social Prescription and Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) service which is empowering people and communities across the South-West of England to better understand and engage in self-care, in order to maintain/improve their health, wellbeing & quality-of-life. We provide accurate, up-to-date, quality-assured information on a wide range of over 4000 organisations, support groups, community groups, events & activities that can help improve health and wellbeing for local residents in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and surrounding areas.

Following a holistic approach, we provide IAG and signpost local services/activities in key outcome areas for health improvement, including but not limited to:

- Activities for older people
- Adult carers advice & support
- Adult education courses
- Adult residential care
- Alcohol advice & support
- Benefits advice & assessment
- Bereavement support
- Care at home
- Care needs assessment
- Community support groups & organisations
- Community transport

- Drugs advice & support
- Exercise/fitness classes
- Food banks
- Health advice
- Hobby/interest classes & groups
- Homelessness support
- Independence support for disabled people
- Mental health support
- Outdoor activities
- Parks & open spaces
- Skills for living

Support is provided through an interactive website, telephone support line, and by text, email and post as needed to meet service user accessibility needs, ensuring Bristol & South Gloucestershire residents, their families/friends, and other local/national partners (including social prescribers and clinicians) have convenient 24/7 access to high-quality data based on national best practice at their fingertips.

Visit the website here: <https://www.wellaware.org.uk/>

## **What challenges or barriers were you faced with, and how did you solve the problems or overcome the barriers? (max 250 words)**

We were presented with several challenges in developing WellAware services—including issues of quality assurance, digital inclusion, convenience and accessibility. Whilst there was an explosion in access to online services in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, IAG was often poorly organised, low-quality, unnecessarily duplicated, or difficult to locate online and many residents in our locality were unsure what services/resources are available or how to access them.

We needed to ensure service users could access IAG and services matching their needs/priorities/interests, local to them/their community, all in one place, without getting lost in a 'sea' of irrelevant information. We also needed to ensure that service users could easily access areas of support such as 'Suicide Prevention' and 'Mental Health'.

To address these issues, we launched a brand-new, improved WellAware website in 2021 — our platform now supports 'area tagging' meaning service users are better able to find listings local to them. We now have over 1000 listings on the site, most of which are hyperlocal and aim to tackle demand for statutory services, reduce social isolation, and promote independence. Users benefit from resource pages focused on specific areas of support including 'Better Health,' 'Sports and Physical Activity', 'Emotional Wellbeing', and 'Residential Care'.

To maximise inclusion, our digital offer is complemented by telephone/face-to-face and 1:1 social prescription services. We use innovative ReachDeck technology to support live text/text-to-audio translation into 200+ languages, text font/size/colours and other formats (e.g. easy-read).

We apply a rigorous quality assurance process, with our WellAware Team continuing to research /add new listings. The platform also facilitates management of listings by organisations, ensuring information (e.g. meeting times/dates/locations/etc) remains accurate and up-to-date.

## **Did you collaborate with other partners or organisations, if so, who were they?**

Yes — our WellAware service was launched as part of an innovative partnership with Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, and Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire

Integrated Care Board (ICB BNSSG) with local collaborators, Placecube and Doc & Tee, also playing key roles in development and delivery of this initiative. Our aim was to enable quality data to be shared with other partners regionally to support a person-centred approach to referring individuals into community assets, as well as ensuring social prescribers and clinicians have access to the same, quality community data.

We have therefore made our data open-source, feeding into the social prescription platform used by staff across BNSSG, 'Elemental,' as well as localised resources used by partners such as WECIL Trust, Age UK Bristol, Remedy, Bristol Ageing Well Forum, and The Self-Care Forum, who have used our data for their delivery of digital self-care apps and signposting for our locality. We have developed tailored directories of resources for high-priority communities such as Ukrainian arrivals receiving Resettlement Support in South Gloucestershire, and older residents (65+) supported by Bristol's Ageing Well Forum, ensuring these are available in a range of languages & formats to suit accessibility needs of the diverse communities we support.

We work with over 4,000 organisations, support groups, community leaders and activities/service providers to coordinate and deliver accurate, up-to-date information on local groups and events to improve mental/physical health and wellbeing. All of our IAG resources are informed by current NHS/UK best practice and developed in partnership with approved health/care partners to ensure accuracy and consistency of information.

We continually engage service users in collaboration, evaluation, and co-production of WellAware and connected services (e.g. social prescription services), using 'Lived Experience' panels, feedback and impact/outcomes data to gain insight into local residents' priorities and interests for self-care – e.g. specific health conditions affecting older communities (65+), BME, refugee/migrant/asylum-seekers, LGBTQ+; identifying gaps in current local IAG resources or accessibility needing attention; understanding patterns of behaviour within specific groups and using this to inform development of health/wellbeing IAG for different communities.

Acting as VCFSE representatives for Integrated Care Alliances (ICAs) uniting NHS, ICB and other health/care partners across the South-West, we share local intelligence and facilitate collaboration at hyper-local levels within communities, championing the voices of community residents across a broad, diverse spectrum of needs – informing commissioning of services and development of new funding opportunities that address gaps in service provision. Our highly collaborative approach to developing and delivering WellAware shows our wider commitments to coproduction, community development, and improving access to self-care for people and communities experiencing health inequalities.

## Impact and outcomes

**Who was the initiative directed at and what were the benefits to the targeted group or individuals? (max 250 words)**

Our WellAware service is designed to be fully inclusive, ensuring that residents of Bristol & South Gloucestershire, people visiting the region or with loved ones here, and professionals/community leaders all have convenient access to quality-assured information on activities, events, support and wellbeing services, at their fingertips, whenever they need it.

The initiative places particular focus upon supporting those individuals/communities experiencing health inequalities and poorer health outcomes in our locality, who are most likely to benefit from social prescription and enhanced self-care. This includes:

- Older people (aged 65+)
- Young people (aged 16-24)
- People with physical impairment
- People with hearing and/or visual impairment
- People with learning difficulties and/or cognitive impairment (e.g. dementia)
- People with mental health needs (inc. emotional distress/anxiety/depression)
- People deemed at high-risk of Covid-19 (i.e. those recommended to 'shield', frontline 'essential' workers)
- People with other long-term conditions affecting their physical and/or mental health
- People living in areas of high deprivation and/or impacted by low income
- Other vulnerable people (e.g. those experiencing social isolation)

The benefits of WellAware services for these 'target groups' are multitudinous, inter-connecting, and based on individual needs. Key outcome areas include:

- *Increased choice and control*—empowering service users to co-create their own enriched, personalised self-care journey and make informed decisions about their health/wellbeing
- *Improvements to physical and mental health*—tailored support for a wide range of physical, mental, social, emotional or practical needs
- *Engaged, inclusive communities*—building stronger communities by connecting individuals to local services/groups and other community assets/members
- *Reduced health inequalities*—improved accessibility and engagement for hard-to-reach and isolated people/communities

**Were there further benefits to you, your colleagues, your organisation or to a wider area such as the NHS? If so, what were they? (e.g improved job satisfaction, smoother running of facility, happier service users, better use of scarce resources, cost saving)**

Yes — WellAware has become an integral tool supporting our work within the community, helping to ensure smoother running of day-today activities (e.g. by providing convenient access to data all in one place), bridging the gap between collaborators (e.g. for research or coproduction of services), and aiding identification of gaps in resources/accessibility by providing an overview of hyperlocal/local/regional data on services, groups & activities. We've seen an overall improvement in service user outcomes and experiences (based on self-reporting and feedback) across all TCF-led services.

This innovative partnership has achieved significant cost savings for Local Authorities (estimated at £70,000 per area per year) — facilitating smooth running of social prescribing services delivered by Bristol City Council/South Gloucestershire staff, through provision of easily-accessible, quality-assured information, and reducing admin time for referrals, by using a single point-of-access model with 'no wrong door' into the service.

There is considerable evidence demonstrating the positive cumulative effects social prescription has for NHS and other community health/care services — by cultivating a culture of self-care and management, we contribute to reductions in health service use and costs, ensuring efficient use of limited resources, combatting misuse of emergency services through user education, and helping to support frequent attenders to primary care. In this way we are able to maximise health outcomes whilst minimising NHS costs. Research by the British Medical Association shows social prescription schemes generate an average 28% reduction in demand for GP services, and average a 24% fall in A&E attendance for patients referred to such schemes.



Local Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations/groups also benefit from WellAware, as improved visibility is helping to secure high levels of service user engagement, improved outcomes and lived experiences – we provide a platform championing over 4000 groups, services and activity/service providers, and regularly ‘feature’ VCFSEs in our company bulletins and marketing campaigns (including social media channels).

## Evidence

**Please quantify the benefits of your initiative. (e.g. cost improvement, numbers of people helped, time saved)**

While calculating ‘true’ social return on investment can be challenging, we can quantify the benefits of our WellAware initiative in terms of numbers of people helped and cost improvements achieved.

We have achieved increasing levels of engagement with the service from its inception in 2020 to the present day. Between January & June 2023, we received 506 referrals for social prescription, with a total of 6,900 web users generating 60,000 page views during the same period. Our social media presence has increased from 1,569 Twitter followers and 464 Facebook followers in 2020, to a combined audience of over 100,000 people in 2023 (based on current reach/likes/followers). We have supported a total 50,000 people over the last 3 years, with significant increases in use seen throughout the pandemic, and during recent strike action undertaken by healthcare & ambulance staff (e.g. shown by 77% increase in searches for community transport to hospital).

Using demographic data, we can evidence use of the WellAware initiative by local residents with a spectrum of health and wellbeing needs, including service users with physical impairment (26.8%), visual impairment (4.6%), hearing impairment (1.8%), learning disability (6.4%), mental health needs or emotional distress (27.7%), and other long-term conditions (25%).

We can demonstrate successful delivery of support including IAG and signposting to activities and hyperlocal resources in various health outcome areas, including mental health (representing 5.5% of enquires made in 2023), physical health (2.5%), activities (17%), adult social care (9.4%), transport (3.6%), help around the home (5.2%), wellbeing (3.4%), dementia (1.8%), learning (0.9%) and general advice and support (39%). 11.4% of support offered covered multiple or ‘blended’ outcome areas, further highlighting the benefits of our ‘one-stop-shop’ single point of access model.

Tracking of referral routes evidences local residents successfully accessing self-care without need for professional intervention, with self-referral making up 40.7% of total referrals received in 2023. We can also evidence successful referrals made by communities and local partners, with 15.2% of referrals coming from family/friends, 2.4% being made by community organisers, 16.8% by South Gloucestershire staff, 20.5% by Bristol City Council staff, and 4.11% by out-of-area professionals.

The cost savings achieved by the WellAware service for Local Authorities is estimated to be around £70,000 per region per year (totalling £420,000 across two regions over 3 years). Research by the British Medical Association shows social prescription schemes generate an average 28% reduction in demand for GP services, and average a 24% fall in A&E attendance for patients referred to such schemes. Local Government Association (LGA) suggests a social return of £2.80 per year per £1.00 invested in innovative social prescription schemes such as ours, which would represent total SROI of £747,600 over 3 years.

## Do you have formal or anecdotal evidence of success? (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, informal feedback?)

We record/monitor formal and anecdotal evidence of WellAware's success, including quantitative, qualitative, and informal feedback from service users, commissioners, community partners and key stakeholders. Impact/outcomes and feedback are routinely assessed using an ISO:9001 accredited Quality Assurance Framework and openly shared in annual reports. Examples are provided below:

- Service User Feedback & Case Studies

Qualitative feedback received from service users and their families about how WellAware has empowered them to improve health/wellbeing and engage in self-care includes the following:

*"[WellAware is] an amazing service. The staff do a wonderful job."* – Joe S

*"Without WellAware, I wouldn't know what to do. I would be isolated and alone."* – Nancy P

We can provide various case studies evidencing successful sign-posting, health interventions, and promotion of self-care by our experienced WellAware staff team. For example:

*"Caller rang the helpline about her daughter, who is suffering from ME and long Covid with mental health diagnosis. Mother feels her daughter needs more support, as she has been bedbound for last 8 months, can't shower, isn't really eating etc. I signposted to SG Adult Social Care for a needs assessment. Caller expressed frustration with her daughter's care. She stated much of the physical illness is being treated as mental health need. They hired a private ME consultant who has written reports which, in her view, are being largely disregarded. I discussed whether she felt she needed Advocate support, but she already contacted one who is starting to work on the case. I signposted her to Action for ME for specific support and guidance on living with ME and her daughter's rights. I also discussed the NHS Hope Programme for long Covid and provided their details."*

- Feedback from Commissioners, Community Partners & Stakeholders

Since the inception of WellAware in 2020, we've received overwhelmingly positive feedback from commissioners, local staff, community partners, and stakeholders about the service and its impact. A sample of informal feedback is provided below:

*"[We] have certainly appreciated the help that your service has been able to provide."* –  
Commissioning Manager for Bristol City Council

*"I always signpost my clients to WellAware, and everyone gives really good feedback"* – Social Worker  
in South Gloucestershire

*"Ooh I love that, so easy to use!"* – Bristol Law Centre

## What was the cost of this initiative in terms of time, money, and/or other resources? Please be as specific as you can

The WellAware initiative costs £89,000 per year to run (representing £267,000 investment over 3 years), with the majority of this investment going towards maintaining a highly-skilled, experienced Service Team. We record, monitor and report on 100% of income, expenditure and activities. A full annual cost breakdown for the WellAware initiative is provided below:

### ANNUAL COST BREAKDOWN



Staffing	69308
Volunteering / events	1880
Premises	6833
Office costs	7999
External audits / accreditation	2980

## And, finally...

### Are there any lessons you learned or top tips that you would like to share? (max 200 words)

One of the most important lessons we've learned in delivering innovative self-care services is that digitised self-care is most effective when delivered hand-in-hand with personalised care. While we support thousands of service users per year through our digital WellAware platform, some of our most meaningful, impactful interactions have been with service users calling our helpline because they lack confidence to navigate a digital interface or are unsure what they need or where to start.

By taking an inclusive, innovative, and person-centred approach that empowers service users at all levels of need and ability to access the service and take control of their health/wellbeing journey, we've helped to improve health outcomes and social inclusion for some of our community's most vulnerable and isolated residents. Maintaining our highly-skilled and knowledgeable staff team has proven essential to delivery, by providing a friendly face for residents to interact and connect with, combatting the perceived coldness some associate with digital technology, and preventing digital exclusion of residents unable to access the digital platform (e.g. lacking secure Internet connection, access to computer, or required digital skills). This 'human element' is key to successful delivery of self-care initiatives for elderly, disabled, and otherwise marginalised/vulnerable groups.

### Did you use any of the Self Care Forum's resources? If so, please specify.

While we have not directly used resources provided by the Self Care Forum to develop WellAware, our IAG & resources have been developed in line with the same local/national research and best practice (e.g. research from World Economic Forum on use of self-care to support healthy ageing, NICE & NHS guidelines and best practice in mental health, etc). We have also shared our resources (including open-source data on activities/services) with the Self-Care Forum to support developing of apps and IAG promoting better mental and physical health. We would be open to sponsorship of new/current SCF Factsheets and other methods of support or resource-sharing going forward.

### Please provide the social media addresses of all those who were involved in the initiative.

<https://www.facebook.com/WellAwareSouthWest/>  
[https://twitter.com/wellaware\\_tcf](https://twitter.com/wellaware_tcf)  
<https://www.facebook.com/TheCareForumSouthWest/>  
<https://twitter.com/thecareforum>  
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-care-forum>  
[The heart of social inclusion - The Care Forum](#)

**Why do you think this initiative deserves to win the award? (Max 100 words)**

We are extremely proud of everything our WellAware service and staff team have achieved over the last 3 years. Team Manager Sam Wheeler, and Intelligence & Wellbeing Administrators, Olivia and Sarah, have gone above and beyond to support our local residents to better understand and engage in self-care, and identify a broad spectrum of opportunities to improve their physical and mental health (by tackling social isolation, becoming more active, and accessing resources to help manage mental & emotional wellbeing). Our innovative approach has driven up data quality across the South-West, and ensured residents and professionals alike have access to up-to-date relevant information and services at their fingertips.

**Do you have an image, materials or weblinks to supplement your application? Please supply no more than 2 images which may also be used to promote your application if successful. Ensure images are square (ie height/width dimensions are the same).**



Your application may be chosen to be uploaded to the “best practise” page of the Self Care Forum website to share self-care excellence so that others might use the learnings in your application. We will also include your email address so that people may get in touch with you. If you would prefer that your application and/or email address was NOT chosen then please make it clear in the box provided below.

N/A

We look forward to receiving your application. Please email your completed form to:

[selfcare@selfcareforum.org](mailto:selfcare@selfcareforum.org)

### About the Self Care Forum

The Self Care Forum supports organisations in helping their communities and service users better understand how to self care. It is the leading independent provider of best practice around self care and the ‘go-to’ place for top quality resources, current opinion, and self care interventions in the UK.

It is a charity and aims to improve public health by promoting self care at national policy level. It creates resources, runs the UK-wide National Self Care Week, and supports robust research evidence.

For more information about the Self Care Forum please go to the website. [www.selfcareforum.org](http://www.selfcareforum.org).