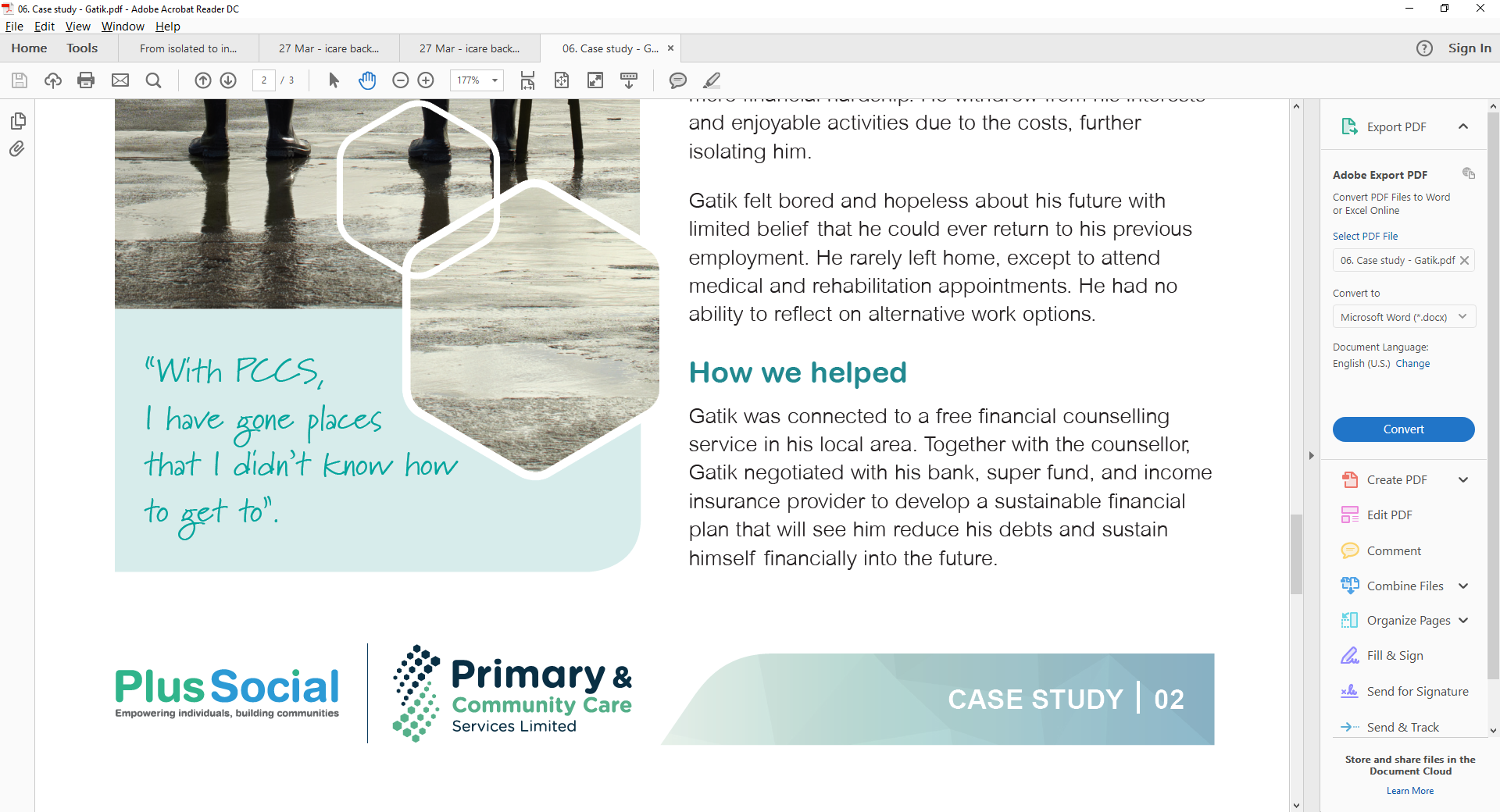
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**Plus Social for Injured Workers program**

Frequently asked questions and answers

1. **What is the Plus Social for Injured Workers program?**

This Plus Social program aims to help address the social, emotional and practical needs of injured workers who have been unable to return to work or who have returned to work on reduced hours. The program provides more options for recovery by supporting participants to access a range of social group activities and local services based on their needs and interests. Examples include relaxation, cooking, art and photography classes, health education, financial counselling, relationship counselling and housing assistance.

Plus Social is Australia’s first ever social prescribing pilot program and complements the medical care, and any other health and support services already being accessed. As a pilot program, referrals are only being accepted for a limited time.

1. **What is Social Prescribing and why are we using it?**

The Plus Social program is based on the Social Prescribing model of care. Social Prescribing is similar to the prescription of medication for illness but instead involves the “prescription” of activities and services to improve wellbeing and quality of life.

It is a relatively new model of care in Australia but has been used widely internationally, especially in the UK. While the evidence base is still emerging, over 30 international studies on Social Prescribing have demonstrated individual improvements in general health and mental wellbeing, as well as reductions in inappropriate health and social service use.

Specifically, patients have experienced improvements in self-esteem, confidence, a sense of control and empowerment, built a wider support network, and have experienced reduced feelings of loneliness and isolation as well as reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. GPs have also experienced benefits through social prescribing freeing up their time to focus on a patient’s medical needs by providing an additional tool to address their patient’s holistic needs.

1. **What is Primary & Community Care Services?**

Primary & Community Care Services (PCCS) is a local non-government, not-for-profit organisation that works to make it easier for people to access the health and community services they need, and make the journey smoother for those who deliver these services. PCCS provides a range of programs that deliver nursing, occupational therapy, social work and psychological support services in the community. PCCS’ strengths lie in care coordination, linking and providing support services.

PCCS has developed and runs this *Plus Social* program on behalf of the program funder, the icare Foundation.

1. **Who can participate in this *Plus Social* program?**

Plus Social is for injured workers who have not made a full return to work. Specifically, it is for injured workers who have:

* been unable to return to work or who have returned to work on reduced hours
* a current Certificate of Capacity from the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme
* social, practical, mental and/or emotional needs that are impacting their quality of life and would benefit from increased social participation and/or linking to services that aim to meet these needs.

1. **How does an injured worker participate in the program?**

If an injured worker is eligible to participate in Plus Social, they can either ask their GP, rehabilitation provider or allied health professional to refer them or they can contact PCCS directly. A referral can be made by calling PCCS on (02) 9477 8700, or emailing or faxing a completed one-page referral form (available on PCCS’ website) to [intake@pccs.org.au](mailto:intake@pccs.org.au) or fax 1300 067 747.

1. **Is the program voluntary?**

Yes, participation is voluntarily. Participants can withdraw at any time. Withdrawal from Plus Social will not affect a person’s workers compensation claim in any way.

1. **How is this program different to other support injured workers receive?**

The Plus Social program uses non-medical interventions to improve the wellbeing, quality of life and social connectedness of injured workers. This is done through building support networks, increasing confidence and boosting mood. Plus Social works alongside the medical care injured workers already receive from their GP and rehabilitation provider, and complements any other health and support services being accessed.

Plus Social is not a rehabilitation or Return to Work program. However, social prescribing can assist people to overcome general barriers in life which may help them to achieve other goals.

1. **How does Plus Social fit with a person’s workers compensation claim?**

The Plus Social program is run independently of a workers compensation claim. Participation in Plus Social does not require approval from an injured worker’s insurer or employer. It is the injured worker’s choice whether they inform their case manager about their involvement in the program.

1. **What happens once PCCS has received a referral?**

A Link Worker will contact the injured worker to confirm their participation in the program and schedule an appointment to meet with them at their home or in another quiet/safe place in their local area.

The Link Worker will meet with the injured worker, assess their current needs, and help them to identify and set goals. The Link Worker will develop an action plan together with the person. Based on this action plan, the Link Worker will then connect the injured worker into appropriate local social activities and/or services.

The Link Worker will support the injured worker throughout the program. At the end of the program, the Link Worker will talk with the person about next steps and will help them secure ongoing support if needed.

This *Plus Social* program is a pilot program. The injured worker will therefore be asked to complete evaluation forms at the beginning and at the end of the program to help PCCS demonstrate the value of the program.

If the injured worker is referred by a GP, PCCS will send the referring GP a summary of the participant’s action plan early in the program, and a summary of the services accessed by and links provided to the participant at completion of the program. However, if the injured worker advises the Link Worker that their information is not to be shared with the referring GP, we will not provide this information back to the GP.

1. **How long does the support provided through the Plus Social program last?**

The program is 12 weeks in duration. We encourage participation for the full length of the program in order to gain the most benefit.

Participants are typically involved in social activities for up to 10 weeks. After this, we can link injured workers to other local community groups if available.

1. **What is a Link Worker?**

A Link Worker has experience supporting injured workers throughout their journey. A Link Worker is an employee of PCCS and is typically a qualified and experienced social worker, occupational therapist, nurse, psychologist or doctor.

Link Workers connect injured workers to social activities and support services which may be of assistance to them.

1. **What kind of social activities and support services are available, who will run them and where are they held?**

Participants will be linked to social activities and support services in their local area based on their needs and interests. Social activities are group activities such as relaxation, cooking, art, craft and photography classes. Examples of support services include financial counselling, relationship counselling, housing assistance, English language classes and health education.

Social activities are run by PCCS or in partnership between PCCS and existing local providers. The group leaders are professionals with expertise in the specific group activity. Support services are run by existing local providers.

We currently link participants to social activities and support services in the Sydney, Central Coast, Newcastle and Wollongong areas. Participants will be encouraged to engage with relevant local social activities and support services, and may need to travel locally to access these. This will enable them to tap into a vast network of social and community services.

1. **Is there any cost to the injured worker when participating in the Plus Social program?**

There is no cost to the participant during their involvement with the program. They can participate in more than one group at any time throughout the program.

The cost of travel for the participant to attend social activities or support services is not included in the program and they will be required to cover these costs. We aim to link participants with activities and services in their local area to minimise their travel. If travel cost is an issue, we encourage participants to discuss this with their Link Worker.

Injured workers can participate in a PCCS group for up to 10 weeks. After this, we can link them to other local community groups if available.

1. **What if the injured worker doesn’t like their social activity?**

Participation is always voluntary and an injured worker can opt out at any time. We encourage participants to raise any issues with their Link Worker, as we may be able to improve their experience or alternatively link them to another social group activity or support service.

1. **Can participants bring a friend to the social activities?**

Unfortunately, a friend will not be able to participate in the social activities because the groups are specifically designed for injured workers. A Link Worker can attend the group activities as a support to the participant if they wish.



1. **How do participants register for a social activity?**

The Link Worker will assist participants with this and discuss the details with them.

1. **What if participants can’t make it to their social activity?**

Participants will be given the details of the group leader. We ask that participants inform the group leader if they know they can’t make it.

If a participant’s personal circumstances change and a scheduled group is no longer convenient for them, their Link Worker can discuss alternatives.

1. **Who is involved in the program?**

Injured workers may be referred to Plus Social by their *GP, workplace rehabilitation provider or allied health professional*. They will be referred to the program provider, *PCCS*. Their *Link Worker* is an employee of PCCS, with relevant experience in the field. The Link Worker will connect participants to social activity groups and support services which will be run by PCCS in partnership with *other local providers*.

Funding for this pilot program is provided by the *icare Foundation*, a social venture that is investing in ensuring the people of NSW are safe and healthy at work and on the roads, and receive the support they need to recover from injury. A separate organisation, *icare*, is a public financial corporation operating in NSW that works with insurance companies who manage the claims of injured workers. icare will receive de-identified/grouped outcomes of the project; they will not receive any individual data.