

Policy Context

‘Scotland’s most deprived communities need additional support, so we will recruit at least 250 Community Link Workers to work in GP surgeries and direct people to local services and support’.

A Plan for Scotland, SNP Manifesto 2016

Community Link Working

- Community Link Workers (CLW) are one of the six key priorities that will be provided to patients in GP practices or clusters of GP practices by Health Boards under the new GP contract, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding¹ (MOU)
- CLW are social practitioners based in a GP practice serving a socio-economically deprived community, addressing the problems and issues that the individual is experiencing.
- The purpose of their role is to improve patient health and well-being, reduce pressure on general practice and tackle health inequalities.
- Many CLW are generalists, but others provide specialist non-clinical support, for example with social welfare, debt and housing issues, mental health or supported self-management of long term health conditions.
- CLW roles will be designed, commissioned and planned by Health and Social Care Partnerships, based on assessment of local need, working hand in hand with local GPs, patients and the third sector.
- This will be a locally-determined and delivered service, built up across the country to deliver the overall national commitment to at least 250 community link workers.
- To be most effective CLW are integrated or embedded in general practice and provide a non-clinical intervention which meets the needs and demands of the practice and practice population.
- Depending on the needs of the practice and practice population, CLW may support an individual practice or work across a cluster of practices.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Services/Primary-Care/GP-Contract/Memorandum-of-Understanding>

- A community link worker team approach could also be developed to support a number of practices where the team comprises of generalist and specialist CLW.
- They provide an essential role in tackling deprivation, and meeting the needs of those who have complex conditions, are socially isolated, or live far from other support.
- CLW offer non clinical support to patients in order that they can take greater control of their health and well-being.
- A key part of their role is to link, connect and support people to attend and use local and national services and resources according to people's needs and priorities.
- Following testing of community link working in areas of high socio-economic deprivation, there are now CLW in many areas across Scotland.
- The new GMS contract National Oversight Group will ensure that community link workers are being rolled out at pace nationwide over the next three years.