

COMMUNITY LINK WORKERS

As the CLW Network Manager with Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership I am responsible for creating and maintaining a network of link workers spread across the city.

Scottish Government's define a Community Link Worker as follows -

"A CLW is a generalist social practitioner based in a GP practice serving a socio-economically deprived community, addressing the problems and issues that the individual brings to the consultation. Link workers offer non clinical support to patients, enabling them to set goals and overcome barriers, in order that they can take greater control of their own health and well-being".

As you can see the focus is very much around Health Inequalities is also about reducing GP workload.

In August 2017, the Government gave Edinburgh funding to recruit 14 of these community link workers. By December 2017, we had established a CLW presence in each of Edinburgh's 4 localities as well as what has quickly become a unique link worker role at the Edinburgh Access Practice.

All the link workers are employed by either a local Community Health Organisation (CHO) or Third Sector organisation, thereby allowing for local responsiveness to local need. The CLWs are jointly managed by the CHO's management team and Edinburgh H&SCP. There are four community link worker Team Leads who look after day to day operational issues, team training and data gathering for evaluation.

The CLWs see patients who need support to consider what social activity or interaction might be of interest, to identify a local provider of whatever that activity might be and perhaps accompany patients to help with first introductions. 19 practices have aligned CLWs which equates to a total population of c136,000 patients.

Work to date shows that:

- Each CLW sees around 250/300 patients each year
- Average number of sessions is between 4 and 6 sessions. A session lasts between 45 minutes and an hour
- Over an initial 3-year period the CLWs will have interacted with 10,500 patients
- 74% of those people will go on to access services and 60-70% experience a tangible benefit from the support offered
- Our aspiration is that 50% of patients seen by a CLW will consult a GP or PN less frequently.

The community link worker network is currently establishing working relationships with a range of counterparts in each of the Edinburgh localities and we are undertaking a series of locality events to support.

This exciting and emergent service has much to offer both in terms of benefits to local people and as an opportunity for positive and successful integrated working.

Anne Crandles
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