



**Essential Connections:
Exploring the range and scope of
community link worker programmes
across Scotland**

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Research Aims

- What do we know already?
- The range of CLW programmes:
 - How are they designed, delivered and evaluated?
- Learning:
 - Why are programmes implemented this way?
 - What can we learn?



Research Methods

- Review of published information about link worker programmes in Scotland
- Online survey of CLWs
- Interviews with 18 programme leads and managers across Scotland



Programme Design

Different approaches taken to the design of CLW programmes:

- Responsibility for delivery
- CLW distribution
- CLW allocation
- Accessibility across Scotland
- Referral pathways

“It’s not one size fits all. I am really keen to reiterate that. What happens in areas like Glasgow or Edinburgh can be quite different from what needs to happen in places like Highlands”



Programme Delivery

Community link worker role:

- Terminology
- Support provided by CLWs
- What issues do CLWs help with?

Approaches to intervention:

- Number of appointments
- Intervention framework
- Leaving the service

“When you look across the country and you look at all the different link worker programmes, some of them are poles apart in their delivery. They are all doing really good work but are quite different in some aspects”



Monitoring and Evaluation

- Range of data management systems used
- Lack of consistent data for evaluation
- Ambiguity about what to collect and how to evaluate programmes

“We need much more of that evidence to support us and to show that we can make a difference, and that the difference is not just nice to have, it is part of everyday general practice”



Outcomes and Potential Impact

- Health inequalities
- Primary care
- Communities
- Patient outcomes

“We are not clinical... but we are the missing link. Because the GPs don't have the time to do the community mapping and know everything out there in the community”



Future Service Design and Delivery

- Community link working as a profession
- Primary care modernisation
- Embedding CLWs within GP practices
- Community link working at a national level

“Scotland should be good. Scotland should be ahead of the game. We are in terms of the grass roots, but we are absolutely failing the structural aspect”



Next Steps

- Scottish Government National CLW Advisory Group
- Review areas of the programme that could benefit from more national oversight
- Learn from strategic developments in other parts of the UK

