

## KEY MESSAGES



GIVING A VOICE TO SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY LINK WORKERS

## SCLWN: Peer Support Event 20 February 2025

### Introduction

Voluntary Health Scotland and the Scottish Community Link Worker Network hosted their latest peer support event for CLWs on 20 February. The purpose of these events is to support CLWs to share learning and good practice with their peers in smaller groups.

The session began with a welcome and introduction from Roisin Hurst, Project Manager for the Network before the participants were divided into two breakout groups for 30 minutes to give them an opportunity to introduce themselves to each other and share what they would like to get out of the session.

A number of topics for discussion had been suggested in advance of the meeting including mental health, social isolation and loneliness, neurodiversity, Scottish Government policies and transport as well as the need for standardisation and consistency in certain aspect of programme service delivery.

### Challenges in Befriending Services and Mental Health

There was discussion around the challenges faced by CLWs in various regions in accessing services for their clients, and in particular, in relation to asylum seekers and refugees where there are often long waiting lists for and a lack of services. South Ayrshire was highlighted as an area where there appears to be a good range of services. Befriending services for the elderly are much needed to support social interaction for older people. There was also discussion around the issue of some clients who don't feel comfortable in group settings and the need for one-to-one and peer support to enable them to access services and support.

### Community Link Worker Funding

The challenges of long-term funding for CLWs was discussed by the group. CLWs are key to the early intervention and prevention agenda and need sustainable funding to be able to support this. The current challenges for the CLW programme in West

Dunbartonshire were referenced in the discussion and the impact this will have on job security. The Scottish Government's national review into community link working in Scotland was welcomed by the group, especially if it leads to a more sustainable funding model for the CLW programme nationally.

## Developing Scotland's CLW Service

The national review is also supporting discussions on standardization of some aspects of the community link worker programme, particularly in relation to data collection, evaluation, evidence and outcomes. The participants discussed the importance of some consistency for the service, particularly in relation to skills and competencies required for the CLW role. There will always be certain aspects of the programme, particularly from an operational perspective, that will be determined at a local level. However, they welcome the review looking into a more consistent approach nationally around collecting data to reflect national impact and outcomes.

## Supporting Neurodiverse Patients

The importance of understanding and supporting clients presenting with neurodiversity was highlighted, with the CLWs seeing a large increase in the number of people they are seeing with these conditions. The CLWs discussed the challenges they face in dealing with this, particularly supporting those who have not yet been diagnosed or are awaiting diagnosis which can range from 18-24 months for ADHD and up to 5 years for a diagnosis for autism. This situation is particularly difficult for parents whose children are awaiting diagnosis or who are already diagnosed and lack support. The CLWs also noted the strain on their resources and the need to provide basic information and coping strategies to those in need. One of the CLWs added that they often encounter adults who have slipped through the net and are now seeking support as well as parents struggling with their children's neurodiverse needs.

Roisin told the group that VHS and SCLWN will be hosting an event for CLWs focused on Neurodiversity on 1 April led by Salvesen Mindroom. Full details of the event including booking information can be found [here](#).

## Transport Challenges

Transport poverty was another issue that was referenced by CLWs in the lead up to the event. The lack of accessible and reliable transport can have a big impact on people's ability to access services, particularly in rural areas.

Roisin agreed to share further information from Public Health Scotland around this issue:

[Movement | Improvement Service](#)

[Why is transport important for health? - Transport and Health - Environmental health impacts - Population health - Public Health Scotland](#)

[Transport poverty - Transport and Health - Environmental health impacts - Population health - Public Health Scotland](#)

[Public Health and Sustainable Transport Network Conference Recordings](#)

Cycling Scotland have also got some useful information regarding their Cycle Access Fund which is available in the following areas:

- SPT Region (Glasgow, The Shires and Inverclyde)
- SESTran Region (Edinburgh, The Lothians, Scottish Borders, Fife and Clacks)
- NESTRANS Region (Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire) **only until 31st March**
- Zetrans - Shetland Isles.

CLWs can contact Cycling Scotland's [Eileen Hamill, Senior Project Officer, Cycle Access Fund](#) for more information.

## Contact information

Roisin Hurst, Project Manager - Scottish Community Link Worker Network

[roisin.hurst@vhscotland.org.uk](mailto:roisin.hurst@vhscotland.org.uk)

Voluntary Health Scotland  
18 York Place, Edinburgh EH13EP 0131 474 6189  
[mail@vhscotland.org.uk](mailto:mail@vhscotland.org.uk) [vhscotland.org.uk](http://vhscotland.org.uk)

Registered Scottish Charity SC035482 A company limited by guarantee SC267315