

KEY MESSAGES



GIVING A VOICE TO SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY LINK WORKERS

SCLWN: Knowledge Exchange 29 May 2025

Introduction

Voluntary Health Scotland and the Scottish Community Link Worker Network hosted the 10th Knowledge Exchange event on 29 January 2025, featuring presentations from Natasha Johnston from [Bowel Cancer UK](#), Caroline Gibb from [Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care](#) and Anna Hawkins from [Action Against Stalking](#).

Bowel Cancer UK

Bowel Cancer Awareness and Support

Natasha outlined Bowel Cancer UK's mission to reduce deaths from bowel cancer through early diagnosis and timely treatment. She detailed the organisation's information and support services, including an online forum, Facebook groups, and a peer support line, as well as educational resources for health professionals. Natasha also highlighted their awareness campaigns, including talks, stands, and a roadshow featuring a giant inflatable bowel, and announced an upcoming online education session for primary care staff on 19 June.

Bowel Cancer Awareness and Screening

Natasha presented an overview of bowel cancer, highlighting its prevalence, symptoms, and the importance of early diagnosis. She discussed the organisation's awareness efforts and the role of lifestyle modifications in reducing risk. Natasha also explained the bowel cancer screening programme, its process, and the varying participation rates across the UK, emphasising the need for increased awareness and participation.

Natasha explained that people with genetic conditions like Lynch syndrome typically receive regular colonoscopies rather than participating in the standard screening

program. She clarified that while bowel screening tests stop at age 74 due to cost and resource constraints, individuals over this age can request continued screening if they wish, though clinical judgment is used for those with multiple health issues. The discussion also covered the roadshow's current 2-year funding period, which ends in June next year, and while rural areas like the Highlands and Islands were noted as areas of need, the current focus is on areas with high deprivation and low screening uptake.

Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

EASE Course Overview: Death Education

Caroline presented an overview of the End of Life Aid Skills for Everyone (EASE) course, a public education initiative in Scotland focused on improving experiences with death, dying, and bereavement. She explained the course's structure, key messages, and content, highlighting its accessibility and emphasis on peer sharing. Caroline shared statistics on the course's reach, including the number of participants and facilitators trained, and discussed the evaluation process using pre and post-course questionnaires. She concluded by sharing feedback from participants, illustrating the course's impact on individuals' confidence and ability to support others through end-of-life issues. She discussed the course's availability, including online and in-person options, and mentioned potential interest in bringing the course to rural areas like the Highlands and Islands. Roisin inquired about community link workers participating in the course, and Caroline confirmed they were welcome to sign up.

Action Against Stalking

Stalking Awareness

Anna highlighted that stalking is predominantly a crime against women and girls, with 80% of their victims being female. She emphasised the importance of recognising stalking as a public health issue and discussed the impact of chronic trauma on victims. She also shared statistics on the prevalence and effects of stalking, including its online aspects and the underestimation of its seriousness. Anna provided insights into the legislation surrounding stalking in Scotland and the behaviours that constitute stalking, using the mnemonic "FOUR" (fixated, obsessive, unwanted, repeated).

Stalking Support Overview

Anna Hawkins provided an overview of stalking behaviours and support services, emphasising the seriousness of stalking and its potential to escalate to homicide. She advised victims to trust their instincts, document incidents, and not block stalkers online, as this could force them to find other ways to contact the victim. Anna explained that her organisation offers confidential support, advocacy, and therapy services to stalking victims across the UK, working closely with police and other agencies. She also addressed questions about referring victims to both Women's Aid and her organisation, as well as the challenges of tackling stalking in small communities and how to handle potential stalkers.

Contact

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