

KEY MESSAGES



SCLWN: Knowledge Exchange 28 January 2026

Introduction

Voluntary Health Scotland and the Scottish Community Link Worker Network hosted their latest SCLWN Knowledge Exchange event on 28 January 2026, featuring presentations from Guide Dogs Scotland, One Parent Families Scotland and Pain Concern.

Guide Dogs Scotland

Emma Brown who is Volunteering Attraction Co-ordinator at Guide Dogs Scotland started by introducing their volunteering opportunities, including fundraising and direct involvement with guide dogs. Emma detailed the opportunities, particularly for fostering and puppy training, which require proximity (around 20 miles) to their centres, and outlined the retirement process for guide dogs, which typically occurs around age 10 after about 8 years of partnership.

She then shared insights about Guide Dogs Scotland's services, including their training programmes for sighted guides and the breeds they use, primarily Labrador and Golden Retriever crosses, as well as services for people with sight loss, such as guide dogs, sighted guiding, and support for children and families. 1 in 5 people experience sight loss and over 2 million people are living with sight loss across the UK.

She explained that guide dogs can work with both completely blind and partially-sighted individuals, focusing on independence rather than formal registration. She provided further information about their organisation's grants: [Tech for All | Children with Vision Impairment | Guide Dogs](#) and [Eligibility criteria | Tech for All](#).

One Parent Families Scotland

Jenifer Hamilton, the Regional Coordinator for One Parent Families Scotland in Edinburgh, presented an overview of the organisation's history, services, and mission. She explained that the organisation provides support to single parents across Scotland through local services, a national advice helpline, and policy research.

Jennifer highlighted key statistics about single-parent families in Scotland, challenging stereotypes and emphasising the diversity of single-parent experiences. She also discussed the challenges faced by single parents, including work-life balance, childcare costs, and social isolation.

Jenifer then presented a summary of One Parent Family Scotland's services, highlighting their national and local offerings. She explained their core services, including a Childcare Connector and Employability Service, and discussed their six key priority areas for single parents. Jenifer shared a case study of Claire, a kinship carer who received support from OPFS in navigating the childcare system and accessing funding.

Pain Concern

Sam Mason, Outreach Manager for Pain Concern, explained that the charity has been going since 1995 and has 4 employees and up to 40 volunteers supporting its work. She outlined that 1 in 5 people are living with chronic pain. She detailed their range of resources and education programmes for people living with chronic pain, including online sessions, 151 podcasts covering every single chronic pain topic, educational sessions, mindfulness courses, online peer support and a self-management navigator tool which is their most popular resource.

The charity doesn't give any medical advice, but it does have a helpline for anyone who wants additional information or support. Sam also spoke about their Pain Education sessions, of which there are 3 a month. These are for people who have been in pain for 12 weeks or more and are also suitable for those, such as community link workers who are supporting people experiencing chronic pain. These sessions are run both online across Scotland and in-person (Edinburgh and Forth Valley). They welcome anyone from across Scotland to these sessions.

Further information

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