

COMMUNITY LINK WORKING IN ARGYLL AND BUTE

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Health Improvement Team in Argyll and Bute

BACKGROUND



- Argyll and Bute HSCP covers the second largest local authority by area in Scotland, after Highland.
- Around 90% of the population live in areas classified by the Scottish Government as Rural or Remote Rural.
- This results in challenges of service delivery and a mixed service delivery model – health and social care is delegated to the HSCP; Highland Health board oversee some services; and secondary care is primarily delivered by SLA with Greater Glasgow and Clyde.
- Third sector organisation With You have been commissioned by NHS Highland to provide the Community Link Worker service in A&B since 21/22, with the service available in an initial 12 GP practices.
- In late 2024, due to the success of the service and receipt of additional external funding, the service was recommissioned and is now available in 21 GP practices.

Argyll and Bute Community Links

If you're over the age of 16 and registered at one of these practices, you can arrange to meet with one of our Community Links Workers. You don't need a referral from your GP. Simply email us at argyllandbutecommunitylinks@wearewithyou.org.uk or speak to the reception team at your practice.

1 Furnace and Inveraray Medical Practice,
Church Square, Inveraray, PA32 8XT

2 Strachur Medical Practice,
Dalnacraig, PA27 8BX

3 Kyles Medical Centre,
School Road, Tighnabruaich, PA21 2BE

4 Riverbank Surgery,
Kilmun, Dunoon, PA23 8SE

5 Port Appin Medical Practice,
Port Appin, PA38 4DE

6 Easdale Medical Practice,
Clachan Seil, Isle of Seil, PA34 4TL

7 Arrochar Surgery,
Kirkfield Place, G83 7AE

8 Kilcreggan Medical Practice,
Shore Road, Kilcreggan, G84 0JL

9 Garelochhead Medical Centre,
McAulay Place, Feorlin Way, G84 0SL

10 Campbeltown Medical Practice,
The Health Centre, Stewart Road, PA28 6AT

11 Islay Medical Service,
Bowmore Medical Practice,
Gortonvogie Road, Isle of Islay, PA34 7JD

12 Lochgilphead Medical Centre,
Mid Argyll Community
Hospital and Integrated Care,
Blarbuie Road, PA31 8JZ

13 Dr Hall, Brennan and McLaughlin,
Argyll Street Surgery, 246 Argyll Street,
Dunoon, PA23 7HW

14 Church Street Surgery,
30 Church Street, Dunoon, PA23 8BG

15 Cowal Medical Practice,
246 Argyll Street, Dunoon, PA23 7HW

16 Millig Practice,
Helensburgh Medical Centre,
12 East King Street, G84 7QL

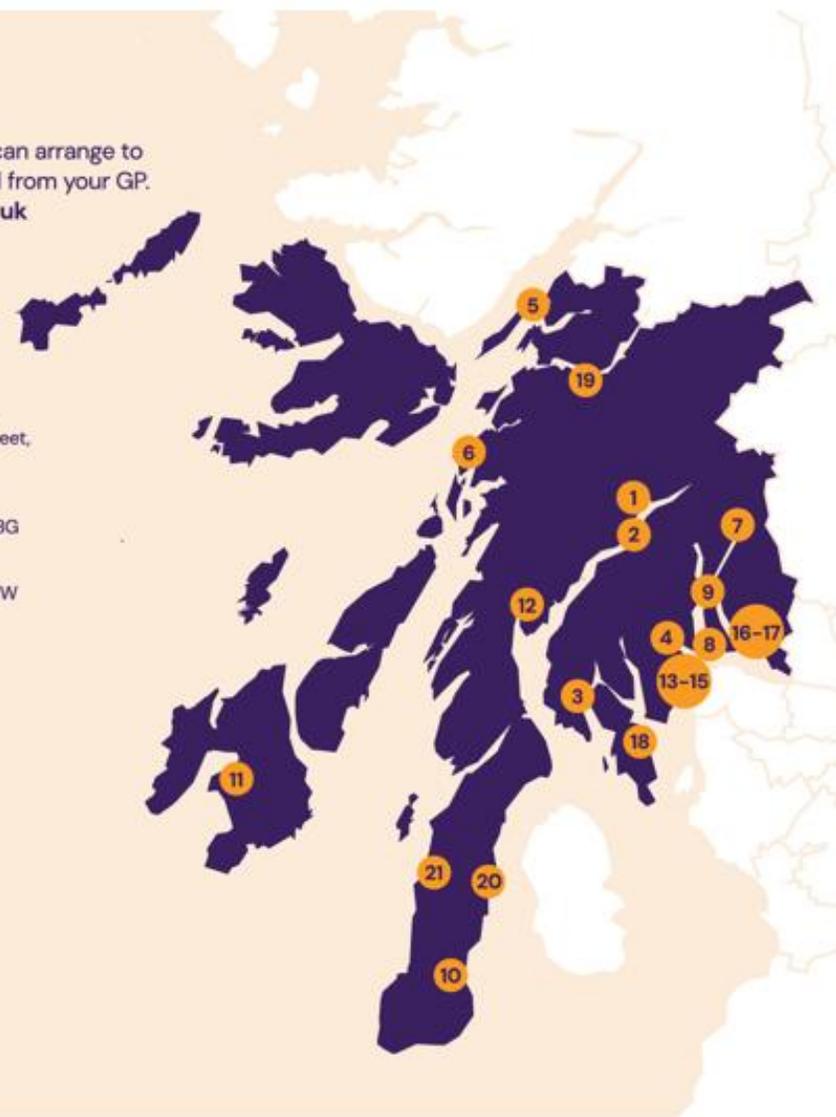
17 Dr McLachlan & Partners,
Helensburgh Medical Centre,
12 East King Street, G84 7QL

18 The Bute Practice,
The Health Centre, High Street,
Rothesay, Isle of Bute, PA20 9JL

19 Taynuilt Medical Practice,
The Surgery, Connel, PA37 1PH

20 The Carradale Surgery,
Carradale, PA28 6QG

21 Kintyre Medical Group,
Greenhill, Muasdale, PA29 6XD



BACKGROUND

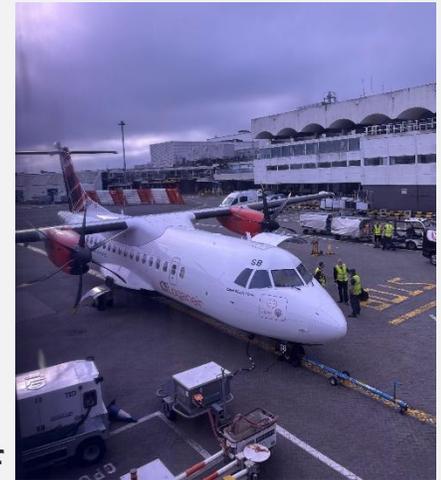


- We have successfully implemented a CLW service within primary care across the main rural towns/villages of Argyll and Bute, covering 21 GP practices and 80% of Argyll and Bute population.
- However, there are a remaining 3 mainland practices and 5 islands without the CLW service.
- Patients living within these GP practice catchment areas are in the most remote areas of our local authority, including on a number of small islands of Coll, Jura, Mull, Tiree and Colonsay.
- Despite some early engagement with GPs in these areas, there are a number of evidence gaps around community link working on small islands.
- Funding was awarded by the National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care to explore CLW on some of the Argyll and Bute islands.

THE PROJECT: COMMUNITY LINK WORKING IN PRIMARY CARE WITHIN VERY REMOTE AND ISLANDS SETTINGS ACROSS ARGYLL AND BUTE

Our objectives:

- Assess the implementation and impact of CLW on islands in A&B.
- Understand how CLW can be tailored to meet needs of island communities and inform future development
- Generate evidence on CLW role in reducing health inequalities and improving access to services in rural areas.
- Engage island residents and healthcare providers to explore the specific health and social needs of the community and how/ whether CLWs can address these effectively.
- Identify challenges (i.e., transport issues and digital exclusion), as well as facilitators like strong social networks and community trust, that could influence the success of the CLW programme.
- Were clear with residents that this might not result in their island receiving a service – but that would use this information to inform and build a picture.



OUR METHOD

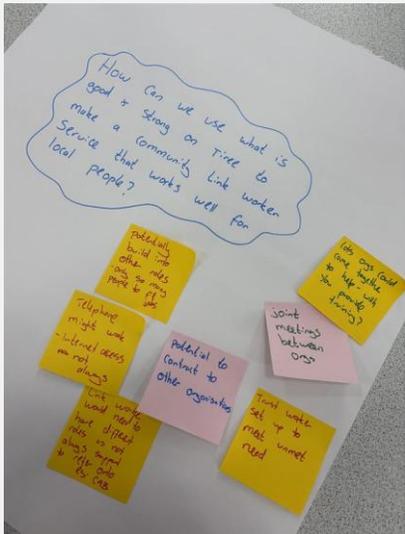


- So far, two community workshops have been held this year on Islay and Tiree. Islay currently has a CLW service whereas, Tiree does not.
- A qualitative approach was selected to gather insights, opinions, beliefs and meaning on the CLW programme's acceptability and perceived value.
- Members of the public attended and contributed to rich conversations around CLW on the island.
- Information was gathered informally via post-it notes responses to two key open questions:

How can we use what's good and strong on Islay/Tiree to make sure the community link worker service works well for local people?

What else can a Community Link Worker support with on Islay and how?

How could a Community Link Working service benefit Tiree?



OUR FINDINGS

- These workshops helped us harvest valuable insights and key findings and helped us shape future community engagement events.
- A thematic analysis helped us identify themes, patterns, and meanings within the data to draw meaning and understanding on how CLW can best support people's local specific needs within the islands remote and rural context.
- Findings were presented on an infographic, which was sent to attendees for feedback and disseminated to the communities.
- Although findings are still tentative, we have identified key themes so far

OUR FINDINGS

Alcohol related harms

Some people on the island recognise the alcohol related harms and children and young people's frequent exposure to the alcohol industry. For example, school trips take place at the distilleries, bottles of whisky are won at schools raffles, and internships for young people organised with the distilleries. Others, however, praised the distilleries positive messaging around 'responsible drinking'.



Face-to-face appointments

The need for more face-to-face interaction was identified. Moreover, the benefits of in-person meetings/ appointments was highlighted.



Social isolation

"Isolation is a real challenge" as we learned from a members of the community.



Telephone appointments

As Tiree does not always have strong internet connection, a member suggested telephone appointments could work better on the island.

By helping people connect with local support services

Members felt that Community Link Workers (CLW) could help to direct people to services that are right for them and help join up disjointed services.

However, others expressed that connections/ links are already well established on the island or "already sorted".

Existing job roles

Community members were curious at to whether CLW service could be built into other roles and recognised that only so many people do fill jobs on Tiree.

Link workers on islands may need to be trained to provide additional support due to services not being available on the islands i.e., money advice training.

Others wondered whether existing organisations on the island could be trained and funded to fill this role, but others were unsure if this would best meet the needs of Tiree.

A known vs. unknown Link Worker

There were mixed views on whether a Link Worker ought to be someone local to Tiree or not. Some recognised that people may feel more comfortable speaking to someone they know while others were unsure how people would feel about speaking to someone on the island. Other acknowledged the need to have a choice of which CLW people can speak to.

A choice of CLW

Some members recognised the benefit of choosing between an island or mainland CLW. Some felt that off-island CLWs may be disconnected and lack local understanding.

Anonymity

Anonymity is important due to stigma and some people also prefer remaining anonymous.



NEXT STEPS

- Plan repeat workshops on Islay and Tiree to increase the pool of data.
- Development of questionnaire to get broader insight
- Visit other remote islands in Argyll and Bute to continue to address the evidence gap.
- Sharing our findings with the communities on Islay and Tiree.
- Consider contract alterations highlighted by community members e.g., enabling individuals to have a choice of their preferred CLW – either on or off island.
- Publish our findings.

THANK YOU!

