

KEY MESSAGES



GIVING A VOICE TO SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY LINK WORKERS

SCLWN: Knowledge Exchange 26 March 2026

Introduction

Voluntary Health Scotland and the Scottish Community Link Worker Network hosted their latest SCLWN Knowledge Exchange event on 26 March 2026, featuring presentations from Big Health, Sleep Action Scotland and Epilepsy Scotland.

Big Health - Sleep and Insomnia

Dr Dimitri Gavriloff, a clinical psychologist based in Oxford and working for Big Health, presented on sleep and insomnia, emphasising the importance of sleep for optimal human function. He explained the dynamic nature of sleep, including the different stages of sleep and the two-process model of sleep regulation. Dimitri highlighted that brief awakenings during the night are normal and that understanding sleep processes can help in addressing sleep issues, particularly insomnia.

Sleep and Insomnia Treatment Models

Dimitri explained the biological processes of sleep, focusing on sleep pressure and the circadian rhythm. He discussed how these processes can be affected by napping, sleep timing consistency, and stress responses. Dimitri then outlined a three-Ps model for understanding insomnia, highlighting predisposing, precipitating, and perpetuating factors. He emphasised the importance of cognitive and behavioural changes in maintaining chronic insomnia and introduced CBT-I (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia) as the first-line treatment.

Dimitri also introduced [Sleepio](#), a free, NHS-recommended digital treatment for insomnia in Scotland that delivers CBT-I in 10-20 minute sessions over six weeks.

Dimitri discussed positioning Sleepio as a clinical treatment rather than as an app, emphasising that the treatment approach is most effective at a population level. He addressed questions about motivating service users who are reluctant to use digital tools, suggesting alternative resources like a book by Colin Espie entitled [Overcoming Insomnia and Sleep Problems](#). He also addressed a question about managing catastrophic thinking at bedtime, explaining how Sleepio can help address these cognitive patterns.

Sleep Tracking Devices

The group discussed sleep tracking devices and their effectiveness. Dimitri shared findings from a study showing that fake sleep feedback can exacerbate insomnia symptoms, emphasising the importance of device validation in different populations. He noted that while these devices may become more widely used in the future, they are not currently clinical tools and may not provide actionable information for most users. One CLW did highlight her experience of her sleep tracking device flagging her lack of sleep. This resulted in her speaking to her GP and led to a diagnosis of sleep apnoea.

Sleep Action

Jack Kinross presented an overview of Sleep Action (formerly Sleep Scotland), highlighting the organisation's history, services, and approach to sleep support. He emphasised that sleep is a complex life skill and discussed the organisation's focus on providing practical, evidence-based interventions, particularly for children and young people with additional needs.

Jack outlined several service approaches, including a sleep support line, training for practitioners, and educational initiatives in schools, stressing the importance of integrating sleep support into existing care plans rather than adding new specialists. The discussion touched on the high prevalence of sleep difficulties among people with complex needs and the organisation's efforts to raise awareness about sleep as a fundamental aspect of well-being.

'There is no health and wellbeing without sleep.'

Jack presented an overview of Sleep Action's Sleep Support Line, which provides free sleep support to children and young people aged 18 months to 18 years. The service has evolved from a direct phone line to an email inquiry system due to high demand, resulting in a 3-6 month waiting list. Jack explained that the service offers person-centred behavioural interventions, requires self-referral, and emphasises the importance of a stable sleeping environment. The organisation also provides training courses and free resources on their website. When asked about recommended sleep duration, Jack indicated that 7-9 hours is generally

appropriate, though this can vary by age and individual circumstances.

Epilepsy Scotland

Scott Coyne from Epilepsy Scotland shared information about their youth services including Happy Mail packs, one-to-one support, and youth groups, as well as their wellbeing programmes and helpline services and welfare rights assistance. The organisation currently offers in-person support groups primarily in Glasgow and Edinburgh, with plans to hopefully expand services geographically pending additional funding. For remote areas like Northwest Sutherland, Scott suggested the organisation's closed Facebook group as a starting point for connecting with others, and noted that while one-to-one wellbeing support is available, there are currently no plans to establish this yet outside the central belt.

[Visit the Epilepsy Scotland Website](#)

[Find out about the Epilepsy Scotland Youth Service](#)

Further information

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