Community Link Worker Programme

Annual Report 2025/26

Primary Care Community Link Workers (CLWs*) are funded as part of Glasgow City Health & Social Care Partnership's Primary Care Improvement Plan.

This report focusses on the work of Primary Care CLWs and specialist thematic CLWs, and details the progress and development of the Community Link Worker programme in Glasgow over the 12 months ending 31 March 2026.

During this period, the programme was delivered by the Health & Social Care Alliance Scotland and Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH).

Primary Care CLWs



Patients

Patients are the main focus of the CLW role and CLWs support patients by identifying their needs; strengthening connections between community resources and primary care; and mitigating the impact of the social determinants of health.

CLWs are embedded in GP Practices as part of the multi-disciplinary team. They work with practice staff to increase their confidence and capacity to direct patients to local and national support services.



Practice



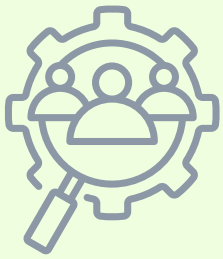
Community

CLWs have excellent knowledge of what's going on in their communities and what supports are available to their patients. They work within local areas to build strong relationships within the community.

*In Glasgow, Community Link Workers (CLWs) are also known as Community Links Practitioners (CLPs) and the terms are used interchangeably.

Specialist thematic CLWs

In addition to the Primary Care CLWs based in 80 GP practices, the Glasgow City programme also has three specialist thematic CLWs:



Asylum Seekers; Homelessness; and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Follow these links to find out more about all of our CLW roles:

Alliance - About the Community Links Programme

SAMH - Community Link Worker (CAMHS) Service

Referrals & engagement

In 2025/26, CLWs received

13,082 referrals,

which is roughly the capacity of the OVO Hydro!

Referral sources

All members of the practice multi-disciplinary team, including non-clinical team members, can refer to their CLW.

GPs are the main source of referrals for CLWs - making 54% of all referrals this year.

The programme also allows self-referrals and these were the second highest source this year at 17%, followed by Receptionists who made 9% of referrals to CLWs in 2025/26.

This year, the programme had an incredible engagement rate of 86%.

CLWs are really committed to engaging with patients who need their support and they're flexible around where and how they engage with patients. This likely contributes to such an excellent engagement rate.

86%
engagement rate

44,395
appointments

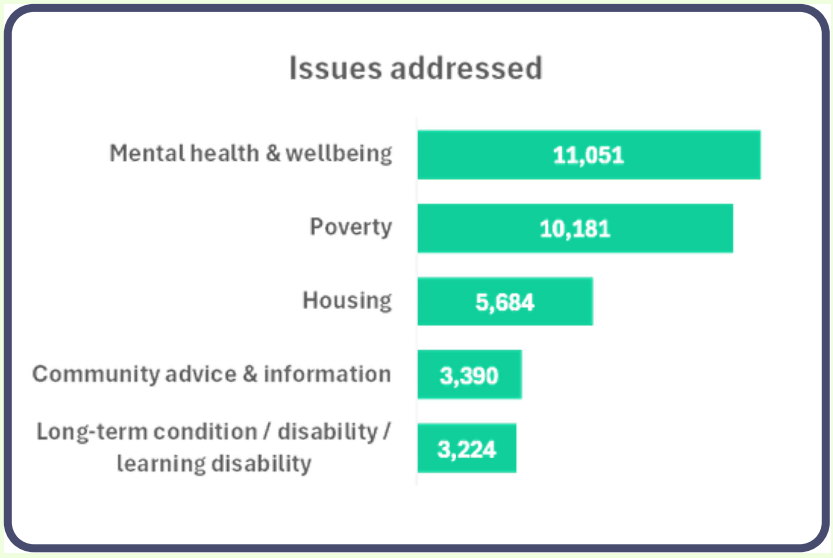
The programme is also person-centred in terms of the number and type of appointments each patient has and the duration of support they receive.

CLWs across Glasgow City carried out a total of 44,395 appointments with

11,836 individuals,

a 3% increase on the previous year.

Issues addressed with patients

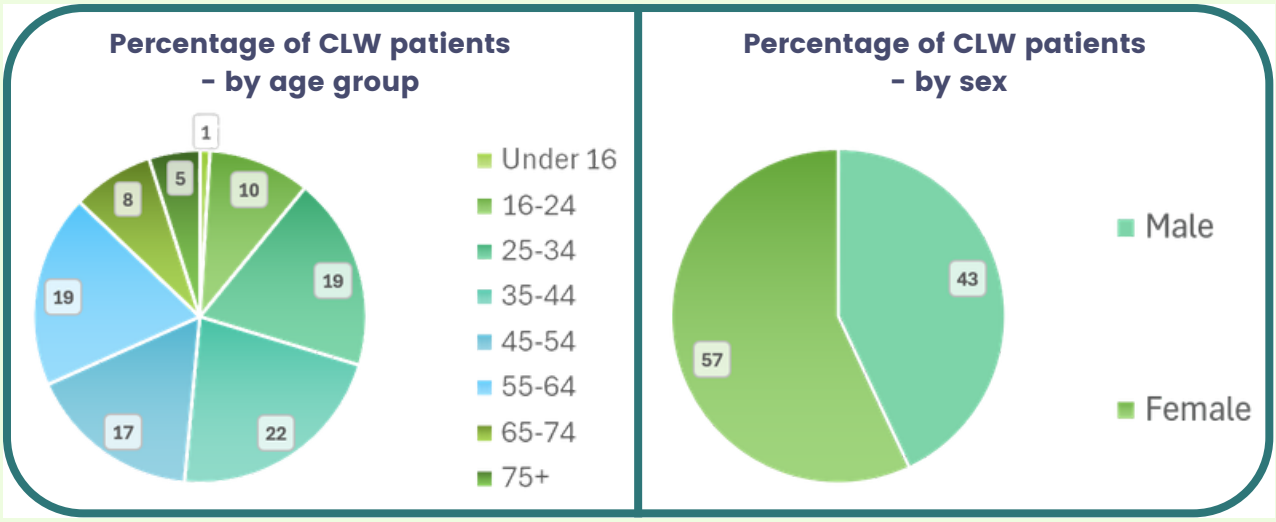


This graph illustrates the most common issues addressed in 2025/26.

CLWs support patients with a wide variety of issues, in addition to those they are referred for.

Initial conversations often uncover further patient concerns and priorities and many patients are supported with multiple issues.

Patient demographics



These charts illustrate the distribution of some of the demographics of patients supported by CLWs in 2025/26.

The highest concentration was distributed fairly equally across the 4 categories in the 25 to 64 year old age groups.

The distribution of patients by sex remained static this year. 0.6% of patients selected ”Other’ and ‘Prefer not to say’ categories.

Patient outcomes

CLWs use the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale* (SWEMWBS) to gauge improvement in patients’ mental wellbeing, over time.

Patients reported improved wellbeing after working with a CLW - with an average improvement score of 4.1 for 2025/26.

*Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)© NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2008, all rights reserved

Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please select the answer that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

Case studies

The following case studies further demonstrate the range and impact of the work carried out by CLWs in 2025/26 (*all names have been changed).

Sara*

Sara was referred by her GP following separation from her spouse. She was living in emergency accommodation with her two children, and was also five months pregnant. English was not her first language, creating an additional barrier to navigating services and accessing appropriate support.

The family had been placed in hotel accommodation with no cooking facilities while awaiting temporary housing. At the initial appointment, the CLW provided a supermarket voucher and information on local organisations offering free meals. Sara had no access to finances at this stage, with Social Work supporting her to apply for Universal Credit.

The CLW also identified that Sara had limited support during her pregnancy and with her agreement, a referral was made to Amma Birth Companions to provide additional practical and emotional support.

With Sara's consent, the CLW liaised with her homelessness case worker and established that, although a Resettlement Plan appointment had taken place, the plan had not yet been finalised, delaying the family's move into temporary accommodation. It also became apparent that previous meetings had been conducted in English despite this not being Sara's first language.

At the request of the case worker, and with Sara's agreement, the CLW attended a follow-up appointment. An

interpreter was arranged, and the CLW supported Sara throughout the meeting by helping to explain information in clear, accessible language, enabling her to participate more fully in discussions and decisions about her housing.

The family was later offered a temporary furnished flat. As this was outside the area covered by their existing GP practice, the CLW helped the patient identify local GP practices, including those offering CLW support, helping to provide continuity of support.

The CLW also supported Sara to complete an application for Best Start funding. Further support included registering Sara with the Priority Services Register and making a referral to the local food bank to help the family settle into their new home.

Although Sara and her family's journey is ongoing, the CLW helped address immediate practical and financial pressures, reduced barriers to accessing services, strengthened her ability to participate in decisions affecting her family, and established ongoing support within their new community. Sara expressed her gratitude for the support received.

William*

William was supported to self-refer by the Anchor service, who identified concerns around his living conditions. He was experiencing high levels of anxiety and difficulties establishing boundaries with family members, which were affecting his wellbeing and ability to address issues within the home.

During the initial appointment, he presented as highly anxious. A family member had recently moved back into the property and was engaging in chaotic behaviours, which were having a negative impact on his mental wellbeing.

William was also experiencing several housing issues. He was sleeping on a mattress on the floor which, due to limited mobility, made getting in and out of bed difficult. There were also problems with the boiler, heating and electric shower.

The CLW supported him to report the necessary repairs to his housing provider. She also supported him to apply to the Glasgow Care Foundation who responded quickly, and a new bed frame and mattress were delivered within a few days. The required housing repairs were also completed, enabling William to use the shower for the first time in several months.

During subsequent appointments, William described ongoing sleep difficulties, racing thoughts and anxiety relating to his family member returning home 'under the influence'. Online relaxation resources were discussed; however, he lacked confidence using the internet and only had access to a basic mobile phone. With consent, a referral was made to The ALLIANCE's digital skills programme, where he received a tablet and support to develop his digital skills. He has since described the tablet as a "life saver", using online relaxation resources regularly to support his sleep.

Given the ongoing impact of the family member's drug and alcohol use, the CLW referred William to Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs (SFAD) and he continues to receive support. Following the end of his involvement with the Anchor service, he was also referred for CBT through Family Addiction Support Service (FASS). He has found this beneficial in building confidence, managing anxiety and establishing healthier boundaries with his family member.

Although his family circumstances remain complex, William reports feeling more confident and better able to

manage challenging situations. He also feels more able to recognise when additional support is needed and he knows how to access it.

The CLW is providing ongoing support for William: focusing on goals he's identified. Future plans include attending social groups together, representing a significant step forward from his initial position, when engaging in this type of activity felt beyond his reach.

Kerry*

Kerry was referred to the CLW for support with anxiety, depression, social isolation and welfare benefits. She has learning and literacy difficulties and requires support with formal correspondence and administrative tasks. At the point of referral, she had no formal support or connection to relevant services.

During the initial appointment, she disclosed significant experiences of trauma and abuse throughout childhood and adulthood, which had impacted her mental health and wellbeing. She also disclosed experiences of assault during a period when she had been alcohol dependent and particularly vulnerable.

Working with Kerry to identify her priorities, the CLW facilitated referrals and connections to a range of appropriate services, including:

- Rape Crisis for specialist support
- Glasgow Disability Alliance for a benefits assessment, application support and wellbeing activities
- Rosemount Lifelong Learning for one-to-one support

- A CLW-led walking group to reduce social isolation and improve health and wellbeing
- The Halliday Foundation for access to activities and wider support
- Home Energy Scotland for support with fuel debt
- Local food pantries for practical assistance
- We Are With You for substance use support

When Kerry raised additional health concerns, the CLW also supported her to access the appropriate healthcare professional.

Over eight months of CLW support, Kerry has made significant progress. She has engaged positively with a wide range of services and activities, gradually building the confidence to try new experiences, participate in larger groups and engage with peer support. These were activities she previously felt unable to consider.

She is now engaging in activities most days, providing greater routine, purpose and social connection. She reports improvements in her emotional and physical wellbeing, alongside a significant reduction in her daily cannabis use.

Her healthcare needs are also being more effectively supported, including access to appropriate treatment for anxiety and depression and HRT. Improvements are evident in her confidence, self-care and overall wellbeing, including increased attention to personal hygiene and presentation.

Kerry continues to meet with the CLW fortnightly to review progress and address any additional support needs. She regularly expresses appreciation for the support received across services and recognises the positive impact this has had on her quality of life.

Patient feedback

My CLW was a very good source of support for me and listened to me and supported me to get the right help from other services.

I am new to Scotland, and I am on my own with 3 children, and have really needed some support to connect with the right people and services. This service has been invaluable to support me and my children. Thank you, I will be forever grateful.

The CLW was so approachable and easy to talk to and knew right away what services could help me.

CLW has been invaluable to myself and my son. She's helped me out so much since my husband passed away. She's helped with information on benefits that I should be claiming. I was so anxious about doing these things as I didn't know where to start. She's been amazing, I'm so glad I found out about this service.

**I got great support and help from my CLW.
She really helped build up my confidence and pointed me in the right directions to get all the help I needed.**

My CLW has been an amazing support and a lifeline to myself, and therefore to my children. It has made a very challenging time for our family feel less overwhelming and hopeless. Having his support has been a very important part of us coping & moving forward. He is kind, compassionate and professional with warmth and humour. Thank you.

I was a real mess when I first came to see the CLW, thanks for just being there and listening to me - very much appreciated.

Thank you, I have really struggled with money issues, and was really struggling to feed myself.
The CLW put me in touch with local charities, and also provided me with a food voucher. I have since started a new job, and I'm doing much better, but I am extremely grateful for the support
in a time of need.

My wife and I have tried for over a year and a half to get our issues resolved and got nowhere. The CLW got involved and they were resolved in a matter of weeks. The service provided was first class and we can't thank him enough.

The support and information we were given as a family was outstanding, didn't know any of these services were available, was such a great relief to know there were so many options available. This service is essential to patients and their families, don't know how people would manage without this input.

My CLW supported me to link in with addictions support and continued to support me with her kindness and encouragement. Couldn't have done it without her - she's great and just so nice!

I didn't know where to turn or what to do when my husband was diagnosed with Dementia. You have been so kind and caring, helping me through every step of the pain and tears. I felt so alone and scared, my world has been turned upside down, and you were there to listen and I had somewhere for me to talk.

The CLW has been very helpful for me, and I wouldn't have been in contact with all the other services who helped me if it wasn't for the support from my CLW.

I felt really supported and I am now in employment and really enjoying it. I don't think I would have had the confidence if it wasn't for the support I got from the CLW.

I was really struggling with my husband's death, when I came to see the CLW. I've now been attending a lovely wee bereavement group and it has really helped me, so thank you.

She has been incredibly helpful to both me and my mother, who has a disability. She is always genuinely caring and goes out of her way to ensure that we are comfortable and supported. I will never forget the day when I had no food at all, and she stepped in to help me obtain the right support. Her compassion and quick actions made a significant difference during a very difficult time. We are truly grateful for her patience, professionalism, and empathy. Thank you, for everything — your help has truly touched our lives.

My CLW helped me and my family through a difficult period of our lives by linking us in with the right support, and by always providing a good listening ear.

I would be homeless, or facing a court order or have been struggling with my mental health without the support from my CLW, and the financial assistance in terms of food and fuel vouchers has been invaluable.

My CLW has helped me in so many ways.
She is kind, compassionate and professional at all times and I honestly don't know how I would have managed without her help.

I don't know how I would have gotten through the last few months without her help. Even now things are looking up for my daughter and I, she's still there offering support and guidance. She's been a life line for us.

You have been a lifesaver to me
and I would never be where I am today if you hadn't got in touch and helped me through the last 6 months.
I appreciate it more than you will ever know.

Onward referrals and signposting

This year CLWs made **41,392 onward links** via referrals and signposting - connecting patients to a diverse range of supports and services across Glasgow. The most common onward destinations related to:

Money & benefits	12,363
Mental health support	6,143
Community groups	4,280
Housing support	3,816
Health behaviours	3,521

Long term condition support	1,509
Carer support	1,362
Supports for marginalised groups	1,056
Learning & development	980
Social Work services	916

Supporting patients and communities

A key aspect of the CLW role is strengthening communities and connecting patients with local support that best meets their individual needs. CLWs not only identify and link people to existing services and resources but are also well placed to recognise gaps in local provision. Where unmet need is identified, they work collaboratively with communities to help develop new groups and opportunities, building on existing local assets, strengths and resources.

Inclusion Health Action in General Practice

One example of CLWs building on community assets is their work with the Inclusion Health Action in General Practice (IHAGP) fund - a small Scottish Government fund supporting work within GP practices to reduce barriers to access and address health inequalities through more inclusive, proactive and patient-centred approaches.

CLWs have worked in partnership with GP practice multidisciplinary teams, as well as neighbouring practices, to develop additional supports and groups in response to the needs of local patient populations.

In the Scottish Government evaluation of IHAGP, CLWs were recognised as playing a vital role in delivering patient support associated with the fund. This included: leading groups; developing collaborative approaches across practice teams and GP practices serving similar patient populations; connecting practices with their local communities through their extensive knowledge and established links; and identifying and engaging patients who could benefit most from additional practice-based support.

Community Walking Groups

Another example is the development of community walking groups. Many CLWs are trained through Walking Scotland and have established walking groups that provide opportunities to improve physical, social and mental wellbeing while strengthening connections within local communities.

In addition, the approach also aims to build capacity within communities. CLWs encourage participants to undertake training themselves, supporting them to take a more active role in leading walks and, where appropriate, establishing their own walking groups within their local communities.

CLW Patient Fund

CLWs have also had access to a small discretionary fund, enabling them to provide individuals and families with low-cost practical items and resources that can support mental health and wellbeing and help alleviate some of the pressures experienced during times of financial difficulty.

A key strength of the fund is the flexibility it gives CLWs to respond quickly and appropriately to individual need. CLWs have discretion over how the funding is used, allowing them to provide practical support that can help ease immediate pressures and reduce stress for patients. This approach provides a sensitive way of offering assistance, helping to reduce some of the stigma that individuals may experience when seeking financial or practical support from other sources.

The reach of this relatively small fund has been significant, with 2,642 patients benefiting from practical support. This included 1,437 households receiving support with food and fuel-related items, while a further 1,205 individuals benefited from bus tokens, helping to reduce transport-related barriers and support access to services and wider community resources.

Scottish CLW Team of the Year!!!



There was much to celebrate this year, when the team was named Scottish Community Link Worker Network (SCLWN) Team of the Year.

In presenting the award, the judging panel made particular mention of the programme's focus on areas experiencing the greatest levels of deprivation, recognising this targeted approach as an effective means of addressing and reducing health inequalities.

This prestigious award recognises not only the team's dedication, innovation and outstanding contribution, but also the care, compassion, and commitment that underpin everything they do. Their work has a genuine and lasting impact on the lives of the people they support, helping individuals and communities to thrive.

Get in touch

If you would like to find out more about the Glasgow CLW programme, please email:

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