# Community Link Worker Programme

## Annual Report 2023/24

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 of the specialist thematic CLWs, and details the progress and development of the Community Link Worker programme in Glasgow over the 12 month period ending 31 March 2024.



**Patients**



**Practice**



**Community**

In 2023/24 the programme was delivered by the Health & Social Care Alliance Scotland; We Are With You; and Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH).

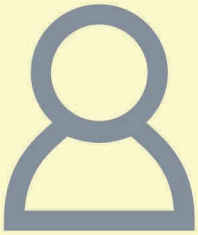
You can use these links to find out more:

**Alliance - About the Community Link Programme**

**SAMH - Community Link Worker (CAMHS) Service**

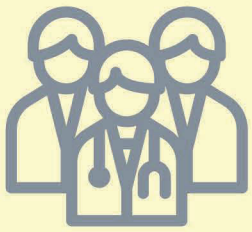
*In Glasgow, Community Link Workers (CLWs) are also known as Community Links Practitioners (CLPs) and the terms are used interchangeably.

# Elements of the Primary Care CLW programme



**Patients**

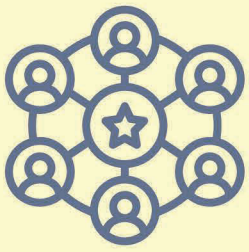
Patients are the main focus of the CLW role and CLWs support patients by identifying their needs; strengthening connections between community resources and primary care; and mitigating the impact of the social determinants of health.



**Practice**

CLWs are employed by third sector organisations and aligned to GP Practices, where they are embedded as part of the practice's multi-disciplinary team.

Another element of the CLW role is working with practice staff to increase their confidence and capacity to direct patients to local and national services and to develop their skills in supporting patients to overcome potential barriers to accessing information and services.



**Community**

CLWs have excellent knowledge of what's going on in their communities, and of the services and supports that are available to their patients. This means they are able to quickly connect patients to the right sources of support to suit their patients' needs.

They have dedicated time to work within local areas to develop their knowledge and strong relationships: often working in collaboration to help develop activities to meet the needs of their patient population.

# Specialist thematic CLWs

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

### Asylum Seeker CLW (WAWY)

The Asylum Seeker CLW supports people on a one to one basis and within a specialist "Welcome Group" which covers topics including health, housing and accessing support from both local and national organisations in the community.

### Homelessness & Complex Needs CLW (WAWY)

The Homelessness & Complex Needs CLW supports people with a range of issues who may also be experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Due the nature of the support required, many individuals require a longer period of support than is seen in the main CLW service.

The CLW provides support to register with local GPs and other health and wellbeing services along with securing longer term support in the community. There continues to be flexibility in appointment location and a high level of partnership working with other agencies.

### CAMHS CLW (SAMH)

The CAMHS CLW offers a range of support to parents/carers, young people and their siblings. This includes providing space and time to listen and linking them to longer term community supports. The CLW supports people to improve and maintain their mental health and wellbeing in order to support the overall family unit.

### Youth Health Service CLW

Within the Youth Health Service, the staff member works primarily around communication and engagement with young people and their families/carers to promote service accessibility and uptake and to inform service design and delivery.

## Referrals & engagement

In 2023/24, CLWs received

**12,250 referrals,**

which was slightly less than in the previous financial year.

### Referral sources

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

GPs have continued to be the main referral source this year - making 54% of all referrals to CLWs.

This is a slight reduction from the previous year, which has been offset by increased referrals from other sources: with self-referrals and Practice Receptionists accounting for 14% and 10% respectively.

This year, the programme had an excellent engagement rate of 81%.

CLWs are flexible around where and how they engage with patients which likely contributes to this.

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 37,700 appointments with

**10,470 individuals.**

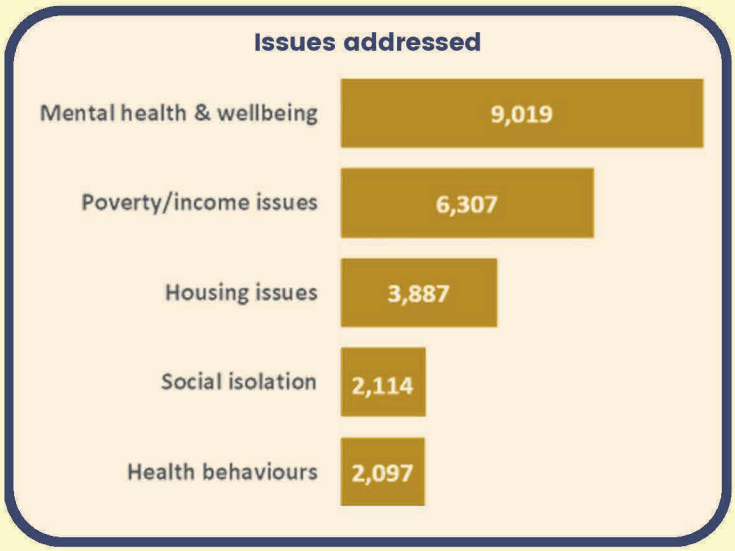






*All data in this section relates to primary care and thematic CLWs

## Issues addressed with patients




CLWs support patients with a wide variety of issues.

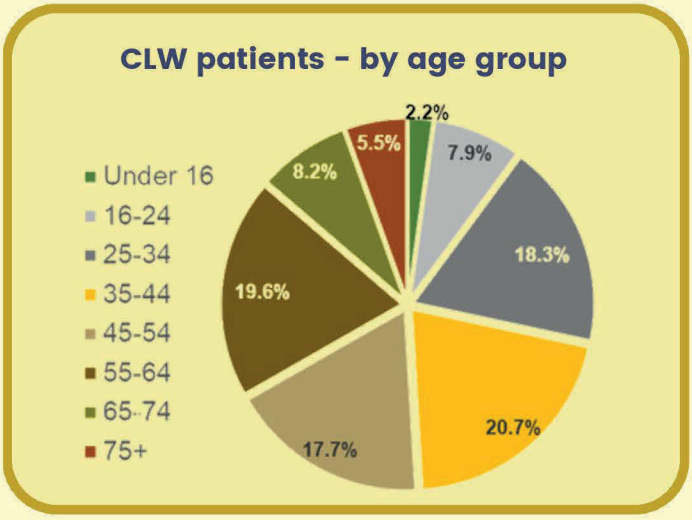
This graph illustrates the **most frequent** presenting issues for 2023/24. Many patients are supported with multiple issues.

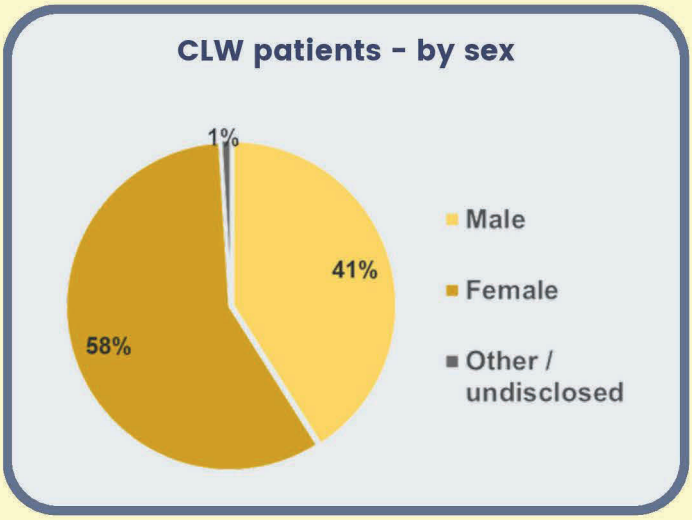
## Patient demographics

These charts illustrate the distribution of some of the demographics (age and sex) of patients who were supported by CLWs in 2023/24.

There was little change in the distribution of age groups this year - with only a slight increase in the percentage of patients in the '55 - 64' group.

The distribution by sex remained static.



# Patient outcomes

**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 |

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

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

Patients complete a SWEMWBS when they begin working with a CLW and then again at the end of the period of intervention.

Patients reported improved wellbeing after working with a CLW - with an average improvement score of 4.7 for 2023/24

# Case studies

The following case studies further demonstrate the impact and the range of the work carried out by CLWs in 2023/24 (*all names have been changed).

### Robb*

Robb was referred by his GP as he was experiencing a number of issues relating to the recent breakdown of his relationship with the mother of his child. The CLW supported him over a number of months.

Robb was homeless and sleeping on a friend's sofa. The CLW supported him to contact the Community Homeless Team, as well as supporting him with applications for social housing. She also

put him in touch with the practice Welfare Advice & Health Partnership (WAHP) Advisor for a benefits review as he was also struggling financially.

He was having difficulties with his ex-partner around access to his daughter and the CLW signposted him for legal advice which helped to resolve the matter quickly. Robb was allowed to visit with his daughter for her upcoming birthday but he was upset that he wasn't able to buy her a present, due to his financial situation. The CLW was able to access a patient fund from We Are With You to help him buy a few small presents.

In the meantime, the WAHP Advisor had helped to maximise Robb's income from benefits and he was waiting for this to be resolved to help improve his finances. However, Robb disclosed to the CLW that he was actively seeking employment but found the process of applications and interviews a bit overwhelming. He asked if this is something the CLW could support him with.

The CLW helped him to complete a job application form and identified possible referees to support the application. Robb was successful in securing an interview and the CLW was able to provide him with travel expenses to get there, from the CLW Patient Fund.

Robb was successful in the interview and is now in full-time, permanent employment. He is currently living in temporary accommodation but is confident he will obtain a permanent tenancy soon. He sees his daughter regularly.

**Helen***

Helen was feeling isolated and her mood was low. She was new to the area and had no family or social support. She was also struggling financially and this was affecting her mental health. The CLW assisted Helen to access fuel vouchers and a foodbank and discussed longer term solutions.

Helen had a long-term health condition and the CLW supported her to make a claim for Adult Disability Payment and to complete an application for a bus pass. She was also supported to make and attend appointments with her GP and specialist health services as this was something she struggled to do on her own.

While working with the CLW, Helen became pregnant and the CLW helped her to access additional benefits and supplies from the Baby Bank, in preparation for the baby's arrival.

Helen said she's feeling a lot happier: her mental wellbeing has improved and she's looking forward to the future with her new baby.

**Jenna ***

Jenna (16) was referred to the CAMHS CLW as she needed support to find community activities to reduce her isolation and improve her mental health.

Jenna was on the waiting list for a neurodevelopmental assessment and she found the school environment overwhelming. She hadn't attended school in 4 months which made her very isolated. She reported feelings of anxiety and a lack of structure in her routine, which in turn affected her sleep.

She was keen to engage with groups tailored to young people who are neurodivergent and wanted to explore creative groups in her local area that would give her the opportunity to make new friends.

The CLW referred Jenna to a programme for young people who are struggling to engage with school due to poor mental health. As part of this programme, young people are supported to grow their skills and confidence: using art as a tool to overcome difficulties and gain qualifications.

Jenna expressed an interest in studying film at college so the CLW signposted her to a youth television project where young people have the opportunity to learn about television production, scriptwriting, camera operation and sound production.

The CLW also made a referral to an organisation who run various groups that are inclusive of young people who are neurodivergent.

Jenna completed the arts programme and is now attending school again on a part-time basis.

She told the CLW "It's quite hard to find community information on your own or know where to look, the service made that easier because the Community Link Worker has knowledge of the area". "Support provided at home was useful because I suffer from anxiety and having support at home really helped this because it was tailored to my needs".

## Patient feedback

**The CLW is a great contribution for our community, especially in difficult times like these. We need them in our society and, personally, I am very glad we have them.**

I think it's a fabulous service and would definitely recommend it. It's given me a real lifeline.

I would like to say my CLW has helped me, even when I didn't know I needed help.
A blessing coming in to my life.

**I know I can always go to my CLW with any issues I have. He has helped me with benefits and housing issues and gave me food vouchers when I have been struggling to eat. He also helped me with my forms to get assessed for ADHD. Without his support I wouldn't have sent them in.**

My CLW has been providing lots of support for me on and off. Having a link worker in the surgery has been a lifesaver for me.

My CLW helped and guided me immediately and opened a gateway to help that I desperately needed. Nothing would have been achieved without her knowledge, assistance and valuable connections.

**My CLW has been brilliant at helping me talk through my worries and coming up with ideas for support. He's a great listener and always has good suggestions of where to turn to for help.**

I had struggled to find support from various different services before. But the service provided by my CLW restored my faith in the system and is still assisting me in recovery.

**The CLW was very helpful and understanding about what I was talking about. She took her time and listened to what I had to say and explained things very well. I would recommend the link worker.**

## Practice feedback

**"We're very lucky to have a CLW at our practice. She's a fantastic benefit to our patients and we receive lots of positive feedback. The links programme should be further developed and protected in areas where it's needed most." - GP**

"The CLW role is important in GP settings as part of our multi-disciplinary teams because it alleviates pressure on clinical teams. CLWs help patients with wider issues that may be impacting on their health. They provide additional support and resources, tailored to fit patients' needs." - Practice Manager

## Onward referrals and signposting

CLWs made more than **18,391 onward links** via referrals and sign posting: connecting people to a diverse range of supports and services across Glasgow. The most common onward destinations this year were:



## Carers

CLWs play their part in making Glasgow a Carer-friendly city and Carer Awareness briefings have been a standard part of the CLW induction programme for the past three years.

These sessions equip CLWs to actively identify, involve, and support unpaid carers in line with the HSCP's Carers Strategy.

In 2023/24, CLWs made **443** direct referrals to a range of carer support services and signposted a further **478** individuals for support.

## CLW Patient Fund

Throughout the year, a small, non-recurring, fund was available to CLWs to allow them to help patients who needed immediate support with unexpected costs. CLWs used the fund to help patients who were experiencing financial hardship in relation to the increased cost of living.

The fund was used to provide a range of homewares, technology, winter essentials and travel expenses, dependent on patient need. Some examples included:

**School shoes & trainers for play**

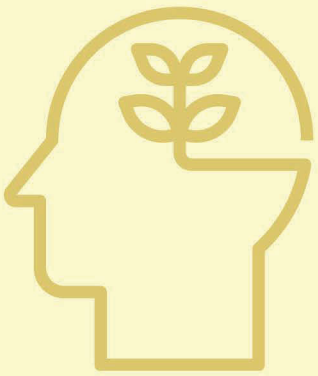
**Winter coats & warm pyjamas for children**

**Air fryers & heated clothes airers**

**Bus passes & travel costs to attend appointments**

CLWs reported that having this small fund made a huge difference to the lives of those they were working with. It often solved a problem for which there would have been no other solution and eased stress on the patients and their families.

## Training & development

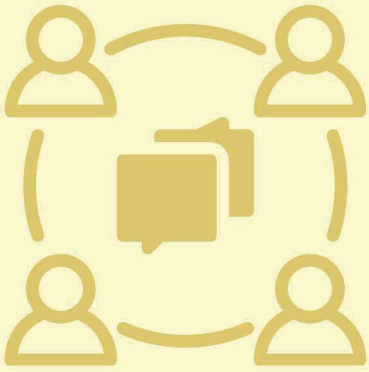


As part of the programme delivery, the HSCP provide a range of training and development opportunities for CLWs.

Core training provided this year included: Safe to Say trauma informed training; Conflict Management training; and Alcohol Brief Intervention training.

CPD sessions included: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST); Peer Support training; and LGBT+ Health Needs Assessment information sessions.

### CLW Locality Forums



CLW Forums, facilitated by Health Improvement staff from the programme, provide an opportunity for CLWs to spend time with colleagues across the three provider organisations: creating a space for networking and sharing knowledge, best practice and resources.

Forums allow for CLW discussions on programme development and the opportunity to discuss the challenges and successes of the role with their peers in a supportive environment.

## Get in touch

**If you want to find out more about the Glasgow CLW programme, please email:**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