

PE2053/K: Stop the cuts to community link workers and help secure their long-term future within GP practice teams

Scottish Government written submission, 6 December 2024

Thank you for your email of 08th November 2024 on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in relation to PE2053, regarding an update on the work of the National Community Link Worker Advisory Group, and, specifically, what consideration the Group has given to introducing baseline funding for CLW services.

Background on the National Community Link Worker Advisory Group

Community Link Workers (CLWs) are at the forefront of our efforts to address health inequalities, and we will make every effort to support the continued sustainability of that role. As noted in our letter to the Committee on 29 November 2023, most CLW services in primary care multidisciplinary teams across Scotland are funded from the annual Scottish Government's Primary Care Improvement Fund (PCIF) (£190m plus uplifts in 2024/25), which supports integration authorities to deliver six services (one of which is CLWs) that help to deliver the 2018 GP contract. It is for integration authorities to decide how they use their PCIF allocation to deliver the six services in line with local priorities.

Officials have begun a review of general practice CLW policy which is overseen by the CLW Advisory Group. The aims of the review are to create:

- Greater consistency in local data collection with new national reporting and proposals that will provide a basis for longer-term data and evidence improvements.
- A refreshed national approach to CLWs which realigns policy and resources to greatest need, including the development of options for how we might administer national funding for CLWs in future with the aim of improving stability and sustainability. Timing of this work will align with a process to baseline the PCIF described below.
- A national model for General Practice CLWs which sets consistent minimum expectations for the role, local policy and services, which can be adapted to local needs.

Changes arising from this two-year review project will be introduced through processes of phased implementation which will extend beyond the life of the review.

The National CLW Advisory Group plays a critical role in ensuring a wide range of stakeholder voices and experiences are represented in the review process. The group has met twice this year to agree and define the scope, deliverables, assumptions, interdependencies and risks involved.

PCIF Baseline Funding

Following agreement at the GMS National Oversight Group, we are exploring the potential to baseline the PCIF from 2026/27 financial year, aligning to reporting timescales attached to the Primary Care Phased Investment Programme. We are establishing a short life working group to consider the opportunities and risks associated with baselining the fund and the arrangements required to mitigate the risks identified. The sub-group will also consider the potential for baselining the Vaccination Transformation Programme (VTP) element of PCIF prior to 26/27, recognising that the VTP element of Primary Care Improvement Plans is now complete and that there is parallel work underway to baseline core vaccinations funding.

We will develop options for how we administer CLW funding at the national level as the PCIF baselining work develops.

I hope my response provides an informative update on the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring CLW service sustainability and is helpful to the Committee's consideration of the petition.

Primary Care Directorate