

COMMUNITY LINK PRACTITIONER

INTEGRATION & THE COMMUNITY LINK PRACTITIONER

Integration aims to improve care for individuals and their families by shifting the balance of care to community and primary care settings (Scottish Government, 2018). Evidence suggests that individuals often approach their primary healthcare practitioner with both health and social issues (Scottish Government, 2017b). The Community Link Practitioner is key to joining up services and utilising social, rather than medical prescribing and linking people to community services (Scottish Government, 2017c).

JUSTIFICATION TO SUPPORT INITIATIVE

In order to enable Scotland to achieve the National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes it has been identified that people living in deprivation require extra support (The Scottish Parliament, 2019; Scottish Government, 2017a). In 2014, the Link Worker programme, funded by the Scottish Government was initially rolled out in 'Deep End' Practices in Glasgow. This programme created stronger links between resources within the community and Primary Care and consequently improved health outcomes (NHS Health Scotland, 2016). The Links Worker Programme has now been extended throughout Scotland, with practices being allocated a Community Link Practitioner (CLP) who uses a person-centred approach to 'prescribe' local organisations who may be best placed to support individuals with complicated health and social care issues (NHS Health Scotland, 2016).

Research has identified that individuals who encounter socio-economic deprivation suffer from increased levels of psychological and physical health problems (Scottish Government, 2017c).

In South Ayrshire **12,888 people** 

live in the 15% most deprived data zones, (South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, 2018). Within the Strategic Plan for South Ayrshire, the need for an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to care has been identified. The Community Link Practitioner has been recognised as a key contributor to this approach (South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, 2018).



ROLE OF NURSE & WIDER TEAM

It is widely recognised that nurses have an important role to play within integrated care due to the frequency in which they see individuals (Donovan and Warriner, 2017). The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 set out the aims of the Scottish Government with regards to integration. This requires cross-organisational working to achieve the best outcomes for the patients (Scottish Parliament, 2014).

By developing a good rapport with individuals, this builds trust and may encourage individuals to open up about concerns that they may have otherwise kept to themselves (Molina-Mula & Gallo-Estrada, 2020). In these instances it is important that an individual receives the right care at the right time. This may not always be a medical intervention or may be in addition to a medical intervention (Bickerdike et al., 2017).

Within Primary Care it is challenging to keep up to date with the latest non-medical services and organisations available locally (Scottish Government, 2017c). This is where the role of the Community Link Practitioner is key to making a difference. A primary healthcare practitioners is able to refer individuals who they feel may benefit from a 'social prescribing' intervention (NHS Health Scotland, 2016). This integrated, collaborative approach ensures that the individual receives the most appropriate intervention.



HOW DOES A COMMUNITY LINK PRACTITIONER MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT

The Community Link Practitioner role recognises that although Primary Care Practitioners are often the first people that individuals turn to in times of need, the issue may not require a medical intervention (The Scottish Parliament, 2019). Community Link Practitioners utilise 'social prescribing' to reduce pressures on General Practitioners and improve patient outcomes (Moffatt et al, 2019).

Role of the Community Link Practitioner

- Can have a first-hand positive impact on deprivation and potentially improve loneliness and reduce social isolation (South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, 2018).
- Instead of providing limited medical interventions the Community Link Practitioner is able to encourage people to identify and discuss their concerns and support individuals to set and achieve goals and take control of their own health and wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2017c).
- Findings from the 2014 pilot in 'Deep End' Practices in Glasgow, suggest that the Community Link Practitioner role is a key contributor to reducing the the lasting effects that health inequalities may have on individuals (NHS Health Scotland, 2016).

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