KEY MESSAGES

SCOTTISH COMMUNITY LINK WORKER NETWORK

GIVING A VOICE TO SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY LINK WORKERS

Knowledge Exchange 25 September 2024

Introduction

Voluntary Health Scotland and the Scottish Community Link Worker Network's 7th Knowledge Exchange featured presentations from Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland, Diabetes Scotland and Reengage. The Knowledge Exchange events are designed to encourage discussion and collaboration between CLWs and organisations that can support them and their clients.

Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS)

Joy Gillespie, CEO of Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS), led a discussion on human trafficking, emphasising its prevalence in Scotland in all local authority areas. She highlighted the need for better identification and support for vulnerable individuals as many won't recognise they are victims. She clarified that human trafficking is an action carried out for exploitation and highlighted that it is a multi-billion-dollar industry, with over 50 million people worldwide held in trafficking or slavery. Joy also noted the low recovery rate of victims in the UK and the need for better identification of British nationals who may be victims of trafficking. She stressed the importance of recognising vulnerabilities that make people susceptible to trafficking, such as poverty, physical disabilities and poor mental health.

Joy emphasised the importance of being informed and trained on human trafficking, particularly in relation to safeguarding policies and procedures. She discussed her organisation's work in prevention, identification, and recovery, focusing on outreach, working with frontline workers, and supporting survivors through advocacy. She highlighted the need to understand the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty and mental health issues, and the importance of community collaboration. She encouraged CLWs to report concerns to SOHTIS where they can signpost to resources like the modern slavery helpline. CLWs raised examples of cases where they felt that clients were being subject to labour exploitation in both

the social care and fishing industries. Training is available from SOHTIS as well as recovery for victims and long-term support for survivors.

Diabetes Scotland

Judith Kennon, Health Systems Engagement Manager at Diabetes Scotland, discussed the different types of diabetes, their causes, and risk factors. Judith also highlighted that Type 1 diabetes is less common, affecting around 8% of people with diabetes in the UK, while Type 2 diabetes is more prevalent, affecting around 90% of people with diabetes in the UK. She emphasised that living with obesity does not guarantee the development of Type 2 diabetes and that there is no cure for Type 2 diabetes; however, it can be managed through lifestyle changes. Judith also introduced the Know Your Risk tool on the Diabetes UK website, which can help individuals assess their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

Judith discussed healthy eating tips for preventing type 2 diabetes and the seriousness of living with the condition in Scotland. She highlighted that many people with diabetes struggle financially to manage it. She introduced their services, including a helpline, online resources, and local support groups for those affected and those that support them like Community Link Workers. She mentioned their involvement in fundraising, research, and advocacy, as well as an upcoming professional conference. One CLW raised concerns about reaching marginalised communities and Judith said Diabetes Scotland is working to improve access to care.

Reengage

Esther Lynn, Engagement Officer at Reengage, introduced their service, which offers social connections and community engagement for people over 75 years old. She highlighted the importance of combating loneliness, which affects over 100,000 people in the UK and Scotland. She highlighted their in-person and remote services, including tea parties, social activity groups, remote telephone befriending and a Christmas-specific service. Esther also mentioned their unique service for the LGBTQ+ community, offering a judgement-free space for conversation.

Esther emphasised that their services are free, volunteer-led, and inclusive, with no qualifications required other than being over 75. She also mentioned their partnership with other community organisations and their willingness to create new groups as needed. Esther shared that their services have helped people regain confidence, form new social circles, and even influenced policy. She concluded by expressing her desire to expand the service to the Islands.

Esther encouraged CLWs to refer potential clients to their service. There was some discussion about expanding services more widely in Scotland and Esther would be happy to follow up with interested CLWs about setting up groups in their areas.

Roisin highlighted the organisation's need for more volunteers and encouraged the CLWs to consider volunteering. One of Edinburgh's CLWs had previously volunteered and shared her positive experience, emphasising the importance of companionship and social interaction. Esther noted that the waiting time for their services is currently around 2 to 3 months; however, they are working to reduce this.