



NEWS RELEASE

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Joined up working to help equality of health

Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP) has awarded a contract worth £1.4million to Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) to deliver a 'Link Worker' resource to the city over the next two years.

The ACHSCP recognises the current and future challenges posed by an ageing population with long-term health conditions and the prevalence of health inequalities combined with fiscal challenges.

The introduction of the Link Working Programme aims to reduce pressures on mainstream primary and community care services by meeting a need for joined up support across the Health and Social Care Partnership. This will be achieved by embedding link worker posts in the community, local GP practices and ACHSCP locality teams.

The contract will see 20 full-time equivalent Link Workers attached to 30 General Practices across the city.

The link worker role will have three main responsibilities, delivered through the multi-disciplinary practice team:

- working directly with the practice population, particularly with people who are experiencing complex circumstances in their life journey;
- working with the entire primary care team, both clinical staff and non-clinical staff in order to enable them to adopt the Links Approach (this would include the extended

clinical team including social work staff, associated secondary care staff, and other third sector providers);

- working with local community resources, in conjunction with other key stakeholders, supporting them to become more accessible to people accessing them via primary care.

The 2014 health and wellbeing profile of the residents of Aberdeen showed statistically significant scores above national average for several indicators (life expectancy (males), patients hospitalised with cerebrovascular disease and patients prescribed drugs for anxiety/depression/psychosis) however there were categories where Aberdeen scores statistically significantly below the national average (alcohol and drug related hospital stays; patients hospitalised with coronary heart disease; people (65+) with intensive needs cared for at home).

In addition, unplanned bed use in specific adult hospital services such as geriatric medicine, general medicine, general psychiatry and psychiatry of old age highlight significant challenges across the health and social care systems in Scotland that require a shift to alternative and more preventative types of planned care.

Aberdeen City Councillor Sarah Duncan, Vice-Chairperson of the Integrated Joint Board, said: "Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership is committed to carefully considering approaches to reduce health and social inequalities and in particular, to balance provision of universal or more targeted service delivery with identified needs in and across localities across the city. The Link Working Programme reflects this commitment and will be an important development to achieve this.

"By working in partnership with SAMH the introduction of this link worker programme in Aberdeen will be the biggest of its kind in Scotland."

Billy Watson, Chief Executive, SAMH, said: "This new Link Worker service is great news for the people of Aberdeen which will see patients who are seeking help and support in their GP surgery gain quicker access to a wider range of community support and resources which hopefully will lead to improved outcomes for people.

“SAMH is delighted to be working with Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership in delivering this innovative new programme. Aberdeen HSCP is taking a significant lead in this area, creating the largest Link Worker programme of its kind in Scotland by ensuring every GP practice in Aberdeen will have access to a Link Worker. We look forward to working with GPs, patients and the wider community to bring the link worker programme to fruition.”

It is envisaged that there will be a staged approach to the implementation of the programme.

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