

HIPS/20/16 – Evaluation of the Community Link Worker Scheme in Highland: Implications for Social Prescribing in Rural and Remote Scotland.

In Scotland, there is a commitment to embedding community link workers within our Primary Care system. In NHS Highland, around a dozen link workers will be employed to cover 29 GPs practices, in an approach targeted on the reduction of health inequalities. However, there is little guidance on how to implement a link worker model in remote and rural areas, and no published evaluation evidence. There is a need for robust evaluation of the link worker scheme within the rural context. We propose to undertake this evaluation in Highland and to highlight the relevance of findings to other remote and rural areas of Scotland. Our evaluation will monitor and measure the impact of the introduction of community link workers in three main areas: i) Impact on the patients, their carers and families; ii) Impact on the third sector and other groups that form part of the social prescribing system and iii) Impact on the health and care system