

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

## **GMB Scotland written submission, 31 May 2024**

GMB Scotland represents Community Link Workers (CLWs) in the core links service in Glasgow City Council. CLWs do not just work in communities. They are part of them. They work with individuals and community groups to ensure people have the fullest access to the support they need to alleviate their health and social problems.

CLWs' work has a ripple effect within communities as income maximisation is a key part of their role. CLWs also alleviate the pressures placed on our health services – specifically GPs. For example, they assist with supporting letters for benefit claims which GPs may not have capacity for, and they also assist with matters like housing by liaising with local authorities and housing associations to seek repairs or more suitable housing that meets their needs.

In 2023, CLWs were notified that a substantial number of roles were to be cut from the service. This would not only have led to redundancies, but it would also have left some of the most deprived communities in Glasgow without the support of a CLW. Our members organised, campaigned, and won the funding to protect their posts and service.

During the campaign, community groups across Glasgow co-signed a letter to the then Cabinet Secretary to urge that posts are protected. Likewise, GPs were vocal about the vital role of CLWs in their community and practices.

Councillors, MSPs and MPs of all parties and levels of seniority were vocal about how important CLWs are. However, this did not prevent our members facing redundancy and the decimation of their service. Councillors and MSPs passed the buck back and forth on who was responsible for the cuts.

At the root of the issue is a lack of consistent funding from the Scottish Government to local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships. Furthermore, local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships fail to plan long term. The result of this is that contracts for these services are frequently put out to tender and their funding reviewed. This creates uncertainty for CLWs and disruption to services which in turn encourages a high turnover of staff which means the local expertise and knowledge of CLWs is lost. This is not a unique issue in Glasgow, but an example of how short-term planning and financing is impacting on workers and services across local services in Scotland.

In other parts of Scotland, members are aware of services which have either been taken inhouse by a public body, and where contracts have been awarded for longer periods. Even now after winning their campaign to protect posts, our members have still not received clear answers from the Glasgow HSCP on how long funding has been secured for, or whether the service will remain with the Alliance for one year or three years before being put out to tender.

The value and impact of CLWs is clear. The posts and services must be protected with stable, long-term funding which provides certainty to workers, service providers, and service users.