

PRIMARY CARE LINK WORKER

Functions of the CMHT

- Increase capacity within primary care through collaboration.
- Reduce stigma associated with mental health care.
- Ensure that care is delivered in the least restrictive and disruptive manner possible.
- Stabilise social functioning and protect community tenure.

(Department of Health Publications. Mental Health Policy Implementation Guide. Community Mental Health Teams)

Function of the Primary Care Link Worker

- Provide support and advice to primary care services to support them in:
 - Providing joint educational facilities for all members of the Primary health care team.
 - Ensure that regular clinical meetings occur between the primary care team and the CMHT.
 - Ensure there are shared clinical governance topics between the Practice Development Plan of the PHCT and the clinical governance framework of the CMHT.
- Establish effective links with the local primary care teams to filter, provide an initial assessment of referrals, to ensure they are appropriate. This may be achieved through discussion with the primary care team, or a brief assessment meeting with the patient, which may lead to a referral to the CMHT.
- The link worker may be the allocated care co-ordinator for patients registered with a specific primary care team. However, this will be in conjunction with caseload management issues, which may include, limits on the number of cases allocated at any particular time, sensitivity to individual needs of the client.
- Give advice on management of mental health problems by other professionals within the primary care team. This will be in the context

of social, employment and training needs as well as medical and therapeutic treatments.

Link Worker Profile

- The link worker will be an experienced CMHT worker.
- The link worker could be from a range of professional backgrounds including Social Work, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, and Psychology.
- The link worker role complements the care co-ordinator role of responsibility for a caseload of service users suffering from a serious mental illness.
- The link worker is a member of a multi-disciplinary team based within a CMHT, aligned to a Primary Care Team.

Role of the Primary Care Link Worker

- To ensure discussion of referrals through regular and scheduled attendance at the surgery and acting as a link between the primary care team and the CMHT.
- To provide a “triage” function at the surgery. Particularly for those referrals where there is uncertainty as to the value of the CMHT’s involvement. The link worker will feed back the information into the CMHT.
- There is a single point of entry to the CMHT (Duty). The link worker is available for advice and access into that process.
- To provide a forum for the resolution of any issues that may arise between the Primary Care Team and the CMHT. This may be about process, systems or joint patients.

- To provide information and advice on patients who are cared for entirely in Primary care and not known to the CMHT. (Up to 30% of people with a serious mental illness are managed in primary care.)
- To ensure that the primary care team are supported around the discharge of CMHT service users back to primary care. Risk assessments and relapse signatures should be provided, as well as clear protocols for referral back into the CMHT by the Care Co-ordinator. Thought should be given as to whether the discharge CPA is held at the Primary Care Team base.
- Although it is the responsibility of the Care Co-ordinator to ensure clients with complex needs are discharged safely from the CMHT back to Primary Care. The link worker should be notified of such cases in order to assist in ongoing management by Primary Care of the case.
- To act as a facilitator in the arrangement of Out Patient and CPA reviews, for those clients who would benefit from the attendance of the Primary Care Team.
- To help establish systems for the review of patients on the SMI register, to ensure they have collected prescribed medication, have a yearly health check, receive depot medication administered by the primary care team. For those on Lithium that they have their treatment reviewed.
- To liaise with graduate and gateway workers where available.
- To provide information around statutory and non-statutory services available for Primary Care Teams to refer on to directly. This may be in the form of a resource file, which the link worker will be responsible for the update of.
- Where referrals to the CMHT are assessed as in appropriate the link worker will meet with the Primary Care Team to explore alternative sources of support.

The Link Worker Role does not include:

- Any form of Counselling.
- Seeing new patients who are outside of the 18-65 year age range.
- Urgent referrals – these should continue to be sent to the Duty Team at Tynemouth Road or Canning Crescent or, if indicated, to the Crisis Team at St Ann's Hospital.
- Follow up appointments at the surgery. If patients require ongoing support they will be taken to the Community Mental Health Team and followed up from there.