

SNP progress towards key mental health co-ordinator target 'glacial'

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On World Mental Health Day, the Scottish Government's progress towards recruiting key mental health co-ordinators, known as Community Link Workers, has been described as 'glacial'.

The Scottish Government pledged to recruit 250 Community Link Workers to work in GP surgeries by the end of the parliamentary session.

Community Link Workers connect people to non-medical sources of support or resources in the community which are likely to help with their health problems. They are equipped to deal with a wide range of issues however, they are expected to be of particular benefit to people who have mental health issues.

Figures outlined in a written answer to Annie Wells, Scottish Conservative mental health spokesman, show that only 56 directly funded community link workers are currently in post, indeed, only three have been recruited in the last nine months.

With a target of 250 community link workers to meet by the end of the parliamentary session, the Scottish Government will need to employ 194 more workers by the next election, or over 60 per year.

However, at their current rate of progress, the SNP will miss their own target by 140 workers.

Worryingly, of the Community Link Workers already in post over half are on fixed term contracts suggesting that the funding for these important positions is not secure.

Annie Wells Scottish Conservative mental health spokesman said:

"Today is World Mental Health Day and we are reminded of the importance of having resources in place to support those suffering from mental ill health and social isolation.

"The progress the SNP are making towards this important target really is glacial.

"The SNP is responsible for the longest ever waiting times on mental health.

"The SNP talk a good game on mental health but this demonstrates that they are missing crucial actions that would make a fundamental difference to patients.

"The SNP must act urgently to recruit Community Link Workers and ensure that they are in place on permanent contracts."