

Community Health Workers: the eyes and ears for Primary Health Care in the community

National Association of Primary Care (NAPC) is at the centre of shaping the future of healthcare, spreading innovation, transformation and getting involved with meaningful programmes with the community at heart which is why we've teamed up with Imperial College London to help them roll out the Community Health Worker role across England.

What are Community Health Workers?

The role of Community Health Workers (CHW) was developed in Brazil which has the largest primary care system in the world. It is a community household approach to population health which offers insight into the factors that determine an individual's health and wellbeing.

CHWs provide universal, comprehensive and integrated health and social care support to all households in a defined geographical area, usually around 200 households. They are recruited from these areas, are paid full time and are members of the local primary care team. CHWs are trained at a low technical level to support their households with a broad range of activities. By visiting households at least once a month irrespective of need, CHWs proactively identify any new illness or problems and to provide support.

Activities of CHWs

- Promotion of healthy lifestyles
- Support with breastfeeding
- Reminders for vaccination schedules, screening services
- Management of chronic diseases
- Adolescent health and sexual health
- Medicines adherence
- Social care support e.g. loneliness, housing issues
- Empower and engage communities in health-related activities

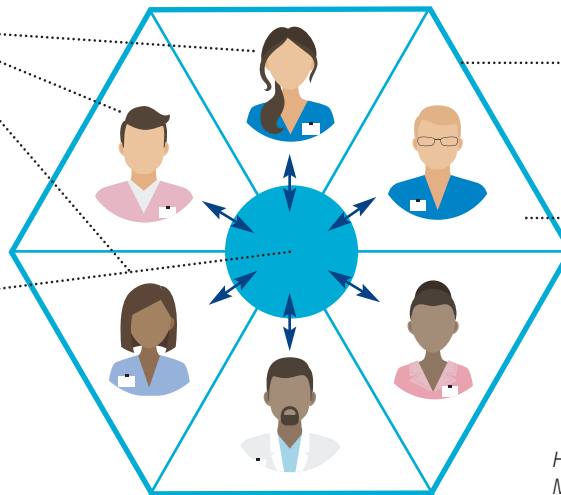
Brazilian CHW model

Each CHW supports:

- Childhood development
- Antenatal and postnatal care
- Immunisations and screening uptake
- Adolescent health
- Social care support
- Community development
- Public health campaigns

Primary care clinic

- GP
- Nurse
- Nurse auxiliary



Catchment area

- 1,000 households

Micro area

- 150-200 households
- CHW lives in micro area
- Full time role
- Every household visited once a month

Harris M. London Journal of Primary Care 2011;
Macinko and Harris NEJM 2015



Core principles of the CHW role from Brazil

Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ An empathetic individual, passionate about their community and willing to support all households equally through basic health and social care support, connecting to primary care and related services as required
Universality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Input is offered to all households in the geographical area including everyone within a household, irrespective of need■ Households visited monthly as a minimum or more frequently if needed
Comprehensiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Life-course approach, not delimited by age, clinical need or risk profile, providing light-touch bio-psycho-social assessments for all ages with a focus on prevention and health promotion
Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Insights from individual and household visits is fed back into general practice and related statutory services to improve access and quality of care

Who employs Community Health Workers?

In Brazil the CHW role is integrated into the primary care team, but funded, administered and governed by the local authority, specifically the municipal secretariat for health. The holistic nature of the role, and the importance of primary care in the wellbeing of residents, makes primary care networks an ideal place for this role in England. Social care services, acute trusts, mental health trusts and public health will also benefit from the CHW role so collaboration and engagement with these areas is essential.

What are the benefits of the Community Health Worker role?

CHWs provide a consistent flow of information, intelligence, and knowledge between them and the primary care team. In Brazil 70% of the population is being provided with this service, and in areas fully covered by CHWs, cardiovascular disease mortality is reduced by around 34% compared to areas without this system in place¹. Through proactive engagement CHWs can address public health, individual clinical health issues and social care issues simultaneously.

If CHWs were rolled out to cover the entire general practice population of England and they engaged with and referred 20% of eligible unscreened or unimmunised individuals, per year there would be an additional²:

- 754,000 cervical cancer screenings
- 365,000 breast cancer screenings
- 483,000 bowel cancer screenings
- 16,000 children could receive their MMR1
- 25,000 children could receive their MMR2²

How is this different to other community roles?

The main differences between other community focused roles such as Social Prescribers or Community Champions, is that the work of CHWs:

- Is not referral dependent
- Is proactive and comprehensive
- Is geographically delineated i.e. covers a group of council blocks, or streets. The CHWs are responsible for the whole population in that patch
- Addresses the health & wellbeing needs of anyone within the household

Is anyone employing Community Health Workers in England yet?

Westminster Council have recruited four CHWs who have honorary contracts in a local primary care practice. They have been allocated to whole blocks of social housing to provide proactive household visiting to all practice-registered households. From June 2021, each CHW will be responsible for around 125 households, working for the moment on a part-time basis. Several other areas across the country have already expressed an interest and can see the value in this role.

How can I find out more? Join a CHW workshop event

We are hosting a CHW workshop event: **18 November, 11.00 to 13.00**. Please register for your free place:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81979736943?pwd=UXJ0VHZ0MGoxbHliMlV6TUxYaUd5QT09>

For more information please email: liz.dominique@napc.co.uk

www.napc.co.uk/webinar-series

1 Rasella D et al Impact of primary health care on mortality from heart and cerebrovascular diseases in Brazil: a nationwide analysis of longitudinal data. *BMJ* 2014;348:g4014

2 Hayhoe B et al J Integrating a nationally scaled workforce of community health workers in primary care: a modelling study. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 2018 0(0) 1–9 <https://DOI.org/10.1177/0141076818803443>