



# NALW's Annual Conference 2024 Motions

## 01. Accredited Register of Social Prescribing Link Workers

This Conference expresses extreme concern regarding the lack of progress on the proposed regulation of link workers, despite the backing of [over 70% of social prescribing link workers from across the UK during a 2021 consultation by NALW and backing mandatory registration.](#)

**Conference notes** that other Health and Care Professions which are not regulated by law such as Wellbeing Practitioners, which includes Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (PWP), Children's Wellbeing Practitioners (CWP), and Education Mental Health Practitioners (EMHP), [are mandated by NHSE to join an accredited register](#) via [Professional Standards Authority accredited registration](#)

**Conference believes** that in not being regulated, the quality of care and access to support for patients varies between SPLWs. Without regulation, SPLWs do not have a clear scope of practice or agreed competencies to adhere to. This leaves patients in a position where they are receiving differing support across all services in which SPLWs operate. Additionally, regulating the profession will enable link workers to benefit from gaining professional recognition, the ability to find social prescribing link workers, ensure fairness by being brought in line with other healthcare professions that require professional registration, enable an appropriate pay structure, protected time to develop and maintain skills and competencies, gain qualifications, get supervision and put the profession to a sustainable footing enhancing career progression. Furthermore, it will enable a wider understanding of the Link Worker role, by both SPLWs, employers the wider healthcare profession, and patients.

### Conference resolves to:

- Mandate the National Association of Link Workers (NALW) to apply to the Professional Standards Authority to accredit the register of social prescribing link workers working with key stakeholders.
- Call upon NHS England to (1) support the development of a Professional Standards Authority Accredited Register by the National Association of Link Workers (NALW) and (2) to mandate individual registration on this register for social prescribing link workers in NHS England commissioned healthcare.
- Mandates the National Association of Link Workers to work with NHS national bodies responsible for education across the four devolved nations to set and agree on the educational requirements.

“It is important that the regulation of health care roles is proportionate to the risks. Our [manifesto](#) sets out the need for regulation to support the successful delivery of workforce plans and maintain public confidence and safety.

The PSA’s Accredited Registers programme is a Government-backed scheme for roles not subject to statutory regulation. To achieve accreditation, registers are required to meet our Standards for Accredited Registers through a rigorous assessment process, including our Standard 1 public interest test. Accredited Registers and their practitioners can display our accreditation Quality Mark, which provides the public and employers with confidence in standards of competence and professionalism.

We know that social prescribing is a key part of NHS England’s model of personalised care, and that the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan set out the aim to expand the number of social prescribing link workers. We have engaged with NHS England since 2021 about the potential for voluntary, accredited registration for link workers.

We understand that link workers work on a one-to-one basis, with potentially vulnerable service users, as part of wider multi-disciplinary teams. The benefits of accreditation could be to help give assurance to patients, employers and others working alongside link workers about their commitment to demonstrating high standards.

We would welcome an application for accreditation, and further discussion with the NALW, NHS England and the Government about the best way to achieve additional assurance for link workers, as a key part of the broader healthcare workforce.

***Alan Clamp, CEO, Professional Standards Authority’***

## 02. Standardisation of Education and Training of Social Prescribing Link Workers

The National Association of Link Workers (NALW) conference condemns the way social prescribing link works are being treated. There is a lack of standardised education for Social Prescribing Link Workers (SPLWs) leaving employers recruiting new individuals with inconsistent training and also some SPLWs struggling within the job to access training. There is no allocated budget to developing core competencies and CPD for social prescribing link workers to access.

Whilst the framework of core competencies for SPLWs has been developed in England and Wales, however, these are not effective as they are not enforced or resourced. It doesn't specify the curriculum or level and no clear qualification is required or professional registration is currently required to work as a Social Prescribing Link Worker.

**Conference believes** that a national curriculum for all social prescribing link workers is necessary and set at the appropriate level to meet the needs of the profession and ensure professional competence.

**The conference notes** that [Unison the union passed a similar motion last year calling for consistency in education and training standards.](#) The NALW conference believes that SPLWs are a health and social care profession improving health outcomes across the UK, therefore employers and patients should be provided with a service that practices similarly across the country, with clear education standards and this should not be optional and is necessary for accreditation and will enable link workers to move around internationally.

**The conference resolves to:**

- Explicitly asserts that all training providers delivering higher education qualification courses (level 4 and above) seek accreditation from the National Association of Link Workers (NALW) or ensure that their qualification is aligned with NALW standards so that SPLWs can meet accredited registration criteria following the qualification.
- Calls upon NHS national bodies responsible for education to engage in discussions with NALW regarding reviewing education requirements and competencies and CPD funding arrangements.