

Joint review of health and care sector investment in the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise

Department of Health, NHS England, Public Health England and the VCSE sector

Why do we need a review?

The Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector is crucial to sustainable delivery of health and wellbeing.

The VCSE sector plays a critical leadership and delivery role across the whole health and care sector, providing voice, championing equality and inclusion, and directly working with people, families and communities to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

The VCSE sector is diverse and includes organisations of a variety of sizes, roles and structures. These organisations make contributions in many ways, from the tiny group which helps a seldom-heard community to influence local plans, to the national charity which delivers vital services to thousands of people. Social enterprises such as Community Interest Companies, offer another approach to charities.

Health and social care strategies set out how the VCSE can make a unique contribution to health and wellbeing, reaching people and tackling challenges which other sectors cannot. But not all VCSE organisations do this equally well and not all demonstrate their impact clearly. As public funds remain under pressure, all kinds of organisations need to be able to do this better.

There are three ways in which the health and care system invest in the sector:

1. through central grant funding held on by DH on behalf of itself, NHS England and PHE to support and build capacity across the VCSE sector;
2. through a wider range of investments in health and care nationally;
3. through significant local investment across the whole health and care system to support local provision across communities.

It is important that we see this funding as a whole and understand the wider landscape and interdependencies notably the role of local commissioners and councils.

The first of these, the central grant approach, has delivered a great deal in the six years since it was last reviewed. Whilst a small proportion of the overall amount, the central grants support strategic and innovative national work which would not otherwise happen. It is one way in which national bodies can role-model well-planned, pragmatic, transparent and impactful investment.

Our view is that this fund and the wider range of investments made by central government and national bodies need to be well-integrated and carried with an awareness of the overall impact of the total investment into supporting the sector. Great local partnerships between the statutory and VCSE sectors need to be more widely celebrated and learned from. Poor and variable practice needs to be understood and addressed. And we need to understand how we maximise our investment and impact across the whole to secure better outcomes for people, families and communities.

What will the review try to achieve?

The review will be based on a clear statement of the unique and crucial role of the diverse VCSE sector, which is shared by the sector and the three statutory partners. We will explore and make initial recommendations on how to:

1. **Maximise and demonstrate the contribution** of the VCSE sector to achieving health and wellbeing in the UK, based on a shared understanding of the range of ways in which different kinds of organisations can have impact.
2. Build the **sustainability** of the VCSE sector and its ongoing **capacity** to deliver health and wellbeing, working effectively alongside other partners.
3. Ensure that the VCSE sector is able to **promote inclusion and equality**, helping a wide range of people and communities including those often excluded to have a voice in healthcare and social care planning and commissioning.

How will the review work?

The review will be based around an open and inclusive conversation, led by the VCSE sector and government and arms-length bodies working jointly together, which will raise questions, seek responses and make recommendations:

- The review themes above will each be led jointly by a VCSE representative and an official from one of the statutory partners. Each will publish exploratory questions, convene meetings of interested parties, make themselves available to participate in existing VCSE activity and engage online. They will seek to include the voices of people who use services and their families.
- The review is Chaired by Alex Fox and supported by an advisory group and supported by a joint secretariat.
- The participants will blog and engage with contributors online at <http://www.voluntarysectorhealthcare.org.uk/vcse-review/> Discussions on the website will form an iterative process: we will share ideas, questions and suggestions

publicly and invite further responses, in order to develop ideas thoughtfully and publicly.

- This first stage will develop an interim report to seek views from Ministers, the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health, the CEOs of NHSE and PHE.
- After the election, it will be the decision of the new government as to how they proceed but they will have the opportunity to build on the pre-election engagement

Each of the themes will include consideration of these questions:

- **What is the current and potential contribution of the VCSE sectors?** This will take into account the diversity of the sector and the role of volunteers and social action.
- **What kinds of impact are valuable and how can this be demonstrated?** We believe that definitions of impact are best co-designed by the statutory and VCSE sectors.
- **What are the challenges faced by the sector?** This will include consideration of changes in funding levels and the effectiveness of investment and funding processes.
- **What examples can be found of good partnerships and investment?** What can be learned from these? How can they become more widespread?
- **What is the role of central grants, wider cross-departmental spending practice and local investment in increasing and sustaining VCSE impact and capacity?**

With your help, each review theme will develop and share more detailed questions as it progresses.

We expect to include in our recommendations options for how funding can be used differently and innovatively, potentially in a more integrated way, to support the sector to sustain and increase its impact in helping the population achieve greater health and wellbeing. We will note any trade-offs we find (e.g. between supporting organisations which can evidence most impact or supporting innovation) and issues which we believe need further study.

How to get involved in the review

There are several ways to get involved with this review:

1. Contribute your thoughts online at <http://www.voluntarysectorhealthcare.org.uk/vcse-review/>. You can leave comments or submit proposed guest blogs.
2. The review advisory group are happy to talk at events or meetings and to contribute articles to newsletters and bulletins. Please contact emma.easton@nhs.net to discuss.

3. If can submit evidence, case studies or research papers on the review website:
<http://www.voluntarysectorhealthcare.org.uk/vcse-review/> or contact
tricia.rich@phe.gov.uk