

one goal, many voices, unlimited potential

get involved

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2015 How we made a difference



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making health inequalities everyone's business

one goal

Living in the Gap



This year VHS published Scotland's first study into the voluntary health sector's role in addressing health inequalities. VHS made sure it was discussed in the Scottish Parliament more than once and took it on a seminar roadshow across Scotland. In June 2015 the Cross Party Group on Health Inequalities appointed VHS as its new Secretariat.

Built around a survey of nearly 160 organisations and 10 case studies, **Living in the Gap** focused on the lived reality of health inequalities and the contribution the voluntary health sector makes through supporting and advocating for vulnerable and marginalised people.

However, the report also found that more work is needed to optimise the impact of these efforts, and to overcome the barriers that prevent more equal and effective partnership working between public and voluntary sectors.

Among the case studies, the charity Includem discussed its experience of supporting vulnerable young people with histories of abuse, neglect and deprivation:

"The needs vary from person to person but there are common issues facing most of them. Poverty and difficult life experiences can affect physical and mental health in so many ways – through the cumulated impact of things like exposure to violence, low quality housing, bad diet, low mobility and limited social activity."

Living in the Gap's hard hitting message is that it is neither acceptable nor inevitable for people to live in the shadow of poor health and premature death, solely for reasons of inequality.

"Often the individuals most in need are not accessing statutory services and so remain in the shadows of service provision."

We were thrilled to be NHSScotland poster winners in the Improving the Health of the Population category this year and thank NHSScotland for the opportunity to exhibit our work. This represented a real achievement for VHS and, crucially, recognition by the NHS Scotland judges of our key role in addressing health inequalities. We also acknowledge NHS Health Scotland's support, without which we couldn't have undertaken the **Living in the Gap** study itself.

Our one goal must be to make it everyone's business to close the gap.

Claire Stevens, VHS Chief Officer

NHSScotland recognition

VHS was delighted when NHSScotland Chief Executive **Paul Gray** presented VHS with an award for its poster representation of the **Living in the Gap** report.

Our winning poster was one of 230 entries at the 2015 NHSScotland Event at Glasgow's Exhibition Centre, attended by 1,500 delegates. The judges commented:

"An excellent poster which presented a large amount of valuable information crisply. It clearly shows how Voluntary Health Scotland are focusing on addressing health inequalities for those living in the gap."

Martyn Evans, Chief Executive, Carnegie UK Trust commented:

"I am increasingly interested in the 'capabilities' approach **Living in the Gap** highlights so I found it an insightful and informative read. The analysis is excellent and has added fresh thinking to the debate around tackling health inequalities. With its emphasis on positive and confident partnership, evidence and optimism **Living in the Gap** is a high level benchmark for third sector reports."

Q for Quality

VHS has successfully nominated **Hilda Campbell**, Chief Executive of COPE Scotland, to join the founding cohort of the **Health Foundation's Q initiative**. Q will work to connect people skilled in improvement across the UK, from frontline clinicians, managers and researchers to policy makers, patient leaders and those bringing expertise from other industries. The aim is to connect a critical mass of 5,000 participants by 2020.

Of the 20 Scottish improvement experts appointed to Q, just 2 are from the third sector. Hilda said she was honoured to be appointed:

"I believe only by working together across sectors and communities will we begin to find real improvements, and Q aims to do just that."

"I am very excited and looking forward to see how we can build more connections in Scotland around Q and linking this with the connections I am able to build with other members of the founding cohort across the UK. I think linking in with members of VHS will be one way of bringing more people on board."

Hilda is approaching the initiative with two clear goals: to improve the way we share best practice and learning; and to raise awareness of and respect for the voluntary health sector's contribution to this.

She is confident that Q will, in time, bring tangible benefits to patients.

"There is so much to celebrate within health services across the UK. But there are also areas we could improve on and working together I think we can do just that."

250 members across Scotland

many voices

Knowing Me Knowing You

Improving cross-sectoral understanding about what works in addressing health inequalities has been the focus of the **Knowing Me Knowing You** learning exchanges developed in partnership by VHS, Community Food and Health Scotland and Community Health Exchange (CHEX).

Round table events and community visits in Glasgow and Edinburgh have encouraged active dialogue between voluntary health organisations and national policy makers. Bringing together civil servants and organisations at the heart of their communities has helped reconnect policy making to the real world.

"It is hugely valuable for us as civil servants to actually see what is happening on the ground as it helps us better understand people's lived experience and this can only influence policy making for the better."

Elaine Bell, Policy Manager, Scottish Government Public Health Division

The exchanges provide an opportunity to hear the personal testimonies of, and in some cases visit, the organisations working with those experiencing some of Scotland's worst inequalities.

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership has supplied a range of food initiatives to the local community for over 20 years. Demand for their services has increased sharply because so many people now struggle to get through to their next pay cheque or benefits payment. Manager **Ian Shankland** expressed concern that the problem of food poverty is growing faster than policy solutions. However, events like **Knowing Me Knowing You** help, he said, as they build trust and a clearer understanding of what everybody's roles are if we are to tackle this issue together.

100%

100% of **Knowing Me Knowing You** participants made new contacts to help their work

80%

80% of participants plan to change how they work as a result of what they learned



Public Health Platform

The Public Health Review set up by Ministers offered VHS a platform to discuss the voluntary health sector's role as a partner in public health. Early in 2015, VHS's Sounding Board discussion with health charities gave civil servants and Review Group members the clear message that our sector is part of the wider public work force, above all through its inequalities work. "**Public health is core to what we do**" said one participant.

VHS's formal representative on the Review Group is **Grant Sugden**, Chief Executive of Waverley Care, the charity that works throughout Scotland to improve the lives of those living with HIV and Hepatitis C.

Grant described being part of the Review Group as "a great opportunity to influence what is going on in Scotland."

"I wanted to highlight the broader aspects of health. Health is not just about medical treatment. It is also about ensuring people have opportunities for healthy relationships and support networks and the third sector has a huge role to play there."

"I think the Review started off with a very narrow perspective and it became much broader. It was a really worthwhile exercise to be part of to highlight the role that the third sector can play in public health and tackling health inequalities."

what our members say

Thank you to the 98% of VHS members surveyed who said we are doing a good job.

"As a small community-led project we need organisations like VHS to exist in order to be kept informed of the bigger picture"

"It's difficult to attend lots of meetings and training throughout the year. As a community-led health project there are many guises we fit into, therefore, we attend only the ones we cannot miss. VHS AGM is one of them. The AGM last year was fantastic."

"VHS plays a crucial role in supporting the voluntary sector across Scotland."



our values: influencing, collaborative, inclusive, dynamic

unlimited potential

Our New Strategy...



Learning to Lead in Health

With more than double the number of applicants to places available and 42 programme graduates to date, **Learning to Lead in Health** continues to demonstrate strong demand from voluntary health organisations. The importance of good leadership and partnership skills is even greater now that the integration of health and social care services is fully underway. The programme provides a space for action learning, reflection and peer support to consider strategic questions relevant to health organisations, including the challenges of working with statutory bodies. Crucially, all places are fully funded, making the programme uniquely accessible for smaller organisations with limited budgets for senior staff development.

90%

90% feel better able to address challenges and opportunities in their role.

100%

100% of our learners feel they have changed and developed as a leader.

Learning to Lead in Health is jointly developed and delivered by VHS and Social Enterprise Academy.

As a trained counsellor, **Maria Jackson**, Director of Clinical Practice for the relationship support charity The Spark, says that all of her past training had been therapeutic.

"As I have risen through the organisation I have found myself sitting at a table with managers whose training is very different from my own. We were struggling to understand each other at times, so I thought that maybe if I understood better how they think we would be able to interact more easily."

The programme made her more aware of different leadership styles and gave her a new set of tools that helped her to see things from a different perspective.

"I've used these tools in my organisation in several different ways. They have helped me to get my point across at meetings and taught me to change my focus when presenting information so that I focus on the positives for the organisation first."

She has also used them to help build a new professional relationship with managers in another organisation from a very different background to theirs, in order to tender for a new service.

"The tools helped. We slowly introduced them to our client group and we found some mutuality. It was much more democratic and it was really useful for me as I felt like I had a plan going in."

"To some people who have been trained in management techniques that might have come naturally. But I hadn't, so I didn't."

Informed by the views and involvement of VHS Members, strategic partners and the wider voluntary health sector, the Board has developed a set of core values for VHS and a new strategy. The strategy takes VHS through the next three years to 2018, furthering our mission to promote greater recognition of the voluntary health sector and support it to be a valued and influential partner in health and care.

Promote greater recognition of the role of voluntary health organisations

1

Activities: Involve our members actively in a dynamic network

Provide platforms for members to raise awareness of how they contribute to health outcomes

Inform a wide audience by gathering and highlighting evidence of our sector's role and impact

Short term outcomes:

Voluntary health organisations are more visible and heard
Improved awareness of the voluntary health sector across central and local government, NHS, communities, media and academia

Long term outcomes:

The voluntary health sector's role in creating a healthier Scotland is better recognised and harnessed in public policy and services

Support voluntary health organisations to build their understanding of health agendas so as to play an active part

2

Activities: Extend our communications and other active engagement with members

Translate and interpret complex policy issues for and with our members

Equip our members with additional skills, ideas, connections and learning

Short term outcomes:

Members have a better understanding of health agendas
Members are better informed about where and how to access resources and practical support
Organisations have enhanced access to partnership and collaboration opportunities

Long term outcomes:

Voluntary health organisations are more involved in developing national and local policies
Health and social care services are delivered in partnership between voluntary and public sectors

Influence change in policy and practice, by providing a bridge between the voluntary health sector, decision makers and public services

3

Activities: Engage our members and national decision makers in effective debate and discussion

Provide high quality policy briefings, consultation responses and discussion papers

Deliver high quality consultation events, seminars, workshops and conferences for a wide audience

Short term outcomes:

Members have increased opportunities to engage directly with policy makers
Members are more confident about engaging with Scottish Government and NHS

Long term outcomes:

The voice of voluntary health organisations is listened to more consistently by policy makers
Health and care policy making and implementation reflects what people and communities need