

our road to a healthier Scotland

We've been going the distance to promote the voluntary health sector's contribution to a fairer, healthier Scotland

Closing the Gap

Our conference brought together 130 delegates from the third sector, NHS and wider public sector to promote the voluntary health sector's role in tackling inequality and discuss practical action for making health inequalities a greater priority for policy and interventions.

Health Policy Officers Network

In partnership with The Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland this unique peer support group for health policy officers is now underway, aimed at those working in smaller organisations or who are new to health policy.

"VHS was a natural choice to help develop the network with a well-established network of contacts, and a proven track record of influential policy initiatives. For those working at smaller charities, the opportunity to get fresh perspectives and insights from others can be valuable, and this has already led to a real sense of purpose within the group."

Rob Mackie, Policy and Communications Manager, QNIS

Public Health Sounding Board

Following publication of the Scottish Government's 2015 Review of Public Health, 45 delegates came together for a Sounding Board discussion on the outcomes of the Review and its implications for the third sector.

Post-election agenda for health

This VHS event was a timely opportunity for health charity leaders to take stock following the Scottish Parliamentary elections, consider the new National Clinical Strategy and set out a voluntary sector agenda for change.

Advisory groups

We used our knowledge and understanding of the voluntary health sector to influence and contribute to the ten external advisory groups we sit on.

Integration events

VHS played the lead role in facilitating Audit Scotland to actively engage the third sector in discussion about its published and planned audits of health and social care integration. We held two seminars, two round tables and introduced the scrutiny body to other audiences, including unpaid carers. This engagement enabled voluntary health organisations to get an overview of progress across Scotland and to suggest questions for future audits.

"How Audit Scotland engages with others, such as the voluntary sector and service users, is something we're considering carefully at the moment, and it was refreshing and insightful to gain some alternative perspectives on what our role and focus should be in the months ahead."

Gordon Neill, Senior Manager, Audit Scotland

"VHS have been an invaluable source of support for the Drink Wise, Age Well Programme. Not only do they sit on our Scotland Advisory and Impact Board as an advisory member, but Claire and her team also actively identify opportunities and events for us to strengthen our partnership links."

Julie Breslin, Head of Programme, Drink Wise Age Well

Mental health and social support

The new partnership between VHS, Support in Mind Scotland and the Open University created an events programme on the role of social support in maintaining good mental health.

Happier in our skin

We are proud to be part of Cope Scotland's new partnership which is working with communities to help people smile more, get active and make positive choices for their health and wellbeing.

Cross-Party Group on Health Inequalities

As the new Secretariat we brought 140 participants to the Scottish Parliament over three sessions to discuss housing, health and social care integration and the latest inequalities research.

Clear Pathway

A collaborative project designing guidance and case studies for safe, effective and person-centred volunteering in NHS settings, with the focus on volunteers recruited and managed by third sector organisations.

Community Link Worker Study

When completed in January 2017, our scoping exercise for the Scottish Government will inform the creation of 250 Community Link Workers to assist primary care patients facing the greatest health inequalities.

"Realising Realistic Medicine is about moving away from the 'doctor knows best' culture and the need to treat people not patients. It's about more fully involving patients in the decisions about their care. Doctors should consider how isolation and loneliness can impact on the wellbeing of the people they treat and have conversations that reflect the person as a whole, not just as the health matter they are trying to manage."

Dr. Catherine Calderwood, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland

Understanding the Gap

Our partnership conference with the Open University pooled expertise from the NHS, third sector, academics and people with lived experience to explore the role of research as a weapon in the fight against health inequalities.

"I found the VHS conference at Stirling to be one of the most outstanding of the year with inspirational plenary speakers and rounding off with a profound panel of 'experts by experience' involved in various aspects of tackling health inequalities."

Looking back through my actions in response to the topics of the day and new contacts made I racked up in excess of 30 emails of follow-up actions and discussions. So for me it was one of those conferences which truly made a difference to my day job."

Dr. Neil Hamlet Consultant in Public Health Medicine, NHS Fife

Loneliness a threat to Scotland's health

Inspired by our members, our annual conference examines the damage that protracted loneliness causes to physical and mental health and sets out an agenda for a social isolation strategy for Scotland.

looking to the future

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In my two years as Chair of VHS I am proud to have watched the organisation grow from strength to strength. We have all the ingredients for success. Our board brings a wide range of talents and experience to the organisation, and a determination to keep driving it forward to future success. In Chief Officer Claire Stevens we have a tireless advocate for the voluntary health sector and she and her small but highly skilled team have ensured that VHS continues to make a big impact.

I was delighted to see their efforts recognised in our recent membership survey, where you told us how much you value our contributions and support. But we also value yours. We are an organisation that is moulded by our members and committed to working collaboratively and inclusively. Next year we will begin reviewing our constitution to ensure it is fit for purpose. And as we reach the mid-way point of implementing our current strategy, we will also be turning our heads to the future. What happens next? That's up to you! We hope you will join us in this process.

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Lorna Hunter, Chair



Board members

VHS board members David Robertson, Frances Simpson, Lorna Hunter, Alan Cowan, Allyson McCollam, Eric Samuel, Norman Craig. Not pictured: Allan Johnstone, Margaret Totten, Karen Sutherland, Billy McClean.

get involved we welcome new members

www.vhscotland.org.uk/get-involved

Voluntary Health Scotland
Mansfield Traquair Centre
15 Mansfield Place
Edinburgh EH3 6BB
0131 474 6189
mail@vhscotland.org.uk

www.vhscotland.org.uk
Twitter: @VHSComms



Claire Stevens
Chief Officer
claire.stevens@vhscotland.org.uk
0131 474 6191



Alison Crofts
Membership and Administrative Officer
alison.crofts@vhscotland.org.uk
0131 474 6189



Lauren Blair
Programme Engagement Officer
lauren.blair@vhscotland.org.uk
0131 474 6190



Lesley Munro
Development Officer
lesley.munro@vhscotland.org.uk
0131 474 6156



Kiren Zubairi
Policy Engagement Officer
kiren.zubairi@vhscotland.org.uk
0131 474 6187



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