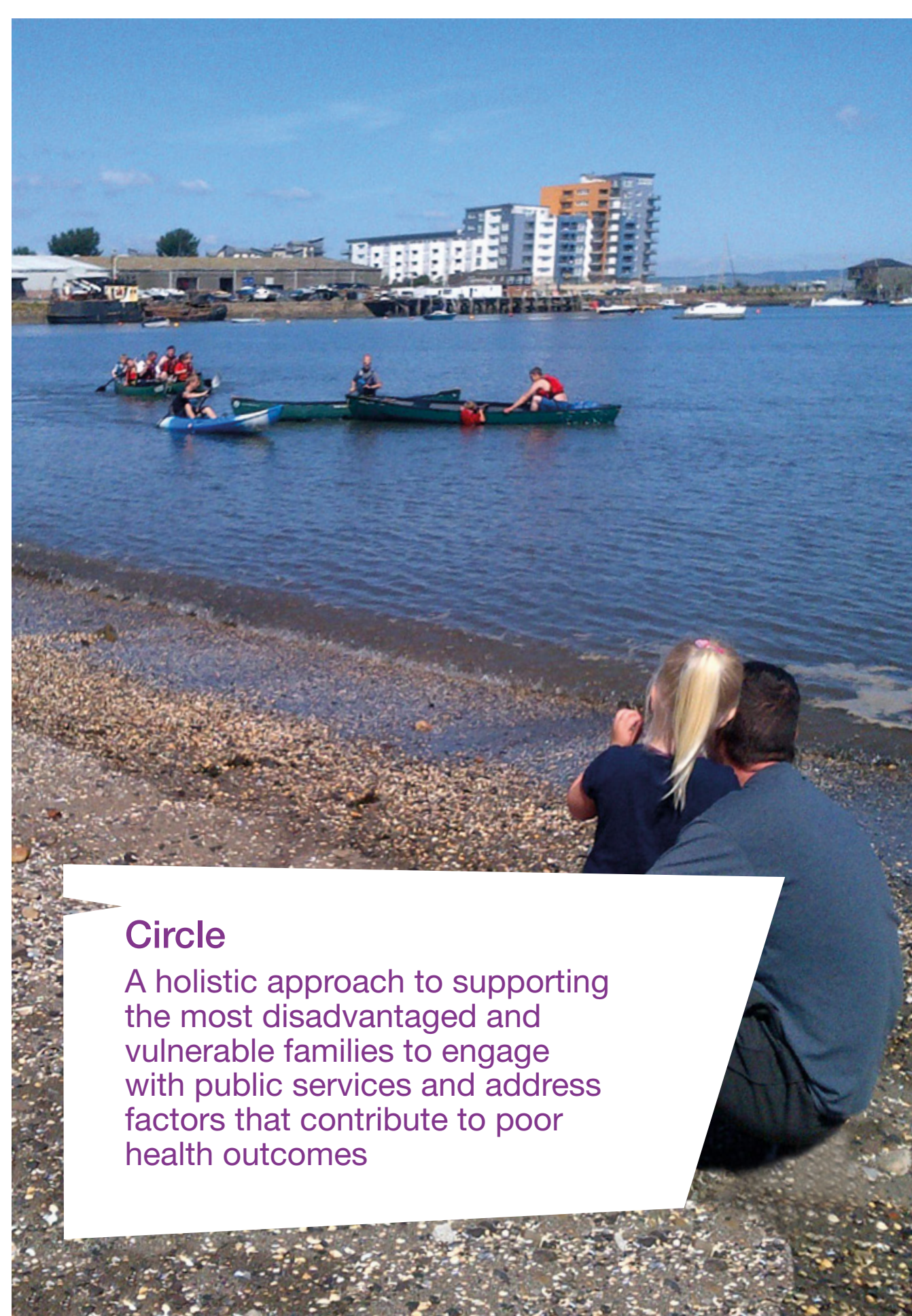


Living in the Gap: a voluntary health sector perspective on health inequalities in Scotland



Circle
A holistic approach to supporting the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families to engage with public services and address factors that contribute to poor health outcomes



MS Therapy Centre Lothian
A grassroots organisation providing people with MS more accessible treatments and greater frequency of support for self-management than public services can offer



Includem
Working with vulnerable young people with histories of abuse, neglect and deprivation, to support engagement with mainstream services and provide support and education to drive behaviour change



North Glasgow Community Food Initiative
Community centred food projects that work with and alongside local people, to address factors underpinning poor nutrition, poverty, stigma and social isolation

Mind the gap

- Life expectancy in our poorest communities is 13 years less than for people in the most affluent areas.
- This is the health inequalities gap.
- People 'living in the gap' are more likely to experience preventable illness and to be sick much earlier in life and for longer.
- Over 30 years health inequalities increased significantly in Scotland.
- National policy initiatives to reduce the gap have had little impact so far.

What we asked

- What role do Scotland's health charities play in reducing the impact of health inequalities on individuals, families and communities?
- What can health charities tell us about the lived experience of people affected by health inequalities?

What we did

Carried out a year long qualitative study in 2014:

- 150 charities surveyed
- 10 case studies conducted
- 4 workshops observed
- Analysis and reporting

'We supported a single mother to undergo treatment for Hepatitis C that she had previously 'put off' for two years because of fears about being able to care for her children over the lengthy recovery.'

The results

Health charities and other voluntary organisations are mitigating the negative effects of health inequalities by:

- Reaching into and working closely with population groups most at risk.
- Overcoming social isolation, stigma and barriers to mainstream services.
- Taking a wrap-around, holistic and flexible approach to meeting individual, family and community needs.
- Supporting people who are 'just coping' and reducing the need for statutory interventions.

'This pilot saved 25 bed days because people who were befriended felt confident to leave the ward sooner.'

How to close the gap?

- Make health inequalities everyone's business.
- Get policy and decision makers to ensure effective partnership working between public and voluntary sectors is the norm.
- Invest in 'what works well' and develop tools and resources to extend and embed effective interventions.

'We're showing that a third sector organisation can be at the helm of a successful cross-sector approach to addressing health issues.'

What can you do?

- Download **Living in the Gap** to find out more about the study, its conclusions and next steps:
www.vhscotland.org.uk
- Work with the VHS network to harness the power of partnership to tackle health inequalities.



Clackmannanshire Healthier Lives
A community based, cross-sectoral partnership providing anticipatory health services, including addiction assessments, physical health activities and life skills support



Argyll Voluntary Action
Releasing social capital to reduce isolation and exclusion in rural areas, improve mental health and support people to engage with health services and positive activities