

The national intermediary and network for voluntary health organisations in Scotland

# Key Messages



## Population Health Framework VHS Member Engagement

15 November 2024

VHS hosted a meeting on 14 November with Public Health Scotland to discuss the development of the Population Health Framework, with the aim of making the voices of the third sector heard in the Framework.

Mark McAllister, Organisational Lead for Strategic Development at Public Health Scotland opened the meeting and shared his presentation giving some background to the framework. [Read Mark's PowerPoint Presentation here.](#)

### The Population Health Framework

The overarching vision of the Framework as stated by the Cabinet Secretary for Health, is for Scotland to be a place where people live longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives. This vision is supported by four key areas: improving population health, focusing on prevention and early intervention, providing quality services, accessible to all. The Population Health Framework (PHF) is being developed to achieve this through a cross-government and cross-sector approach. It aims to be a collaborative effort involving the Scottish Government, COSLA, Public Health Scotland, and other key partners which includes the third sector. Our members' event provided an opportunity to discuss the aspirations, scope and content of the draft Framework. There is agreement that there is the need for a coordinated, whole-system approach to address population health challenges in Scotland.

### Prevention and Health Creation

Prevention plays a pivotal role in addressing the root causes of health inequalities, making it a cornerstone of the Framework aimed at improving population health. In Scotland, where health inequalities remain a significant challenge, prevention offers a sustainable path to long-term improvements. It shifts the focus from treating symptoms to addressing underlying factors such as poverty, poor housing, limited access to education, and mental health.

Third-sector organisations are experts in this approach. Embedded within communities, they bring invaluable local knowledge, trust, and relationships that enable them to identify and address issues at an early stage. These organisations often deliver innovative programmes, promoting a range of early interventions. By targeting the communities most affected by inequality, they ensure resources are directed where they are needed most.

A focus on preventative approaches creates a ripple effect. They not only improve individual health outcomes but also create better health outcomes and reduce pressure on public services. We know it is not just about tackling current inequalities—it is about creating a healthier, more equitable future for all.

### Key points raised in the discussion:

**We are vital:** The third sector is a vital part of prevention and should be a vital part of the Framework. Its place should be considered and included in the planning and implementation of the Framework.

**Collaboration is key:** There is a great deal of willingness to achieve real and impactful cross-sectoral delivery by creating greater alignment.

**Healthier for longer:** The vision of the Framework is aligned with the vision of third sector organisations which is to enable people to live healthier lives.

**Adapt and change:** As the Framework is set to run for 10 years the approach would need to be adaptable and flexible.

**Best practice:** Enable sharing best practice across Scotland as we need a focus on actions that will have the biggest impact.

**Prevention:** Third sector organisations are experts in prevention and community-based interventions and are a valuable source of knowledge and experience.

**Person centred:** Embedding lived/living experience and person-centred care into delivery is already a key approach of many third sector organisations.

**Preventative spend:** Many third sector organisations face challenges with budget and resource allocation.

**Insecurity of funding:** We know supporting prevention that demonstrates a direct return on investment is important- yet third sector funding has been reduced in some areas- Edinburgh IJB was raised as a recent example.

**Systems and structures:** There is agreement that there is the need for a coordinated, whole-system approach to address population health challenges in Scotland.

**Consistency:** There needs to be a consistent and agreed approach to prevention and early intervention.

**Power and money:** Several points raised around the distribution of funds and the need for a more equitable system without the power imbalance.

**Evidencing:** There is a challenge faced by the third sector in demonstrating return on investment.

**Accountability:** There is a need to hold the wider system - including national government and local partners - accountable for delivering the desired changes.

## What next?

VHS and Public Health Scotland will convene to determine the next steps, with the aim of re-engaging VHS members and Public Health Scotland in further discussions. We want to make sure that we continue the discussions on the Framework, with our members' voices as a vital component.

Please contact Lauren Blair, Events and Engagement Lead at Voluntary Health Scotland with any questions:

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