

Movement for HEALTH Creation



12th May 2026

Dear Member of the Scottish Parliament,

Open Letter from Voluntary Health Scotland Members

Congratulations on your recent election/re-election to the Scottish Parliament. We look forward to working with you to reduce health inequalities and empower the people of Scotland to live well.

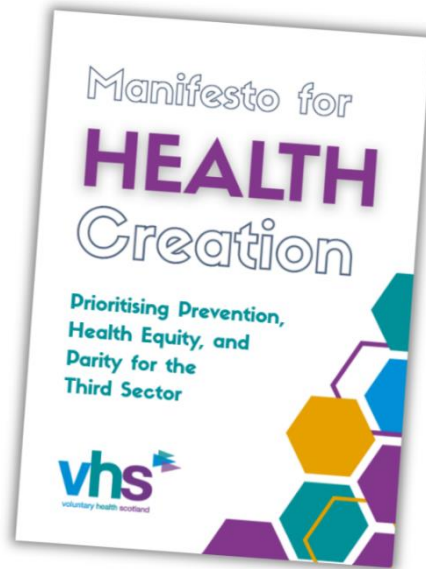
Voluntary Health Scotland are a movement for health creation working to reduce health inequalities to enable the people of Scotland to live well. We believe that health is more than the absence of illness, and together with our members and partners we champion this belief. We collaborate to provide the national voice for third sector health organisations in Scotland.

In this open letter, co-signed by 79 Voluntary Health Scotland members, we share some of the key health challenges facing Scotland and the actions we believe are necessary to improve Scotland's health.

Scotland is facing a public health crisis. Healthy life expectancy in Scotland has been steadily decreasing for over a decade. The [most recent figures](#) show that, on average, people in Scotland will be in ill health before their 60th birthday. Scotland's ageing population also means that the annual burden of disease facing our health services is [forecast to rise by 21% before 2043](#). Given current public sector spending pressures, this is simply not sustainable.

Scotland's third sector has an essential role in supporting our public services to improve health in Scotland. Our members empower people to live well and manage their own health in every community across Scotland. However, our sector is not always treated as an equal partner. Many Third Sector health organisations are facing funding challenges, leading to reduced services for those who need them most.

We believe that change is possible, but we **must act NOW**. In October 2025, we launched our [Manifesto for Health Creation](#), setting out our four key asks for improving Scotland's health.



1. Create a Prevention-Centred Health System

Committing to a prevention-first approach, and building the system to successfully implement this, will support interventions that create health and relieve pressure on acute services.

2. Prioritise Health Equity and the Right to Health

A rights-based approach would support prioritisation of the root causes of health inequality, specifically poverty, and person-centred approaches to health.

3. Establish Third Sector Parity

Policy solutions which protect the third sector and its workforce, including volunteers, as vital and equal contributors in the delivery of public services will help to safeguard the future of the sector.

4. Improve Health Measures and Datasets

A meaningful shift to prevention and health equity can only be achieved if national outcomes and indicators for health reflect this. It is therefore essential to ensure that health data is robust, accessible and focused on enabling health creation.

The future health of Scotland's people is in our hands. It is not too late to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of Scotland's people. However, this will require cross-party commitment to prioritise health creation, health equity and the right to health.

We ask you to:

- read the [Manifesto for Health Creation](#).
- [Contact Voluntary Health Scotland](#) to further discuss your role in improving Scotland's health.
- Consider joining the [Cross Party Group on Health Inequalities](#) for which we provide the secretariat. This active CPG has almost 150 non-MSP members.

Yours Sincerely,

Tejesh Mistry, Voluntary Health
Scotland

Clare Ogden, Action for ME

Maree Aldam, Amma Birth Companions

Vanessa Paynton, Art in Healthcare

Julie Morrison, Baby Loss Retreat

Alex Jones, Beat Eating Disorders

Susan Hunter, Befriending Networks

Maja Mitchell-Grigorjeva, Bipolar
Scotland

D'Arcy Williams, Bite Back

Dr Catherine Hughes, British Nordic
Walking

Fiona Collie, Carers Scotland

Stephanie Fraser, Cerebral Palsy
Scotland

Jane Claire Judson, Chest Heart &
Stroke Scotland

David Stewart, Clackmannanshire
Economic Regeneration Trust SCIO
(CERT)

Colin Melville, Clackmannanshire
Third Sector Interface

Niall McShannon, Clydesdale
Community Initiatives

Sarah Boath, Community Health
Exchange, Scottish Community
Development Centre

Kirsty Cumming, Community Leisure
UK

David Kelly, Community Transport
Association

Hilda Campbell MBE, COPE Scotland

Jenn Hall, Diabetes Scotland

Neill Clark, East Ayrshire Advocacy
Services

Charlie Cumming, Edinburgh &
Lothians Greenspace Trust

Euan Hamilton, Equality and Rights
Network (EaRN)

Rebecca Don-Kennedy, Equality
Network

Allie Cherry-Byrnes, Fast Forward

Ian Bruce, Glasgow Council for the
Voluntary Sector

Nicky Thomson, Good Morning Service

Helene van der Ploeg, Grassmarket
Community Project

Robert Smith, Group Recovery
Aftercare Community Enterprise

Joyce Cattanach, Headway East
Lothian SCIO

Sara Redmond, Health and Social Care
Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Lesley McCranor, Healthy Valleys

Helen Malo, Hospice UK

Janette Mitchell, Inspiring
Communities

Bushra Riaz, Kidney Research UK

Derek Todd, Lanarkshire Deaf Hub

Sarah van Putten, LifeCare Edinburgh

Simon Betteridge, Linking Lives UK

Maureen Cameron, Lochaber Care &
Repair

Gill Bruce, Lorn and Oban Healthy
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Registered Scottish Charity SCO35482 A company limited by guarantee SC267315

Peter Hastie, Macmillan Cancer Support
Amy Dalrymple, Marie Curie Scotland
Jillian Milne, Mindspace Limited
Jo Anderson, MS Society Scotland
Liam Sloan, Narcolepsy UK
Heather Calvo, Neighbourhood Networks
Alice Struthers, Neurological Alliance of Scotland
Jane Ferguson, NHS Lothian Charity
Linda McCurrach, NODA Ayrshire
Claire Williams, Northern Corridor Community Volunteers
Dawn Crosby, Pancreatic Cancer UK
Dr Mehar Shagufta, Playlist for Life
Stuart Valentine, Relationships Scotland
Samantha Harrison, Richmond's Hope
Cassie Forbes, Roar-Connections For Life Ltd
Laura Jones, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Scotland
Catherine Johnstone, Royal Voluntary Service
Mark Gaffney, Scottish Disability Sport
Alistair Haw, Scottish Huntington's Association

Suzanne Swinton, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA)
Louise Christie, Scottish Recovery Network
Vic Valentine, Scottish Trans
Kevin Kane, Shared Parenting Scotland
Sarah Pryde-Smith, Simba Charity
Neil Hay, Space @ The Broomhouse Hub
John Watson, Stroke Association
Iona McCann, Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust
Anne Black, The Braveheart Association
Catherine Hine, The Breastfeeding Network
Gary Christie, The Poverty Alliance
Karen Bradford, The Sorted Project
Jenni Snell, The Young Women's Movement
Natalie Stevenson, Voices of Experience (VOX) Scotland
Marion Findlay, Volunteer Edinburgh
Alan Stevenson, Volunteer Scotland
Grant Sugden, Waverley Care
Pasma Sallis, Weekday Wow Factor
Louise Stewart, WithYou