

**Policy Briefing:** Public Health Working with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector: New Opportunities and Sustainable Change

**Document published by:** Local Government Association and Volunteering Matters

**Original Document:**

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1.35\\_VCS\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1.35_VCS_WEB.pdf)

**Purpose of document**

Local Government is a close partner to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. Along with public health colleagues, the Local Government Association (LGA) have been able to make the best use of skills, enthusiasm and expertise of VCSE organisations and volunteers to publish a joint piece of work - which is a collection of case studies - to show and share best practice and examples of where and how public health and the VCSE are successfully working together to support and improve people's health and wellbeing in local communities across the country, highlighting the benefits along with the issues of partnership working between the health sector and the voluntary and community sector. The purpose of the report is also to demonstrate approaches to delivering integrated health and wellbeing services.

**Summary of contents**

The case studies in the report cover 5 themes including: 1) positive partnership and engagement between public health and the VCSE sector; 2) commissioning and delivery models; 3) supporting a financially sustainable future; 4) integrating services and 5) community-centred approaches. Examples of case studies include an initiative to tackle social isolation and loneliness in older people, an integrated lifestyle and wellness support services for people at the greatest risk of poor health outcomes, and also for socially isolated and marginalised people. For each case study, there is an overview of the service, an evaluation of findings where available and key learning from the initiative. Also included for each case study are suggestions for good practice in partnership working between public health and the VCSE sector.

**Summary of outcomes**

There is a strong argument to show that a sustainable and diverse VCSE sector is essential and that it is necessary for local authorities to realise their potential to help improve the health and wellbeing of their local communities. It is seen as crucial that the skills and capabilities of the VCSE sector are recognised and supported particularly at a time of decreasing resources. The report greatly promotes the need for supporting the infrastructure of the local voluntary sector because they are central to the VCSE's relationship with public health and significantly contribute to an extended role in the delivery of services. It emphasises how important it is for the local authority and VCSE sector to work together, focusing on the need for ever closer relationships between public health and the VCSE sector to make a real impact on the health and wellbeing of local communities. The key message from the report is that public health has a major role to play in the VCSE sector. However, their contribution to the sector across the country is not as strong and influential as it should be. Therefore, more work is needed for public health to understand the positive contribution that VCSE organisations bring to health and wellbeing, and that the VCSE sector may also benefit from a better understanding of public health, and how local government operates at a time of significant change.

**Summary of recommendations**

- Better and more robust understanding from public health and the benefits of working with the VCSE sector, along with more effective partnering between both.
- Commissioners and service providers design together, solutions to the challenges of public health.
- Understanding of community led public health models and approaches that put people at the centre of the public health agenda to help them to stay healthy and reduce inequalities.

Further information and resources

Local Government Association <https://www.local.gov.uk/>

Volunteer Matters <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/>

VCSE Review - Investing in Partnerships for Health and Wellbeing  
<https://vcsereview.org.uk/>