

New action plan for NHS providers to forge better links with voluntary sector launches with backing of Simon Stevens

A new action plan setting out to deepen partnerships between health bodies and the voluntary sector launches today with the backing of key public health bodies.

Headline recommendations in the plan include asking health providers to:

- place a clearer expectation on health leaders to co-designed services with users
- make wellbeing a core outcome for health and social care services
- make the most of voluntary sector health providers by nurturing small organisations

The action plan has been jointly agreed between NHS England, Public Health England, the Department of Health and Social Care and has been adopted by the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, the partnership programme between those bodies and the voluntary sector.

Commenting ahead of the launch, Simon Stevens said that use of the Social Value Act, which encourages commissioners to consider wider social outcomes, should be more routine in health services.

The recommendations are directed at health bodies across the NHS such as clinical commissioning groups, hospital trusts, and sustainability and transformation partnerships, as well as the voluntary sector. They provide a framework for improved partnership between the wider voluntary sector and government.

The plan has been developed by the joint voluntary, community and social enterprise sector review oversight group. The group is overseeing the implementation of a major report on voluntary sector involvement in healthcare published two years ago which has already led to significant progress including the establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, the launch of the Health and Wellbeing Fund, and the redesign of the Care Quality Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (1).

Alex Fox OBE, independent chair of the Joint Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Review oversight group said:

'Our action plan is an attempt to bridge the statutory and voluntary worlds. That bridge will enable people to travel more freely between their lives at home in the community and the world of service support which can too often be inaccessible.'

Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England said:

'We welcome the new action plan from the joint review group, which has set out an important vision in which voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations work with the NHS to co-design and co-deliver health and care services with local people. The action plan has a strong focus on greater use of Social Value Act powers by health and care commissioners which enables commissioners to seek added social value from local providers and more value for public money in partnership with charities and community groups. Use of the Act should be more routine in health commissioning.'

Jon Rouse, chief officer at the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership said:

'The Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership based our working relationship with the voluntary sector on the recommendations from the joint review, which included that statutory and voluntary agencies should work together with local people to co-design better health and care services. We welcome the new action plan and expect to lead the way in using the Social Value Act powers routinely in our health and care contracting, to get the best value possible from public funds.'

-ENDS-

Notes

1. The VCSE Review process, chaired by Alex Fox OBE, published its [final report](#) in May 2016, following a detailed consultation process. In November 2014, the Department of Health, Public Health England, and NHS England initiated a review of the role of the VCSE sector in improving health, wellbeing and care outcomes. The purpose of the review was to:
 - Describe the role of the voluntary sector in contributing to improving health, well-being and care outcomes
 - Identify and describe challenges and opportunities to realising the potential of the sector to contribute to these outcomes
 - Consult on options for policy and practice changes to address challenges and maximise opportunities, then develop final recommendations

It had two elements:

- A review of wider funding and partnerships between health and care agencies and the voluntary sector across England which would focus on three areas: defining, achieving, and demonstrating impact; building capacity and staying sustainable; promoting equality and addressing health inequalities
 - A review of their Voluntary Sector Investment Programme: The Strategic Partnership Programme; The Innovation, Excellence and Strategic Development Fund; The Health and Social Care Volunteering Fund The review was produced in partnership through an advisory group of system partners (Department of Health, NHS England, and Public Health England) and voluntary sector representatives working together in an open process (see Annex B for a full list). Following an initial consultation in early 2015, the advisory group published an interim report in March 2015. The findings of this report informed a more comprehensive consultation process which ran from August to November 2015 (see Annex A for details of consultation). The Review's final report was the result of that engagement process.
2. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is providing secretariat to support to the VCSE Review Oversight Group as part of the action plan launch.
 3. NHS England are reflecting on their commitment to the action plan in [a blog](#) on 16 May.