

Voluntary Health Scotland

Manifesto for Elections 2007

Our vision of health

The community and voluntary sector's vision of health is one where:

- Health and well-being are defined broadly to support all aspects of people's lives
- Opportunities for a healthy life are considered as a human right
- People have the power to express their own health needs and to participate in developing responses to needs
- Access to services to maintain health and care for ill-health is fair and equitable
- Services are delivered as close to home as possible
- Commitment to work together in the pursuit of health for all is sustained

Our contribution to health

The voluntary and community sector already makes a major contribution to this vision.

Across Scotland, hundreds of community-based health projects and healthy living initiatives work to improve health and combat the effects of tobacco, unhealthy food and poor environments; at the same time, hundreds more patient interest groups support people affected by illness – cancer, heart disease, mental ill-health – and disability.

Together, around 1500 groups:

- Address the needs of people who find it hard to reach services, tackling health inequalities
- Work with individuals and communities to build local capacity for action to improve health
- Develop and deliver cost-effective health initiatives, sensitive to the needs of local communities, complementing mainstream public services and contributing to the social economy
- Promote patient and public involvement in the development of quality standards in health care
- Support democratic participation in the development and delivery of evolving health services

The challenges faced by the sector

Significant challenges confront the voluntary and community sector as it works to contribute to better health for Scotland.

These are:

- Insecure, short-term and unsustainable funding
- The pressure on community-based organisations to demonstrate short-term outcomes in a strategically-focused NHS environment
- The need for increased recognition of the added value brought by the sector
- The need for greater resources for workforce development
- The need for resources to support evaluation of the effectiveness of voluntary and community sector intervention

On behalf of the voluntary and community health sector in Scotland

Voluntary Health Scotland calls on all Scottish political parties and all prospective members of the Scottish Parliament to:

- Ensure sufficient government resources are allocated and dedicated to primary and community-based health services
- Ensure fairer access to opportunities for a healthier life, taking into account the needs of diverse and hard-to-reach communities
- Ensure fairer access to local services which can improve health, in particular through Community Health Partnerships
- Offer greater choice of services to local people
- Open up channels for local people to have a greater say in how health services are planned and delivered
- Secure greater and sustainable resources for building the infrastructure and capacity of the voluntary and community sector to maximise its contribution to health
- Strengthen partnership working between government and the voluntary and community sector, adhering to the principles of The Scottish Compact

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Voluntary Health Scotland shares a common vision of health with its 300 members across Scotland and voices the common aspirations and concerns of the voluntary and community health sector.