

BRIEFING



Promises, promises: party manifestos show mixed commitment to the voluntary sector

In the run-up to the Scottish Elections, we rate the Manifestos of the six main political parties against our own VHS Manifesto for Elections 2007 which we distributed to all candidates for election or re-election to the next Scottish Parliament and to the party manifesto teams.

VHS called on parties to commit to a greater share of resources for community-based health services,

sustainable funding for the voluntary and community sector, a stronger voice for local people in the planning and delivery of services and a

strengthening of partnership working for health.

Our report card, formulated from each manifesto's key concepts, shows variable promises on health.

Unsurprisingly, Labour, Lib Dem and Green parties give most mention to the voluntary and community sector - "Social enterprises have the potential to deliver more in health services, particularly in rural areas" (Lib Dems) and "We will work closely with the full range of cancer charities to develop new strategies to tackle cancer" (Labour).

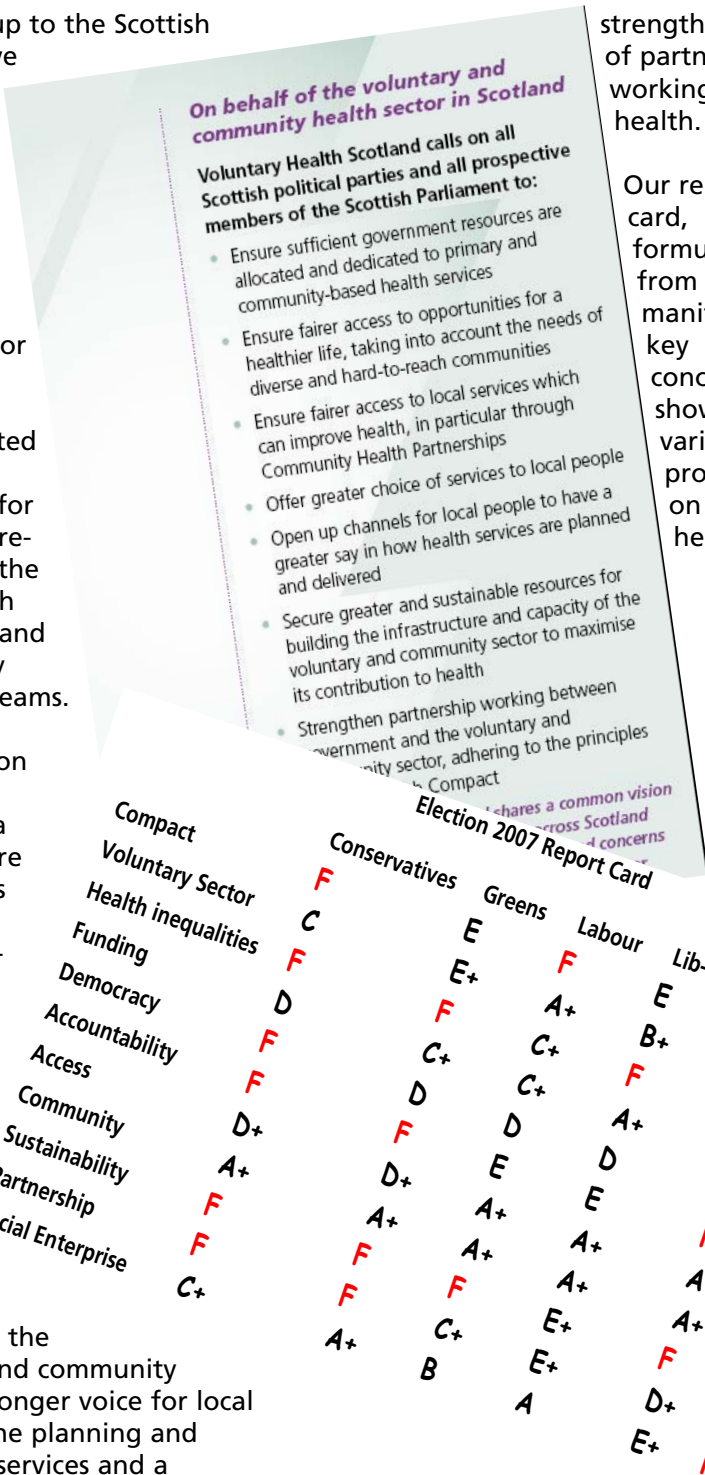
The Tories will "put more money into the mental health voluntary sector".

The Greens promise "a national strategy for supporting community health projects" and will require all NHS Boards and local authorities to adhere to Compact principles and the national Standards for Community Engagement.

The Scottish Socialist Party scores highly for its focus on communities, democracy and increased access to services, while the SNP continues its commitment to direct election of local people to NHS Boards and working in partnership with the VCS in CHPs.

But - after May 3rd, will the parties deliver, or will it be a case of "Often expectation fails, and most often there where most it promises" (All's well that ends well)?

In the coming weeks VHS will further analyse the manifestos and report back to members.



Who is hungry for success?

Since the publication of the Scottish Executive's initiative 'Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland' and the implementation of its recommendations, obesity in primary 1 schoolchildren has remained almost static at 9%. The proportion defined as overweight has also remained the same at 22%.

The statistics available for primary 7 children show that the proportion of those overweight has increased from 32.5% to 34%; obesity has increased slightly from 17.5% to 19.5% and severe obesity has risen from 10% to 11%.

One of the main risks to health is the persistence of obesity from childhood and adolescence to adulthood. More than 70% of obese children and more than 85% of obese adolescents will become obese adults.



Recent ISD statistics show that children in the more deprived 3rd, 4th and 5th quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) have higher levels of obesity than the wealthier 1st and 2nd quintiles, which can lead to a significant increase in cardiovascular risk factors, lower educational achievement, social isolation, low income and other long-term morbidity and mortality.

With the Scottish Executive having funded local authorities over £135 million to implement 'Hungry for Success', a positive change in these figures is due.

However, it is not solely up to the Executive to make these changes.

Local authorities need to attack

childhood obesity on several fronts. The provision of accessible sporting facilities is a key factor in keeping children fit and involved in exercise which in turn will manage children's weight.

In Edinburgh, the Council's decision to demolish Meadowbank Sports Stadium is causing great concern in local communities.

The Council plans to remove this large and respected sporting facility with no consultation with the community which may result in long term effects for the east of the City.

Although the west of the City at Sighthill will benefit from a new sports stadium from the sale of the Meadowbank site, facilities continue to be lost in the east.

In 2005 in Portobello the community was told it was to lose its 5-a-side football pitches for housing and the golf course for a school relocation - and to assist funding for the Sighthill centre Leith Waterworld is to close.

The common denominator in each of these examples is the local council closing or at least planning to close sporting facilities in an area of Edinburgh where they are in need.

The removal of facilities such as Meadowbank will make it more difficult to encourage children to take part in physical activity outside of school.

The Council should be reminded that one of the main aims of Community Planning Partnerships in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 is: "Making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on

public services which affect them .."

We also note that the British Medical Association recommended in February 2006 that: "There should be increased access to subsidised sporting facilities for both children and their parents. Ready access for those from more disadvantaged groups is particularly important."

The solution to childhood obesity is extremely complex: schools encouraging sport and healthy eating; parents encouraging increased physical activity and a healthy diet; government supporting opportunities for sport and leisure - all play a part.

Voluntary organisations such as Community Food and Health (Scotland) and Edinburgh Community Food Initiative (ECFI) are invaluable partners in promoting and delivering healthy food.

However, the City of Edinburgh Council now appears to believe that the long running Snack Attack programme from ECFI which supplied free and subsidised fruit for all Edinburgh primary schools since 1999 is no longer needed and is withdrawing funding.

If childhood obesity statistics are to be improved, communities and voluntary organisations need to be involved in decisions such as the removal of key sports centres and the delivery of healthy food programmes to schoolchildren.

Phil McAndrew

A single Commission for Equality and Human Rights

In October 2007 the Disability Rights Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission will be replaced by a single body.

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) will be a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) whose purpose is to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people and protect human rights.

The CEHR will take an active role in achieving change which will benefit some of the most vulnerable and least well represented people in society.

The CEHR will take on all of the powers of the existing Commissions as well as adopting new powers to enforce legislation more effectively and promote equality for all. The Commission will champion the diverse communities that make up modern Britain in their struggle against discrimination.

It will also promote awareness and understanding of human rights and encourage good practice by public authorities in meeting their Human Rights Act obligations. New powers on human rights cases will give a new arrow to the bow of many minorities who suffer discrimination.

The Commission will cover England, Scotland and Wales. In Scotland and Wales there will be statutory committees responsible for the work of the CEHR. The benefits of a single Commission include:

- ◆ bringing together equality experts and acting as a single source of information and advice - instead of the current separate organisations
- ◆ being a single point of contact for individuals, businesses and the voluntary and public sectors
- ◆ helping businesses by promoting awareness of equality issues
- ◆ tackling discrimination on multiple levels
- ◆ giving older people a powerful national body to tackle age discrimination

In addition to the new Commission a new Equality Duty came into force on 6th April. The Gender Equality Duty now joins the Disability Equality Duty and the Race Equality Duty in covering all public authorities.

Public bodies are now required to promote equality of opportunity in relation to race, disability and gender.

In addition, key public bodies are required to demonstrate how they are taking forward their responsibilities under the duties by publishing schemes setting out what they will do to promote equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment.

The Scottish Executive's Race Equality scheme was published in November 2002 and updated in November 2005 and the first Disability Equality scheme was published in December 2006.

For further information including copies of each Duty please refer to the CEHR website - <http://www.cehr.org.uk> - this also has links to the existing three Commissions.



New VCS workforce research

Recent research commissioned by VHS from Rock Solid Social Research has built on the initial enquiry of the voluntary and community sector workforce carried out by VHS and CHEX in 2006.

The follow-up enquiry aimed to understand better the skills and qualifications brought by the VCS to health improvement and to explore avenues for promoting ongoing CPD with the aim of moving towards:

- ◆ A greater range of learning opportunities accessible to the VCS public health workforce in Scotland, and
- ◆ Greater opportunities for skills crossover and shared learning within the multi-disciplinary public health workforce in Scotland.

The sample of 50 managers and development workers was selected from respondents to the 2006 joint enquiry by VHS and CHEX. The main conclusions of the enquiry are:

- ◆ The VCS Health Improvement workforce is highly qualified and experienced
- ◆ But there are limited links between job descriptions, knowledge and skills requirements and relevant competencies.
- ◆ Learning opportunities in some fields appear well developed and very relevant; they are less clear cut in other fields
- ◆ Learning opportunities delivered on a cross-sectoral basis need to be expanded
- ◆ There has been progress in tackling funding barriers by subsidising training, although less progress in provision of flexible work-place has been made.

VHS and CHEX continue to work together in this area - the full report of this enquiry will be available soon from VHS - helen.tyrrell@vhscotland.org.uk

Further training and development day for CHP members

Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) held a further successful training and development event for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) committee members of Community Health Partnerships (CHPs) at Falkirk Stadium on 15th of February.

The day was attended by CHP committee members, Public Partnership Forum (PPF) members and Scottish Executive staff.

The event was opened by Fiona Mackenzie, Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley, who emphasised the importance of the voluntary and community sector in delivering the health gains which are the overriding purpose of CHPs.

The other presenters included Roddy Duncan, leader of the Community Health Improvement Team in the Health Improvement Strategy Division at the Scottish Executive.

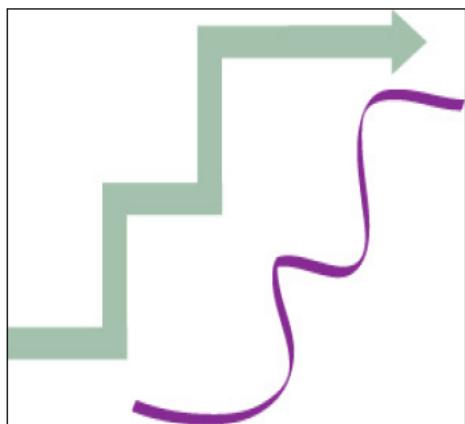
Roddy outlined the policy directive for community-led health improvement created by the Task Group and contained in the recommendations of *Healthy Communities: A Shared Challenge* (December 2006).

Finally, David Elder from NHS Health Scotland previewed the forthcoming Leadership for Health Improvement in Scotland training course.

All three presentations are

available from VHS.

The presentations were amplified by workshops which explored the levels of participation in CHPs achieved so far by the voluntary and community sector and identified future support needs.



In particular, VHS was seeking feedback on a simple-to-use appraisal tool - Good practice in CHP meetings appraisal questionnaire - which has been developed to assist our sector in assessing good and promising

practice in partnership working.

Soon, this will be sent out to all VCS CHP committee members and to CHP General Managers.

It has been developed with close reference to *Scottish Compact* principles and to the *National Standards for Community Engagement* and the NHS Scotland *Informing, Engaging and Consulting* guidance.

Many useful suggestions for taking forward action on ongoing support were made, and these are currently being reviewed.

They include building up the contacts database for CHPs and looking at ways in which we can work more effectively with intermediary bodies, both national and local, to provide support for promoting our sector's key role in CHPs.

A full report of the event can be obtained from Bill Weir at Bill.Weir@VHScotland.org.uk - tel: 0131 652 5993.

Voices for All - participation in developing guidelines for the NHS

SIGN (the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network) is the foremost health care guideline development network in the world.



Since 1994, SIGN has produced 97 guidelines laying out best practice in care for a great range of conditions and disabilities, based on up-to-date clinical evidence.

Hundreds of patients and members of the public have taken part so far in developing and reviewing these guidelines and have made extensive contribution to new patient versions of guidelines for the care of epilepsy in children and young people, coronary heart disease, lung cancer and dementia.

In partnership with VHS, SIGN is putting on an event at the Lighthouse in Glasgow on 18th May, to explore ways in which SIGN can involve a broader range of people in its work, in particular those who are affected by less common conditions or who find it difficult to make their voices heard in the NHS.

This is an opportunity to make a real difference to the work of SIGN and to patient and public participation.

The event is free, and some reimbursement of travel expenses may be available.

The building is fully accessible and BSL interpretation as well as information in different formats will be supplied as requested.

For further information contact either Helen Tyrrell in the first instance or Emma Cameron at SIGN - emma.cameron@nhs.net or on 0131 718 5090.

NESTA launches mental health initiative

The UK's National Endowment for Science, Technology & the Arts (NESTA) is to invest over half a million pounds in mental health initiatives across the UK.

NESTA's 'Innovation Challenges' is designed to create opportunities for innovation in response to major social issues

NESTA

such as mental health and climate change.

A new partnership between the Mental Health Foundation, Mental Health Media, Mind, Rethink, the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health and NESTA called *Innovations in Mental Health* aims to find and develop local ideas that - with the right support, funding and guidance - have the potential to grow into national projects with real impact.

NESTA is now calling for service-users and people with direct experience of mental distress, frontline mental health workers and carers to come forward with ideas on how to improve mental health services in the UK.

The deadline for applications is 5pm on 18th May.

Those with potential ideas can apply online on the NESTA website:
http://www.nesta.org.uk/programmes/challenges/call_for_proposals/index.aspx

Leadership for Health Improvement in Scotland

On 21st of March NHS Health Scotland launched the Leadership for Health Improvement Programme in Scotland.

The 120 delegates from the NHS, local authorities and the voluntary and community sector reflected the style of leadership which the Programme is promoting.

Traditional leaders are usually seen as distant, slightly heroic, figures; however NHS Health Scotland's leadership programme focuses on the model of dispersed leadership, where leadership is fostered throughout an organisation.

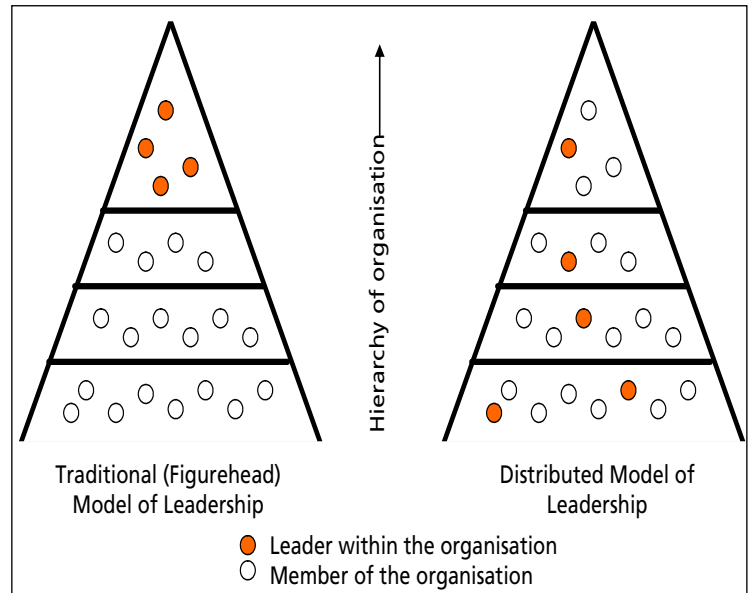
This model views leaders as people who get things done and who can influence others in a positive way, regardless of their occupational status or position in the organisation.

The Leadership for Health Improvement Programme will commence in May 2007 and is taking applications now.

The programme is aimed directly at people who are delivering health improvement activities, no matter what sector they are from.

It is hoped to develop a wide cohort of leaders, with complementary skills, who can work at local, regional and national levels to forward the Health Improvement agenda.

This will happen mainly under the umbrella of CHPs but it is also recognised that a great deal of so called "un-badged" health improvement work takes place in local communities, and it is hoped that many of the people engaged in such work locally will take part in



the Programme.

The cost of the programme will be £400 for the year and this includes all supporting material.

Participants will require to be supported by their organisations, but some help is available for community and voluntary sector applicants.

For further information, follow the link or contact David Elder, the Programme Leader at Health Scotland -
david.elder@health.scot.nhs.uk -
0131 536 5565

<http://www.healthscotland.com/learning/courses-and-conferences/leadership-for-health-improvement.aspx>

Funding cuts hit more voluntary sector organisations

Last month Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project (KASP) were informed that they faced a funding cut from Fife Council of approximately £10,000, representing 18% of their core budget.

KASP provides a wide range of free confidential counselling and support services to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse throughout North East Fife.

With this proposed cut the impact will be felt by the service users throughout the region.

The funding cut will have a direct impact on services including:

- ◆ A 50% reduction in direct one-to-one support from volunteer counsellors

- ◆ Withdrawal from the Fife-wide childhood sexual abuse training initiative via the Fife Domestic and Sexual Abuse Forum

At a time when the demand for support for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse has increased dramatically, the Council's decision to reduce funding seems to go against the Scottish Executive's strategy for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Meanwhile, this type of funding cut is happening with growing frequency up and down the country:

- ◆ The Ark Café in Edinburgh is facing closure within a few months due to the Council's withdrawal of funding.

The café provides hot, cheap food for up to 110 people every morning after a night sleeping rough or in hostels.

- ◆ A large part of Cornerstone's Community Support Service in Aberdeen will cease providing care for adults with learning disabilities and other special needs due to council funding cuts.

From mid-July the service will provide only 422 hours of care and support a week, compared to 1,040 hours a week in January.

- ◆ Scottish Huntington's Association has had a five figure sum withdrawn by North Ayrshire Council and a four figure sum by Moray Council. In both cases no consultation was held with the charity.



- ◆ The Maryhill Community Health

Project, which provided a range of help for new mothers, and North Glasgow Community Health Project, whose services included an oral health project, has been forced to shut after funding was cut by Glasgow City Council.

Raising the case for increased funding in the voluntary and community health sector will continue to be an important issue after the Elections.

VHS has already been involved in this lobbying process and is well placed to take this issue to the new Parliament.

If your organisation has suffered funding cuts or you are aware of any shortfalls to other organisations VHS needs to hear from you.

Please contact Phil McAndrew on 0131 652 5994 or email: phil.mcandrew@vhscotland.org.uk

HIV challenges for the new parliament

HIV rates in Scotland are at their highest ever, despite a general perception that HIV has disappeared to become a problem elsewhere.

HIV Scotland are the independent voice for HIV in Scotland and are calling for the next parliament to meet the challenges, reinforce the successes to date and look to new opportunities.

The actions being called for include:

- ◆ A national anti-stigma campaign, which promotes positive attitudes and community participation

- ◆ HIV prevention must be a public health priority with significant increases in funding, targeted to populations most affected, consistent with epidemiology and with the Scottish Compact

- ◆ Improved HIV testing and funding for HIV treatment and care must be fully available

- ◆ Harm reduction and comprehensive prevention must remain integral components of prevention strategies

- ◆ Government must aim to reduce inequalities in the enjoyment of good sexual health

- ◆ Political leaders can support the work of local HIV agencies and the Parliament's Cross Party Group on sexual health

For more information about HIV Scotland telephone 0131 558 3713 or visit www.hivscotland.com

Scotland's New Minority Ethnic Resource Library

Edinburgh-based voluntary organisation MECOPP (Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project) has launched a national resource library for Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

Supported by the Big Lottery Fund, the library holds information on a variety of health and social care issues.

While MECOPP works specifically to support carers from Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the Lothians, the new library encompasses a much wider range of subjects, for example, housing, education and employment, and can be accessed by anyone in Scotland.



Materials of interest to professionals include reports, policy documents, studies and training materials published by the statutory, voluntary and academic sectors. These titles, to date numbering over 1,200, are available for borrowing.

Titles for the public include advice and information leaflets & booklets on numerous topics in minority community languages.

The library currently holds over 1,700 titles in Bengali, Chinese, Punjabi, Urdu alone. There are

also a number of titles available on audio and video.

The library's entire catalogue can be accessed and searched via MECOPP's web site by subject, language and resource type. Titles can then be requested by email or phone and sent to the user.

Postage and packing will need to be reimbursed but this is the only charge made for use of the library.

Many titles, however, are also available in electronic form as PDFs and can be emailed immediately at no cost.

The new library has taken almost 3 years to develop and is partly an extension of a directory of health resources in Minority Ethnic community languages, 'Information for All', that MECOPP researched for NHS Health Scotland (2005), and partly the organisation's ongoing commitment to providing multi-lingual advice and information.

MECOPP's aim is to make the library the principal source of information for anyone working with Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

For further details, please contact the Information Development Officer at:

MECOPP Carers Centre
23 Leith Walk
Edinburgh EH6 8LN

Telephone: 0131 467 2994

Email: library@mecopp.org.uk

Website: www.mecopp.org.uk

Opening of incubator for social innovation

Edinburgh's first incubator for social innovation is being opened in the heart of the city.

A new social enterprise – The Melting Pot – has secured premises with an innovative property company, The Ethical Property Company, and will be opened later this summer.

The Melting Pot offers affordable and flexible office space in central Edinburgh, with a strong focus on fostering networks and opportunities for collaboration.

The space will provide state of the art, eco-friendly serviced work and meeting spaces and access to resources by the hour, day or month. These will be made available on a membership basis to individuals and organisations from across the social enterprise, environment and charity sectors.



As a grassroots organisation The Melting Pot supports those with visions of social and environmental change.

Claire Carpenter, The Melting Pot's Development Director said: "Getting premises is a big leap forward for us as a grassroots organisation. Now we can really get going. Social change organisations from local sole traders to charities and NGOs coming to the city to lobby will no longer need to rely on cafes or libraries to hold meetings."

To find out more about The Melting Pot and to register your interest in becoming a member, please use the registration form on their website: <http://www.themeltingpotedinburgh.org.uk> or telephone Claire on 0845 458 3211

Scottish Community Foundation launches new Community Investment Programme

The Scottish Community Foundation is inviting proposals to its new programme, which offers grants of between £10,000 and £50,000 (up to £25,000 per year for up to 2 years) to support activities relating to three investment areas:



- ◆ Building enterprising communities - supporting creative and innovative ideas that develop local talents, assets and resources for community benefit.
- ◆ Connecting generations - helping people develop sustainable relationships that span generations, enabling all age groups to participate in and contribute to community life.
- ◆ Repositioning Organisations - assisting established organisations to evolve in order to best reflect the changing needs of their communities.

This new Community Investment Programme complements the Foundation's ongoing small grants programmes and reflects a strategic approach to achieving the Foundation's vision of strong, successful communities.

In keeping with the Foundation's emphasis on supporting smaller, grass-roots organisations, grants will be made to community groups and charities with an annual income of under £250,000.

And to ensure that the Foundation's investment makes

a significant impact, requests must be for at least 50% of total project costs.

Grants can support a wide range of costs and activities, but will not fund purely capital projects.

The deadline for receipt of initial proposals is Monday 30 April 2007. Details and Proposal Forms are available at www.scottishcf.org or by calling 0141 225 6670.

Public Health Legislation in Scotland - consultation update

The Scottish Executive Health Department ran a consultation on "Public Health Legislation in Scotland" between October 2006 and January 2007.

Scotland-wide seminars attracted 180 interested parties, including voluntary sector organisations, public health professionals and local authority representatives.

The written consultation document received 98 responses. Together with the analysis from the seminar sessions the findings will help draft a new Public Health Bill in Scotland.

Highlights from the analysis include:

- ◆ Most of the respondents favoured local health protection plans
- ◆ The vast majority was in favour of repealing the Aids (Control) Act 1987
- ◆ The majority view was in favour of changing the status quo and including sexually transmitted infections in a new notification system
- ◆ Most favoured making it a statutory duty to divulge information during public health outbreaks or incidents

- ◆ Most agreed that there appeared to be a gap in current legislation to deal with threats from the environment
- ◆ It was commonly thought that both light and insect pollution were areas of nuisance which should be included in any expansion
- ◆ 70% agreed that the NHS should charge the police for the use of mortuaries.

VHS was concerned that voluntary and community groups were not involved in the consultation process and had to discover the consultation by their own means.

It should be highlighted that it is often frontline organisations such as those in the voluntary sector working with those affected by HIV / AIDS and community based projects in poor urban environments (e.g. near rubbish tips, disused factories) who have to respond first to public health crises.



Public health risks are more often undergone by those who are already disadvantaged.

The research findings and the complete research publication are available on the VHS website at: http://www.vhscotland.org.uk/library/executive/exec_pub.html

e-news bulletins

In addition to this quarterly newsletter Voluntary Health Scotland issues regular e-news bulletins by email.

If you would like to receive this please contact phil.mcandrew@vhscotland.org.uk or call 0131 557 6845

From Social Economy to Social Enterprise: in the business of improving health

Voluntary Health Scotland hosted this conference in Edinburgh on 27th February, to highlight the actual and potential contribution of social enterprise to health improvement in Scotland.



VHS believes that in the context of community-led action for health, the role of social enterprise in health improvement is still under-recognised.

Social enterprise already makes a significant contribution to health improvement in key areas - employability and employment, economic and environmental regeneration, mental health improvement and the promotion of well-being, physical activity, healthy food production and consumption.

Engaging in social enterprise is of itself health-producing, building confidence, self-esteem and shared skills in individuals and communities.

Opened by Rhona Brankin, Minister for Communities, the VHS Conference was skilfully chaired by Declan Jones, Director of the Social Enterprise Institute at Heriot-Watt University.

Delegates heard the case for scaling up of the social enterprise approach to health

in Scotland (from Antonia Swinson of the Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition); gained advice on how to go about developing a successful social enterprise (from Kevin Robbie, Forth Sector Enterprises); learnt about government's approach to supporting social enterprise (from Alistair Thornley, Scottish Enterprise).

Stephen Maxwell of SCVO warned that until public service demand was geared to purchase more from the voluntary sector, progress would be hampered, while Andrew Lyon of the International Futures Forum painted a vision of health in a post-modernist society where inclusion, participation and diversity led to the creation of community resources.

Meet the Experts sessions enabled delegates to gain from the real experience of leading on social enterprise in a variety of contexts (Colin Campbell, Senscot; Bill Gray, Community Food and Health Scotland; Chris Dabbs, National Social Enterprise Network (England) and Roddy Macdonald, Communities Scotland).

The theory of social enterprise was brought to life by vivid examples from the field, provided by the Coach House Trust (Glasgow), Redhall Walled Garden (Edinburgh) and Aberdeen Foyer.

Meantime, the long-awaited social enterprise strategy *Better business: a strategy and action plan for social enterprise in Scotland* was launched at the end of the last government (30th March 2007), accompanied by £1.5m to promote the aims of the Strategy -



http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/otcs_018661.pdf and a new publication, *Good Company*, has been created for everyone interested in social, co-operative and ethical enterprise - www.good-company.info

All the VHS conference presentations are available on the VHS website.

Forthcoming events

23rd May: Recovery Down Under Event

Working to Recovery are hosting an event specifically designed for service users and carers in Dundee on May 23rd, featuring speakers from New Zealand and Australia.

The event aims to learn from the successes and failures elsewhere in promoting recovery and to offer a platform for open and honest discussion of recovery for service users and carers.

For more information or to book a place please contact Working to Recovery on info@workingtorecovery.co.uk or on 01382 542 517.

4th June: Dementia Deserves Better - Make dementia a priority in the 21st century

This conference will be held at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and will focus on the twin challenges of the rapidly increasing numbers of people with dementia and the need for improved services throughout the course of the illness.

A programme and booking form is available at: <http://www.vhscotland.org.uk/events/conf.html>

GPs give cautious welcome to social prescribing

A small pilot project in Glasgow has asked GPs about referring or signposting their patients to community-based services for help with issues such as smoking cessation, weight management, mental health difficulties and parenting.

Participating GPs said that while they supported a social model of health, certain factors inhibited partnership working with local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations.

These included:

- ◆ A limited knowledge of local programmes and services
- ◆ The perceived instability of local groups
- ◆ Frequent changes of personnel and contact details
- ◆ Reservations about local VCS organisations being reputable
- ◆ Lack of feedback on the

outcome of referrals or signposting

These issues will be familiar to us - indeed VHS, CHEX and other networks are working together to achieve greater sustainability for our sector, while research into professional development and the building of workforce competence is being carried out by VHS and CHEX.

But what of the practical issues of maintaining local databases of services - could CVSs develop this role for CH(C)Ps? How would this be funded?

Importantly too, the ongoing need for care for Scotland's 2 million people living with long-term disabilities and conditions has been recognised through funding for the new Scottish Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland which includes organisations such as Alzheimer's Scotland, the MS Society and Arthritis Care.

GPs will need to be aware of the services offered by these and many others and will need to liaise

increasingly effectively with them if adequate support is to be provided.

Questions for possible further research suggested by the Glasgow team include:

- ◆ Identifying effective social referral and signposting
- ◆ An exploration of good practice in social prescribing
- ◆ An exploration of the experiences of voluntary and community sector organisations in encouraging GPs to make referrals and signposting

VHS is keen to convey your views on this to the research team - contact Helen Tyrrell at VHS - helen.tyrrell@vhscotland.org.uk or on 0131 652 5992

Long-term Conditions Alliance Scotland - www.lctas.org.uk - contact Shelley Grey on 0131 474 8023

Is work good for your health and well-being?

Increasing employment and employability are key elements of the UK Government's public health and welfare reform agendas. The independent review, *Is Work Good for Your Health and Well-being?* commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), examines the benefits of work for the most common health problems accounting for two-thirds of sickness absence and long-term incapacity.

The report evidences the therapeutic benefit of work as reversing the adverse ill-effects of unemployment for many with disabilities and chronic common health problems.

This evidence supports the roll-out

of a new initiative from the DWP in Scotland.

New claimants among Scotland's 300,000 Incapacity Benefit claimants can self-refer through Jobcentre Plus to Condition Management Programmes where NHS staff, including Allied Health Professionals, help people to manage common conditions such as back pain, arthritis, cardio-vascular problems and depression, through pain and stress management approaches, exercises, goal setting, healthy eating and exercise.

Those participating in the Pathways to Work programme and finding work can receive an additional £40 per week for up to 52 weeks for salaries less than £15k pa.

VHS will meet with the Programme leaders in Scotland to promote the added value of including the voluntary and community sector in the support and advice on offer - in areas such as confidence-building, self-help for chronic pain and mental ill-health, access to opportunities for healthy exercise and eating and welfare advice.

We hope to report back soon on partnership opportunities in increasing employability for people with long-term conditions.

Is Work Good for Your Health and Well-being?

<http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/books/tore.asp?Action=Book&ProductId=0117036943>