

Better Health Better Care - new Health Action Plan launched

In a ministerial statement (12/12/07) the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Nicola Sturgeon, launched the new Health Action Plan *Better Health, Better Care*.

This follows extensive consultation in the autumn of this year, at the end of which written responses to the consultation document *Better Health, Better Care* numbered 600.

VHS submitted a response on behalf of its 310 members in which we urged Government to make better use of Scotland's thousands of community and voluntary groups in improving health and tackling inequalities through Community Planning processes and in partnering the NHS to improve primary care for excluded groups and those with long-term conditions through Community Health Partnerships.

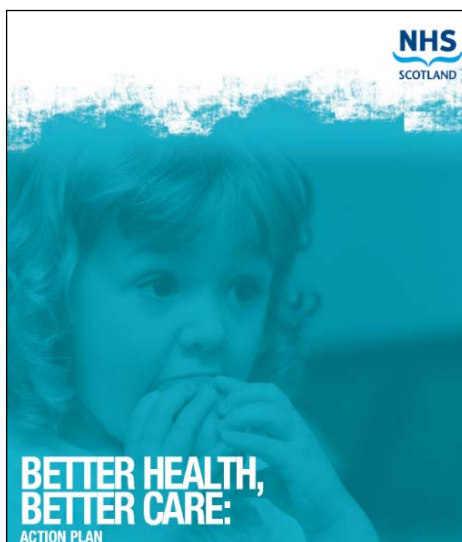
We advocated for a broader community-based health improvement focus in the forthcoming Action Plan.

The announcement signalled an even stronger commitment to participation and involvement by patients and the public and a radical shift to a publicly owned and mutual NHS.

We were told that this Government "rejects completely the market-based model followed elsewhere in the UK".

We are reassured that involving people, tackling health

inequalities and improving health, including mental health, and ensuring a good start in life remain top priorities - and that there is, this time, a more specific commitment to working with our sector - "The value added contribution of Scotland's network of voluntary and community organisations is already significant, but more must be done to foster this important partnership.



NHS Boards are required to work with local third sector organisations to understand and develop the potential contribution they can make to improving the effectiveness of health improvement and health care planning and delivery".

We are also very pleased that strong voices from our sector seeking ongoing commitment to the recommendations of *Healthy Communities: a shared challenge* (the Community-led Task Group), which was absent in the consultation document, have been heard: "The Scottish Government is

committed to improving the capacity of the third sector to reduce health inequalities.

We are continuing to implement the recommendations of the 2006 report of the community-led task group, by supporting commissioners and funders on the one hand and community-led services on the other, to work better together in achieving shared outcomes".

And in addition, our serious concerns about unsustainable funding: "We heard from people working in, or benefiting from, third sector organisations and initiatives, who were concerned about their ability to provide or receive these services over the longer term.

We will therefore establish a national review of the way in which NHSScotland supports these organisations to explore ways in which we can enhance the sustainability of programmes that demonstrate clear benefit."

This is indeed heartening. However, the challenge will be to identify new and ongoing sources of funding and support in an ever-tightening financial climate.

Better Health, Better Care can be accessed through the VHS website - http://www.vhscotland.org.uk/library/executive/better_health_better_care_action_plan.pdf

For further information, contact Helen Tyrrell - helen.tyrrell@vhscotland.org.uk or phone: 0131 652 5992

Editorial

As 2007 ends, we are mulling over the implications of new information from a still new government.

We now have a modest increase in funding for Scotland's Third Sector and a commitment in the country's latest health action plan to making real and effective use of the thousands of voluntary and community organisations engaged in improving and maintaining health.

This Government agrees that more must be done to foster this important partnership.

But will this mean greater sustainability for the voluntary and community health sector?

And how will the rhetoric balance out against the increasingly precarious position of the many groups and organisations funded by local authorities?

In the face of these strategic challenges, which have to be managed on a daily basis, it is at times difficult to remain fully focused on our sector's purpose: to improve the lives of people affected by poverty, illness and disability; to help those who are isolated and in despair.

And, at this time of year especially, we must make sure that organisations like Age Concern, The Ark in Edinburgh and Samaritans are able to continue the valuable frontline work which they have done for so long.

With this in mind we at VHS would like to wish all our members and readers a very happy Christmas and a prosperous 2008.

Helen Tyrrell

Samaritans and the not so festive season

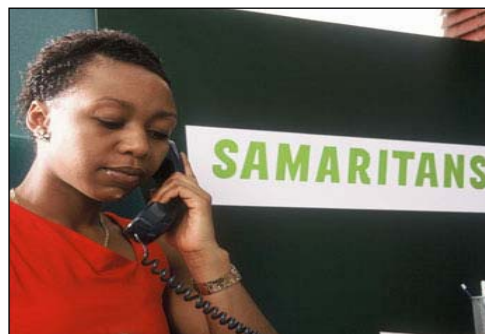
At midnight on Christmas Eve, all over the UK, when many of us are wishing loved ones a happy Christmas, Samaritan volunteers are answering calls, e-mails and texts from people for whom the Festive Season is far from cheerful.

Every six seconds over the Christmas and New Year period, someone contacts Samaritans because they cannot cope: those who have lost someone, people living alone, those working here from abroad, those struggling with debt and the high expectations of others, and people who are coping with illness.

The pressure to be extra happy and sociable at this time of the year adds stress that can become intolerable.

Our calls rise in January until the middle of February, and our 24:7 service, provided by 950 volunteers in Scotland, working from 20 branches throughout the country, ensures that there is always someone there at the end of the phone.

Unaddressed emotional distress, stress and depression are on a frightening continuum, and can lead, for some, to thoughts of suicide.



Calls to Samaritans are rising year on year - we dealt with over 150,000 in Scotland in 2006 - and we can hope that this is because it is becoming more acceptable to ask for help, rather than

fearing that emotional distress is itself on the increase.

Samaritans' public number is 08457 909090.

For further information about Samaritans, contact Frances Simpson: f.simpson@samaritans.org - or 01382 561372

VHS website improvements

In addition to hosting an online discussion forum, the VHS website now provides a library of over 500 publications from a wide range of sources including the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government, VHS itself, the various NHS bodies in Scotland and other voluntary sector organisations.

This library allows the user to search for material by publication category

(NHS, Government, VHS etc.), source and Boolean text search.

The news pages have also been recently refreshed to allow easy searching through nearly 800 relevant press articles. The next stage in enhancing the VHS website will introduce an easy to use and searchable events section.

Visit www.vhscotland.org.uk to access the new search features.

CHP "surgeries" - a partnership between Voluntary Health Scotland and members of the CVS Network

Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) is working in partnership with SCVO to host a series of CHP "surgeries" at which Bill Weir, VHS Partnership Development Officer, will be available to discuss the latest VHS Advice Note, *The role of the voluntary sector committee member of CHPs*, and answer queries on any other aspects of voluntary sector involvement in CHPs.

Bill has been involved at national level in CHP development for almost five years now and the surgeries are just one of the ways in which VHS has been supporting the active participation of the voluntary and community sector in CHPs.

Up to six surgeries are scheduled for the period December 2007 - March 2008, with two surgeries having taken place already in Aberdeen and Kirkintilloch.

They will be in different locations across Scotland and may be stand-alone events or part of a larger event which the CVS is already hosting.

Each surgery will run for 2-3 hours as a drop-in session, with some time reserved for one-to-one discussion if required.

The format is however very flexible. The aims of the surgeries are:

- ◆ to strengthen voluntary

and community sector (VCS) partnership working with members of the CVS Network, where 37 CVSs are members of VHS;

- ◆ to support greater statutory sector awareness and involvement of the voluntary and community sector in CHPs;
- ◆ to support greater public awareness of and involvement in CHPs

The two surgeries which have taken place to date have attracted an audience of NHS and voluntary sector staff, members of CHP committees and PPFs and have generated a list of possible actions which participants wish to take forward at local level.

These include a local development day for the voluntary sector and a possible pilot around volunteering for health improvement.

Also mooted was a series of action planning events for one CHP, involving all partners taking part in workshop style scenarios to

explore individual topics and view theoretical changes from every perspective.

This would give all partners a chance to understand each other better and to see how their own actions affected others in the partnership.

Forthcoming surgeries are being planned for:

Dumfries and Galloway - late January / early February 2008

North Lanarkshire - early 2008

Renfrewshire - date to be confirmed

For more information contact Bill Weir at bill.weir@vhscotland.org.uk or on 0131 652 5993

Meningitis Trust increases community presence in Scotland

This year the Meningitis Trust marks a major milestone as we celebrate our 21st birthday.

It is at this significant milestone that we are increasing our community presence in Scotland. For thousands of people who have been and continue to be affected by meningitis, and for those who sadly will be affected in the future, the Meningitis Trust is a lifeline.

We provide free information and support through:

- ◆ a 24-hour freephone helpline led by nurses offering information and support in over 100 languages - Tel: 0800 0281828
- ◆ professional counselling
- ◆ home visiting service by our Community Services Nurse
- ◆ financial grants to help fund specialist equipment, respite care and funeral costs

Next year we will be building on the successes of our 'Family Days' held in England and Northern Ireland in 2007 by holding our first family day in Scotland in the spring or early summer.

Our family days are an opportunity for families affected by meningitis to get together and share their experiences of the illness. Children are able to express their experiences of meningitis through art and play in a safe environment.

If you would like information about our family day, please contact Kerry Ross on 0845 120 4883

KerryR@meningitis-trust.org or visit our website: www.meningitis-trust.org/Family-Support.html

The Meningitis Trust in Scotland relies on donations for 99% of its income. If you would like to support our work, please contact Katherine Russell on 0845 120 4885 katheriner@meningitis-trust.org

VHS lobbies Parliament in support of community health initiatives

Last year, VHS joined forces with CHEX, Community Food and Health Scotland and the UKPHA in Scotland to raise awareness of the severe threats to community health work in Scotland.

In this, we were supported by the Scottish Green Party's Mark Ballard, who sponsored a very successful members' debate in November 2006.

18 MSPs from across all parties gave their support for the valuable work carried out by community health



projects and healthy living centres (which, when mental health and substance abuse work are included, account for around a third of the VHS membership). Since then, changes in membership

of the Scottish Parliament and a new Government in Scotland have required us to seek out new sources of support at a time when community initiatives are daily hearing news of funding cuts signifying major loss of capacity and even closure, with up to 60% of healthy living centres currently affected in this way.

Our four organisations are pleased that Christine Grahame, SNP member for the south of Scotland and Convenor of the Health and Sport Committee, has agreed to sponsor a combined stand in one of the Parliament's foyers over the days **Tuesday 26th - Thursday 28th February, 9.00am - 4.30pm.**

We are therefore seeking a small number of volunteers to help us to man the stand.

If you work in a community health initiative or a local voluntary organisation and can offer a two and a half hour shift on one of these days, with the chance of lobbying individual MSPs, we should like to hear from you - contact phil.mcandrew@vhscotland.org.uk.

VHS will pay expenses as well as offering refreshments at the Parliament's café either before or after the shift.

Later in the spring, we will be working with Christine Grahame towards setting up a meeting with members of the parliamentary Health and Sport Committee.

For further information, contact: helen.tyrrell@vhscotland.org.uk tel: 0131 652 5992, Janet Muir: janet@scdc.org.uk, or Bill Gray: bgray@scotconsumer.org.uk

CHPs Three Years on: productive partnerships with the third sector

There is a great deal of interest in Voluntary Health Scotland's forthcoming conference on 20th February 2008 at the Edinburgh Airport Hilton and places are being booked up very quickly.

Voluntary and community sector organisations and NHS and local authority partners interested in attending are advised to reserve a place soon.

All exhibition space has now been filled and we have secured a wide range of exhibitors from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. Any new requests for stands will be placed on a reserve list.

The themes for the day include:

- ◆ Health Improvement in CHPS -

the contribution of the voluntary and community sector (VCS)

- ◆ Achieving greater public involvement in CHPs through the engagement of the VCS
- ◆ Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) - their role in CHPs
- ◆ Showcasing success - stories from the field

Further details and a booking form can be found at: www.vhscotland.org.uk/events/conf.html



For more information please contact Alison Crofts on 0131 557 6845 or email: alison.crofts@vhscotland.org.uk

An enhanced role for the third sector - does the funding fit the vision?

The Scottish Budget Spending Review (14/11/07) announced the tightest settlement from the UK Treasury since devolution.

And a concomitant target of 2% cash-releasing efficiency savings each year has been set.

At the same time, a new concordat between Government and COSLA and the removal of ring-fencing aims to devolve greater control over public spending to local authorities.

And there is a freeze on Council Tax payments in preparation for the introduction of a new system.

Together, national and local Government in Scotland will sign up to a small number of strategic objectives - smarter, wealthier and fairer, greener, safer and stronger, and healthier - which will have supporting outcomes and national performance indicators.

Within the Single Outcome Agreement the only indicator directly reflecting voluntary and community sector activity is Indicator 18 - an increase in the social economy turnover.

Nationally, an extra 37% funding earmarked for the third sector consists of a £63 million development programme to support an "enterprising third sector" and a £30 million Scottish Investment Fund to help us "fulfil an increasing role in providing public services".

This clearly implies harnessing the economic power of our sector.

The overall Health and Wellbeing Budget of £11.2 billion for 2008 - 2009 demonstrates the Government's commitment to a healthier Scotland, including increased spending to combat alcohol and tobacco misuse, step up physical activity and encourage healthy eating to combat obesity.

Extra resources go to improving access to primary care and NHS dentistry.

Tackling inequalities will run throughout all health programmes and there will be additional portfolio investment through equality, community regeneration, sport and housing initiatives with an implicit mission to improve health.

But with Health Budget funding for the third sector located under General Services, it is not easy to determine if a share of the national extra 37% will find its way to the local health-focused third sector, or what kind of initiatives it will fund.

This all adds up to mixed news for the voluntary and community health sector. Launching the ACOSVO Conference on 30th November, John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, repeated the Government's commitment to the "transformational potential of the third sector" and said that he was "delighted that the sector had been taken away from the periphery of government and put centre-stage".

As the curtain falls on 2007, it is not yet fully clear what kind of third sector performance is envisaged or whether the vision is shared by all.

Helen Tyrrell



Helping older people to stay warm at Christmas

At this time of year it is important to remember how the cold weather can affect older people.

In the winter of 2005 / 2006 over 1700 more older people died in Scotland than in the summer of 2005.

It is because of this that Age Concern Scotland has again provided older people and organisations working with older people with its very popular and highly in demand *Hot Tips* booklet.

This booklet is a guide for keeping warm, safe and most importantly healthy. The guide has already been sent out to a wide variety of places, including large numbers of Age Concern Scotland members for local distribution, but it can also be ordered from the Scottish Helpline for Older People on 0845 1259732.

On the policy front, the New Year also promises to have an impact on the health of older people with new guidance on NHS Continuing Care due from NHS Scotland.

The new guidance will, it is hoped, clarify the difference between the social care that local authorities provide (and may charge for) and the health care which the NHS should provide free.

In March Lord Sutherland will produce a report on the Free Nursing and Personal Care Policy (FNPC) and will make recommendations for improvements in the way in which local authorities deliver FNPC.

For further information, contact: Douglas McLellan, Policy Advisor, Age Concern Scotland
Tel: 0845 8339326 or e-mail: douglas.mclennan@acscot.org.uk

Re-building the Ark

Since 1936 the Ark in Edinburgh's Old Town has been providing hot food, clothing, laundry and refuge for many of the City's most vulnerable homeless people.



The men and women who come to the Ark have multiple needs, their homelessness compounded by alcohol and drug problems, mental and physical ill-health, social isolation and stigma.

In June this year, however, withdrawal of Council funding led to the closure of the café which served over 80 breakfasts a day and provided washing facilities, clean clothes and a supportive, non-judgemental, open-door environment.

For the present, the Ark is being operationally managed by Streetwork UK in Edinburgh, which ensures its ongoing commitment to Space 44, a dedicated safe place for 35 destitute women who are homeless, often serially abused and extra vulnerable on the city streets in a very unsafe environment.

The Ark is also continuing with

its tenancy support service through the Supporting People Programme.

The Ark's Board has a strong vision for the Ark's future: they have updated the operational and risk management procedures and are working towards an Investors in People Award.

The Ark's vision is for a holistic approach to re-building lives, whole person health and offering volunteering, skills development and job opportunities.



THE ARK CHRISTMAS MEAL.

£1 million is needed to re-build the Ark, however, and they are appealing for donations - even £3.50 will sponsor a hot meal ticket.

To donate to the Ark this Christmas and into 2008, please contact savetheark@streetwork.org.uk or telephone 0131 476 2023.

For more information about the Ark contact Tam Hendry at Streetwork UK on 0131 476 3666 or Lesley Blackmore at Lothian Health Projects Forum, email: lesley.blackmore@lhb.scot.nhs.uk or tel: 0131 536 3540.

Mental health improvement messages report

NHS Health Scotland recently commissioned a report to assess the strength of the evidence for mental health improvement messages and to establish the views of the public and professionals on what are



sometimes referred to as 'positive steps' for mental health.

This report *Mental Health Improvement: Evidence Based Messages to Promote Mental Wellbeing* is now available at:

www.healthscotland.com/documents/2188.aspx

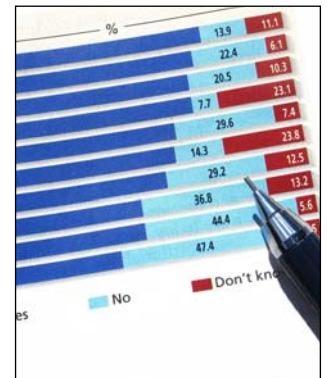
Member survey shows support for VHS services

VHS recently surveyed their membership on their satisfaction with the services provided to them. The overall message was positive, with members approving the services in varying degrees.

Of those participating in the survey, 45% were national organisations and the remainder were local. Of the total, 47% had an annual turnover of less than £200,000 and 53% with over £200,000.

86% of respondents believed that the work which VHS carries out in the areas of health improvement and health care was balanced about right for their organisation's interests.

The regular members' VHS Briefing was rated excellent or very good by 87% and good by 13%, which encourages us to produce even bigger and better Briefings in the future.



The monthly e-news bulletins which reach a wide and ever increasing circulation were rated excellent or very good by 79% and good by 21%.

When asked how they rate the members' services provided by VHS, 80% responded 'highly', 13% responded 'moderately' and only 7% said 'poorly'.

The majority of respondents, 93%, believed that the services provided to members by VHS were value for money.

Contact phil.mcandrew@vhscotland.org.uk for more details.

Research shows VCS makes vital contribution to health improvement in CHPs

The key role played by the voluntary and community sector in health improvement is re-affirmed through new research undertaken by VHS entitled *The role of the Voluntary and Community sector in Health Improvement in CHPs*.

In order to modernise the health sector and establish opportunities for improving the health of the local population, Community Health Partnerships (CHPs) were established in 2004 to act as a vehicle for partnership working within the health sector and with partners in local authorities and the voluntary and community sector.

It was within this context and in order to inform the upcoming VHS conference, *CHPs Three Years On: productive partnerships with the third sector* (20th February 2008) that VHS undertook an investigation of the contribution of the VCS to health improvement within CHPs.

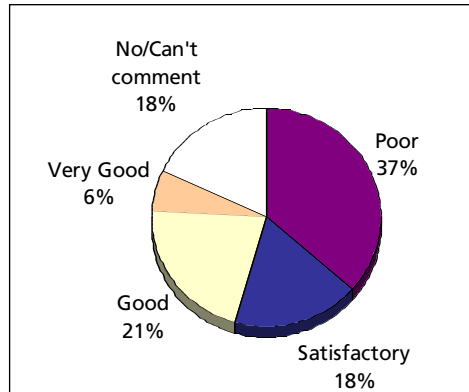
This research reviews the progress of CHPs in taking forward an integrative approach to health improvement and offers suggestions for good practice within CHPs.

The results are based on responses from 33 senior members of VCS organisations from across Scotland who participated in a 20 minute telephone questionnaire.

Some of the key findings from the research include:

- ◆ the VCS is making a vital contribution to health improvement, realised through the provision of services in response to unmet need;
- ◆ the VCS is adding value to CHPs through their localised approach, ability to meet community and user needs, and application of practical community knowledge;

- ◆ less than half of CHPs are working in partnership to an extent that the VCS believe is satisfactory;



VCS appraisal of the working partnerships within CHPs

- ◆ it appears that CHPs as a whole are struggling to deliver on their remit to act as a channel for the community to voice their health care needs.

In the full report, to be published early 2008, suggestions for future joint action of CHPs and the VCS organisations working within them will be highlighted.

These should improve the VCS ability to deliver their specialist health improvement services critical to maintaining the health of local people.

Intermediary bodies, including Voluntary Health Scotland, will continue to take a strategic role in ensuring that the service delivery potential of the VCS is met.

This research was carried out by Jennifer Foley, an intern at VHS and recent MSc graduate of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

For further information, please contact Helen Tyrrell, VHS Director on 0131 557 6845 or email: helen.tyrrell@vhscotland.org.uk

Thistle Foundation Lifestyle Management Programme update

The Thistle Foundation in Edinburgh supports disabled people to lead full and active lives by developing services with its clients that are relevant and appropriate to their needs, as well as by being a catalyst for changes in service delivery and acting as advocate for an inclusive society.

The Thistle Foundation are running Lifestyle Management Courses which are 10-week programmes of group-based sessions lasting three hours each and presented by two trained course facilitators.

The courses are free of charge and are designed to make use of and build on participants' own recovery strategies and delivered within a framework of planned discussions, safe and appropriate exercise and therapeutic relaxation.

Participants are likely to find themselves suited to the course if they feel ready to focus on what they can do to improve their situation.

This means they typically agree on the goals of the course and on how the group will run.

The facilitators' "method" is to strongly acknowledge the difficulties participants face in increasing control over their situation and to focus on small improvements as the course develops.

Course dates for January are available from the Lifestyle Management Team, tel: 0131 661 3366, email lifestyle@thistle.org.uk

The new Big Lottery Research Programme

Many voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations are keen to research the needs of particular groups of people in order to advocate for policy and service change. Others wish to demonstrate the impact of particular interventions.

Most organisations in our sector lack the resources or the capacity to carry out large-scale or scientific primary research and while some very successful partnerships with academic institutions have been forged, there can sometimes be a mis-match between the research priorities of university departments and those of the voluntary sector.

Now, the Big Lottery has launched a research programme which will award



grants of between £10K and £500K (totalling up to £25 million) over 2007 to VCS organisations to support high quality health and social research.

The aim of the Programme is to produce and disseminate robust research-based knowledge that reflects VCS priorities and will influence local and national policy and practice, in order to improve people's lives.

Importantly, while partnerships with the wider research community, including academic institutions are being encouraged, the research questions will be framed by the VCS lead and service users will be involved meaningfully in directing and disseminating the research as well as carrying it out if they wish.

The Programme was launched in late October 2007 and pre-applications seminars were put on in November to assist prospective applicants, with further applicant support seminars to follow in January 2008.

A wide range of organisations is already interested. The deadline for submission of round one (there are three rounds) applications is 28th February 2008. Development grants of up to £10K are also available in the first round of the Programme to support organisations with limited research experience to develop good ideas into viable research projects.

Applicants for both types of grant need to obtain a password by registering on-line at: www.bigresearchprogramme.org.uk - the Programme Helpline is on 0845 0711068 or e-mail: researchprograme@aeat.co.uk - the Guidance Notes are at: www.bigresearchprogramme.org.uk/content.php?key=home

The **VHS annual report 2006 - 2007** is now available at www.vhscotland.org.uk/library/vhs/VHS%20AR%202006_07.pdf



Update on Equalities and Planning Directorate

Health Scotland's Directorate of Equalities and Planning will be established within the next six months and will bring together the work of the Fair for All teams with NHS Health Scotland's Policy and Planning team to support boards to promote equality, tackle discrimination and contribute to NHS Scotland's efforts to reduce inequalities in Health.

Since September, NHS Health Scotland's Chief Executive, Graham Robertson, has been meeting Health Boards as part of the consultation process and is continuing to do so.

The feedback from the consultations will help shape the new Directorate.

Meantime the Scottish Government published the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) Annual Report 2007 in which it sets out its commitment to achieve disability equality and the steps that it has taken, and will take, across Government to meet its disability equality duties.



The report also highlights how the recent change in government will impact on the structure and content of the DES and how the Scottish Government plans to publish a revised Scheme by end of March 2008 in which it will take account of the areas for improvement identified by the Disability Rights Commission.

Government announces £45 million spending to tackle silent killer as Glasgow shows worst Hepatitis C rates in the UK

The Scottish Government has announced £45 million is to be ploughed into Hepatitis C services in Scotland over the next three years in a bid to challenge the spread of the chronic virus.

Over 22,000 Scots have tested positive for Hepatitis C, but over 55,000 - 1% of the population, are estimated to have the virus.

Greater Glasgow has the highest prevalence of Hepatitis C with almost 40% of all those infected in Scotland residing there and performs worst of all UK cities.

In many cases sufferers present no symptoms, with the virus slowly multiplying in the body until the later stages of life, when it can result in liver disease and in the worst cases liver failure.

Louise Chisholm, Manager of C-Level, one of the main Hepatitis C charities in Scotland and based in Glasgow commented "The new funding is great news for those affected and we welcome this Government's commitment to tackling this serious health issue, particularly in Glasgow where rates of infection are so high.

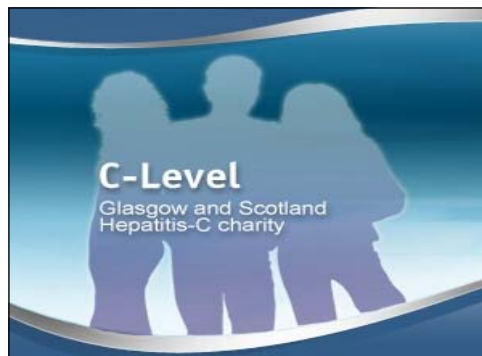
It's important that this money is dispersed so that it reaches those who will really benefit - the people at risk and those accessing testing, treatment and care."

£6 million will go to NHS boards in 2008 for the Hepatitis C Action Plan Implementation as outlined in

the Governments detailed spending plans 2008 - 2011. £18.2 million will be allocated in 2009, rising to £21.1 million in 2010.

This is expected to include a public awareness campaign and training for health and addictions staff, as well as increasing numbers going on to access Hepatitis C treatment.

Neil, a 37 year old C-Level service user from Glasgow was diagnosed with Hepatitis C in 2003 "When I found out I had Hep C no-one really knew anything about it.



I went through treatment in 2004 and was given the all-clear. This money should go towards raising people's awareness and encouraging them to get tested.

It's also really important that anyone going through treatment has support from a specialist service if they want it.

This would've helped me cope with the side effects better."

Chisholm urges anyone worried about Hepatitis C to contact C-Level on 0141 332 2520 or their local NHS service "Anyone who has put themselves at risk should be tested and ensure they are not unknowingly passing the virus on. There is help and support out there."

Getting Down to Business

Community Food and Health (Scotland) are running two one-day events about social enterprise for community food initiatives and organisations that run community food activities are being held next year, one in Edinburgh on 7 February, one in Inverness on 28 February.

The events will provide participants with an opportunity to meet community food initiatives that are operating successfully as social enterprises and key social enterprise support agencies.

Participants will also be able to book a one-to-one session with a social enterprise adviser, in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses and key actions they need to consider if they wish to become a social enterprise.



The events are aimed at community food initiatives and organisations running community food activities who are interested in becoming social enterprises or finding out more about the social enterprise business model.

However, other organisations who are involved in supporting community food activity are welcome to attend.

A booking form is available to download on the VHS website at: www.vhscotland.org.uk/events/misc_events.html

Tel: 0141 226 5261, email: cfh@scotconsumer.org.uk

Health improvement through volunteering in the NHS in Scotland

A recent piece of research has shown that volunteering in Scotland's NHS can assist in health improvement.

At Volunteer Development Scotland's Annual Assembly and AGM at the beginning of December, Rocket Science presented their review findings on behalf of the Scottish Government on "*The Journey of Discovery: development of a strategy for volunteering in the NHS*".

The study showed that volunteering in the NHS does provide health related benefits to both those who are patients and to volunteers.

For example, for volunteers recovering from mental health problems, a sense of achievement and giving something back can enhance wellbeing, boost confidence and alleviate anxiety.

Patients commented that "*Volunteers added value to the health service in Scotland*".

The research has helped inform the Scottish Government's Volunteering Strategy and an

action plan to increase the focus on volunteering in NHS Scotland has been developed with the following aims:

- ◆ to improve the health and wellbeing of the users of NHS services by enhancing the quantity and diversity of volunteers, and the effectiveness of their contribution to health delivery;



- ◆ to ensure that volunteers have a consistently positive experience, whenever and wherever they volunteer in NHS Scotland;

- ◆ to provide a framework for quality standards in volunteer development and create a platform for better recognition of the importance of volunteering.

A partnership between the Scottish Government and VDS has been established to help deliver these outcomes towards which they will work with and support NHS Boards over the next three years.

At the VDS Assembly, Shona Robison

MSP, Minister for Public Health agreed that the overall aim of the action plan should be to, "*maximise the benefits volunteers bring to improving the health and wellbeing of patients and service users by supporting NHS Boards to build on current success and for NHS Scotland to become an excellent engager of volunteers*".

George Thomson, Chief Executive of Volunteer Development Scotland, said "*Volunteering is an important aspect of Scottish life and one which many people are engaged with at various levels and in a number of places.*"

For a long time it has been an established and well regarded part of Scotland's NHS and in some instances it has become woven into the very fabric of improving health and well being and delivering care.

There is no doubt volunteering in the Scottish Health Service is a Scottish success story and today we were able to reflect on this and outline our thinking and vision with our stakeholders and partners."

For further information on the Volunteering in the NHS action plan please contact VDS on 01786 479593 or email: vds@vds.org.uk

Scotland's Mental Health First Aid - Getting Involved

Mental Health problems will affect more than one in four people in Scotland at some point in their life.

Chances are you know someone who may need help.

Don't know where to start?... Scotland's Mental Health First Aid will teach you the skills to help someone who is developing mental health problems or is experiencing a mental health crisis.

Anyone can benefit from learning Mental Health First Aid. You can train to become a 'Mental Health First Aider'.



There are over 200 specially trained SMHFA instructors who are offering courses throughout Scotland.

You can go a step further and train to become a Mental Health First Aid instructor and deliver the training yourself.

For more information about these training options log onto the Scotland's Mental Health First Aid website www.smhfa.com