



Better for everyone

## **Better Together Policy Forum**

### **‘Healthy Communities’**

#### **Finding Common Ground within the Integrated Care System**

This event held at Durham Town Hall on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023 was aimed at organisations which focus on supporting the health and wellbeing of people in County Durham. It looked at how the [Integrated Care System](#) (ICS) functions and what this means for our communities in County Durham. It provided an opportunity for discussion between a range of providers from both public and voluntary sectors.

Kate Burrows, Executive Director [Durham Community Action](#), and Chair of [Better Together VCS Forum](#), introduced the policy forum inviting participants to consider two key questions: What do these new health and social care arrangements mean for me and my organisation and how do we work in partnership to find that ‘Common Ground’?

#### **Regional Perspective: Health Inequalities and the Integrated Health System**

Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health [Link to presentation](#) (Sides 1-18)

The presentation provided an overview of the ICS which includes all the organisations responsible for health and wellbeing working together across the region to plan and deliver services for our communities.

Amanda outlined the strategic aims set by government and the regional governance framework. She highlighted the work of the Healthy and Fairer Advisory Group which oversees the delivery of a programme of work that encompasses Prevention, Healthcare Inequalities, and the NHS Contribution to Social and Economic Inequalities. The Voluntary Sector is represented on this group by [VONNE](#).

#### **Local Perspective: Durham’s Place in the ICS** [Link to presentation](#) (Slides 19-24)

Sarah Burns, Director of Place, Integrated Strategic Commissioning

The presentation outlined where County Durham sits as part of the ICS.

Sarah highlighted the strength of partnership working in County Durham and the importance of collaboration across all pathways: Starting Well; Living Well; Ageing Well; and the Health & Care Engagement Forum.

## **VCS Perspective: ICS/VCSE Partnership** [Link to presentation](#)

Lisa Taylor, [VONNE](#) Health and Wellbeing Programme Director [Link to video recording](#)

The video recorded presentation provided an overview of the [North East and North Cumbria VCSE Partnership Programme](#).

Lisa highlighted how the sector is represented at various levels of the ICS and how individuals and organisations can be involved as appropriate. The VCSE partnership programme seeks to support the involvement of VCSE leaders within ICS governance and structures to support collaborative working and co-production in health and care services planning and commissioning.

Further information and resources can be found via the [VONNE Health and Wellbeing Hub](#)

You can also sign up to join VONNE's various [health and wellbeing networks](#)

## **Roundtable Discussion**

Participants were invited to consider three questions. Key messages are summarised below:

### **1. What are the challenges of engaging with and across the Integrated Care System? How do we overcome them?**

- Understanding the complexity and scale of the system and where best to focus energies
  - Consider system directory explaining what each group does
  - Generic email for VCS partners to ask questions/share information
  - Provide information on key local contacts both NHS & VCS – names and faces
- Time and capacity to engage, especially for smaller organisations
  - Consider digital solutions, recording meetings to listen in later, flexibility of days & timings
  - Provide evidence/examples of where engagement has made a real difference to beneficiaries to encourage participation
- Ensuring communities of interest have accessible information appropriate to their needs e.g. people with hearing or visual impairments
  - Use of community venues based in the areas where people are
  - Engaging with people with lived experience to identify solutions

### **2. What issues should we be tackling together? What are the priority issues we can work on together in County Durham?**

- Culture change
  - Helping health & social care overcome unconscious bias towards VCS
  - VCS to provide training/workshops/case studies to help culture change and evidence value of VCS via IT solutions e.g. Podcasts

- Prevention
  - Appropriate design of services and direct investment to VCS e.g. 1-1 befriending services; assisting with NHS appointments for vulnerable people
  - Improving access to mental health services in communities
  - Peer support systems
  - Health literacy - understanding the incentives that encourage families to live healthy lives
- Information sharing
  - Data sharing – systems talking to each other
  - Use of social media; Easy read material; sign language interpreters

### **3. How can support services be shaped from a VCSE perspective and in partnership with statutory service providers?**

- Test & Learn models
  - e.g. Appointments for vulnerable people
  - Sharing examples of good practice
- Connecting with 'Enabling groups'
- Working in alliance as an equal partner and building on what is already there
- Health & Care Engagement Forum
  - Trying to engage smaller organisations
  - Closing the loop - making sure everyone is hearing back the influence they had and the changes that have been made
- Use of Better Together Forum to have discussions and make this a stronger conduit to ICS sub-groups. Themed meetings for BTF Starting well, living well, ageing well.

#### **Key messages from the VCS for Commissioners**

- Building relationships to aid understanding of VCS - specialist practitioners in their own right
- Help us to understand where input is most valuable
- Explore jointly commissioned services between sectors
- Listening to us and to user experience
- Flexible longer-term funding at local level

#### **Key messages from Commissioners for the VCS**

- There's a genuine willingness to work collectively and collaborate and continue learning
- We would like to Co-produce /design services with VCS
- We recognise the benefits of longer-term commissions /funding for VCS
- It would be helpful to have more evidence of need/gaps in services
- It would be helpful to have more evidence of the impact you make

## Next Steps

- Continue open discussion across the system – we must be careful not to destabilise existing work that delivers well for our communities.
- Shape and develop appropriate funding packages to support the implementation of initiatives, interventions and activities including those specifically clinically driven and those delivered through wider social infrastructures.
- Together, take opportunities to build on existing and emerging ‘frameworks’ across the County, for example: Advice in County Durham, the Health and Social Care Engagement Forum, the Resilient Communities Group, the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme.
- Above all, shape suitable opportunities to take forward and build on the issues raised at the conference through the Better Together VCS Forum in order to continue to influence and inform future policy and service developments for our communities.

[The Better Together Forum](#) brings together senior representatives of larger or specialist VCS organisations with a countywide remit to share best practice and look for new opportunities to collaborate.

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