

**Bournemouth and Poole Health and Care Forum  
Held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

**The Voluntary Sector in Bournemouth and Poole  
and its role in promoting Health and Wellbeing**

- 1. The voluntary sector can make a major contribution in challenging inequalities and improving the health and wellbeing of local communities. It does this in a number of ways.**
  - 1.1 Voluntary organisations are able to reach out to the most vulnerable members of the community and those who are reluctant to use traditional services. By engaging at an early stage support can be more accurately targeted.
  - 1.2 Because individuals do not always have to fulfil specific criteria or display particular symptoms to receive support from a voluntary organisation, a preventative approach is often possible. This in turn can shift demand away from acute services
  - 1.3 The voluntary sector is able to harness the ability of communities themselves to identify their own needs and find solutions in tackling the causes rather than the symptoms of their ill-health.
  - 1.4 Many voluntary organisations operate on a self- help basis where individuals are able to both give and receive help. This is crucial in harnessing the motivation and preserving the self-esteem of residents. These organisations and their members also represent a very significant resource in terms of local expertise about specific conditions.
- 2. The Voluntary Sector Forum identified the following as key assets and resources making a major contribution in promoting health and wellbeing:**
  - 2.1 **Carers:** Support for Carers must be central to any strategy as without them the social and health care system would collapse. The voluntary sector recognises the significance of the contribution that Carers make on a daily basis. They are key stakeholders requiring considerable support. Supporting Carers also makes sound economic sense in helping to divert demand from acute provision
  - 2.2 **Social Networks:** Having strong social networks has a major impact on the resilience of individuals. It is now widely accepted that the extent to which individuals use professional services depends more on the networks (or lack of them) available to them than on the extent of their needs. The voluntary sector plays a major role in supporting the development of social networks.
  - 2.3 **Volunteers:** Volunteers represent another important local resource. They comprise at least 75% of the workforce in local voluntary health and care organisations and contribute 31% of all hours worked. If they were to be paid at the national wage it would cost Bournemouth and Poole millions of pounds.

It has been demonstrated that there is a clear link between volunteering and health and wellbeing. Volunteering can help to raise self-esteem, beat depression, stress and pain and helps to reduce hospital visits.

### **3. Roles Played by the VCS**

The VCS is actively involved in promoting health and well-being in the following ways:

- Providing information,
- Raising awareness
- Providing education
- Preventing ill-health
- Targeted intervention
- Breaking the cycle

The VCS works closely with both the statutory and the private sector in doing this.

### **4. The Voluntary and Community Sector believe the following are key priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

- Preventing Alcohol and Drug Misuse
- Preventing Mental Ill-health
- Preventing anti-social behaviour
- Combatting Isolation
- Promoting Exercise
- Tackling Poverty

The Strategy should have bold and stretching targets on addressing gaps in health status and clear action plan. The success of the Strategy should be closely monitored and evaluated in order to provide knowledge about the effectiveness of different health interventions.

### **5. How the voluntary sector can help the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Health and Wellbeing Board and other agencies**

5.1 The voluntary sector can access additional funding and other support which is not available to others sectors. In order for this to be effective, partnership work has to be developed to ensure that joint outcomes are identified.

5.2 Voluntary organisations can act as an important channel of engagement to diverse communities and reach beyond those currently in receipt of services to gain feedback.

5.3 Voluntary organisations can assist other agencies in measuring the effectiveness of local health interventions, including: helping to set baselines, providing data (both soft and hard), acting as a critical friend, identifying duplication and providing illuminating case studies and feedback from their service users and the local community.

