

## **Policy Briefing: Untapped Potential: Bringing the Voluntary Sector's Strengths to Health and Care Transformation**

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### Purpose of document

The document is a research report from the author's 'Doing the Right Thing' project. This came together in response to the Five Year Forward View report by NHS England which is about the development of, and proposed changes to the NHS in the next five years. It is the result of a partnership between the Richmond Group of Charities (consisting of 12 UK health and care charities such as Age UK, Breast Cancer Now, Diabetes UK and Rethink Mental Illness), and a wider group of partners (including Public Health England, British Red Cross and Mind). The report is based on the assessment of evidence from 175 evaluations and research to understand how to integrate the voluntary and community sector (VCS) (also referred to as the charity sector) into the future health and social care system.

### Summary of contents

The report describes the role of the VCS in health and social care. This includes what charities do, where they help in the patient care pathway, how charities work, and the additional value that they bring to the health and social care system. The report then goes on to discuss the evidence to support the health and care system's increased engagement with the VCS. It explains how the VCS and the health and social care system can work together, and provides recommendations for creating solutions that are based on strong evidence, integrated the VCS in health and care, and for making progress.

### Summary of outcomes

The evidence shows that charities have a genuine and valuable role in transforming the NHS. They can also add value to the wider health and social care system in the coming years. For example, there is evidence that they are effective in improving health and care outcomes for the patient, and the health and care system too. Health and social care decision makers working in the system recognise that the way in which the charity sector approaches health and care matters are essential for achieving good outcomes for people. However, it doesn't always see how much the charity sector can offer because the evidence from the evaluations are disconnected and poorly understood. This lack of understanding affects the charity sector's opportunities to voice what it can offer in a way that the health and social care system can recognise. It also affects their involvement in the development and delivery of better health and care services.

### Summary of recommendations

- The views of the VCS should be included in the decisions made about health and social care at a national and local level.
- There should be long-term funding for voluntary organisations.
- Develop well thought out plans that are based on thorough engagement with local communities and VCS organisations.
- Revise the statutory guidance for clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to emphasise that they should work in joint working partnership with charities in order to meet duties under the Health and Social Care Act.

Further information and resources - Five Year Forward View - Full and Easy Read Versions

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/5yfv-web.pdf>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/5yfv-easy-read.pdf>

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