

# COVID-19 Sussex wide VCSE review (September 2020):

Stronger partnerships, stronger communities and a stronger  
voluntary, community and social enterprise sector



## The review sought to:

- Identify how VCSE and statutory organisations and other partners (such as funders) can collaborate to inform and participate in emerging system changes.
- Capture the scale of change within VCSE organisations in order to meet the needs of their communities and service users during the Covid-19 crisis.

- Provide insight into the impact of the VCSE response on communities/clients/service users.
- Identify the key changes VCSE organisations believe should be sustained and/or developed as we move into the next phase of the pandemic.
- Understand how VCSE leadership has functioned at system, place and neighbourhood level.

## Collaboration

Sustained and strengthened collaborative working between VCSE and statutory sectors will ensure communities are supported effectively.

## Partnership

The VCSE sector must be involved as an equal partner in the planning and delivery of health and care services.

## Resilience

Continued investment in the VCSE sector in order to maintain existing and develop new partnerships and volunteering opportunities is essential.

## Innovation

The VCSE sector should be recognised as innovators in improving the health and addressing health and wider inequalities of the Sussex population.

## **We found:**

- strong and effective collaborations between VCSE and statutory services developed at speed, identifying and coordinating responses to protect and support communities.
- VCSE supported statutory services to provide early support to hyperlocal need – thanks to their unique characteristics, agility and connectedness to their communities

- Covid-19 has provided an opportunity to demonstrate VCSE organisation's value as innovators and partners in improving health and wellbeing and addressing wider inequalities.
- There an opportunity to involve the VCSE sector as a key system partner building on existing and new collaborations to improve health and address the wider multipliers of inequality.

- Investment in maintaining existing partnerships and making new ones is essential to build the long-term sustainability and resilience of the sector.

We identified five opportunities that build on the findings, furthering cross-sector collaboration. These are aimed at leaders across health, local authority and VCSE sectors.

## **Opportunity 1: Create more opportunities for VCSE and public sectors to work together at all levels of system transformation**

- Recommendation 1.1: Commit to system-wide collaboration, recognising the VCSE as an equal partner
- Recommendation 1.2: Collaborate using shared principles for partnership working
- Recommendation 1.3: Support experimentation and celebrate success



## Opportunity 2: Engage as equal partners

- Recommendation 2.1: Explore opportunities for greater collaboration between funders
- Recommendation 2.2: Improve VCSE participation and capacity
- Recommendation 2.3: Reduce damaging competition and create more equal partnerships

## **Opportunity 3: Make better use of data**

- Recommendation 3.1 Share data more openly and use this to understand community needs and set priorities
- Recommendation 3.2: Collate proportionate and purposeful data collection for the future

## **Opportunity 4: Strengthen preventative approaches to health and care**

Recommendation: 4.1 Support and invest in local solutions

Commissioners and funders have an opportunity to ensure continued delivery by helping local organisations – the ‘first responders’ – to establish new approaches and pathways, and adapt services to increasing demand

## **Opportunity 5: Create accessible and diverse volunteering opportunities**

Recommendation 5.1: Develop cross-sector approaches to volunteer coordination and development

Recommendation 5.2: Increase and diversify volunteering opportunities

## **Calls on leaders to support the health and wellbeing of communities across Sussex by:**

- Sharing this report within and across their organisations
- Reflecting on the recommendations within the report
- Seeking opportunities to promote/enhance/build upon the recommendations to strengthen future collaboration
- Taking actions to progress recommendations in a collaborative and solution focussed way
- Examining, within current planning processes and frameworks at all levels and places within the SHCP, how recommendations and associated actions are (or may be) supported and developed in order to embed collaborative working to address health and wider inequalities.