

# **Population Health Framework Supporting Sector Summaries: Community and Voluntary Sector**

## Overview

To support the implementation of the Population Health Framework, a suite of sector summaries has been developed with key partners. These summaries highlight the vital role that key sectors play in creating good health, recognising that meaningful progress towards our aim can only be achieved through shared responsibility and collaboration.

These summaries cover [local government](#), the [NHS](#), the community and voluntary sector and the [business sector](#). Each reflects the sector's contributions to realising our aim to improve life expectancy and tackle health inequalities through the delivery of the priorities and actions set out in the Framework.

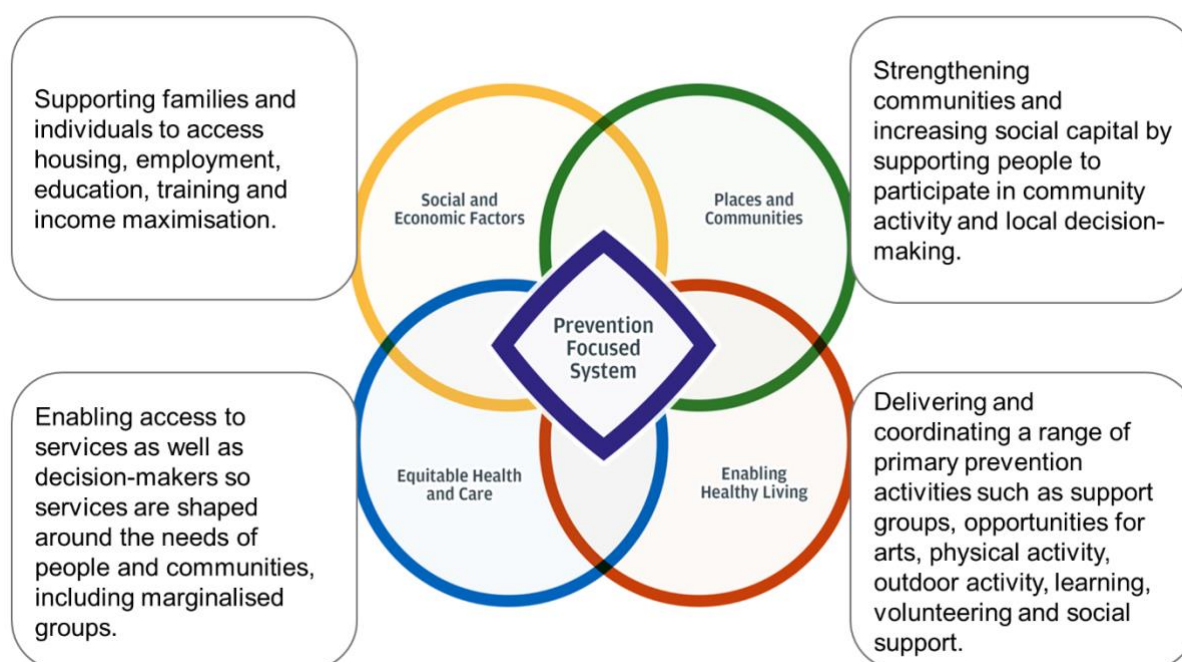
The following sector summary focuses on the **community and voluntary sector**<sup>1</sup> reflecting its strengths, perspectives and levers for change. The community and voluntary sector is uniquely situated to build trust, reach key population groups and support prevention through person-centred approaches and the delivery of vital services that underpin the building blocks of health.

Together these sector summaries aim to support dialogue, collaborative working and coordinated action, ensuring that all parts of the system are enabled to contribute fully to the delivery of the Population Health Framework.

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<sup>1</sup> There is known contention around the terminology of 'community and voluntary sector' vs 'third sector'. For this document, we are using the terminology that was agreed by our stakeholders and use it to include charities, social enterprises voluntary and community organisations that work with communities of place, identity or interest.

## The Community and Voluntary Sector



### Working Together to Improve People's Health

Good health and wellbeing are essential for people to fully participate in society, enabling people to learn, work, engage in social activities and contribute meaningfully to their communities. The communities in which people live have a strong influence on health and wellbeing, in terms of the services available, as well as providing social connections and a sense of belonging. The community and voluntary sector is well placed to help establish and sustain communities that create good health and support people to lead healthier and more connected lives.

### The Role of Community and Voluntary Organisations

Community and voluntary organisations are uniquely placed to address prevention, positively promote health and wellbeing and to tackle health inequalities. Rooted in, and trusted by, the communities they serve, they are often better positioned than public services to work with marginalised and disadvantaged communities, and to reach those most likely to experience health inequalities.

In addition to commissioned services, the sector delivers a range of support and activities to local communities, including healthy living, social networks, peer support and community development, as well as independent advocacy, advice and signposting. Many of these activities help to strengthen the building blocks of health, which in turn improve the population's physical and mental health and wellbeing. By fostering a sense of empowerment, belonging and connection, the sector helps to counteract social isolation, loneliness and disempowerment.

Local and national community and voluntary organisations play an important role influencing policy and practice across a wide range of issues that affect population health, both directly and indirectly. With their unique expertise, they help raise

awareness of how structural issues impact specific groups. They also build knowledge and capacity amongst individuals and organisations, helping to inform and strengthen equalities practice.

The Community and Voluntary Sector employs around 5% of the Scottish workforce,<sup>2</sup> providing a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of these employees, as well as supporting the wider economy. There is also strong evidence that the volunteering and peer-based support, which community organisations offer, positively impacts health and wellbeing.

Community organisations also work with and encourage people to develop their own pathways to address problems impacting mental and physical health which are often complex and deep-seated. This holistic and person-centred approach is implicit in the social prescribing model which recognises how community organisations support wellbeing by connecting people to the activities, groups and services that best meet their practical, social and emotional needs.

### **Supporting Community and Voluntary Organisations to Play Their Part**

Community and voluntary organisations play a key role in delivering health and wellbeing activities through local third sector interfaces (TSIs), commissioning arrangements and informal partnerships. The meaningful involvement of community and voluntary organisations, often represented by TSIs, in Community Planning Partnerships is key to supporting community engagement and empowerment. The important insights and contributions this sector makes can be further strengthened by involving the sector in strategic planning discussions from the outset.

The Scottish Government, local government and the NHS can support the community and voluntary sector by:

- utilising and encouraging fairer funding models which increase the sustainability of organisations and services
- including community and voluntary organisations in policy-making, decision-making and strategic planning, in recognition of their service delivery role offering first-hand understanding of people's needs
- promoting the vital role of the sector and encouraging other system leaders to recognise the role of the sector as an equal partner in decision-making and service planning
- encouraging increased partnership working, in order to increase resources to the sector such as access to data and training
- ensuring any engagement with the community and voluntary sector is meaningful and feedback is provided, in line with the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#)

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<sup>2</sup> [Scottish Government's Industry Statistics](#)

## Unlocking this Potential

The [Population Health Framework](#) is a ten-year, cross-sector approach to improving health and wellbeing in Scotland. During its lifetime the Framework will set out priorities and tangible actions to improve health and reduce health inequalities. The actions within this will help to support Scotland to have a healthy population, where everyone can actively participate in society and work, engage in social activities and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Many of the actions will require ongoing, collaborative working with community and voluntary organisations if they are to be delivered successfully.



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