

Unlocking Voluntary and Community Sector potential

Q. How should GP consortia engage 29,000 community focused health & social care partners in the East Midlands?

Background

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the East Midlands is active, diverse and passionate about health and social care provision. We estimate that there are over 29,000 organisations delivering a diverse range of support to their local populations.

At a time of reduced public spending it is crucial that statutory, voluntary and private sector partners work together to create sustainable approaches to meet local community need.

The role of voluntary sector infrastructure organisations

The key challenge for statutory partners has always been how can we effectively engage with such a diverse range of VCS organisations?

Across the East Midlands there are 140 voluntary sector infrastructure organisations working to support the development of the VCS frontline; these include Community and Voluntary Service (CVS), rural community councils and learning & skills consortia, supporting both generic and specialist frontline groups. Local infrastructure organisations typically provide a number of services to facilitate the development of partnerships with the statutory sector. This includes:

- Access to VCS networks to helping partners to engage in meaningful dialogue across the diversity of the sector
- Development of training and development programmes for the benefit of both statutory and voluntary sector partners
- Development of consultation programmes
- Support networks of local health & social care providers to assist health and wellbeing board activities

One East Midlands and the health & social care network

In the East Midlands the regional infrastructure organisation providing this type of support is One East Midlands (One EM).

One EM exists to ensure that the VCS across the region are able to influence and shape policy, improve services and to provide a strategic interface between the sector and key stakeholders at regional level.

The One EM health and social care network, funded by the Department of Health, has been specifically established to foster a more progressive approach to the development of health and social care provision in the region.

The health and social care network comprises 270 members who provide community services, regenerate neighbourhoods, support individuals, promote volunteering and tackle discrimination.

The One EM network provides an effective single gateway to facilitate an informed dialogue with the community and voluntary sector across the region. Since its creation in 2010 the network has provided consistent opportunities for voluntary sector engagement with NHS East Midlands and related bodies.

The network also offers a brokerage service to help foster VCS linkages with emerging GP consortia at local level.

Further details of the voluntary sector infrastructure in your area can be found by accessing the [infrastructure finder](#) held on the One East Midlands website www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk

By working collaboratively with your local infrastructure organisation it is possible for statutory partnerships to access the experience and skills of a diverse range community led organisations. This type of support provides complementary assistance to evolve the work of local health and wellbeing boards and GP consortia activities.

To find out more about voluntary sector infrastructure to learn about the health and social care network or to access training on 'working effectively with the VCS please contact One East Midlands.

Kind regards