

# Supporting Voluntary Action

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*Dr Angela Bhan*

14 June 2023

Dear Angela,

RE: SELICS Joint Forward Plan and Bromley Local Care Partnership Strategy

Thank you for sharing the 5 Year Joint Forward Plan and providing the opportunity to comment on the plans prior to sign off.

We welcome the five key priorities within the strategy and recognise the widespread engagement across the partnership to develop these priorities. We also welcome the current draft of the One Bromley Strategy, along with its three identified priorities.

We recognise both the scale of the challenge and the ambition within the JFP to address these challenges. In particular we welcome the commitment to prevention at scale.

We welcome the values-based principles including the need to pool our insight and expertise, and the commitment to harness the power of our communities, as outlined in slide 11 – a mention here of the role that the sector can and does play in facilitating engagement<sup>1</sup> would be a useful addition. This could therefore read “harness the power of communities and third sector.”

## Role of the voluntary sector as an Enabler

The role enablers can play is covered within the priorities slide and separately as an enabler slide.

The role that the voluntary, community, social enterprise and faith sector can play is acknowledged in numerous slides within the deck. For instance, slides 12 and 15 note the role the sector plays as a deliverer of services. However, the sectors' role is broader than only as a provider of services. This is recognised in the development of the ICS and in the approach and direction SEL ICS are taking, which also recognises the important role that the sector plays as a strategic leader in shaping thinking and approaches, as an important source of data, insight and intelligence, and as the pandemic highlighted, as a means to enabling trusted engagement with marginalised communities to enable greater inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Key for enabling trusted conversations and supporting the system to re-build trust with communities who have lost trust in the health& care system (often same communities which are also likely to be facing greater inequalities in access and outcome)

*Given this emphasis we feel that the role the sector can play should be clearly acknowledged as an enabler. This needs to be central to our approach and resourced.*

#### How will things be different in 5 years' time?

The slide 10 highlights “How will things be different in 5 years' time?” This is a useful benchmark. We welcome these pledges but note that the pledges are silent on reduction of inequality. This may merit further discussion given the acknowledged need to improve population health and wellbeing through prevention & personalised care, as well as tackling unwarranted variation in patient outcomes.

#### Programme 1: Evidence driven prevention and population health.

We welcome the commitment to co-design solutions for healthier lives, including the wider determinants of health. We also welcome the commitment to build further understanding of who individuals in communities trust and engage with. *The role the voluntary, community, social enterprise and faith sector can play here in facilitating this engagement should be acknowledged here not least as in some communities/groups VCSEs are likely to be the ONLY trusted partner.*

#### Programme 2: Neighbourhood Teams on geographic footprint

The approach outlined within this programme and the recognition of the role of third sector providers is welcome, along with the accompanying actions. This includes an action to “Baseline the existing organisational capacity and capability change.” This could be strengthened and needs to be *joined up with understanding of local community assets*. Support for the ongoing work to map community assets undertaken by Community Links Bromley via State of the Sector Reports and the ongoing development of its platform Simply Connects would be helpful here. This will help enable the delivery of an asset-based community approach with an engaged population.

#### Omissions

The recent Kings Fund Report Actions to support partnership: Addressing barriers to working with the VCSE sector in integrated care systems and resource, A framework for addressing practical barriers to integration of VCSE sector organisations (NHS England 2023) highlighted the importance of funding and sustainable development. It stated, “The barriers and challenges in this area limit the ability and opportunity for the VCSE sector to contribute by failing to reflect its costs and capacity in the procurement processes and allocation of funding. They can also constrain both the potential to develop more sustainable approaches to working with the sector and its potential contribution to addressing areas such as prevention and the wider determinants of health, which are integral to addressing key system issues such as demand for services.”

It made a number of resulting recommendations including, allocating a percentage of funding streams for investment in the VCSE sector.

This, therefore, is a notable omission and further consideration should be given to how both the capacity and capability can be resourced in a more sustainable way. As outlined above the positive and constructive role the sector can play is acknowledged extensively within the 5-year strategy. It has a key role to play in the provision of services, addressing digital

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exclusion, supporting neighbourhood forums, engaging with marginalise communities, sharing data, insight and intelligence. To ensure that is affective requires investment and a deployment of resources to support equitable access.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given society its biggest challenge of the past 70 years. It has shown that people need support joined up across local councils, the NHS and voluntary organisations. Initiatives to bring support to people in their communities have been most successful when partners have bridged traditional divisions between health and care and the voluntary sector. The pandemic has highlighted the value of this work. It is important that these lessons are acted upon and not lost.

In summary, we welcome the South-East London ICS Strategy and One Bromley 5 Year Strategy.

We further suggest the following:

1. Consideration be given to clearly relaying the role of the VCSE sector as a strategic partner and as a key enabler of change.
2. The role the voluntary, community, social enterprise and faith sector play in facilitating meaningful community engagement should be clearly acknowledged with clear plans for this is going to be resourced and harnessed for influencing sustainable change .
3. That assessments of baseline organisational capacity and capability change includes an assessment of and understanding of local community assets.
4. Resourcing and ensuring the joining up of neighbourhood-based care with available local tools which enhance visibility of and simplify access to services (e.g. simply connect)
5. Consideration is given to resourcing, capacity building and sustaining the VSCE as part of the strategy.

Kind regards

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**Chief Executive Officer**

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