

# About the Health Equalities Programme

As part of their Health Equalities programme, The National Lottery Community Fund has awarded £700,000 to support local areas to develop effective and sustainable partnerships between the voluntary and community sector, the NHS and local authorities to improve health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities and empower communities. These partnerships have the potential to bring about significant change, promoting the role of the voluntary sector and the value of cross-sector partnerships.

The National Lottery Community Fund and the Innovation Unit are working together to connect and convene the Health Equality partnerships to generate and share learning, and communicate this learning to wider audiences. By sharing learning and insights relating to tackling health inequalities, we aim to support partnerships to build a legacy beyond their National Lottery funding and point towards longer-term systems change.

This document captures insights from the first and second learning event; more products and information will be available here as we progress through the programme and accumulate more learning.

# Shared Challenges:

What are the common barriers experienced by the Health Equality Development Grantees (HEDG)?

## Navigating the system

Influencing the NHS amidst complex restructures, new governance and delivery arrangements, and having to build new relationships as staff move on.



## Maintaining a shared vision

Agreeing and retaining a shared vision amongst partners despite changing relationships and processes, and emerging challenges, especially changes necessitated by the Covid19 pandemic.



## Stakeholder management

Juggling a broad spectrum of stakeholders and building a shared vision, from grassroots community groups to senior leaders within their own sector, and the NHS.



## Making and measuring tangible change

Delivering material change on the ground which is evidenced and evaluated, as well as celebrated and showcased with partners.



## Capacity

Managing time and resource: of the grantees themselves, of their VCSE partners and of NHS colleagues. Many are striving to manage time wisely and avoiding “talking shops”.



## Demonstrating the VCSE sector's value

Making the case for the role and significance of the VCSE sector. Feeling at risk of being overlooked amongst major players in the system.



## Data collection

Collecting, accessing and retaining data around specific population groups - and sharing data with system partners.



## Not having a seat at the NHS 'table'

Having a say early on in the composition of governance and delivery structures, rather than being consulted once they have been established.



During the Learning Event 2, HEDG shared examples of where their partnerships and governance structures have been successful. Below are a selection of solutions which have worked well for some HEDG in response to challenges raised in Learning Event 1.

## Navigating the NHS system

### Establish a VCSE Assembly

Some grantees are setting up new structures (e.g. a VCSE Assembly) to formalise VCSE insight and engagement with the NHS.

### Share the load

Develop VCSE partnerships and encourage voluntary/community groups to engage the system through their own workstreams.

## Maintaining a shared vision

### Make your vision explicit

When establishing new partnerships, bring participants together to set a vision and agree guiding principles.

### Appoint Mission Guardians

Staff facilitating the project are explicitly tasked with maintaining focus on the 'North Star'.



**Shared challenges:  
how others are  
overcoming  
them**

## Capacity of partners

### Engage existing healthcare groups

Instead of setting up new project groups and inviting health colleagues in, some grantees have more success in "going to health" and embedding their work within existing NHS workstreams.

### Manage expectations

Be upfront with partners about overall time commitments to reduce the risk of them disengaging later on. See [Features of Successful Partnerships activity](#).

## Demonstrating VCSE value

### Tell the story of the VCSE in the pandemic

In times of crisis the VCSE sector indispensable role often becomes more visible, both to the NHS and wider public.

### Shared messaging

Agreeing priorities and developing shared messaging across the borough strengthens the VCSE voice.