

Northamptonshire ICS Memorandum of Understanding

This document is a written understanding between the Statutory, Voluntary and Community Sectors and other partners about how they will co-operate within the ICS construct and at point of place delivery through Local Area Partnerships. It has been compiled by Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire, VCSE NHS Broker for the ICS and Recipient of the Health Equality Grant Phase 2 on behalf of Northamptonshire community organisations and those members involved in the VCSE Assembly. This document is dated **12.07.2022** and should be **reviewed annually** by respective Health and Wellbeing Boards who are expected to endorse these aspirations and undertakings.

The ICP vision:

To put local people at the heart of the services we design and deliver, helping local people to realise their potential; to live healthier, happier lives; and to stay well and independent in their families, homes, and communities for as long as possible. Voluntary and Community organisations make a major and literally incalculable contribution to the social, cultural, and economic life of Northamptonshire. They act as pathfinders for the involvement of our population in the design and delivery of services and often act as advocates for those who otherwise have no voice. In doing so, they promote both equality and diversity. They help to alleviate poverty, reduce health inequalities, improve the quality of life, and empower socially excluded people. The Voluntary and Community sector also makes an important direct economic contribution to the area. The Voluntary and Community sector in Northamptonshire can operate most effectively if it has the understanding and support of the statutory sector, and vice versa.

The purpose of an MOU:

A 'Local Memorandum of Understanding' is a written understanding between the Statutory, Voluntary and Community Sectors and other partners within any given locality about how they will co-operate. It should recognise the contribution that Voluntary and Community groups make and acknowledge their independence, and the moves in central government and wider society towards empowering the voluntary sector and communities. It is crucial to the governance and wellbeing of communities in Northamptonshire, as elsewhere, working through engagement of volunteers, to promote an active population, promotion of debate, questioning and new ideas, and providing services. If the Memorandum of Understanding is effective, it will support the development of Voluntary and Community sector capacity to increase and improve the impact of the sector and benefit the population of Northamptonshire: Community health resilience is the ability of a community to use its assets to strengthen public health and healthcare systems and to improve the community's physical, behavioural, and social health to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity and reduce inequalities. The Voluntary and Community sector in Northamptonshire is wide-ranging, richly diverse, and resilient. There is continued recognition of the Voluntary and Community sectors independence, skill, and professionalism. Statutory organisations and the Voluntary and Community sector share many aspirations. These include the pursuit of inclusiveness, dedication to public life, and support for the development of healthy and safe communities. VCSE organisations often provide unique solutions to difficult issues and have a reach into communities and cohorts that others do not. If the sectors work well together, the population of Northamptonshire will benefit as they will be empowered and will receive better services.

Shared Principles:

Some principles are fundamental to the relationship which exists between the Statutory sector and other partners such as the VCSE. All sectors need to:

- Ensure that we are transparent in all we do and remain committed to the principles of co-production.
- Ensure that we are both solution- focused and bold in our decision making, and that all conflicts or potential conflicts are declared and resolved accordingly.
- That we respect each other's views and allow partners the courtesy of being listened to and heard.
- That voluntary or social action is an essential component of a democratic society.
- That an independent and diverse Voluntary and Community sector enriches society and is fundamental to its well-being.
- Accept that in the development and delivery of public policy and services, statutory organisations and the Voluntary and Community sector have distinct but complementary roles.
- Strive to work with partners to ensure excellent services.
- Accept that partnership is effective if it works towards common goals and achieves benefits for service users and communities.
- Accept that Statutory organisations and the Voluntary and Community sector have different forms of accountability and are answerable to different stakeholders: But common to both is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership, and inclusivity.
- Accept that Voluntary and Community organisations are entitled to campaign within the law to advance their aims with or without support from statutory bodies, and to promote equality of opportunity for all people regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or any other discriminatory or oppressive criteria and elimination discriminatory or oppressive practice.

Undertakings by the VCSE and the Statutory sectors:

- To advance a positive relationship with Voluntary and Community bodies, Statutory organisations signing up to the Northamptonshire ICS MOU will adopt these undertakings:
- Recognise and support the independence of Voluntary and Community bodies as equal partners, including their right within the law to campaign, to comment on and to challenge policy within the law, irrespective of any resource focus relationship that might exist, and to determine and manage their own affairs.
- Take account of the need for greater proportionality, targeting, consistency and transparency in frameworks and to promote strategic resource focus, enhancing the capacity of Voluntary and Community organisations.
- Recognise the importance of infrastructure to the voluntary sector and volunteering and, where appropriate, to support its development at a unitary and place level.
- Seek to appraise new policies and procedures, particularly at the developmental stage, to identify as far as possible potentially damaging implications for the sector.

- Consult and ensure shared decision making is carried out with the voluntary sector, subject to considerations of urgency, sensitivity, or confidentiality, or on issues that are likely to affect it. Such consultation should be timely and allow reasonable timescales for response, considering the need of organisations to consult their users, beneficiaries, and stakeholders.
- Consult and co-design a fluid engagement strategy that can respond to the needs of the communities impacted by change.
- Take account positively of the specific needs, interests and contributions of those Voluntary and Community bodies which represent women, minority groups and socially excluded people.
- Ensure that statutory sector staff are informed on the nature and importance of the Voluntary and Community sector.
- Recognise and acknowledge the skills and knowledge the voluntary sector retain.
- Undertake regular mapping exercises with the Voluntary and Community Sector to identify gaps and overlaps in service provision and areas of potential support.
- Promote effective working relationships, consistency of approach and good practice between Statutory partners and the VCSE.
- Work to develop a shared data asset register to support local needs assessments to target approaches in reducing inequalities.

Undertakings by the Voluntary and Community Sector:

In developing their relationship with the statutory sector, Voluntary and Community sector organisations agree the following undertakings: Voluntary and Community organisations will:

- Maintain high standards of governance and conduct and meet reporting and accountability obligations to funding bodies and users.
- Respect and be accountable to the law, and in the case of charities observe the appropriate guidance from the Charity Commission, including that on political activities and campaigning.
- Acknowledge responsibilities and constraints placed on the statutory sector, including the democratic responsibility and legitimacy of elected representatives.
- Develop quality standards appropriate to the organisations.
- Ensure that service users, volunteers, members and supporters are informed and consulted, where appropriate, about activities and policy positions.
- Promote effective working relationships with other agencies and across the Voluntary and Community sector.
- Involve users, wherever possible, in the development and management of activities and services.
- Put in place policies for promoting best practice and equality of opportunity, including employment, the involvement of volunteers and users, and in building service provision.
- Work to develop a shared data asset register to support local needs assessments to target approaches in reducing inequalities.
- Build positive, effective, and lasting relationships with Statutory partners and communities.

Next steps:

The publication and endorsement of this Northamptonshire ICS MOU will not, in isolation, change or alter exponentially the relationships which exist between sectors for the benefit of communities. Whilst there are some excellent examples of co-production, engagement and joint working, positive and lasting change will depend on several essential and critical factors agreed on and committed to by all partners. These are:

- Ensuring that the priorities agreed upon for both the wider ICS and the LAPS are consistent and make sense to all, not least the communities that they intend to benefit.
- Ensuring that the wider determinants of health remain as important as the agreed clinical priorities.
- Ensuring that the Population Health Data is used wisely and consistently well as a mechanism for change in communities.
- Ensuring that community assets remain an important conduit for the ICS and for preventing health inequality.
- Ensure that the VCSE is properly represented within the structures of the ICS.
- That solutions are truly tailored to community need.
- That reporting mechanisms focus not only on statistics but socially account for changes in people's lives.
- That Public Outcome Frameworks possess an element of Social Return on Investment.
- That feedback and engagement loops are inclusive.
- That this MOU is treated with respect and is reviewed annually in line with changing circumstances.