

Community spirit and voluntary services help everyday wellbeing

More engagement and coordination with volunteers and charities in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is an integral part of the vision for integrated health and care. **Jackie Butler** finds out what that could look like

ONE of the most significant game-changers for our everyday health and wellbeing lies in solutions that can be discovered within the communities we live in and the people we engage with.

Traditionally the focus for health and care has been rooted in a medical model where people are patients and clinicians provide treatment for their ailments and conditions. Yet public health



research shows that this has only a 10% effect on people's wellbeing and that a lot of their needs sit outside services offered by the NHS or local authorities.

This is reflected in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Health and Care Partnership's long-term strategy for a more holistic, person-centred, more preventative approach, which is officially factoring in the huge contribution already made – and the massive future potential – of voluntary services and charities.

Tryphaena Doyle, programme lead for integrated community health services says: "The voluntary sector is part of our integrated team."

"The key is taking this much more personal approach, thinking about what gets people resilient and being prepared to let go. We need to create conditions for people to live the lives they want."

"It is not how clinicians are used to working, and there is a big piece of work to do here."

Andy Brelford is the support and development manager for Volunteer Cornwall, the umbrella organisation for voluntary and charitable services in the county. His brief is to take stock of what the voluntary sector is already doing – and what they could do in future – to contribute towards each patient's health and care journey.

"Supporting your wider needs is where voluntary services come in," he says. "They have a part to play in every person's journey. Lives are not lived in neat packages – today I am a patient, tomorrow I am a victim of crime, for example. People's lives are complex and there are so

many organisations that can play a role. Although voluntary services have long been involved in the traditional model of hospital and social care, they have not previously been recorded as part of the system."

The county is particularly well served by a myriad of groups providing practical support and activities in the community and there are already the equivalent of 14,000 full-time people working in the voluntary sector locally, with plenty of scope for further expansion.

Volunteer Cornwall offers its own support services but also acts as a hub to link people with the help or support they need. That could be practical help, like transport, shopping, cooking or small jobs in the house, or pointers to activities that provide social connection, emotional support and motivation.

"Everyone who goes through the health and care system could get an automatic referral to the voluntary sector. Now it is the exception, but I would like to make it the rule," says Andy.

"In five or 10 years' time I expect to see a fully functioning integrated health and care system, with the voluntary sector as part of it."

He envisages complete care packages with medical, social and voluntary aspects, with referrals to the best activity or connection for each individual being a matter of course.

"Once the necessary medical part is done, getting people to take exercise is not something for the NHS to do – it is something the voluntary sector does really well, with walking groups and so on."

Volunteer Cornwall now has dedicated community makers and One Vision community develop-

ment workers for families and children – one for each of the six designated localities across Cornwall – who are experts in what groups and services are available locally for all age groups. They assess people's needs and signpost them to the most appropriate organisations.

They work closely with social prescriber link workers attached to GP practices and primary care networks, who have their own caseloads, to find the best individual solutions, including things like gym memberships for improving fitness.

There are countless needs and interests covered by voluntary groups and charities – from people living with long-term conditions like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), those who have suffered strokes, to parents of children with disabilities. There are mindfulness groups, art and craft groups, singing groups, walking and fitness groups; the list is long and growing.

"the team who make this possible," says Amanda.

But it isn't only passengers who benefit from the service; drivers say their own wellbeing is increased by helping people to get around.

John Finch, one of Volunteer Cornwall's 150 drivers, says that after a long military life he needed something to motivate him and get him up in the morning. "The thanks from clients is warm and very appreciated, and it helps to know that I am assisting them to overcome some of the problems they have," he says. Drivers are trained in safeguarding and helping the less mobile get in and out of vehicles.



> Andy Brelford, Volunteer Cornwall

> Livewire music lessons for young people

WELLBEING IS A COMMUNITY ISSUE

A CHARITY in Cornwall dedicated to improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people through making music, is spreading its wings to bring its service into the wider community.

Livewire is a long-established youth music project based in Saltash that has developed its own mental health programme for vulnerable young people, as part of its regular youth work, to respond to local need. Its approach employs instrumental, vocal and technical tuition, performance opportunities and social sessions, as well as one-to-one counselling, CBT and mentoring.

They take referrals direct from young people or their parents, from GPs, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Cornwall Council social care, schools and colleges, as

well as from targeted youth workers. They respond quickly to need, generally seeing a young person within 24 and 48 hours of referral.

Branching out into the wider community, they have just secured a grant from the National Lottery Awards for All to run an inter-generational project which will see young people and staff members using music to support older people with dementia.

"There is so much positive research to show that music can often stimulate the brain, but also this is about getting older members of our community together with some amazing and talented young people," explains youth work coordinator Andy Rance. There are an awful lot of older people whose families aren't close by and they are lonely."

"You have a conversation and get to know someone, what their condition is and the context of where they are living," explains Andy. "For instance, you cannot tell a single parent with four small children that they need to go to the gym three times a week. It is not about off-the-shelf solutions – it is about tailoring them to the person."

Small pots of funding are available through Volunteer Cornwall to help people conquer small barriers to participation and achieve their aims.

"Someone might say they cannot get to the gym or cannot afford it. We can provide transport or pay for the first six weeks' admission, for example. If you want to swim but can't afford a costume, we can buy one for you," he says. "That input has proved very successful and we have had good feedback from both the people themselves and their GPs. A doctor will tell us that Mrs X, who was a regular in the surgery, hasn't been in for ages – she is off singing and knitting."

Dr Tamsyn Anderson, GP and system clinical lead, says: "Our voluntary sector colleagues are really good at identifying how people want to be and how to get them there. It really works and it is lovely to be alongside. The answers are not all in a pill packet."

There are also local hubs such as Treverbyn Community Hall near Bugle, where social activities, community events, classes and groups come together under one roof with the aim of improving life for all – a model flagged up by Cornwall's public health team as an example of excellence.

The strength of these community connections is that they make people more resilient and able to look after each other by interacting and engaging in things that make them happy.

Visit www.volunteercornwall.org.uk, call 01872 265300 or email bookings@volunteercornwall.org.uk if you are interested in giving your time or talents to help others in your community.

A FRIENDLY FACE TO WELCOME YOU HOME

MAGGIE Haward, aged 80 from Quethiock in south-east Cornwall, gives up her time to make sure people who are coming home from hospital have food in the cupboard, a warm house and a smiling, friendly face there to greet them.

The Welcome Home service, run by Volunteer Cornwall, helps more people to get back to familiar surroundings quickly after a stay in hospital, supporting people's recovery and easing the flow of

patients through the system. Maggie says: "Volunteering is highly rewarding for both the person doing it and the person who benefits from it. There are lots of roles out there to suit different people."

"The smiles you see on people's faces as you are there to welcome them home is always the main reward, but I have found it very helpful for me too. The act of helping others definitely makes you feel good."



> Welcome Home volunteer Maggie Haward

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VOLUNTEER TRANSPORT IS A DRIVING FORCE

AMANDA, who has cerebral palsy, wouldn't be able to get from her home at Foxhole, near St Austell, to her job at Morrisons in Bodmin without the drivers from Volunteer Cornwall's community transport service.

She relies on them to take her to work by car and pick her up again and she calls the service, which she has been using for 10 years, a "lifeline".

Every month it provides 4,000 affordable journeys for people who can't drive themselves but need to get to appointments, including hospital visits, employment or education, who would otherwise be stuck through isolation, disability or



> Amanda working at Morrisons in Bodmin

lack of public transport.

"Without Volunteer Cornwall Transport I wouldn't be able to make it to my job at Morrisons and would lose a massive part of my independence. I would like to give a heartfelt thanks to the volunteer drivers and the rest of