

Charities unite to tackle health inequalities

- New membership of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance will ensure strong, diverse representation to reduce health inequalities
- Backed by £2 million per year to support members' work
- People with mental health conditions, autism and those disproportionately affected by COVID-19 will shape policy to protect vulnerable communities

People's voices and lived experiences will continue to be at the centre of health policy development and work to level up the UK, as the government welcomes new members to the voluntary community and social enterprise (VCSE) Health and Wellbeing Alliance.

Backed by £2 million a year, members including Age UK, Barnardo's, Homeless Link, Hospice UK, National Autistic Society and Samaritans, will work together to promote good health and tackle inequalities across the UK.

The refreshed 19 Alliance members will ensure strong representation across the broadest range of lived experiences. They will represent the views of social care workers and older people, people bereaved by suicide, children and young people, people with learning disabilities and autism, those with mental health conditions, LGBTQ+ communities and minority communities, including refugees and Gypsy, traveller and Roma communities.

For example, pregnancy charity Tommy's, heading up a maternity and neonatal consortium, will ensure views from a maternity and child loss perspective are represented in policy decisions ahead of the Women's Health Strategy launching later this year and the British Red Cross will represent all those affected by crisis, including those who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 such as refugees and asylum seekers.

Health Minister, Helen Whately said: > The Health and Wellbeing Alliance is one of the key ways to ensure a range of voices are heard and reflected in government policy – their insight is invaluable. > > Over the last few years members have made an enormous contribution to a number of important policy developments ranging from improving access to services for groups affected by health inequalities and more recently ensuring the COVID-19 vaccination campaign reaches all communities. > > This refreshed membership of 19 charities is a fantastic opportunity to ensure we continue to hear from the most underrepresented voices and make sure important health messages reach those they affect the most.

The new Office for Health Promotion will also launch later this year and will spearhead national efforts to level up the health of the nation and close the gap on disparities.

The Health and Wellbeing Alliance is a key element of the Health and

Wellbeing Programme and the alliance has already helped shape policy-making. The Alliance's work will continue to be of the utmost importance in developing guidance to protect our most vulnerable communities and ensure communities are made aware of important public health announcements that affect them through direct communication.

Naomi Phillips, Director of Policy and Advocacy, British Red Cross:

The British Red Cross is proud to become a member of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance and work with partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors to promote equality of access, experience and outcomes across our health and social care system.

COVID-19 has highlighted more than ever that where you are born, grow-up, live and work affects your health. Over the past year, health inequalities have been exposed and exacerbated – but there's also a renewed impetus to work across specialisms and sectors to address the issue and its underlying factors. Working with and through the Alliance, through fresh research with a focus on policy and practice change, the British Red Cross is committed to ensuring people can access the care and support they need, without falling through the gaps – no matter who they are or where they live.

Sarah Sweeney, Policy and Communications Manager at Friends, Families and Travellers said:

We're delighted to be included in the refreshed membership of the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance. It's of vital importance that decision makers in health and social care have the tools they need to address the often significant health inequalities that exist within our society. The HW Alliance has had an important role in making our health and social care system more accessible and inclusive. We look forward to continuing this important work.

The full membership for the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance 2021-2024 is:

- National Voices in partnership with National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) (Coordinator role)
- Age UK
- Association of Mental Health Providers (consortium with Association of Mental Health Providers, Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, Mind, National Survivor User Network, Rethink Mental Illness, Young Minds)
- Barnardo's (consortium with Barnardo's, Friends of the Horn Foundation; Women's Inclusive Team; Himmat, QED Foundation; Communities Engage and Thrive Wellbeing Connect Services (formerly known as Ebony Peoples Association) African Community School (ACS), Minaret Community Centre, Approachable Parenting, Association of Muslim Schools UK, Education and Skills Development Group, Muslim Youth Helpline, Somali Community

Parents Association, Somali Development Services, Mindful Peak Performance)

- British Institute for Learning Disabilities (Bild) (consortium with Learning Disability England, National Development Team for Inclusion)
- British Red Cross
- Carers Partnership (consortium with Carers UK and Carers Trust)
- Clinks
- FaithAction
- Friends, Families and Travellers (consortium with Roma Support Group)
- Good Things Foundation
- Homeless Link (consortium with Homeless Link, Groundswell, Pathway)
- Hospice UK (consortium with Hospice UK, Marie Curie, Together for Short Lives, National Bereavement Alliance)
- LGBT Foundation (consortium with LGBT Foundation and LGBT Consortium – other partners include a large range of VCSE organisations)
- Locality (consortium with Locality and Power to Change)
- National Autistic Society (Complex Needs Consortium with National Autistic Society, Sense, VoiceAbility, Embracing Complexity)
- Race Equality Foundation
- Samaritans (consortium with Samaritans National Suicide Prevention Alliance, Support After Suicide Partnership, We Are With You)
- Tommy's (consortium with Tommy's, Sands, National Maternity Voices, the Pregnancy and Baby Charities Network, Five X More CIC, Muslim Women's Network UK and LGBT Mummies Tribe)