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The values and value of the third sector:

Collaboration with the statutory sector
to deliver health and social care in Wales

Executive Summary

May 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At a time when our health care system needs to shift from acute services to prevention and from hospital to community, the contribution of the third sector is needed more than ever.

The Bevan Commission has been an advocate of prudent health care for a decade now¹. Its latest report 'Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care in Wales'² articulates afresh the principles and key drivers that point the way to the sustainable, equitable and integrated health care we need in Wales. This is based upon ongoing conversations with the public³ which reveal a strong desire for radical change, including more emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

Third sector organisations have always contributed to positive health and social care outcomes, by virtue of their commitment to 'public benefit'. Some of them have been actively meeting health and care needs since before our welfare state came into being (A blog 'What would Lord Beveridge say' looks back at the role of the sector over 75 years). Since 1948, different relationships with statutory services have evolved: in some cases taking the lead (as in hospice care and some emergency rescue services), in other cases delivering commissioned services or working in direct partnership with statutory health or social care partners. Many more function quite independently, yet working towards the same broad goals for health and wellbeing.



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1 [Bevancommission.org/prudent-healthcare-the-provisional-principle2014](https://bevancommission.org/prudent-healthcare-the-provisional-principle2014)

2 [Bevancommission.org/the-future-foundations-for-the-future-model-of-health-and-care-in-Wales2024](https://bevancommission.org/the-future-foundations-for-the-future-model-of-health-and-care-in-Wales2024)

3 [Bevancommission.org/a-conversation-with-the-public-report2023](https://bevancommission.org/a-conversation-with-the-public-report2023)

Aim and method

This paper is intended as a companion to 'The values and value of volunteering – our hidden asset'⁴ – which explores the role of volunteers both within statutory and within the third sector, in relation to health and social care. Our research gave rise to rich information based on the experiences of a wide variety of organisations (from third and statutory sectors). Some of this material is being worked into an additional paper entitled 'Why the third sector matters for health and wellbeing in Wales'.



We have previously explored the statistical profile of the third sector in relation to health and care in Wales through analysis of public data sources, (this is summarised in an [infographic](#)) and our research was able to build on the insights and contacts which this generated.

The focus of this paper, therefore, is the touch points between statutory and third sectors and the potential for more effective collaboration to achieve health and care outcomes in Wales.

Focus groups and one to one interviews were held with 121 individuals. Phase 1 explored opportunities and challenges for third sector/statutory sector relationships, from different perspectives, including statutory, third sector and membership/infrastructure organisations. Phase 2 explored emerging issues to focus on three broad themes: building cross sector relationships, determining and communicating value and delivering transformational change.

Case studies were developed with 11 organisations to capture the variety of context, benefits and challenges experienced. The contribution of all those who played their part in shaping this narrative is gratefully acknowledged.

4 [Bevancommission.org/publication-4](https://bevancommission.org/publication-4) 2022

Third sector values and strengths

Third sector organisations are characterised by being agile, resilient, connected, independent, trusted and by being values-driven. The wider reach of the third sector into communities, including to marginalised and minority groups and those living with specific chronic conditions, is highlighted in this paper. Also highlighted is the 'wider benefit' – delivery which is 'above and beyond' statutory requirements or service specifications, made possible through philanthropic or other funding sources, through contributions in kind (such as volunteering) and which in general focuses on wellbeing and prevention more than on acute need.

Whilst recognising that much of the third sector has no formal relationship with the statutory sector, (yet nevertheless plays a significant role in relation to wellbeing and prevention), we identified seven ways in which third sector organisations can enrich and support mainstream services. They are:

hospital to home support, social prescribing, integrated delivery, co-production, innovation, addressing inequalities, early intervention.

These are the areas in which we feel that the third sector can make the most significant contributions to statutory sector delivery.

Collaborating for better health care - recommendations

Issues and potential solutions are explored under four headings, which are clear themes for change:

- Collaboration and co-operation
- Representation and planning
- Sustainable for the future
- Recognition, learning and innovation



The wider reach of the third sector into communities is highlighted in this paper

Concluding recommendations

In conclusion, we identified five overarching recommendations. Progress in addressing these will significantly help us to realise a health service that is fit for the future.

- 1 Ensure early and consistent dialogue between all relevant parties, to enable collaborative solutions, integrated services and ensure that all available assets and resources can be drawn upon to deliver priority outcomes.
- 2 Make use of existing third sector infrastructure and strengthen existing networks.
- 3 Protect and prioritise investment in the following areas. These are where the third sector can make the most significant contributions: social prescribing; hospital to home; early intervention; co-production; addressing inequalities; innovation; integrated delivery.
- 4 Adhere to Welsh Government's [Code of Practice For Funding The Third Sector](#).
- 5 Develop a national, 'whole system' approach to monitor service delivery by public, private and third sectors against strategic and funding priorities.



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