

Prof Matthew Ashton
Director of Public Health
Liverpool City Council
Liverpool
L3 1AH

13 June 2024

Dear Matt,

We write on behalf of the Strategic Health and Wellbeing Network in response to your report, State of Health in the City: Liverpool 2040. Our network brings together senior leaders from charities and social enterprise organisations in Liverpool. We welcomed the report and acknowledge the challenges the city faces to increase years of healthy life and life expectancy of people in our city.

The evidence tells us that poverty, where we are born, the circumstances in which we are born into impact significantly on our years of healthy life and life expectancy. It is clear that this is not just a problem for the NHS, it is not a problem that more GP's or shorter waiting times can solve. What we require is a whole system approach to health inequalities, one that focuses on the core challenges and can both think ahead and be responsive at the same time.

Across the third sector, the people we work alongside struggle to engage with health services, often feeling judged or finding it hard to attend appointments and prioritise their own health. The building of a strong therapeutic relationship is one of the most important factors for supporting people to make changes and the work we do ensures that over time people trust in us and our health partners and are able to begin to engage in health interventions.

The voluntary, community, social enterprise and faith sector – our country's civil society, are often closest to our communities. We are alongside people every day, understanding their struggles and helping them to navigate the complex systems we live and work in. As a sector we are nimble, responsive and able much more readily to affect change. Through COVID we saw that, through the third sector, populations that core services find hard to reach were educated to risks of the virus and there were high levels of vaccination uptake.

Being flexible, responsive and dynamic is in our DNA. Charities were established to meet the unmet needs that statutory organisations couldn't or wouldn't meet. Consequently, we are often seen as a trusted partner of our communities and the people we work alongside in services which often means that we can more effectively support the cascading of vital public health messages. We acknowledge and deeply value the partnerships that many of us hold with Liverpool Public Health, which have proven to be instrumental in addressing pressing community health issues.



Where personnel and priorities often change across health and local authority systems, the third sector hold vital institutional and systems memory. Our commitment to excellence for our communities doesn't waiver, advocating for people to have what they need so they can live their best and healthiest life. We have data beyond numbers, the stories of people's experiences, understanding of nuances alongside local and community intelligence.

Liverpool is a vibrant, diverse city. Across our organisations we work with people who services and systems often find hard to reach and heard to hear. When people are in crisis, when their health is poor, when they are going through challenging times, they will often turn to us as places of safety, without judgement and without power over them. We represent the voices of many people. In the recent State of The Sector report there were over 19,500 VCFSE organisations working to support those in need, committed to building thriving neighbourhoods, communities, towns, and cities across Cheshire and Merseyside. Alongside a combined workforce of over 36,000 employees and 352,000 volunteers, the third sector contributes over £896.6 million to the Cheshire and Merseyside economy each year. Local third sector organisations, originating from and operating in and across Liverpool, hold significant power to affect positive change and improve public health outcomes.

Despite all this, the sector is still missing from many key tables where policy, both local and national is made. We are a force for good, a force for change for the benefits of our local community. The solutions to improving the health of our society are vast and complex and it is only when we all come together, as equal partners that real, long-lasting change can be achieved.

We would welcome being involved in working to find the solutions, build on community assets and work towards improved healthy years of life and life expectancy for the people in our city. We would like to host a conversation with you to discuss how we can work in partnership to find innovative solutions to the health inequalities experienced across our communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EMcNeil', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ellie McNeil
On behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Leads Forum

(signatures attached)