

# Policy Briefing:

## Creating healthier communities through social enterprises

Engaging in leisure and cultural activity has positive impacts upon communities' health and wellbeing – enhancing recovery, work preventively, improving quality of life and sense of community by bringing people together.

To deliver the impacts described above and be future ready, we need to **embrace different service models**. The NHS Long Term Plan calls for “new service models” and highlights a number of social enterprises that should be a model for the rest of the health system to work with.

Unfortunately, some of this innovative practice is being lost in a drive towards “integration”. It is important that the NHS does not try to reinvent the wheel and lose best practice in the process. Social enterprises have been delivering effective public services for well over a decade working in partnership with local authorities, commissioners, fellow community and social enterprise organisations and NHS partners.

These relationships should be strengthened and social enterprises given a seat at the table within new Primary Care Networks and Integrated Care Systems so that all the resources of a local area are brought to bear on the pressing health and social challenges faced by local populations.

The strength to the social enterprise model is the idea of yielding positive social outcomes for everyone in society, particularly those in greatest need. This is achieved through focusing on the “triple bottom line” – not just balancing the books but thinking about how services can help the wider

community and environment. This encourages innovation and flexibility which is not always possible within more rigid statutory organisations.

Looking at leisure and culture, social enterprises use several ways to deliver health programmes whilst remaining true to their purpose and identity. They actively collaborate, cross subsidise access, are responsive and agile organisations, and generate social value.

The NHS Long Term Plan is not alone in calling for **more action on prevention and health inequalities**; these are at the heart of leisure and culture trusts' services – for example Circadian Trust's 'Active Lifestyle Strategy' is focused on community health and wellbeing co-authored with the Director of Public Health.

Recognising the social enterprise sector as key transformative partners nationally and locally is critical to addressing stubborn inequalities. Social enterprises are perfect partners and collaborators, and as noted in the NHS Long Term Plan, every Integrated Care System is to have a partnership board involving the community and social enterprise sector. This must happen. Strategic decision should not be taken without social enterprises being at the table.

An example can be seen across Greater Manchester with the Prehab4Cancer transformation programme. Prehab4Cancer is co-designed service delivery between GM Cancer and GM Active. GM Active is a collective of 12 leisure and community organisations (ten of which are trusts) creating a

unified voice, who deliver solutions alongside health colleagues. Greater Manchester is the first regional system in the UK to introduce large scale physical activity supported prehab and recovery as a standard of care for cancer patients. This will give patients the best opportunity for good quality outcomes and long-term survival. The importance of preparation 'Prehabilitation' and active recovery pathways are being increasingly recognised by cancer patients and healthcare providers.

To harness, scale and protect the health and wellbeing impacts derived from engaging in leisure and cultural activities, we need to embrace, support and grow the social enterprise community to maximise community benefit and deliver health services for all. Social enterprises can play a significant role in bringing innovation into local systems, which not only generated better outcomes for people but deliver long term savings.

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