The national intermediary and network for voluntary health organisations in Scotland

Briefing Paper

voluntary health scotland

Members Survey Analysis

August 2023

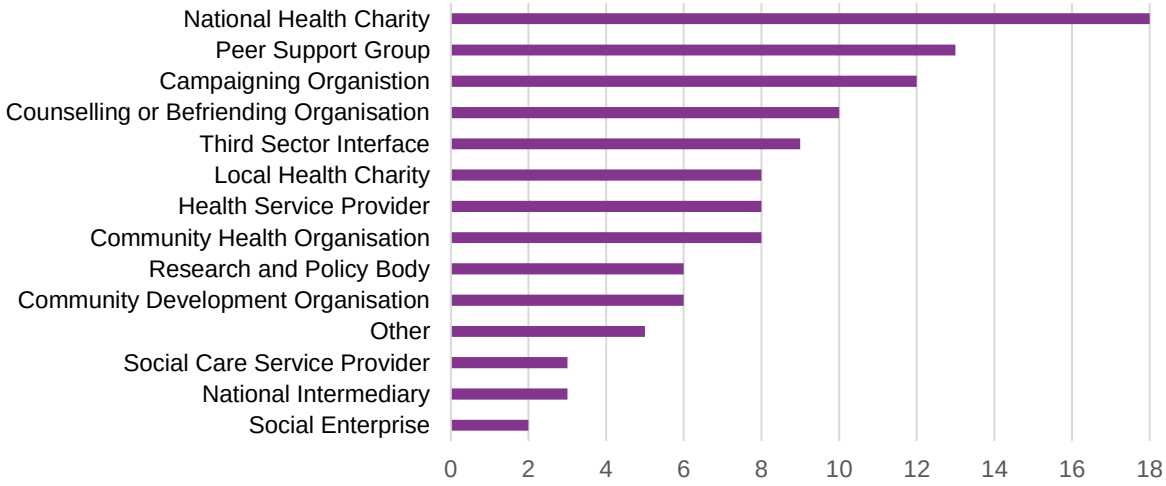
In February 2023 we opened our membership survey which ran on Microsoft Forms for several weeks. It was targeted at member organisations, of which VHS had 150 at the time. We asked a range or questions, primarily multiple choice, but also some open questions where members were given the opportunity to respond more thoroughly. We sought to gain a better understanding of our members priorities, how they perceive our work and what they value most from VHS membership.

Our Members

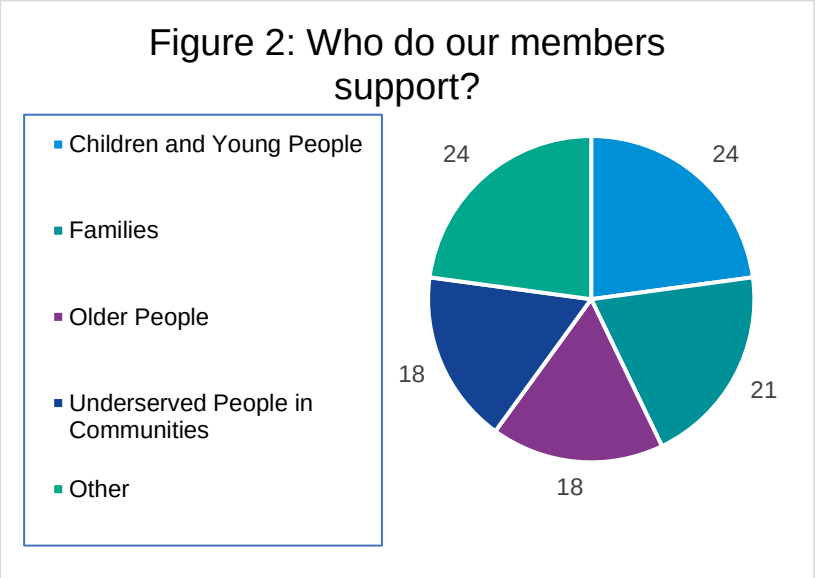
We received 51 responses from 46 different organisations, which is around about a 30% response rate from our members. The views expressed were overwhelmingly very positive in terms of our communications, events and engagement. Respondents also provided a snapshot of their own areas of focus which will help shape our events programme and policy work over the next year.

Of the 51 respondents, 18 described themselves as a national health charity, eight as a local health charity and eight as a community health organisation. It's worth noting respondents were able to select multiple options for this question, which many did. Some even selected both national and local health charity options. We received nine responses describing themselves as Third Sector Interfaces.

Figure 1: Who are our members?



Who do our members support?
Our members support an even spread of people in terms of age, from children right through to older people. Of the 51 responses, 18 said they supported underserved people in communities.

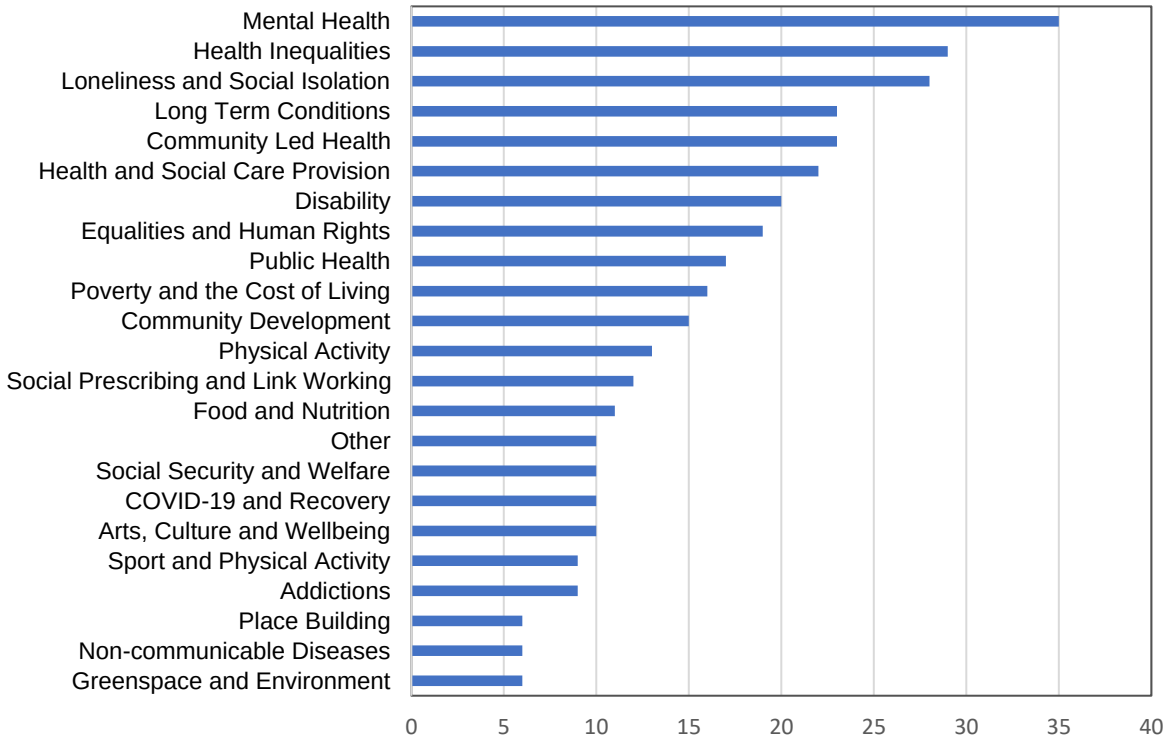


The 24 ‘other’ responses included:
- People with specific health conditions
- Mental health conditions
- The general population
- Third sector
- People with disabilities
- Bereaved families
- and a handful said they represented organisations.

Members’ Priorities
Figure 3 illustrates the areas our members focus on. We provided broad options for members to choose from and many selected multiple options. It’s encouraging to see 29 responses highlighting health inequalities as an area of focus, this was more than half of those who responded.

Notably mental health, social isolation and loneliness were also key areas of interest for members, with 35 respondents selecting mental health as a key area of focus. Community led health, health and social care provision and long-term conditions were all focuses for around half the respondents. Public health was a focus for 17 respondents while social prescribing and link working were focuses for 12.

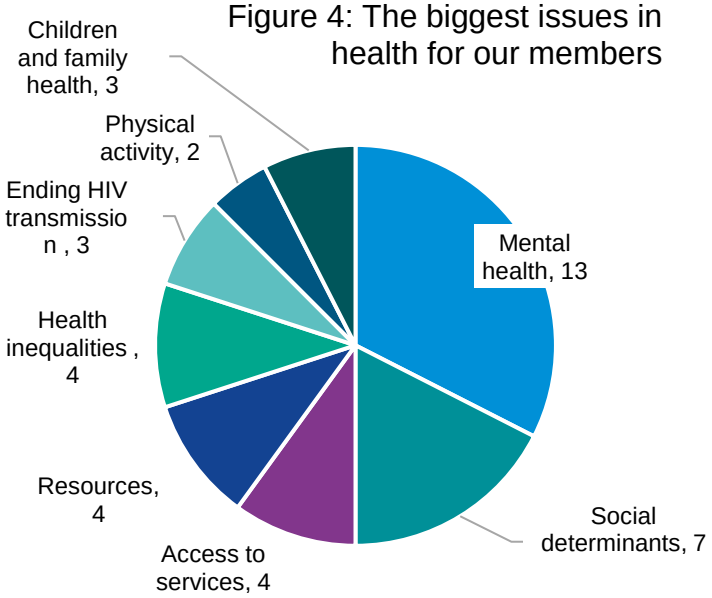
Figure 3: Areas our members focus on



We also asked an open question about the biggest issues in health respondents were working to address right now. This gave respondents the opportunity to write freely about their priorities.

The question was designed to specifically ask about issues in health as opposed to organisational issues like resources and funding. However, it's worth noting four respondents highlighted resources in health and social care services as a key issue.

Figure 4: The biggest issues in health for our members



To analyse the responses all were categorised into more general overarching themes and developed into the pie chart in figure 4.

Again, mental health was mentioned most, followed by the social determinants of health.

Ending HIV transmission was mentioned in three separate responses so has been pulled out as a key issue in this analysis. We received three responses from people who work for a charity

focused on HIV, these members are currently very active as there is a campaign to get to zero-HIV transmissions by 2030. However, other specific conditions were also individually listed.

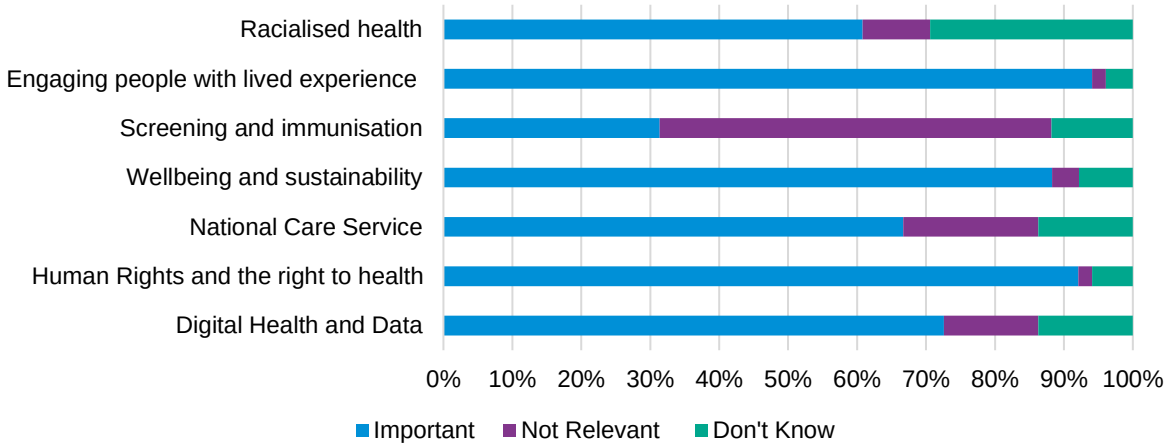
Voluntary Health Scotland's Work

Our overarching health themes:

- Health inequalities
- Public health
- Health and care systems
- Mental and physical health

The VHS overarching health themes were all important or very important to at least 95% of respondents. They also all came through as areas of focus or big issues for our members throughout the survey, especially health inequalities which continues to be the central issue for our network.

Figure 5: How important are these other topics to our members



This question about other topics of importance to our members was drafted to try and gauge the relevance of our current and upcoming policy and wider engagement work.

Notably both the human rights agenda and engaging people with lived experience were rated important to more than 92% of respondents. Wellbeing and sustainability were rated highly important too, by 88% of respondents. The National Care Service was slightly lower with 66% or respondents rating it important. All of these issues have significant pieces of legislation passing through the Scottish Parliament in the coming months and years so this is a valuable insight for our policy priorities.

The issue of racialised health was interesting as 60% of respondents rated this as an important topic, but 30% "didn't know" whether it was important topic. This could be interpreted as an issue which our network is eager to learn more about, given only 10% rated it not relevant. This chimes with our events over the last year on racialised

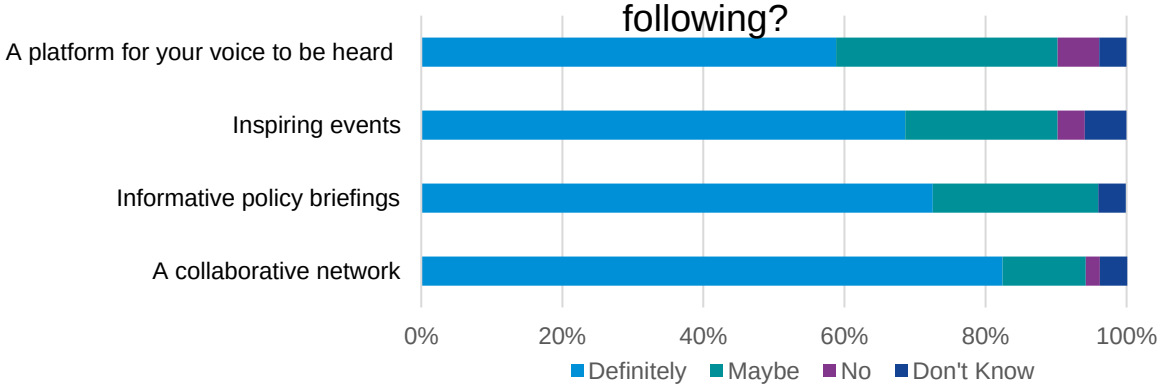
health inequalities which our network has been very engaged with and anecdotally found the conversations to be valuable.

Screening and immunisation were rated as “not relevant” to 57% of respondents, which is notable given our successful role in advocating for inclusive approaches to vaccination. These are very key public health interventions, which VHS has a strong background in and plays a key leadership role in. A strong case could be made for maintaining our leadership role in screening and immunisation with Public Health Scotland, especially given this is an area of public health with a growing contribution from the third sector. It’s also worth noting screening and immunisation is not as active as the other policy areas listed, in that it’s not something with upcoming legislation, which may impact the perception of importance.

VHS Membership
88% of respondents felt the annual fee was value for money and three people even made the case for increasing the membership fee considering the cost of living. One respondent suggested introducing a third tier of membership for national orgs with income significantly greater than £250k, noting there are other intermediaries that charge more for membership than VHS.

When asked why respondents were a member of VHS, collaboration was of most importance. Our events and policy briefing were also rated as definitely important to around 70% or respondents. Figure 6 illustrates the responses.

Figure 6: Are you a member of VHS for any of the following?

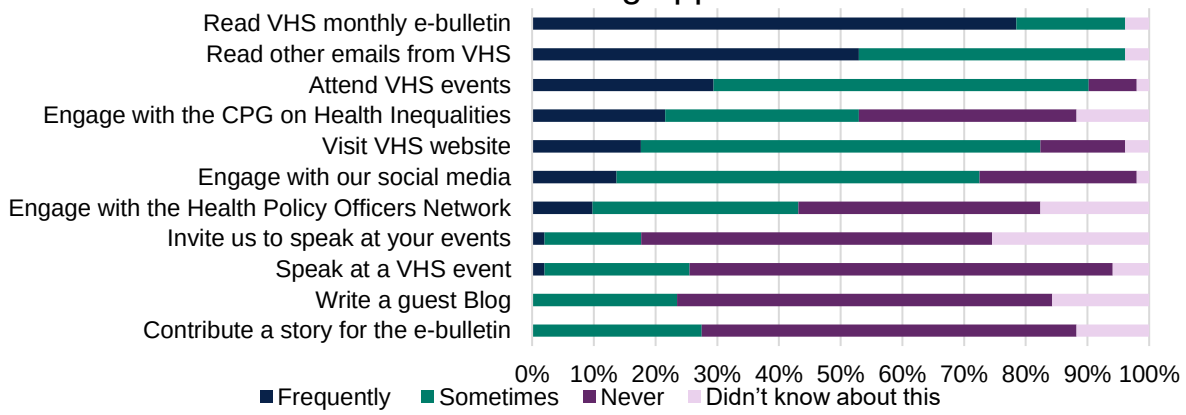


We asked a specific question about VHS outputs and engagement opportunities. We received a very mixed response across all of the options which figure 7 illustrates. The monthly e-bulletin was the most used, with 78% of respondents saying they frequently take advantage of it. Other emails from VHS followed, with 53% of respondents saying they frequently open them and 43% sometimes. The options which received lower response rates were those which are aimed at specific members for example, the Health Policy Officers Network is only for policy officers. Additionally, members tend to be asked by initiation to speak at our events based on their work and relevance to the topic in hand.

The lowest engagement was for members contributing content to our website and e-bulletin. However, it is worth noting that respondents do engage with our own written

content, our events, website and social media. Figure 7 is a complicated mix so it has been broken down further in figures 8 and 9 to make key issues easier to digest. The more purple there is, the less members are taking advantage of opportunities.

Figure 7: How often do members take advantage of the following opportunities?



The "never engage" responses are broken down below in figure 8. Respondents were less likely to have taken up opportunities to invite us to speak at their events or be invited to speak at a VHS event. Equally only a quarter of respondents sometimes wrote a blog for the website or contributed a story to the ebulletin, despite upwards of 80% knowing about these opportunities.

Figure 8: Never engage responses

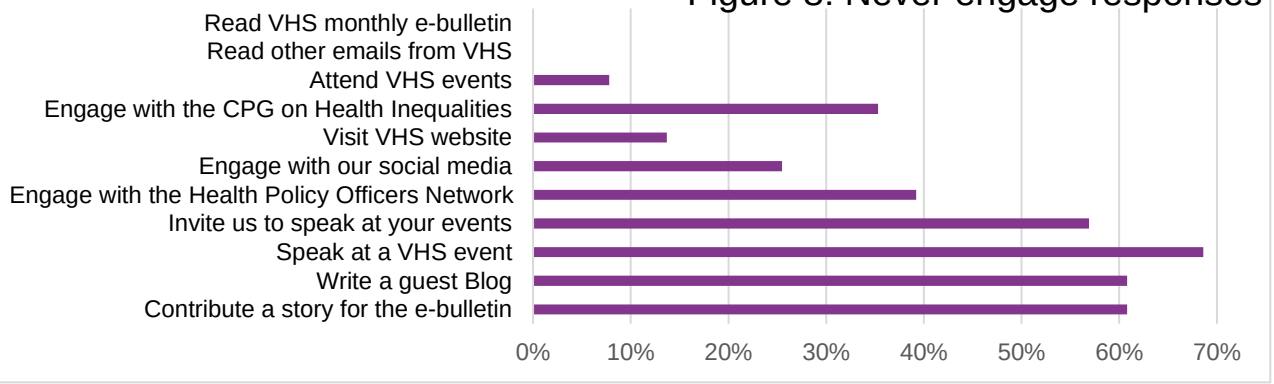
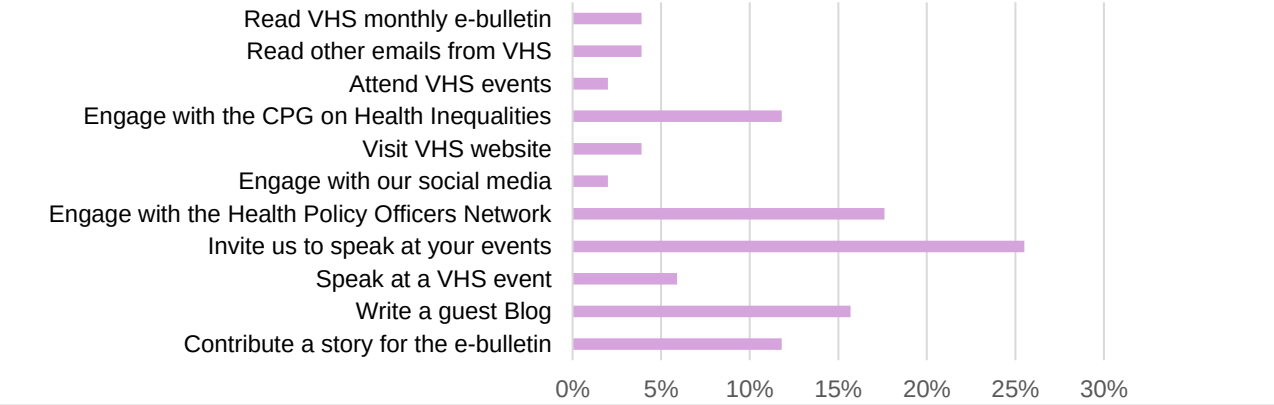


Figure 9: Didn't know about this responses



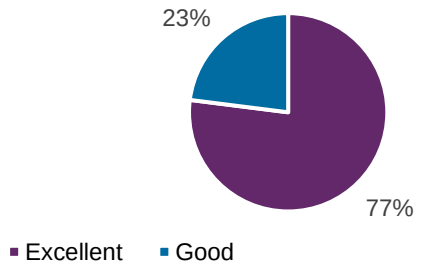
The “don’t know” responses are broken down in figure 9. It is encouraging to see that in general people know about the opportunities to engage with VHS. In terms of inviting VHS to speak at an event, 25% of respondents said they “didn’t know about this”. It is unclear whether this means they don’t know if we have been invited or if they didn’t know we could come to speak, the former seems more likely.

Policy and Engagement
82%-98% of members who responded found all areas of our policy and engagement work useful. The least useful being getting the opportunity to engage directly with policy makers, with 82% marking this as useful, and having the opportunity to collaborate on policy with 86% marking this useful. The others listed scored at least 92% of respondents finding them useful:

- Being alerted to new policy issues / developments – 98%
- Having complex policy issues translated and summarised – 92%
- Getting access to research and evidence you didn't know about -92%
- Knowing that VHS is responding to important consultations – 92%
- The opportunity to attend VHS events to discuss policy/consultation detail – 92%

Events and Engagement
Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about our events programme, with 77% of those who had attended an event rating them “excellent” and 23% “good”. No respondents rated them “fair” or “poor” despite these being options in the survey, which represents an 100% satisfaction rate. 16% of respondents hadn’t attended an event. Figure 11 shows satisfaction rates for those who had attended an event.

Figure 11: How members rate our events



There were a wide range of suggestions for future event topics, the three most suggested being health inequalities, mental health and raising the profile of the third sector. It is worth noting this question was left open for respondents, so for the analysis responses were categorised into general themes.

Figure 12: What topics would you like to see covered at our events?



When asked what we get right about our events, respondents were overwhelmingly positive about our quality of speakers, topics and organisation. A wordcloud of the responses is included below.



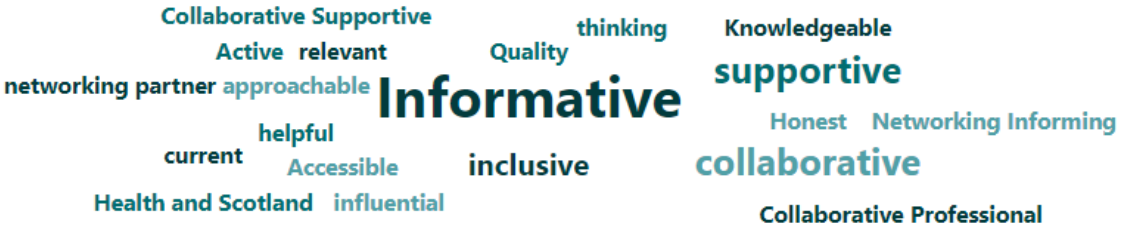
Respondents also provided feedback about what we could improve going forward. Many took this opportunity to say “nothing” or “great work” which was very encouraging. In terms of the actual suggestions these included:

- More space for connections and social time
- Widening the sphere of speakers (beyond deep end GPs)
- Including some shorter sessions
- More diversity
- Considering using third sector venues and varying location
- More consideration of grassroots organisations and lived experience groups when designing events – it was noted sometimes speakers discuss at a level beyond some attendees current understanding
- Lived-experience

Respondents felt the current mix of face to face and online events was good. There was a 50/50 split between those who would prefer more online and those who would like face to face, which reiterates the current approach works as best it can for our network.

How our members see VHS

Respondents were asked to describe VHS in three words. Collaborative was mentioned by eight respondents, supportive by seven and informative by nine.



Throughout the survey respondents were often very appreciative and positive about our work, with many encouraging us to keep it up. One respondent said:

“The work of Voluntary Health Scotland is superb and more important than ever. Greatly appreciate all the fantastic support from Voluntary Health Scotland”

In summary

Overall, the survey highlighted that we seem to be working in strong areas of interest for our members, but we could prioritise some of our focus areas more such as mental health and wellbeing. There were also multiple calls for us to be strong advocates on behalf of the third sector, which we strive to be, but it is worth noting our leadership role.

Our events and engagement work are a particularly strong area with significant positive feedback in terms of how they are run and our choice of speakers and topics. The survey confirmed that our current balance of online and in-person seems to be working but one person suggested varying the location more.

The views gathered on our members interests will strongly influence our policy work going forward. Mental health, human rights, racialised health inequalities and wellbeing and sustainability will all be taken forward as areas of focus.

Our written output comes across as of strong importance to our members, be that the ebulletin, policy briefings or emails. It feels important to maintain these as part of the VHS package as staff changes develop. Equally, we could be doing better in encouraging members to take up the opportunity to contribute to the ebulletin or our website content.

Overall respondents were very positive about our work and have provided a helpful insight into their priorities which will steer our work in the coming year. It is especially encouraging for our team to hear that members feel we are collaborative and supportive in our work, as this is a key ambition for us.

For more information please contact our Policy and Engagement Lead, Kimberley Somerside: kimberley.somerside@vhscotland.org.uk

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Appendix:

Survey Questions

1. What is your organisation's name?
2. Who do you support?
    a. Children and Young People
    b. Families
    c. Older People
    d. Underserved people in communities
    e. Other
3. Tell us about the areas of work your organisation focuses on. Tick all those that apply.
    a. Addictions and Recovery
    b. Arts, Culture and Wellbeing
    c. Community Development
    d. Community Led Health
    e. COVID-19 and Recovery
    f. Disability
    g. Equalities and Human Rights
    h. Food and Nutrition
    i. Greenspace and Environment
    j. Health and Social Care Provision
    k. Health Inequalities
    l. Loneliness and Social Isolation
    m. Long Term Conditions
    n. Mental Health
    o. Non-communicable Diseases
    p. Physical Activity
    q. Place Building
    r. Poverty and the Cost of Living
    s. Public Health
    t. Social Security and Welfare
    u. Sport and Physical Activity
    v. Social Prescribing and Link Working
    w. Other
4. What kind of organisation are you? Tick all those that apply
    a. Campaigning Organisation
    b. Community Development Organisation
    c. Community Health Organisation
    d. Counselling or Befriending Organisation
    e. Health Service Provider
    f. Local Health Charity
    g. National Health Charity
    h. National Intermediary
    i. Peer Support Group
    j. Research and Policy Body
    k. Social Care Service Provider
    l. Social Enterprise
    m. Third Sector Interface
    n. Other

5. What is the biggest issue in health your organisation is working to address right now?
6. Thinking about VHS's overarching health themes, how important are these to you?
    a. Health Inequalities
    b. Public Health
    c. Health and Care Systems
    d. Mental and Physical Health
7. Are you a member of VHS for any of the following reasons? Choose all that apply.
    a. A collaborative network
    b. Informative policy briefings
    c. Inspiring events
    d. A platform for your voice to be heard
8. How important are these other topics to you?
    a. Digital Health and Data
    b. Human Rights and the right to health
    c. National Care Service
    d. Wellbeing and sustainability
    e. Screening and immunisation
    f. Engaging people with lived experience
    g. Racialised health
9. Which of the following do you find most useful about our policy and engagement work?
    a. Being alerted to new policy issues / developments
    b. Having complex policy issues translated and summarised
    c. Getting an opportunity to engage directly with policy makers
    d. Having the opportunity to collaborate on policy
    e. Getting access to research and evidence you didn't know about
    f. Knowing that VHS is responding to important consultations
    g. The opportunity to attend VHS events to discuss policy/consultation detail
10. As a VHS member, how often do you take advantage of the following opportunities?
    a. Read VHS monthly e-bulletin
    b. Attend VHS events
    c. Visit VHS website
    d. Engage with our social media
    e. Read other emails from VHS
    f. Contribute a story for the e-bulletin
    g. Write a guest Blog
    h. Speak at a VHS event
    i. Invite us to speak at your events
    j. Engage with the Health Policy Officers Network
    k. Engage with the CPG on Health Inequalities
11. What items in the e-bulletin are of interest to you?
    a. VHS events programme
    b. VHS policy updates
    c. Scottish Government consultations
    d. NHS consultations
    e. New publications and research

    f. Other organisations' activities and events
    g. Funding opportunities
12. How would you rate our events?
    a. Excellent
    b. Good
    c. Fair
    d. Poor
    e. Not attended any events
13. What topics or speakers would you like to see covered at our events?
14. What do you think we get right or do best at our events?
15. How can we improve out events?
16. Is our current mix of online and face to face events working?
    a. Prefer more online events
    b. Prefer more face to face events
    c. Current mix is good
17. The VHS annual membership fee ranges from £12 for very small organisations to £70 for organisations whose income is over £250,000. Do you think our annual fee offers value for money?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure
18. If you have any further comments on whether the VHS membership fee is value for money, please tell us here.
19. What three words describe VHS best?
20. If we haven't asked something that you think is important for us to know, please tell us here.