

Express your interest in *Connecting Health Communities, 2023 – 2025*

Facilitation support to address health inequalities

Overview

We are inviting expressions of interest for a two-year facilitation support package to enable cross-sector partnerships to address health inequalities in Integrated Care Systems and Primary Care Networks. Previously, we've supported work to:

- Increase the attendance of minoritised groups at cancer screening in Eastbourne (East Sussex)
- Reduce smoking prevalence for the population of Hackenthorpe (Sheffield)
- Develop community-run transport links to hospital and GP appointments in Hambleton and Richmondshire, Nidderdale and North Ryedale (North Yorkshire)
- Support the design and delivery of services for older people to enable access to local support (Wirral)

We'd like to hear from communities, NHS organisations and local authorities who have established partnerships – but need support with designing and implementing improved health outcomes for vulnerable groups.

Our offer

We are offering a two-year facilitation support package from April 2023 to March 2025. This starts with two questions: 'What do health inequalities look like locally?' and 'How can we tackle them together?'

Our work with you is likely to focus on strengthening the foundations of partnership working and supporting local leaders to deliver improved health outcomes for vulnerable groups by:

- Building the evidence base and case for change
- Adapting systems and structures
- Initiating and introducing new services
- Identifying and achieving opportunities for a more sustainable and fairer model of healthcare

Central throughout will be developing opportunities to engage community groups and voluntary organisations in the design, commissioning and delivery of health and care services. We are able to provide modest financial support to enable the participation of communities who experience health inequalities and for venue hire.

[Connecting health communities](#) is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. For more information on how we hope to work with you, see **Appendix 1 (page 3)**.

Who can apply?

Any cross-sector partnership in England, seeking to work with their local community to design and implement changes to healthcare that address inequalities. You will need to demonstrate buy-in and support from the local healthcare system and we expect the involvement of senior leadership from the ICS/PCN, local authority/public health, a community representative and voluntary organisation from the local area.

If we have worked in your area recently¹, please email sonakshi@ivar.org.uk before submitting an expression of interest.

How to apply

If you're interested in applying, please complete [this short expression of interest](#) by 17:00 on 24th February 2023. The form asks for:

- Your name, organisation and email address
- Details of two or more senior leaders working in the local area who are supportive and willing to be actively involved in this programme (including an NHS representative)
- A brief description of your ideas for how collaborative working can contribute to tackling health inequalities in your area
- Your initial thoughts about how people directly affected by health inequalities will be involved in this work?
- An outline of any relevant work that is already underway (e.g. cross-sector working groups, joint action plans, etc.)

If the form is a barrier in any way, please do get in touch with us by emailing or calling Sonakshi Anand at IVAR: sonakshi@ivar.org.uk / 0746 454 8859.

We aim to make a decision about who will receive support by the **21st March 2023**, but we will reply to you within a week of your application and may want to set up a call to discuss the partnership and your proposed idea.

We will select up to four partnerships to work with from April 2023 to March 2025.

For our last cohort of partnerships we received 32 applications, four were selected for our two-year support offer and seven were offered lighter-touch facilitation support. Our preference is to work with groups who are addressing different health inequalities.



Photo credit: P. Coleman;
Eden Project Communities

About the Institute for Voluntary Action Research

The Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) is a UK charity that works with other charities, foundations and public agencies to strengthen communities. We have been supporting cross-sector partnerships to deliver improved health outcomes for over 17 years. What makes us distinctive is our unrestricted funding – which enables us to maintain our independence and gives us the freedom to act as a sounding board at the interface between frontline charities and their funders.

¹ East Sussex, North Yorkshire, Sheffield and Wirral.

Appendix 1: Further information about *Connecting health communities*

We will work in areas where communities face health inequalities, to design and deliver positive action through a cross-sector partnership of voluntary and local healthcare organisations.

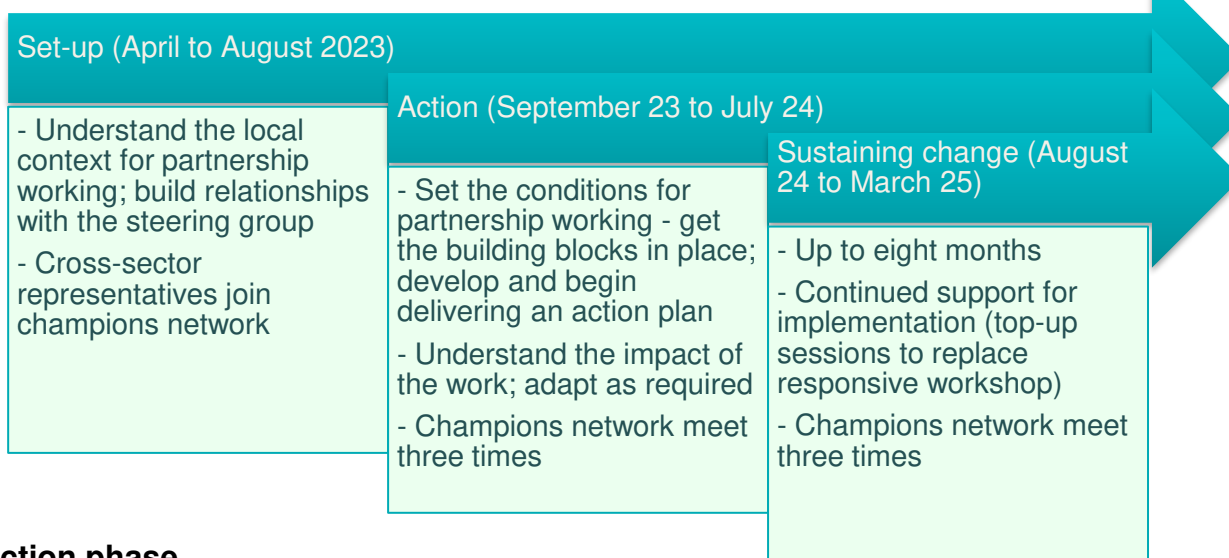
You may have worked together before; or started working together but not yet have fully formed plans – the most important thing is to be a cross-sector group with an idea of what you would like to change and some infrastructure in place or underway.

We will shape the work and our approach in collaboration with you, based on your needs and preferences. In all of our work, we seek to share learning with a wider audience and profile the voices of the people with whom we work.

You can read examples of work carried out by previous partnerships [here](#).

Overview

- Bespoke, facilitated support for a two-year period (April 2023 – March 2025)
- Access to a dedicated team who will support the scoping and development of a project Steering Group
- Facilitation of cross-sector and multi-stakeholder events to set shared priorities and agree joint action, with the involvement of people experiencing health inequalities
- Membership of a wider Champions Network with six peer learning events and a bank of resources from previous cross-sector partnerships



Action phase

Connecting health communities involves activities for a 'steering group' and a wider 'partnership group' as described below:

- **Steering group:** Key stakeholders from across the local area, representing the cross-sector group, who (with the support of IVAR facilitators) will drive

- and support the work outside the facilitated sessions. Usually a group of eight or more people, most often including those named on the application. It is important to have at least one community leader and one NHS representative in this group.
- **Full partnership/Co-designing days:** Involving all interested parties within the local area. The steering group will seek representation from across sectors, as well as community voices to shape and take forward agreed activity. These sessions usually involve around 30-60 people. Workshops are ideally in person; however, they can take place online, on the most accessible platform (e.g. Zoom/Microsoft Teams).
- **The Champions Network:** A group of cross-sector leaders who are keen to develop their skills for collaborative and partnership working through peer learning. The overall aim of the Champions Network is to develop confidence and competence to become system leaders and agents of change. Together, members of the network will share ideas and ways of working, and work on strategies to maintain and build on the practice of collaborative working to support action and sustain change in their areas.
- **Local coordinating organisation (LCO):** An organisation (or organisations) based locally that will support the involvement of communities experiencing health inequalities. The LCO will also be responsible for cascading information following each co-design/partnership session; and coordinating with other communications leads in the local area to disseminate national learning through their networks. There is a small budget to support these organisations working predominantly at a local level, if money is a barrier to their involvement. The LCO will be identified with the facilitator and steering group when the local area conversations begin.
- **Voluntary sector involvement budget:** For partnership working to be genuinely cross-sector, we understand that voluntary organisations need to be able to participate and contribute fully, and be at the forefront of leading action for change. There is a small budget available to help cover the time of people who take on a more action-focused role in the area.

The table below provides an outline of activities. The core of the programme comprises four co-designed days with participation from wider groups, and at least six steering group meetings. However, there a high degree of flexibility is built in, and the programme of support will be shaped and designed through discussions with the steering group.

Date	Activity	Purpose
April-June 2023	Scoping phase and establishing the steering group	Introduction to the programme, exploration of local contexts and establishment of the steering group
June-September 2023	First steering group meeting (face-to-face)	Providing support to the steering group to design a process to involve the right people across the system to provide tangible outcomes

July 2023	Second steering group meeting	Getting an action plan ready for cross sector partnership session, setting shared priorities and agreeing an action plan
September-October 2023	First partnership session	Cross sector partnership development, setting shared priorities and agreeing an action plan
November-December 2023	Third steering group meeting	Develop Challenge-Action-Outcome statements and discuss work and take forward actions and ideas from the partnership meeting
January-February 2024	Second partnership session	Action planning and implementation with full group
March 2024	Fourth steering group meeting	Develop work and take forward actions and ideas from the partnership meeting. Plan for cascading messages and influencing system leaders
April-May 2024	Third partnership session	Action planning and implementation with full group
June 2024	Fifth steering group meeting	Action planning with steering group
July 2024	Final partnership session	Wrap up action planning
July-September 2024	Sixth steering group meeting (face-to-face)	To plan sustaining change offer and how to use the final part of the offer

Sustaining change phase

- Flexible support offer to the steering group or place-based working groups to embed actions discussed in the ‘action’ phase.
- Work with the steering group to understand what change/impact can be sustained and how IVAR can support these changes.
- Delivery plan and timeline based on availability of the steering group members.
- Developing communications on the IVAR platform about the local area work (e.g. key insights, blogs from participants).

Our facilitators will adapt this to work for you, for example, this could be delivered through two workshops, or through one workshop with a couple of steering group discussions, or via presentations at strategic stakeholder meetings or ICS level, etc.

Champions Network

We will establish a network of 'champions' across participating areas who are invited to take part in peer learning and develop their collaborative leadership skills. This will be available for four individuals from each partnership. They will be expected to attend six workshops:

- Workshop 1 in July 2023
- Workshop 2 in November 2023
- Workshop 3 in February 2024
- Workshop 4 in September 2024
- Workshop 5 in December 2024
- Workshop 6 in March 2025

Purpose

- **Leadership skills development:** Support participants to continue to develop the skills, behaviours, attitudes, and resilience required of system leaders and 'change agents' to positively influence your local health and care system and support the desired change and transformation.
- **Action planning and sustaining change:** Support a cross-sector 'team' from each area to build a strategy to take learning and understanding back into the local system, sustaining momentum for transformation around collaborative working, building on the work you are carrying out with the CHC programme.
- **To contribute to your continuing professional development.**

What we need from the partnership

When you express interest in Connecting Health Communities, please be aware that we are offering to facilitate your work, not deliver it. We will need you to:

- Ensure buy-in and support from the local healthcare system and attendance by senior leadership from ICS, CCG, local authority/public health, community representative and voluntary organisation from across the local area. **Leads from each sector must be available for set-up discussions and a first meeting in April-May.**
- Commitment to form a cross-sector steering group of senior health and care stakeholders as a steering group to lead the work (if none already exists).
- Attend up to four half-day co-designing days facilitated by IVAR (with contributions from experts and input from the core team), with a wider group of 30-60 participants (including community and groups), commencing in October following set-up discussions.
- Attend at least six steering group meetings (face-to-face or virtual), plus some out-of-meeting input.
- Commit a named person from one of the lead organisations to support administration and communications locally. This will involve coordinating dates/diaries, booking venues, contributing to note-taking, handling communications with the wider group between sessions.

- Commitment to supporting us to share learning and models with other local areas.
- Commitment from local partners to share data in line with a partnership agreement.
- Four cross-sector leaders from each area to be a part of the Champions Network.

All partners will be expected to commit senior staff time to leading this work.

Principles of our approach

Seven principles underpin and shape our approach to supporting cross-sector partnerships to engage meaningfully and productively in improving local health and care systems.

Local first and asset-based	We start with health inequalities at neighbourhood (Primary Care Network/PCN) level, understanding and building on existing approaches, energy and ideas. We then look at how whole systems (Integrated Care Systems/ICSs) need to change to address them.
Building relationships for joint action	We create space for the building blocks of partnership working by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting people • Helping them listen to and understand each other • Respecting different people’s experiences and circumstances • Achieving clarity – ensuring people use language everyone understands • Identifying a shared starting point for action; and setting realistic and achievable goals
Advocates for the community	Our entry point is to champion, promote and enable the voluntary sector to be a valued and influential partner in health and care design and delivery. We privilege the perspectives and voices of people who are furthest from power in our work.
Flexibility	We have a core offer that we adapt to work for each partnership area. We notice when things aren’t working and change our approach to meet the needs and circumstances of local partners.
Style of facilitation	We take an inclusive, fun and human approach – starting with who is in the room, acknowledging emotions and recognising past challenges. We then use creative methods to facilitate difficult, cross-sector conversations which lead to action. This helps to build capacity locally and is itself an act of influencing the local system, by modelling a collaborative approach to problem-solving.
Maintain momentum	We play a convening role, holding the process and bigger picture for the partnership as collaborative working gets underway: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We ensure that next steps are jointly agreed, and that follow-up discussions/actions are picked up. • We tell the story of the work as it evolves, keeping people energised and motivated.

Project team

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Supervisor and
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