

Working together for health: A qualitative study exploring the role of the third sector for chronic condition management

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Aims

To explore the existing and potential role and function of voluntary organisations (VOs) to support long term condition management

Background

- Increasing prevalence of people with long term conditions of which 80% is expected to self-manage
- Self-management has primarily focused on the individual and neglected the wider social context (Kendall & Rogers, 2007)
- Calls for development of broader range of support for self-management (Vassilev et al, 2013)

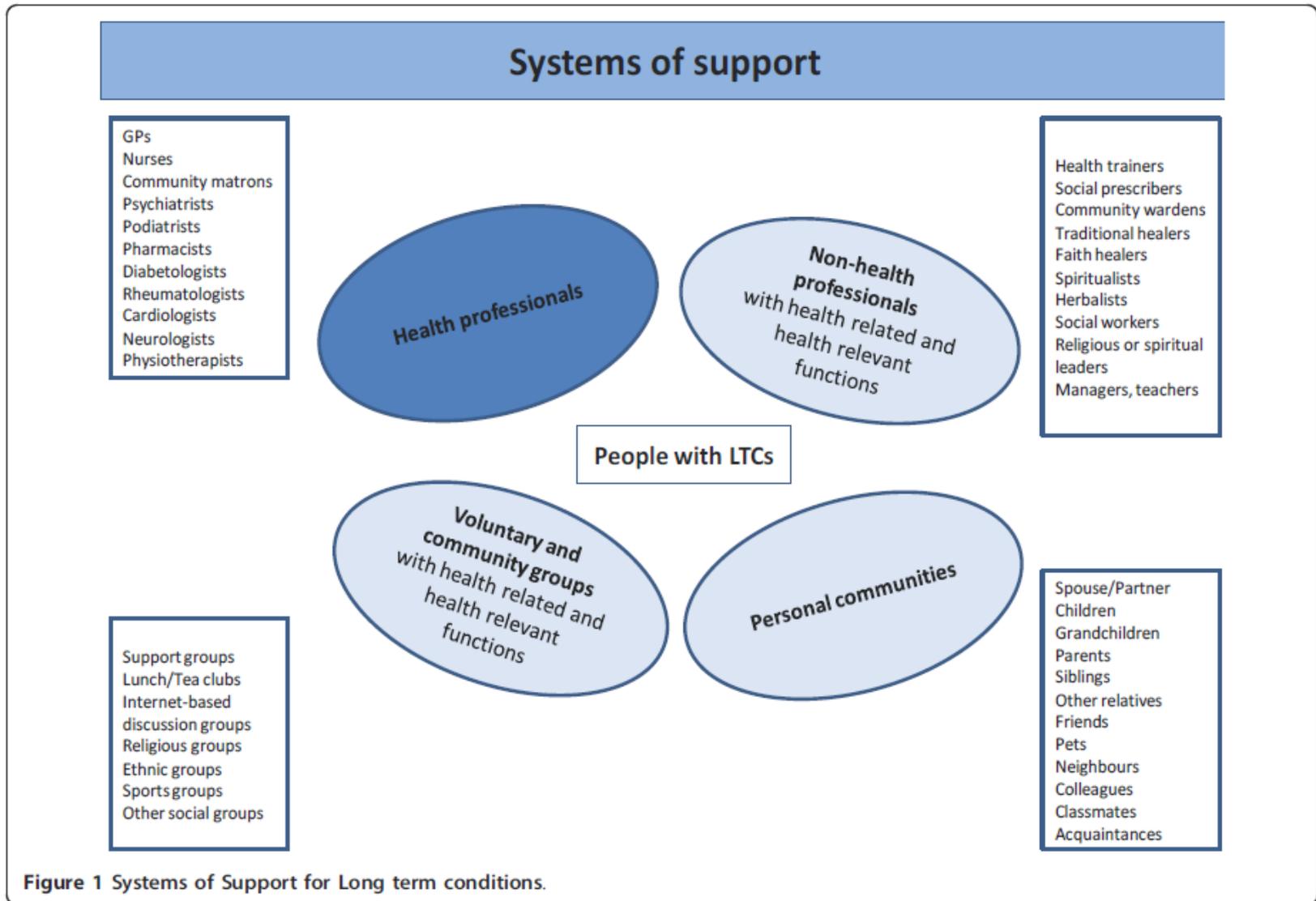
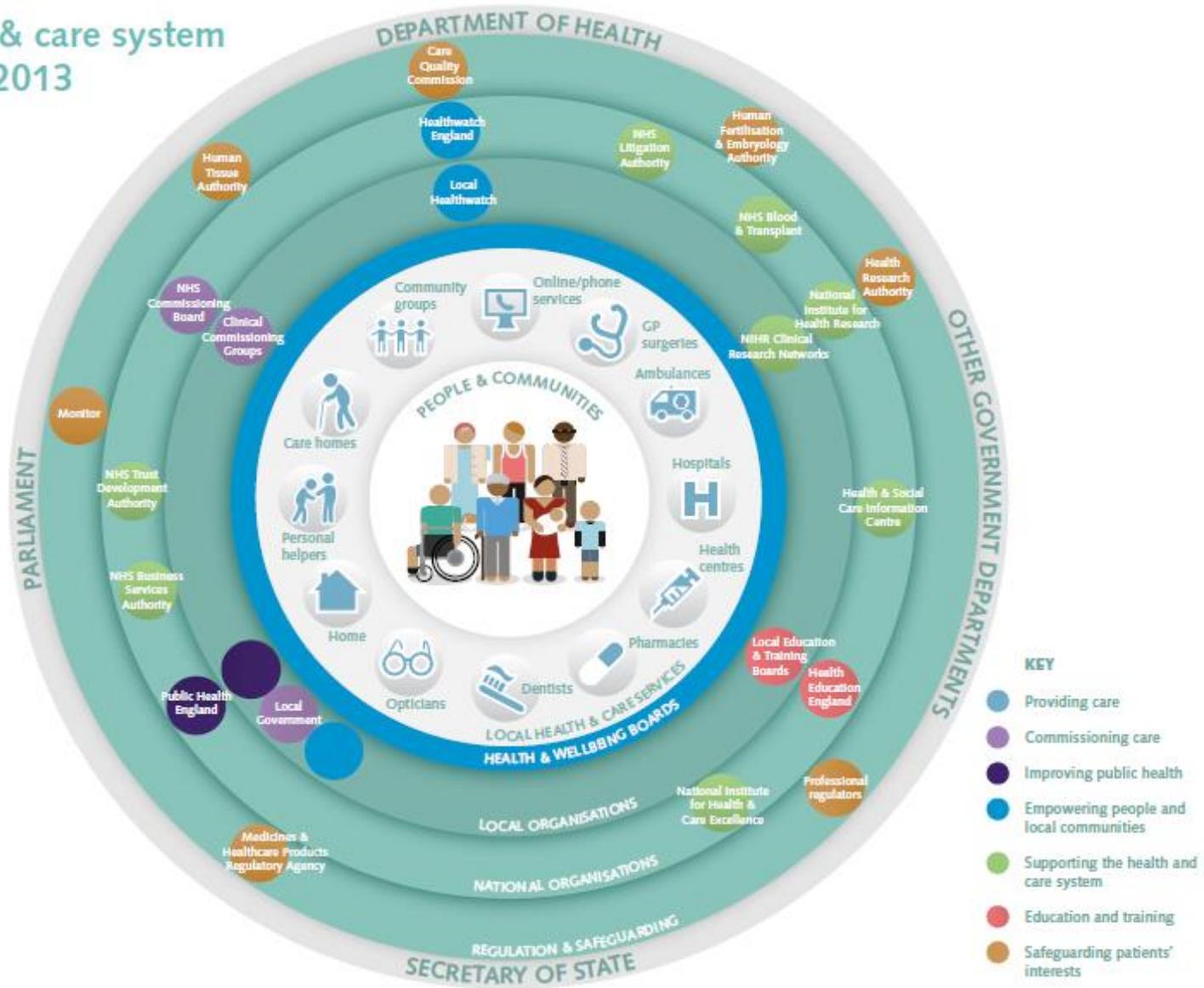


Figure 1 Systems of Support for Long term conditions.

Rogers et al (2011)

The health & care system from April 2013



Department of Health (2013)

Background of VOs and health care

- Approximately £3.39 billion is spent annually on funding health related activities provided by VOs (Clark et al, 2010)
- In chronic illness management, VOs have a history of providing training to patients as peer support and promotion of healthy lifestyle behaviours (Kennedy et al, 2005; MacDonald et al, 2009)
- Potential to extend the range of support strategies that contribute to individual's capacity for long term condition management

Methods

- 33 semi-structured interviews with organisers of VOs in North West of England
- VOs ranged from directly to not directly health relevant (e.g. fitness programmes, art groups)
- Interviews explored a range of topics including sustainability, links to health services, local context and the organisations social networks
- Analysis: thematic as well as narrative

Results

Organisation features	Characteristics		
Funding Source	Member subscriptions		External grants
Role of locality	Locally identified community need		Policy driven
Organisation users	Members	Participants	<i>“Clients”</i>
Activity organisers	Volunteers	Mix of paid staff and volunteers	Paid staff

Connections to health services

Connections to Health services	Type of connections
Primary Care (n=7)	Signposting and referring Sending Information Affiliated work Funding
Hospital services (n=3)	Common Projects Signposting and referring
Local PCT/CCG/NHS (n=13)	Funding Affiliated work Common Projects Receiving information Signposting and referring Sending Information
Department of Health (n=1)	Funding
Health Trainers (n=4)	Signposting and referring Common Projects Sending Information
Other NHS services (e.g. occupational therapists, smoking cessation programmes) (n=7)	Signposting and referring Affiliated work Sending information Receiving information Common projects

Therapeutic work

*We work closely with the diabetes specialist nurses as well... they refer patients to us which we then signpost into lots of different types of physical activity...We have an outdoor activities programme, which is walking, running, and cycling...Which is also popular with the **clients** with various health problems...*

ID VM22 (A physical activity group)

*I get a lot of people as well, who have a lot of physical health issues as well, erm, who come, so they're managing quite painful physical health...But it's been a chance for them to come out and do something **normal**...You know, just mix with other people*

ID VM39 (Arts class)

System of support

*...the main bulk of our work is around creative activities and horticulture... I think that if we find when we're talking to people who have got significant problems, that we'll link them in with another team. ...so if they've got diabetes or, er, heart problems, or some of them have come from the brain and spinal injury... we're providing, er, a **complementary piece of the jigsaw really.***

ID VM38 (Arts and wellbeing centre)

Accessibility

when people join the club ...I will generally have a chat to them...I ask questions like have you done much walking before... Because a lot of people think that walking...that walking the dog...is equivalent to doing an eight-mile round walk...where once you've started, you've got to finish it.
VA20 (Walking group)

...we're not a money making organisation... we're not a statutory organisation which is trying to be responsible for everybody in certain categories... people have to come to us...our role is to let as many people know of our existence
VA08 (Education group)

Sustainability

....it's kind of a Catch 22... The funding gets cut and obviously you have to apply for different funding...And because you don't have the funding, you downsize the organisation...And you cut people's service ...But now, as a manager, not only my role is seeing that the day to day services are running, everything's happening... most of my time is spent looking for extra funding from other bodies ...It is extremely hard to juggle everything together...And you can't appoint people... that costs money ...

ID VA03 (A centre providing a range of services to support local Asian population)

Discussion

- VOs contribute an under acknowledged role in the therapeutic work for chronic illness management
- Their capacity to provide support for management is dependent on individual's having continued access and support
- Implications for commissioning on viability of small organisations and innovation

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