

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING****Communities 1<sup>st</sup> - What We Stand For Policy Statement (3)****Introduction**

Communities 1<sup>st</sup>, alongside our member Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, recognise the pressing health and wellbeing issues within our local communities. These challenges are part of larger social concerns, including economic hardship and limited access to digital resources. We are committed to advocating for lasting changes that benefit our entire community, not just quick fixes. Our goal is to ensure that everyone, regardless of their economic status or background, has equal access to health services and support, contributing to healthier, more inclusive local communities.

**The Health Divide**

The health and wellbeing landscape of our community is fraught with challenges that hinder our collective progress towards inclusivity and equality. From the nuanced difficulties of accessing healthcare post-pandemic, to the stigmatisation surrounding mental health support and the growing concerns over lifestyle-induced health issues, the spectrum of challenges is broad. Key issues highlighted by our members include difficulties in accessing GP appointments, dental care, and the compounded effect of social and economic pressures on mental health. These challenges are further exacerbated by barriers such as language, cultural differences, and the digital divide, which notably impact migrant communities and those not digitally savvy.

**Our Pledge**

Our commitment is to foster a community where health and wellbeing are accessible and equitable for all. As Communities 1<sup>st</sup> and our member organisations, we commit:

- Strengthen collaborations with local services and organisations to directly address and support community health needs.
- Share actionable health and wellbeing information, empowering informed choices.
- Advocate for equitable health access, prioritising solutions for those hindered by technological and socio-economic barriers.

**Our Ask of Decision-Makers and Influencers**

We call upon our politicians, senior leaders, and officers within governments, local councils, the NHS, and other public sector bodies to commit to our cause. We ask that they:

1. Recognise and address the digital divide, making healthcare including GP appointments and dental care accessible to all, particularly the elderly and those without digital means.
2. Support and fund initiatives like the Healthy Hub and Ageing Well With Frailty programmes, which have shown promise in addressing specific community health needs.
3. Foster collaboration and fund local services that can mitigate transport issues and provide more walk-in options for youth and other community members.
4. Engage with and support efforts to reach isolated or marginalised groups, including through better cooperation with GPs, social prescribers, and community leaders.