



# ENABLING AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES IN DEVON

Devon Communities Together:  
Measuring Our Impact

April 2023-March 2024



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MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

As we look back on 2023-2024, it is a privilege to present our latest Annual Impact Report. I am filled with immense pride and gratitude to our staff and trustees for the progress we have made together with our many partners and our rural communities. The past 12 months have continued to bring many challenges, with public sector financial constraints and the cost-of-living crisis in particular, continuing to impact our communities, with our rural communities being disproportionately affected.

Our vision to inspire and support rural communities in Devon to be dynamic and sustainable places for people to live and work has never been more critical. Over the past year, there have been many significant achievements that you will read about throughout the report, from providing a VCSE infrastructure support service in East Devon, to completing the first ever Devon Village Hall Audit; from holding a successful "Devon Prepared" community resilience event, to our work in reducing rural health inequalities, as well as a broad and diverse range of community-led programmes.

Looking ahead, we are committed to deepening our impact, advocating for policies that support rural communities, through collaboration and inclusivity. Together, we will continue to make a difference, ensuring that rural communities across Devon not only survive but thrive.

Nora Corkery, Chief Executive, Devon Communities Together



DO YOU KNOW YOUR ABC?

No, not that one!

Asset Based Community Development is an approach to community development that works with existing strengths within the community to create positive change.

Community assets are everywhere we look - people, spaces, facilities, businesses, organisations and groups. It's our role to support communities to mobilise, develop and protect their assets. This means we don't parachute in and out of places, we empower and enable communities to make sustainable changes with lasting impact.



Visit pg.24 & 31 to find out how we've been helping communities run and develop their Village Halls



Visit pg.14 to see how we brought together a group of people in South Brent to examine together how they could tackle health inequalities



Visit pg.26 to read about how we've been supporting the wonderful voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in East Devon



Visit pg.16 to find out how we've helped the community in Tipton St John on their journey to a new sports facility



Visit pg.30 to find out how we've been bringing community shops together in a new network to support each other



# OUR SIX STRATEGIC AIMS ARE AT THE CENTRE OF ALL OUR ACTIVITIES. DCT WILL ...

...work with communities to develop innovative ways to achieve community resilience and a positive impact for climate change and sustainability

...develop community capacity building, through local facilities, spaces, services, people and their skills

...support Devon's rural economy, local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and thrive, and promote community wealth building

...identify and work to reduce inequalities to ensure 'rural proofing' of services, and to improve community health and wellbeing



...champion diversity and inclusion, hear minority voices and respond to their needs

...flourish as an agile, flexible, learning organisation, responding positively to the evolving needs of our communities, stakeholders and staff



DCT's Anderson (r) with (l-r) Maureen (Open Door) and Zoey Cooper (East Devon District Council) (see pg.26)



## SOCIAL VALUE ENGINE

Social value calculation is the practice of measuring the impact that a project or initiative has on society.

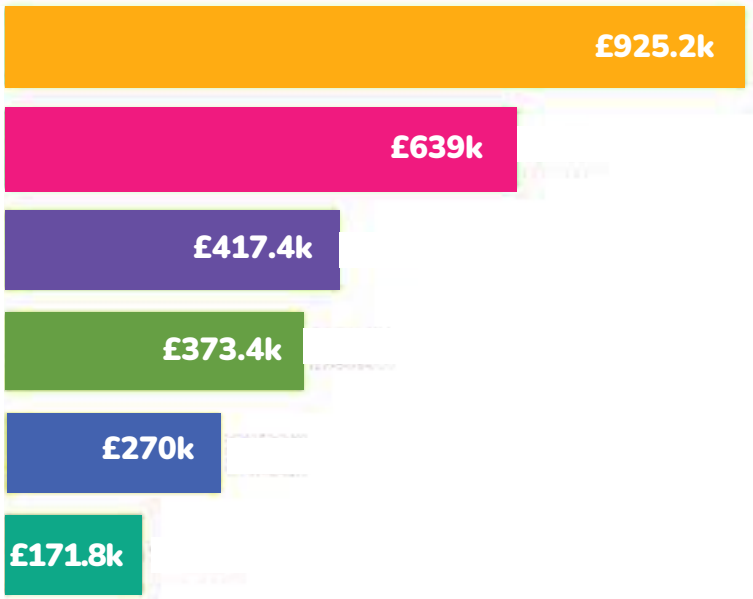
Devon Communities Together uses the Social Value Engine (SVE) built by our partners at Rose Regeneration. The SVE is the only UK software product accredited by Social Value International (SVI). SVI spans 25 countries, including the UK.

The calculations made by this engine are built on statistics from many sources including London Sustainable Development Commission, the Office for National Statistics, as well as several government departments. This engine takes into account unknown variables such as the displacement of other positive outcomes, the drop-off of positive effects over time, and others, to generate a reliable calculation.

Alongside other members of the ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) Network and the wider charity sector, we have invested in the integration of social value with our work. A large part of this involves designing our projects with social value in mind, ensuring that we are capturing the data that the engine needs. Tracking our social value by project allows us to begin to calculate our social value by metrics such as impact by districts, as well as against our six strategic aims.

A robust social value calculation allows us to measure our impact more accurately, helping us to understand how we can best support the communities of Devon.

### SOCIAL VALUE BY STRATEGIC AIM (SEE PG.4)





WE AIM TO ...  
**champion  
diversity and  
inclusion, hear  
minority voices  
and respond to  
their needs**



Produced  
and shared **1**  
final evaluation report  
encompassing **75** lived  
experience stories of  
health in Ilfracombe and  
Okehampton

Improved the  
accessibility and  
inclusivity of DCT's internal  
and external communications  
through expert  
training and  
consultation



Designed  
an evaluation  
programme for The  
Pelican Project - a  
collective of young people  
with learning disabilities  
- to understand its  
impact



Listened  
to the voices,  
ideas and experiences  
of **2,885** people  
across Devon  
through **21**  
community surveys



OUR ACTIVITIES  
HAVE BEEN  
MEASURED AT  
**£171.8K**  
SOCIAL VALUE

**1**  
Successful  
funding bid secured to  
deliver programmes that  
tackle barriers to accessing  
transport for people with  
disabilities



Trained  
**62** people  
at **10** sessions on how to  
support people to use public  
transport with confidence;  
total of **125** people since  
July 2022

Completed our  
activity on the Connecting  
You project, which supported  
**1,854** participants from rural  
Devon to tackle loneliness by  
accessing public transport



Engaged with  
diverse groups  
of people at **607**  
community events,  
workshops and  
trainings






Read more about ...

## TRAVEL TRAINING TO HELP PEOPLE ACCESS PUBLIC TRANSPORT

We've provided specialist travel training to 125 people since 2022 (62 during 2023-24) at 22 Devon-based organisations that work with people at risk of loneliness.

 **What impact did the training have?** It's meant that all of the people we trained were able to better support their clients and service users to make bus and train journeys with greater confidence so they could socialise more, make connections and access important services.

We delivered this training as part of the Connecting You project aimed to tackle the major problem of loneliness and isolation in rural Devon by supporting people to access public transport. Delivery on Connecting You - which was funded by the Department for Transport and led by Devon County Council - wrapped up in July 2023.

More detail can be found in the final evaluation report, which DCT produced in September 2023. You can read the report here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/connecting-you](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/connecting-you)



“...people used to stay in their own ‘spheres’ and now they are more interlinked and less isolated...I think it’s a really positive thing for the community...Being able to get out on social trips and connect with people is massive.”

Torie Hitchings, Wellmoor (Day Trippers project), Travel Training attendee



**COMING SOON!** We were delighted be successful in our partnership bid with Living Options Devon to Motability Foundation funding. ‘Travelling With Confidence’, will provide a programme of support to build the confidence of people with disabilities and their carers in using public transport. Delivery for this exciting new project will begin in July 2024.



### Case history ...

#### SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO MAKE JOURNEYS

Kazlum is a private enabling service based in Exeter and Mid Devon for service users accessing supported living, aged 18 or over with learning difficulties or mental health needs. Many of their service users have profound disabilities, although some have different levels of independence. We trained 24 of Kazlum’s support worker team. During the training there had been expression from some of the support workers that accessing public transport was too high risk for the clients to consider,

“...we have since found that the training 'made staff think better' regarding supporting independence.”

#### What changed..?

The team has started working with two different service users who previously were not accessing public transport. One person has epilepsy which was both a physical and psychological barrier. Since attending the travel training, staff have supported him to become familiar with a bus route and adopted a graded approach to him using the bus. He has now taken a bus journey on his own and the staff met him at the other end. This produced a great sense of achievement for the person involved and although he may not ever become fully independent with transport, travelling on the bus alone has itself had a positive psychological impact on him.

A second service user was fully reliant on staff to provide lifts for all journeys, but since the travel training he has been supported to use the bus, which he has reportedly really enjoyed, leading him to positively reminisce on the past times when he used to get out and about on the bus!





Participants of the Connecting You project (pg8-9) wait for a train as they build up their confidence on public transport




DCT delivers travel training (pg8)

Read more about ...

# VALUING LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RURAL AND COASTAL DEPRIVATION

As part of the NHS Core 20+5 project partnership, we collated and analysed the personal stories of 75 people in North Dartmoor and Ilfracombe who suffer with health challenges. These two areas were identified as being amongst those with the highest rate of health inequalities in Devon, and volunteer Community Connectors were recruited to engage with local people and listen to their stories.

 **What impact did the project have?** The value of lived experience through personal stories has been shown to be an important part of understanding and addressing health inequalities. By sharing the findings with key stakeholders it is hoped that this will be taken into account as service delivery systems are developed.

Our final project report can be viewed here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing)

“People have shared their opinions and stories and experiences, and others have a genuine interest in seeing what can and should be done to improve them. We’ve lit the end of a very long, but exciting fuse! Let’s hope great things come from the flame at the end.”

North Dartmoor Community Connector  
Co-ordinator



## Case history ...

### MR W’S STORY AS TOLD TO A COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

Mr W brought in a letter from “Wellness Health Assessment”. I met Mr W in May 2023 at a Trauma, Mental Health and Addiction Conference I attended and participated in. He has a history of childhood sexual abuse, depression and suicide ideation. There is a lengthy assessment where it is clear he needs professional therapeutic intervention. However, he has been directed to online resources which he feels is unacceptable because a computer with WIFI is required, which means a visit to the library or the Candar Centre, as well as knowledge and skill in IT, and the motivation to access these resources is not always possible when experiencing depression.



WE AIM TO ...

identify and work to reduce inequalities to ensure 'rural proofing' of services, and to improve community health and wellbeing



OUR ACTIVITIES  
HAVE BEEN  
MEASURED AT  
**£639K**  
SOCIAL VALUE



Evaluated and shared the positive impact of a cross-sectoral approach to public health between public and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector



Facilitated a place-based Community Practice Study in South Brent with **17** local organisations, to address health inequalities



Supported digital healthcare infrastructure development as a member of the Digital Transformation Board, including allowing the sharing of critical patient data across health and care systems to improve efficiency and patient care



Commissioned to rural proof **13** Devon County Council Adult Social Care policies

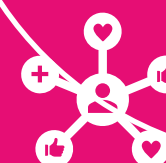
Supported **2** University of Exeter-led research programme bids on sustainable futures and nutrition in older people



Amplified the voices of rural communities at **19** different strategic meetings, steering groups and partnerships



Analysed data from **197** people across **2** projects to produce insights into barriers to taking the Covid-19 vaccine



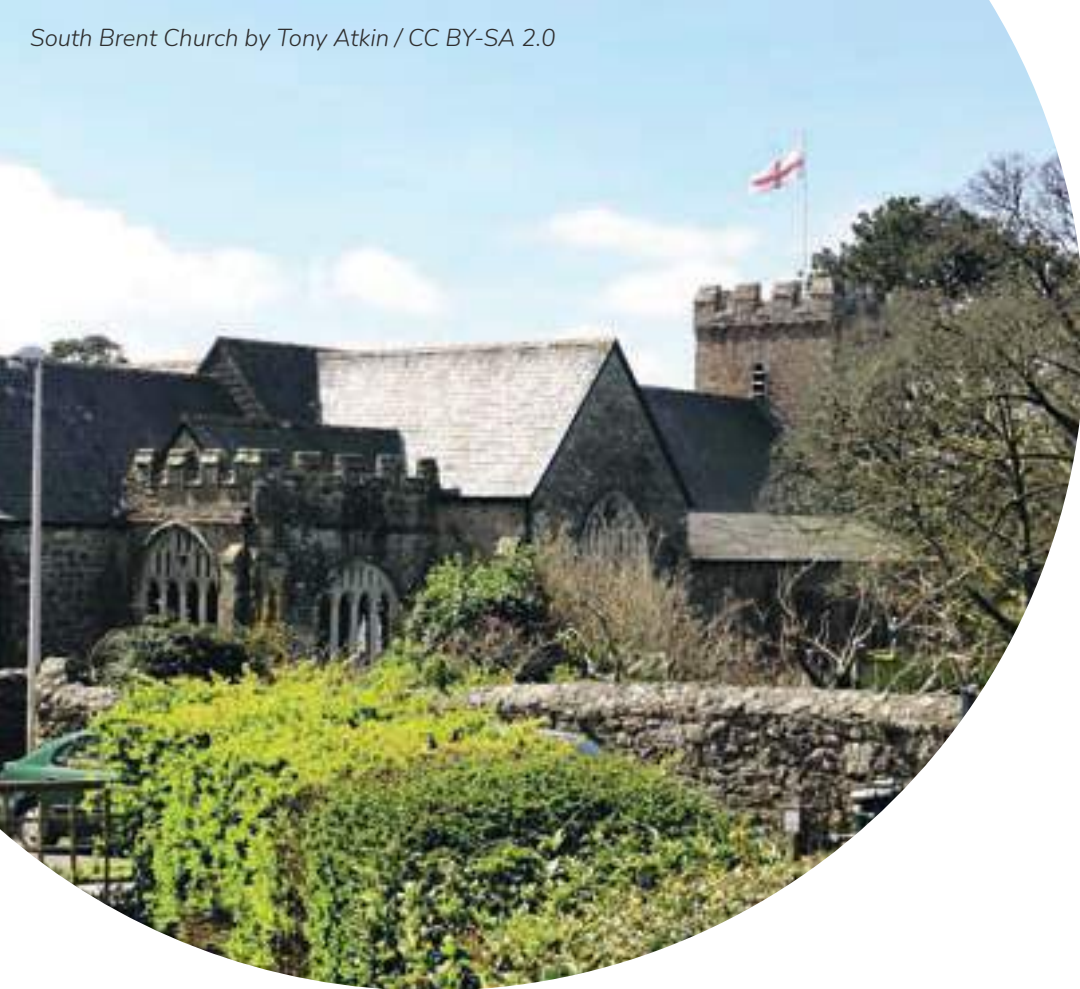
Active role in the Executive Committee of the Torbay, Plymouth and Devon Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (TPD VCSE) Assembly



Produced **1** evaluation report on the East Devon Virtual Wards VCSE pilot programme, which supported **46** patients to receive clinical care at home







Read more about ...

# TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN SOUTH BRENT: A COMMUNITY STUDY

In November 2023, we organised a workshop in South Brent to talk about health inequalities with 17 people, including residents, local organisations, and services.

The aim was to test the ‘Deep End’ theory, in which GP networks in areas of urban deprivation come together to focus on areas that will mitigate health inequalities in their areas. Would bringing people together who live and work in/have responsibilities for a rural area with pockets of deprivation lead to improvements and benefits in the same way that it has in urban communities?

**What was the impact of this study?**  
The study identified: loneliness; not

wanting to ask for help; poverty; transport; digital barriers; the limited resources and capacity of voluntary organisations; lack of information and knowledge about services; and lack of coordination between services, as the key issues affecting people in South Brent. We have a deeper understanding of local needs around health inequalities and a high value has been placed on bringing together people living, volunteering and working ‘on the ground’ to collaborate on solutions.

You can read more about our findings in South Brent here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing)

This was part of the University of Plymouth-led, Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research programme: Devon Community Assets Research Collaborative (CAN-DO), and follows the Mid Devon practice study we previously facilitated.



Read more about ...

# SUPPORTING PATIENTS TO RECEIVE HOSPITAL CARE AT HOME

The East Devon VCSE (voluntary, community and social enterprise) Virtual Wards pilot supported patients who left the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust under the Virtual Wards Scheme. Virtual Wards mean patients can be sent home for monitoring via remote devices, rather than having long stays in hospital. DCT, along with Wellmoor, identified an opportunity for the VCSE sector to offer non-clinical support to these patients in their homes and avoid preventable readmittances to the hospital ward.

The pilot was the first-of-its-kind to offer help in areas such as using the digital devices, transporting devices and general wraparound support. DCT acted as a central hub for referrals, ensuring support was received within an average of one day of referral.

**What was the impact of the initiative?**  
46 people were helped to receive 196 nights of care at home rather than in hospital, with 25 hours of NHS staff time saved by not having to provide digital support themselves. We showed that partnership working between the VCSE sector and the NHS was successful and provided a model for future schemes. Feedback from the patients was 100% positive. The snapshot and full pilot reports may be read here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing)

*“The process was clear, and help was quickly available when John’s heart monitor fell off in the night. Having someone visit three times in that week when John was being discharged worked extremely well.”*





Read more about ...


# A NEW SPORTS FACILITY FOR TIPTON ST JOHN

The community in Tipton St John currently have a sports pavilion built in the 1950s that is no longer fit for purpose. DCT has been supporting the community with a consultation on a potential new venue.

The consultation took the form of an online and paper survey in September, a Lego workshop with the local primary school in October and a drop-in event in November, as well as phone interviews with existing

users of the Pavilion.

We produced a report for the community containing data from nine hall user groups, 77 questionnaire respondents, 28 primary school children and 44 people at a community event, all of whom had a voice in this consultation.

 **What was the impact of the consultation?** Thanks to this process, Tipton Playing Fields Association has a clear mandate from the community to create a modern multi-purpose building, which will bring the community together for sports, leisure and events and create opportunities for improved fitness and wellbeing.



We asked 28 children: 'what games would you play in the field?' at our lego workshop!

# What is rural proofing?



As the Rural Community Council for Devon we contribute to a wide range of strategic meetings, partnerships, working groups and boards, to ensure that the particular issues that affect rural communities in Devon are understood and considered by decision makers. As a county with so many rural and coastal communities, it's important that people living in these areas have fair and equitable outcomes from policies and services. Here are some examples ...



*Amplifying the voice of rural communities at 19 different meetings, steering groups and partnerships, including those focused on ...*



Health and care



Digital inclusion



Community resilience



Nature and environment



Voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations



Economy, enterprise and skills



Research



Housing

## Rurality as an equality issue

Worked through the TPD VCSE Assembly (p.13) to successfully achieve the inclusion of a category of people living in rural areas in the One Devon NHS Quality and Equality Impact Assessment.



## Digital inclusion

Chaired the TPD VCSE Assembly Digital Inclusion Partnership, which this year has been focussing on the development of a Devon Digital Skills Framework and the piloting of a Digital Support Referral Pathway Service for Mental Health Patients from January – March 2024.

## District Council roadshow

Our CEO and a member of our Trustee Board personally visited all Devon District Council leaders and CEOs to discuss their priorities and how DCT can help them to support their communities, particularly around rural issues.

*"...it is clear many of our strategic aims and ambitions are closely aligned. I was surprised and more so impressed with the amount of work and scope you actually cover, which was great to hear about...I think there is much we can do collaboratively."* Steve Hearse, CEO, Torridge District Council



WE AIM TO ...  
work with  
communities to  
develop innovative  
ways to achieve  
community resilience  
and a positive impact  
for climate change  
and sustainability



Engaged  
with  
stakeholders at  
**56** meetings/  
events about nature-  
based flood resilience  
measures in their  
communities



Lead the  
evaluation of **10**  
Community Fridges across  
Devon to understand the  
impact on the  
community and  
reduction of  
food waste



Key  
delivery  
partner in the Devon  
Land Use Framework  
pilot programme,  
contributing to national  
recommendations



Began  
evaluating  
a community  
log bank



Awarded  
**34** community  
wildlife grants of  
up to **£500**, a  
total of **£8,884**



**250** people  
attended our  
energy saving  
advice events,  
**89** people received 1-2-  
1 support to reduce their  
energy usage and **120**  
people received a free  
warm pack



OUR ACTIVITIES  
HAVE BEEN  
MEASURED AT  
**£373.4K**  
SOCIAL VALUE

**72**  
delegates gathered  
to learn about and  
discuss Whole  
of Society  
Resilience at our  
conference in March  
2024



**£22,298**  
awarded in  
community  
emergency  
grants



Supported  
**6** communities to  
develop new or updated  
emergency plans to help  
keep people and property  
safe in local  
emergencies



Supported **21**  
Parish Councils  
with Community  
Emergency  
Planning





Read more about ...

## COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND EMERGENCY PLANNING

Devon Community Resilience Forum (DCRF), which is managed by DCT, continues to promote and support communities to protect people and property in emergencies. Whether that's through training, engagement events and tailored support to develop Community Emergency Plans (six created this year), or by providing funding for community engagement and for emergency response equipment (£22,298 awarded this year).

Local councils are key stakeholders in this work so we have been developing relationships with emergency planning officers from all districts and we've supported 21 Parish Councils to plan for emergencies in their communities.

### Whole of Society Resilience

Over 72 delegates attended the Devon Prepared conference in March, where we explored all aspects of 'Whole of Society Resilience'. Organised by DCT, the conference produced many examples of current practice, explored future goals and challenges.

As the UK faces changing risks from the climate emergency, cyber-crime, food security and the rising cost of living, delegates overwhelmingly agreed that we must work together to prepare for and respond to these risks.

We came up with a list of concerns and questions that communities face. These are being collated and analysed and a response will be produced.

The conference was funded by the Devon Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Resilience Forum.



*"Great to have professional and technical input in the context of community development. Really encouraging! Big thanks to all involved!" Margaret Leppard, Seaton Flood Working Group*



 **What was the impact of the Devon Community Resilience Forum?** Communities are more able to prepare for and respond to incidents including flooding and other emergency incidents. Key stakeholders across Devon will be looking at ways to increase their resilience against a broader range of potential issues beyond natural events. Find out more: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/devon-community-resilience-forum)



Read more about ...


## FOOD AND FARMING LAND USE FRAMEWORK: A DEVON PILOT

DCT was part of a multi-agency leadership group of key stakeholders, led by the Food, Farming & Countryside Commission to deliver a Devon pilot project aimed to support partners in the public, private and voluntary sector to collaborate on land use decision making processes.

We managed the stakeholder engagement, working with a wide range of people who own, work on, use and benefit from the land here in Devon to explore different



perspectives on what a more resilient and sustainable future could look like, and test how a Land Use Framework could help better decisions.

 **What was the impact of the pilot project?** The Devon pilot featured in a national report: 'The Multifunctional Land Use Framework - The key to better land use decisions', which recommends that the Government adopts a Multifunctional Land Use Framework to make the best decisions about land use going forward, optimising our precious land for multiple benefits for people and planet.

Find out more here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/news/devon-pilot-inform-new-land-use-framework](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/news/devon-pilot-inform-new-land-use-framework)


Read more about ...

## KEEPING WARM THIS WINTER

Our energy outreach service ran a programme of drop-in events and 1-2-1 support to help people reduce their energy usage, including through a partnership with Exmouth Town Council that targeted the areas at greatest risk of fuel poverty.

We even reached out to South West Water for training on their social tariffs so that we could offer more holistic support to those struggling with their household bills.

Thanks to a grant from National Grid/Community Matters Fund, we were able to give additional support this year in the form of warm winter packs. These packages contained a hat, gloves, scarf, blanket, thermal mug, radiator foil and room temperature gauge, and were offered to attendees at our drop-in sessions.

 **What impact did our energy champions have?** 250 people who attended our drop-in sessions and 89 people who received 1-2-1 support have been supported to use less energy, minimise their bills and keep themselves and their homes warm.

 *Your patience and understanding with several vulnerable residents [at Belle Court, Barnstaple] was exceptional ensuring they were able to take the advice onboard. This is truly a valuable service that you offer and hope you will continue to do so, for environmental and cost of leaving reasons." Simon Cohen LiveWest Projects Officer*





WE AIM TO ...

develop  
community  
capacity building,  
through local  
facilities, spaces,  
services, people  
and their skills



OUR ACTIVITIES  
HAVE BEEN  
MEASURED AT  
**£417.4K**  
SOCIAL VALUE

190,627 litres  
of oil ordered by  
the 307 members  
of the Devon Oil  
Collective

116  
organisations  
supported as part of  
the East Devon  
Voluntary,  
Community and  
Social Enterprise  
Support Service



Supported  
302 DCT  
members, along with  
806 community,  
voluntary and other  
organisations

Gathered  
8 stories  
of housing in  
Tavistock to inform  
the Neighbourhood  
Plan



Produced  
30 bespoke  
evaluation reports for our  
communities and funders,  
communicating the impact  
of the different projects.

Read many of  
them here!



1,087  
people  
contributed to  
their communities'  
Neighbourhood Plans



136  
Village Halls  
added to the new Devon  
Community Asset Map  
(339 in total)



Engaged 171  
times with village  
halls to support them  
with specialist advice,  
including 38 pieces of  
funding advice



Gave 7,198  
households the  
opportunity to  
contribute to surveys  
about local housing  
need



Administered  
£82,834 of  
grant funding to  
communities





Read more about ...

# HELPING DEVON'S VILLAGE HALLS TO THRIVE

Our Village Hall support service works consistently to give specialist advice to Devon's 440 halls that are so vital to their rural communities. From helping with funding applications to advice on governance, energy saving, marketing and lots more, our mission is to ensure these important community facilities prosper.

Highlights this year have included supporting the creation and ongoing progress of two Village Hall 'clusters', where committees in a particular area form a supportive network to share experiences, ideas and best practice. We've helped establish these in South Hams and in East Devon.


*We've visited 80% of Devon's Village Halls!*

During the last year we visited 136 Village Halls, a total of 339 since 2022, equating to 80% of the halls in Devon!


We've been taking a detailed audit on all kinds of topics including hall capacity; occupancy; financial status (inc. Covid impact); digital connectivity; governance; community resilience; health and wellbeing hub potential; accessibility and environmental sustainability.

This has resulted in an interim report on our findings, as well as bespoke reports for each Devon district. At the time of writing we are in the midst of producing a full evaluation report which will be widely shared to provide evidence for future funding and support for Village Halls. You'll soon be able to read the report here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/village-halls-and-community-buildings](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/village-halls-and-community-buildings)


*In the meantime, did you know ...?*



67% of Devon Village Halls are booked for less than 50% of the time?



10% of halls openly stated that they can't improve their environmental sustainability due to lack of funding?



36% of Village Halls in Devon do not have Broadband?

All of this important data will be added to our new Devon Community Asset Map, which will be launching online later in 2024!

*"The meeting today was great. Sometimes we feel we operate in isolation, but with these network meetings we can learn and share."*  
East Devon Village Hall Cluster member

 **What is the impact of our support to Village Halls?** With diminishing services and transport options for rural communities, Village Halls are a central hub for people to gather for an ever-increasing number of reasons including to celebrate, socialise, learn, shop, even access medical appointments. By providing dedicated support we can help the committees and trustees to deliver and even expand their services and provide modern, accessible spaces that benefit the whole community. Read more here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/village-halls-community-buildings-audit](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/village-halls-community-buildings-audit)

Below are some of the insights and feedback we've learned from Village Halls during our audit ...



*"We want to turn the building into a zero carbon footprint. Want to put solar on the roof, batteries, putting in a link to the grid so that additional power will provide an income. 20 or 30 panels. Improving the insulation, lining with sheep wool, use local materials and reuse some of the things we have eg tiles and floor."*

*"Through the regular activities we hold we bring people together which helps with mental health and wellbeing."*

*"Would like to improve the hall and making it a more attractive space, to make it more attractive for bookings and commercial usage (drinking water, toilet facilities and Wi-Fi need to be improved). Great potential but currently feels a bit 'left behind'."*

*"We are also keen to create digital hubs and have drop-in IT sessions for the elderly; would be keen to investigate being used as a Health Hub, and also as work space for home workers."*




Read more about ...

## SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR IN EAST DEVON

Last year was the first of an exciting three-year project to provide a comprehensive support package to voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations that are based in or service communities in East Devon.

We have supported 116 organisations through a variety of training sessions, drop-in events and 1-2-1 sessions. We've helped to set up four new VCSE organisations and helped 26 to apply for funding. We're also

members of the Financial Resilience Group in East Devon, whose aim is to bring key stakeholders together to develop a pilot cross-sector partnership model of listening, responding and co-producing solutions regarding financial resilience in local areas, with a focus on rural places.

 **What's been the impact so far?** By engaging with the sector and making deep connections we understand the challenges and needs, and have been able to tailor a programme to support VCSEs that deliver such important services in their communities.

Led by East Devon District Council, this project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Find out more here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/east-devon-vcse-support-service](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/projects/east-devon-vcse-support-service)



“We had the chance to talk in depth about our individual situations and I came out of it with a really clear idea of how I could implement improvements in my organisation. It answered all my questions, even ones I didn't know I had!” Attendee at Impact Measurement training session

“Extremely knowledgeable facilitator who ensured that everyone had an opportunity to contribute. Found levels of involvement and layers of community involvement enlightening.” Attendee at Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement training session



### Case history ...

#### OLIMPIA'S STORY

We began working with Olimpia in August 2023 as she wanted to set up a new charitable organisation. Shortly after moving to the UK from Poland 10 years ago, she found herself with no support and experienced multiple challenges trying to integrate into her local community, including language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of support networks. which led her to want to set up a charity to support other non-English speaking migrants going through a similar experience when settling in Exmouth and surrounding East Devon towns.

Over the months we took her through the different stages, from an initial get-to-know-you chat over a cuppa, to exploring organisational structures and training on governance, policies, procedures, business plan writing, and how to secure funding.

Having decided to set up as a CIC (community interest company), she made connections with another CIC, with one of their members becoming a director in Olimpia's new company. She also adjusted her working patterns to give her time to focus on her new venture, which she named Settle UK.

By the time we met Olimpia again in 2024 she had grown in confidence and knowledge, becoming self-directed and having officially registered 'Settle UK CIC'. The next step will be us supporting her with a business plan. Watch this space!



*DCT's Emma chats with local entrepreneur, Olimpia*


“Thank you so much. I am so proud. It is a dream come true!” Olimpia

Read more about ...

## EXPANDING OUR RURAL HOUSING SERVICES

In June 2023, as part of its Unleashing Rural Opportunity strategy, the Government announced funding for a network of Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) across England to tackle the acute lack of affordable housing; a consequence of high house prices, low local incomes, and very limited supplies of social housing, particularly in smaller rural communities.

Devon Communities Together submitted a proposal for the DEFRA funding on behalf of Devon Community Housing Hub partnership, which resulted in **£96,870** being bought into Devon to support the creation of affordable rural housing.

 **What will the impact of this funding be?** We will be able to help Parish Councils and other community groups through the process of creating affordable homes in their community, which will benefit not only the future owners and tenants but also help maintain diversity in rural communities.

Find out more here: [www.devonhousinghub.org.uk/rural-housing-services/rural-housing-enabling-service/](http://www.devonhousinghub.org.uk/rural-housing-services/rural-housing-enabling-service/)





WE AIM TO ...

support Devon's rural economy, local entrepreneurs and businesses to develop and thrive, and promote community wealth building



OUR ACTIVITIES  
HAVE BEEN  
MEASURED AT  
**£270K**  
SOCIAL VALUE



249 members  
of Devon Social  
Enterprise  
Network

110 participants  
from 65 Village Halls  
and Community Buildings  
completed our Enterprising  
Halls programme to support  
Village Halls as community  
enterprises



Facilitated  
**37** training  
and learning sessions  
themed around  
business and  
enterprise  
support, with **260**  
attendees



Engaged with **7**  
learning providers to  
gather and analyse data  
from SMART SKILLS  
training programme



Completed  
our 'New Start  
Devon' programme of  
business support for **80**  
small enterprises and  
**113** entrepreneurs, with  
**17** jobs created



Supported  
and evaluated **2**  
programmes to support  
young people not in  
education, employment or  
training, after which **655**  
entered employment or  
training



Devon  
Community Shops  
Network supported **27**  
Community Shops across  
**4** networking events





Read more about ...

## DEVON COMMUNITY SHOPS NETWORK

DCT attended four network meetings (in Ilstington, Ide, Burrington, Payhembury) to provide support to community shops and their volunteers. During these meetings, representatives networked with each other and as a group we discussed how to recruit and retain volunteers, stocking non-food items including cards, calendars, local art and local maps or jigsaws of the area, as well as how they would like future meetings to look.

### What was the impact of these meetings?

Each shop shared best practice as well as the challenges they face. Many got new ideas which they will incorporate into their own shops to benefit their local communities.

Read more here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/news/community-shop-network-devon](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/news/community-shop-network-devon)



“They have been great meetings and it is really good to meet up and talk things over and share with others.”

Read more about ...

## EXPERIENCE WORKS

DCT completed our activity as a key delivery and evaluation partner in the Experience Works programme, delivering mentoring for 18–24-year-olds in Devon who were not in education, employment or training. The programme was funded by the European Social Fund.

We worked with the funder and the six delivery partners to collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data over the duration of the programme, producing an evaluation report that can be read here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/supporting-young-people-empowering-enterprise-and-experience-works](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/supporting-young-people-empowering-enterprise-and-experience-works)

What was the impact of the project? 151 participants entered employment, education and training on completing. The many others gained employment skills and valuable experiences, and businesses benefitted from new employees and a more inclusive approach to employment.



Read more about ...



## ENTERPRISE COACHING

Our New Start Devon programme received funding from the European Regional Development Fund to provide a minimum of 12 hours' free online coaching and enterprise support to help people develop their enterprises or business ideas. Read our final report here: [www.devoncommunities.org.uk/supporting-enterprise-and-business](http://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/supporting-enterprise-and-business)

What was the impact of the coaching? 119 people completed the full programme, with at least 17 new jobs and eight new enterprises being created.

“Business coaching was exceptional. You supported us and enabled us to come up with our own solutions to problems as they came up along the way.”

“We looked forward to the sessions because we knew that our time with you would be so well spent and that we would leave the session feeling just that bit more confident and have a real sense of we can do this.”

“One to one coaching with Hannah gave me the opportunity to talk through every aspect of my new business and prioritise what to do next – bringing structure to my chaotic jumble of thoughts and worries.”

## ENTERPRISING HALLS

Our Enterprising Halls programme provided tailored enterprise coaching to specifically support Village Hall committees to develop their spaces as enterprises. We welcomed 110 participants from 65 halls across Devon. Three halls even organised a meeting of the whole trustee board to live stream our Essential Bootcamp day workshop! Feedback was that this was an excellent way for them to a) learn together and b) get together for a whole day as a trustee group, resulting in improving the skills of trustees, which in turn supports the ongoing development of the buildings to serve their communities.

### Case history ...

#### STOWFORD PARISH HALL

Stowford Parish Hall was one of the first halls to sign up for DCT's new Enterprising Halls programme and as a result was successful in raising £10,000 for improvements to their hall.

The benefits of attending the training were, amongst others, helping trustees to manage their hall most effectively and access to training in a range of topics from governance to fundraising. Trustees said as soon as they had completed the Enterprising Halls workshops they used everything they had learnt to put as much as possible into their funding application. They got the full £10,000 they asked for, resulting in a new front door, new floor in the storeroom, sound clouds to improve the acoustics for those with hearing difficulties, and a projector screen and PA so that they can have a film club.





WE AIM TO  
...flourish as an  
agile, flexible,  
learning organisation,  
responding positively  
to the evolving needs of  
our communities,  
stakeholders and  
staff



## I AM DEVON: DCT VIDEO

We created a brand new video to share DCT's story and hear from some of the communities we work with about the impact we help them to create. The video features some amazing community organisations including Gittisham Village Hall and Community Kitchen, Totnes Bike Hub, Spreyton Community Shop and Tavistock Town Council. Click here to see what they have to say! [www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEzElhIGf6U&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEzElhIGf6U&t=1s)



Offered  
**7** benefits  
awareness courses  
in collaboration with  
Citizens Advice  
Devon



**1** Trustee  
Board away  
day



OUR ACTIVITIES  
HAVE BEEN  
MEASURED AT  
**£925.2K**  
SOCIAL VALUE

DCT  
staff attended  
**4** national  
conferences: **3** hosted by  
Action with Communities in  
Rural England (ACRE)  
**1** National Whole of  
Society Resilience  
conference



**2**  
staff surveys  
conducted for staff  
satisfaction and  
staff skills

**2**  
staff training  
sessions delivered  
in Impact Evaluation  
and Managing  
Challenging  
Situations



**1,245**  
attendees trained at  
**115** learning,  
development and  
networking  
events



**141**  
systems and  
development staff  
training sessions  
delivered



## SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT AT DCT

We completed phase two of our Digital System Development Programme, embedding our custom built Microsoft Dynamics Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System and transitioning to a Sharepoint-based system to enhance effective teamwork and collaboration.





## FEEDBACK FROM OUR COMMUNITIES ...

“Excellent course, really helpful” Enterprising Halls participant

“I am incredibly grateful for the time and support given to me and really don't think that I would have got anywhere near where I am today without the encouragement and advice from Hannah and the team at DCT.”  
Melissa Noble, The Academy of Wide Hearted Living, New Start Devon participant

“One can feel left out and forgotten here, so it was nice that someone came out and showed interest in the hall and the village.” Village Hall Audit participant

“[The VCSE partnership Virtual Ward pilot] helped us to continue delivering a high standard of care to people once they left the hospital. I know our patients felt well supported by the service and as staff we felt that we could rely on [the VCSE partners] to provide a quality [service] to anybody and at short notice.” Hospital staff

“We felt a bit on our own; it's great gathering together to share the stories and learn from each other. Very useful!”  
Participant at DCT-facilitated South Hams Village Halls Cluster meeting

“Just wanted to say a big thank you for speaking at our conference. Your experience and insight greatly enriched the event. It resonated with the audience and I heard several positive anecdotes appreciating your contribution.” Cara Stobart, County Officer, Devon Association of Local Councils

“Thank you - and everyone involved. It's amazing. There's a good feeling of happiness here today. It will be fantastic to do something practical to start to make things better - and to be able to tell people. I know it's not a magic wand that will solve all ills but it's a very positive step in the right direction for all sorts of reasons. We can't thank you enough.” Chardstock Eco Group, resilience grant recipient

“I really cannot thank you enough for the session and for bringing this amazing little bit of tech to our attention. The training was just 10 days ago and we have already used it to make 7 short promotional videos, which I would love you to see so you can really see the impact of your training.” 'InShot' Training participant

Contact us for more information or support:

info@devoncommunities.org.uk

01392 248919

We invited visitors to the Devon County Show to create their ideal community at our stand!



### SPECIALIST CONSULTANCY

DCT's specialist Community Development consultancy service, Catalyst, delivered specialist support to 15 rural communities this year, providing community engagement, community consultations, impact evaluations and strategy and business planning support. If your organisation or community needs specialist advice or support, please contact us at [info@devoncommunities.org.uk](mailto:info@devoncommunities.org.uk) to see how we can help.



# THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS...

