

2024 - 2025

WEST DEVON CVS

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome

This, my first year, has been exciting and a great challenge. It has been interesting as a new Labour Government seek to drive Local Government Reorganisation and the swift, and extensive, change of the NHS into our communities. The disruption brings about huge challenges and great opportunities.

Following the resignation of the previous Chief Officer, I stepped into post on April 1st, 2025. My background is in education, and with no previous experience in the third sector, those first few weeks were both eye-opening and inspiring. Very quickly I found myself sitting in Health and Wellbeing Alliance meetings, with people and groups working tirelessly in, and for, our communities. What struck me most was the determination – individuals and organisations striving to meet growing needs with fewer resources. It was clear from the outset that these were people whose values aligned with my own: to guide, inspire, and empower communities to work together towards shared goals.

From day one, I was warmly welcomed by our staff team, our Trustees and our partners. Their professionalism, support, and good humour created an atmosphere where I could settle in quickly, build relationships, and begin to understand not only the intricacies of WDCVS but also the wider challenges we face.

This first year has been one of learning, listening, and leading. I've focused on maintaining momentum in our work while also developing my understanding of the many partnerships, sectors, and individuals that connect through WDCVS. I believe I've brought my own style of affiliative and transparent leadership to the organisation – always underpinned by the traditional values I hold dear: being polite, being honest, and always doing my very best.

Brett Elliott
Chief Officer

Who we are …

WDCVS is a medium sized charity dedicated to helping individuals, not-for-profit groups and community enterprises bring about positive change and build strong communities across West Devon and, for some of our work, into other districts of Devon. We are the infrastructure organisation for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE), providing high-quality services and support to give the sector stability, support and status to help it prosper.

We were established in 2007; created from the merger of Okehampton and Tavistock Councils for Voluntary Services and registered with the Charity Commission (Number 1119730) and Companies House as a Company Limited by Guarantee (Number 6115797).

At WDCVS we support local charities, voluntary groups, social enterprises and other not for profit groups to be pivotal to the building of strong, vibrant, caring communities. We work to empower local people and communities to come together and take collective action that provides solutions to meet common problems. We also deliver numerous projects, working collaboratively with the NHS and Social Care providers to join some of our teams together to provide a better offer of support, across all the agencies, for some of our residents and patients who find themselves needing a wrap-around service.

Our commitment to the strong relationships we have built across both the voluntary sector and wider public sector organisations is central to our work as is, our close working relationship with our CVS colleagues across Devon in the Devon Voluntary Action (DeVA) partnership.

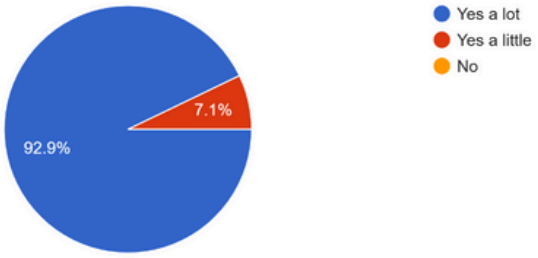
We have a committed, motivated and experienced staff team and Board of Trustees.

Our ‘vision’ is that ‘West Devon people and communities are healthy, active, inclusive, thriving, supported and connected’. .



Health and Wellbeing Alliance Meetings

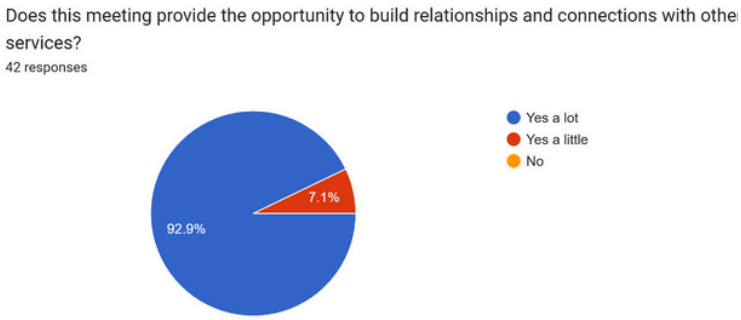
This year we've seen communities and VCSE groups really come together to influence how decisions get made locally. By December 2025, we will have held 6 out of our 8 planned Alliance Meetings, with 108 groups represented and 135 people taking part. These weren't just well-attended meetings – they were lively spaces where people got to share experiences, swap ideas, and build partnerships. The feedback couldn't have been better – 100% of those surveyed said they found the meetings useful, with 92.9% saying they were very useful particularly for understanding the wider landscape and making connections they wouldn't have made otherwise. On top of that, our team attended 34 different meetings across the year, ensuring the sector's voice was heard in the right place at the right time.



Social Prescribing

Our Social Prescribing team continues to make a real difference. In Tavistock Area Wellbeing, 252 people were supported and in North Devon Primary Care Network, 202 people got connected to services that made life a little easier.

For example, one client reported that, 'the basic premise that I would be visited was clear, but I was not in a fit state … as I had smashed teeth, a broken leg and derelict home. I cannot speak highly enough of them, they saved me. Talking to people who understood, did not speak in psychological clichés and who had time to listen.'



Peer Support

The Peer Support Project 2025 we deliver has established four new peer support groups, two in West Devon and two in the South Hams.

We know that on average, peer support can improve a person's health and wellbeing by 92% - this can be life changing and for this reason, it is imperative that we reach as many people in need within our community as possible.

By working together, we can ensure that everyone in our community has access to peer support when they need it. Furthermore, peer support helps to promote long term health and wellbeing and has been shown to save the NHS both time and money, by reducing hospital stays, readmissions and the demand on formal services. Following a series of local research, community consultation and insights from local healthcare professionals, one of the groups to be developed was The Tavistock Fibromyalgia Group which was launched in the previous project year and continues to thrive! There are now 80 group members and the group have expanded their in person offering to include an evening monthly social group as well as the monthly daytime group session.

The group represented themselves at the Tavistock Community Wellbeing Fair and said:

"The group is all about peer support. We offer each other hugs, advice, and information which helps reduce isolation and loneliness. Many people with long-term conditions sometimes lose friends who can't empathise and understand why people like us aren't reliable when it comes to socialising and give up on them.

"This happens because we can't predict how we will feel health wise at any one time, so tend to cancel on people. However. a group of like-minded people who understand will not be put out and persist, which helps with confidence in making friends and going out. This is all about wellbeing and mental health which supports any treatments."





Information and Communications

Our online presence is growing steadily. Posts are reaching more people, views are up, interactions are stronger, and follower numbers continue to rise. It means our messages are landing and more people know about the services and support on offer. With our new Information and Communications Coordinator in situ we now look forward to the next chapter in developing our marketing and extending our profile even further.



South Hams



In South Hams we have played a key role in revitalising local community initiatives, including the re-emergence of the Caring Alliances in the Erme and Yealm areas, as well as in Kingsbridge. We have further supported the wider South Hams community through regular community newsletters, keeping residents informed and connected, and by providing guidance and resources to local voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations. Through these efforts, West Devon CVS working in conjunction with Teignbridge CVS has helped maintain and strengthen local networks, foster collaboration, and help ensure that community groups can thrive.



Our highlights ...

Our successful bid to the National Lottery is a great highlight to report to Trustees in this report. Our project has a total budget of £201,270, and we've been awarded £186,690 spread over 5 years to make it happen.

Our project is built around a simple but ambitious vision: that West Devon communities are healthy, active, inclusive, supported, thriving and connected. To bring this to life, the work focuses on giving people and groups the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to respond to local challenges. By equipping communities in this way, we're helping them to take control of their own future.

We are also committed to creating more and better opportunities for people to get involved in their communities. Whether through volunteering or other forms of active citizenship, our aim is to make it easier for people to step forward, contribute, and feel the sense of belonging that comes with being part of something bigger. Alongside this, we want to strengthen relationships between people, groups and organisations so that connections are not only made but nurtured. Stronger networks mean stronger communities.

An equally important part of the project is ensuring that communities and the voluntary sector have a genuine voice in decision-making. It matters that they can influence policies and shape the way services are developed and delivered. By putting them at the table, we are making sure the people most affected by decisions are directly involved in shaping them.

Over the five years, these aims will translate into real outcomes. We expect to support 618 people into volunteering roles, giving them not only the chance to help others but also to improve their own wellbeing, build resilience and reduce isolation. For local VCSE groups, the growth in volunteer numbers will mean greater sustainability and a stronger ability to plan and deliver for the future.

At a community level, we are planning 11 collective actions that will bring people together around shared goals. These will help to build cohesion and resilience, creating neighbourhoods that can support one another in good times and in challenges. And for WDCVS itself, the project represents an opportunity to strengthen and improve the support we provide, ensuring that we continue to guide, inspire and empower both individuals and organisations long after the project has ended.

Key Performance Indicators

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Communities shaping decisions

8 Health and Wellbeing Alliance meetings held
108 groups and 135 attendees
100% found meetings useful (survey)
34 meetings attended by staff
5 Community Events delivered

Skills, knowledge and confidence

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8 workshops held
70 people and 64 groups attended
67 one-to-one sessions delivered (target 52

Active citizenship

16 new volunteering opportunities created (above baseline

Marketing reach

Growth across post reach, views, interactions, and followers

Stronger local connections

252 people supported in Tavistock Area Wellbeing
202 people supported in North Devon Primary Care Network

Overall impact

Our work this year shows strong community engagement, meaningful support for individuals and groups, and clear growth in opportunities and visibility.

Financial Review Summary

2025

Income: £309,302
Expenditure: £343,232 (Cost Centre analysis: Administration 9.5% and Service Deliver 90.5%)
Net movement in funds: (£33,930)

2024

Income: £245,425
Expenditure: £326,349
Net movement in funds: (£80,924)

Reserves policy stated amount: £35,659
Reserves at 31 March 2025: £223,017
Reserves at 31 March 2024: £256,947

Feedback …

We delivered 4 community events which supported 85 groups connect with the over 600 members of the community and each other. 'I didn't believe in the power of networking until I attended these events!"

'Events like these are the reason we visit Tavistock every year!"

Our workshops had a great response – 8 delivered, reaching almost 70 people and 64 groups. A wide range of subjects were covered, including, Communications, Funding, EDI and GDPR among others.

Feedback was great - "We needed to understand how Trusts and Foundations worked and how to find the right ones for us – this has helped us target our fundraising better"

"I feel much more confident that I can improve how we show the importance of our work"

"I grew in confidence and understand how to ensure adults we work with are safe from abuse and how to report it -We will be implementing the section on Safer Recruitment for our volunteers";

Where we really shone was in 1:1 support. We smashed our target of 52, delivering 67 personalised sessions. This has been especially powerful for groups needing hands-on advice.

Encouraging people to step up and get involved in their community has been another success. We created 16 new volunteering opportunities – not just ticking boxes but opening doors for people to contribute in meaningful ways. For some, it was their first experience of volunteering; for others, it was a chance to give back after receiving support themselves.

Overall, we have maintained contact with almost 350 groups across West Devon. Keeping us and them connected with the community, as well as the wider sector.

Next year …

a As a local voluntary/community service organisation in West Devon, we have deep roots in the area and trusted links with residents, parish/town councils, and local networks.

With the NHS 10-year plan highlighting a shift from hospital to community based preventative care, the emphasis on neighbourhood-level services and partnerships will be increasingly relevant. As engagement through local alliances has never been more important, we must work to remain at the heart of this collaborative work and continue to build relationships at all levels.

As LGR consolidates councils into unitary authorities the impact of changing political contacts, procurement rules and locality footprints is important to our future. We must ensure that we are reactive to change and are central to the work of key partners as they realign commissioning boundaries and changes to community governance come to the fore.

The increasing need for local community services that connect neighbourhoods, address loneliness, support mental health, build resilience, and reduce demand for acute services means that there are great opportunities for WDCVS in the future. Although we are well-placed to support the co-construction of delivery models we must ensure we are at the forefront and advocate strongly to secure our position. It is our intention to ensure our experience and expertise in delivering community-based prevention, health-wellbeing support, social prescribing, and neighbourhood asset activation is recognised and central to both LGR and the new approach to health and social care



Thank you!

I warmly thank all the staff, Trustees and partners that have helped make this year both successful and enjoyable. Together, we have helped many groups and local resident's access services, training, and vital advice. We are proud of the resilience of our community, and grateful to this such a successful year.

Special thanks and acknowledgement of their hard work over many years to all the staff who have left us this year; Karen Nolan, Jill Gratton and Amy Phillips.

We sincerely thank our funders, including Okehampton United Charities, the National Lottery, West Devon Borough Council, our local PCN, Devon Mental Health Alliance and RDUH.

Our team:

Trustees
Phillip King (Chair)
Kathryn Vile (Vice Chair)
Darren Newland (Treasurer)
Ursula Mann (Secretary)
Mark Cullen
Laura Bird
Clare Acton

Staff
Brett Elliott (Chief Officer)
Hannah Child (VCSE Support Manager)
Marion Balsdon (Finance and Administrative Coordinator)
Abbie Gardiner (Information and Communications Coordinator)
Lisa Smith (Community Builder)
Scarlett Moon (Community Builder)
Orla Turner (Group Development Worker) Dawn Todd (Community Engagement Coordinator)
(Teresa Sheehan (Social Prescriber and HOPE Coordinator)
Kim Kenyon-Noquet (Social Prescriber).

Annual Report
(requirements check)

'your charity's name, registration number, address and trustee names'

Registered charity name: West Devon Community Voluntary Services (CVS)
Charity number: 1119730
Company number: 0611579706115797 - Incorporated on 19 February 2007
Address: Fur Room, Ockment Centre, North Street, Okehampton, England, EX20 1AR
Website: West Devon CVS | Supporting Community Action in West Devon
Email: info@westdevoncvs.org.uk
Phone: 01837 738133 (messages only)

'its structure and details of how it is managed, including how it recruits trustees' - The Trustees at WDCVS are guided by the charities constitution and Code of Conduct. Trustees support the charitable activities of WDCVS via quarterly meetings where the operational functions are reported by the Chief Officer**.**

'its activities and objectives in the year' - The activities for the year revolve around our Strategic Plan which aims to support our intention to help individuals, not-for-profit groups and community enterprises bring about positive change and build stronger communities.

'its achievements and performance, including reporting on its public benefit' - Our achievements and performance, including reporting on its public benefit are included in the KPI section of this document.

'a financial review including any debts and details of your reserves policy (if applicable)' - included in this report.