

# South Hams Community Action Strategic Plan 2024—2028



**Our vision is to strengthen our voluntary and community groups to enable them to support the health and wellbeing of people in the South Hams**

**Our mission is to be the leading organisation and partner of choice working on behalf of our voluntary and community sector**

### **Our values**



# Our strategic aims



The rurality of the South Hams district in south Devon, with its fragmented service provision, hidden deprivation and social isolation, means that South Hams Community Action needs to actively work to enable our voluntary and community sector to meet a wide range of needs.

We are working against a tide of many funding bodies prioritising areas of visible deprivation, while statutory services are being cut and the eligibility criteria for social care is being further tightened.

Transport, employment, housing, social isolation, and mental health are growing issues for many of our population. The veneer of our stunning countryside and apparent swathes of affluence masks very real need. This means that our vulnerable and disadvantaged residents are being further disenfranchised.

Only by working in true partnership with the voluntary sector and our partners can we enable the voice and needs of our residents to be heard.

We need to:

- create sustainable partnerships
- build capacity in areas of unmet need
- enable our voluntary sector to better recruit and retain volunteers
- put the health and wellbeing needs of our communities first and foremost.

**Our strategic aims are inter-connected and require a joined-up approach. It is vital that we work in partnership to enhance the health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities.**

**Partnerships**

**Capacity building**

**Volunteering**

**Health and wellbeing**

# Partnerships

**In our survey of our voluntary sector which was undertaken in 2023, there was a consensus on the wide range of needs identified.**

By working in partnership and pooling resources and knowledge, we can develop more sustainable and effective means of supporting each other in our work.

We aim to create more training, networking and learning events—and to encourage more of our voluntary sector to take up a vastly enhanced membership offer.

In addition, we will develop partnerships and networks for the voluntary sector to meet specific and identified needs—including transport, social isolation and other key areas—both at a local and more strategic level.

Our research and learning will be disseminated to our voluntary sector and other stakeholders, to ensure that the needs of residents and gaps in capacity are better known and understood.



- **Leading and developing partnerships and networks to meet specific and identified needs**
- **Encouraging the collective pooling of resources and knowledge**
- **Working strategically on partnerships with statutory organisations to ensure the views of the voluntary and community sector are heard, and their needs are met**



**In the 2021 census, South Hams had 88,600 residents, with the joint highest average (median) age in the South West.**

*Local funding partners attended the Funding Day organised by South Hams Community Action in late 2023*

# Our planned work

- **Leading and developing partnerships and networks to meet specific and identified needs:**
  - Expanding the new District Caring Alliance to include action groups for specific areas of need.
  - In 2024, we will be taking forward a second phase of the reducing social isolation project with partners.
- **Encouraging the collective pooling of resources and knowledge:**
  - Creating peer-support networks around identified areas of need.
  - Developing a voluntary sector leadership group for South Hams to provide peer-support and other development opportunities.
  - Disseminating learning and knowledge to partners so there is a greater understanding of the voluntary sector and residents' needs in the South Hams.
  - Enabling our voluntary sector to evidence need to enhance funding opportunities, for example with access to up-to-date information and research.
  - Providing more online information for our voluntary sector members—including templates, training and other guidance.
- **Working strategically on partnerships with statutory organisations to ensure the views of the voluntary and community sector are heard, and needs are met.**
  - Ensuring our voluntary sector has a voice and channel to enable statutory organisations to recognise their needs.
  - Creating strategic partnerships with a range of stakeholders around specific identified needs, including transport.

## Comments from our voluntary sector:



We have around 800 voluntary and community groups in the South Hams—many working to support and meet residents' needs.

- I would like to see more support for CEOs of small charities, particularly with HR and strategy, as well as possibly networking opportunities with others.
- Sharing of skills across different organisations, perhaps through social events, that will help build relationships.
- Networking and joined up working seem to be very difficult, especially joined-up working. Even though we have an offer to support communities it is hard to get social prescribers, GPs and other community groups interested in spreading the word.
- Leadership and governance is pretty strong in our organisation, but local support for policies and trustee inductions, etc. would be useful. As would longer-term planning/ development support.





# Capacity building

**We need to build a stronger, more sustainable voluntary sector.**

Our offer will include enhanced training and learning opportunities, funding guidance, information and signposting around governance, and much more.

But, as services are being cut and funding becomes more challenging for our voluntary sector, we need to focus on the work we undertake with partners and the voluntary sector organisations around maximising the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Our capacity building work will identify gaps in services and unmet need, and create better outcomes and opportunities for our residents.

We will prioritise our community development work to ensure that our focus is on building capacity to meet the identified health and wellbeing needs in our communities.



- **Improving funding and sustainability for our voluntary and community sector**
- **Developing our voluntary sector around the identified needs of South Hams communities**

**In the 2021 census, South Hams was among the lowest 10% for population density across English local authority areas.**



*Providing a safe space for Ukrainian families with Artmoor Haven*

# Our planned work

- **Improving funding and sustainability for our voluntary and community sector:**
  - Creating a peer-support group to share best practice and ideas around sustainability and funding.
  - Providing more training and networking opportunities, such as our Funding Day and a 2024 Governance event aimed at trustees.
  - Disseminating research and information to enable our voluntary organisations to better evidence need when applying for funding support.
  - Advocating for our voluntary sector and residents, particularly around the impact of rurality with fragmented service provision.
- **Developing our voluntary and community sector around the identified needs of South Hams communities:**
  - Updating the mapping of services provided by the voluntary sector against identified need.
  - Evidencing priority areas for capacity building in the South Hams, particularly in the health and wellbeing voluntary sector, for example our reducing social isolation scoping project.
  - Providing relevant training opportunities for our voluntary sector—these include online—to enhance their capacities.
  - Increasing the number of community builders in our team to support our voluntary sector to build their capacity, particularly in areas of need: dementia, carers, reducing social isolation (mental health, families with special educational needs, older people, people with learning and/or physical disabilities/difficulties, deprivation). Also, around priority areas for the South Hams, for example community transport.

## Comments from our voluntary sector:



**In our 2023 survey of our voluntary organisations, the majority said that sustainability and funding were creating concern.**

- There's a shortage of quality training for charities in Devon—and it costs a lot, for example to send someone up to London. It would be great if you could establish a bigger local market for training.
- New thinking on community development would be helpful.
- Providing access to appropriate funding and/or partners in local areas that we can access funding with or through.
- We have no direct funding and rely on grants (which are far more difficult to obtain now), donations and fundraising from events.
- We have always had excellent support from South Hams CVS in the past and you were instrumental in us getting started as a voluntary group, and then becoming a registered charity.
- Accessing appropriate funding, core funding and project funding. Developing a strategy and getting funding to support that. Needs analysis of local community. We are so small, it is hard to do all of this ourselves, when we are busy delivering services too.



# Volunteering

- **Supporting our voluntary and community sector to build their capacity through volunteer recruitment, retention and management**
- **Making a more positive and rewarding volunteering experience for individuals**
- **Championing and promoting volunteering in the South Hams**



**Volunteering is the top issue identified in our 2023 survey of the needs of our South Hams voluntary sector.**

Even for organisations who currently have enough volunteers, there was a concern about the long-term sustainability, particularly as their volunteers age.

While encouraging and promoting all areas of volunteering, we need to particularly focus our volunteering activity on specific areas of health and wellbeing need, including befrienders and community transport.

We also aim to work with a wider range of people—to enable those seeking employment, people with learning or physical disabilities, and younger age groups—to have more access to rewarding volunteering opportunities.

We will focus on the more strategic needs with a range of partners, including retirement planning, company volunteering, and more access to support and training.

**There were an estimated 8,000 recognised volunteers in the South Hams in 2018 (DeVA report). Since Covid-19, this figure is likely to be lower.**





# Our planned work

- **Supporting our voluntary and community sector to build their capacity through volunteer recruitment, retention and management:**
  - By recruiting a volunteer recruitment role to encourage residents to volunteer; support organisations with volunteer recruitment, management and training; to enable people with disabilities to volunteer; to encourage employers to develop volunteer schemes and retirement planning; and effect wider change more strategically.
  - Providing a range of template policies and other useful guidance.
  - Developing a range of volunteer recruitment events and communication around identified needs, particularly for areas such as befriending, sitting services and community transport.
- **Making a more positive and rewarding volunteering experience for individuals:**
  - Developing opportunities for rewarding volunteers, including the potential for schemes with businesses.
  - Providing more flexible training opportunities to enable safer and more rewarding volunteering practices.
  - Sharing good practice with regard to managing volunteers.
- **Championing and promoting volunteering in the South Hams:**
  - Creating a positive volunteer recruitment campaign with a range of stakeholders.
  - Publicising the Devon Voluntary Action (DeVA) funded Devon Connect site to link volunteers to volunteering opportunities. South Hams Community Action is a DeVA member.

## Comments from our voluntary sector:



**Volunteer recruitment and/or sustainability is the highest need for many of our voluntary organisations in the South Hams.**

- **We just about have enough volunteers at the moment. But it's difficult to expand our services further because we can't overstretch our existing volunteers. Help with volunteer recruitment would be welcomed, and to help fine-tune role descriptions or share ideas for volunteer enrichment and socialising events.**
- **We need more volunteers, but in particular we could do with a volunteer coordinator to help us.**
- **We have a very busy transport service, and need more volunteers both here and in befriending and fundraising.**
- **We certainly struggle for volunteers across the board and it is challenging when people are away or ill as there aren't the people to cover for them. I'm not sure how you could help with this as we are aware that everywhere is struggling for volunteers at this time.**



# Health and wellbeing



- Providing a health and wellbeing service to enable individuals to maximise their health and wellbeing and to improve quality of life
- Identifying gaps in provision and targeting our community building work around these needs
- Working with a range of partners to create strategies to meet these needs

**Maximising the health and wellbeing of our residents to improve their quality of life is our overarching key priority.**

Already we have a fantastic social prescribing team through a partnership with primary care networks. And we are growing the number of community link worker roles to target individuals' physical and mental health needs, alongside providing peer-support opportunities.

Our health and wellbeing team will work closely with our communities team so that evidenced needs can be worked on with communities, partners and our voluntary sector.

We will prioritise support for the health and wellbeing work being undertaken by our voluntary sector and collaborate with a range of partners to enhance our voluntary sector's important and much-needed work.

**In 2021, 5.3% of South Hams residents (aged five years and over) reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week.**



## Our planned work

- **Providing a health and wellbeing service to enable individuals to maximise their health and wellbeing and to improve quality of life:**
  - Working in partnership with Mewstone and South Hams primary care networks we have five social prescribers, who work on a one-to-one basis with residents needing additional support to reduce their social isolation and to enable them to access health and wellbeing activities.
  - We have created a community link worker role to accept referrals from social care and the police—and other partners—and to create support services around social isolation, including buddy schemes and access to IT training. There is a need for two additional community link worker roles.
- **Identifying gaps in provision and targeting our community building work around these needs:**
  - Our health and wellbeing team will actively work with our communities team to enable work to go forward around identified gaps in provision.
  - We currently have one community development worker, but we need a minimum of three community builders to undertake the breadth of work needed in the South Hams.
  - These roles will be developed to meet key areas of unmet need: community transport, social isolation, mental health, dementia, carers, families with special educational needs and disabilities, and cost of living issues.
- **Working with a range of partners to create strategies to meet these needs:**
  - Bringing together a range of partners to assess needs and actions in relation to the local priorities for communities in the South Hams.
  - Developing partnership opportunities to enhance provision around community transport (including mapping), reducing social isolation, mental health and other identified needs.
  - Working flexibly to meet the needs of a changing environment, for example our work with the Ukrainian community and our innovative work with the voluntary sector during the Covid-19 outbreak.

It would help to have youth workers in rural villages. Brixton NEVER gets anything for young people. Nothing ...



## Quotes from our loneliness\* survey:

- **Transport is an issue in the rural villages. More support for people to regularly travel for an affordable price to Modbury, Ivybridge to access shops, cafes, hairdressers, banks etc.**
- **More access to instant mental health support for loneliness through having no family (support).**



\* Loneliness/reducing social isolation survey undertaken from November 2023 to March 2024. Contact us for the full report.

# Key issues

According to the ONS statistics, feelings of happiness are lower, while anxiety and feeling that life is not worthwhile is much higher than the median for other areas.

Many of the issues in the South Hams stem from its rurality and fragmented services. Key needs around health and wellbeing include transport (including community transport), social isolation, mental health, dementia and caring provision. Many residents are impacted by cost of living issues.

Over 27% of residents have a disability that limits day-to-day activities—or a long-term physical or mental health condition—according to ONS statistics.

In our loneliness scoping survey (2024), the top barrier for people attending activities was transport. Mental health was the barrier for those who do not currently attend activities.

We need to work in partnership with the relevant stakeholders to enable more residents and our voluntary sector to access good quality provision that meets their identified needs.

One in ten people in our loneliness survey felt they have no one to rely on at all. Around one third felt they only have someone to rely on occasionally.



While just 2% of the South Hams population identifies as non-white, our team supports ALL communities. We—and our voluntary sector—actively support refugees.

In South Hams, 8.7% of the population was income-deprived in 2019 (ONS information). But these residents are further impacted by fragmented services and rurality.

According to the 2021 census, private renting in South Hams increased from 14.3% to 16.1%, while the rate of home ownership decreased from 71.7% to 70.5%.

ONS statistics also show that 10.6% of South Hams residents say they are 'often or always' lonely. Our loneliness survey suggests this may be an underestimate.



# Our supporters

**South Hams Community Action is always grateful to receive funding support to enable us to continue our work with our voluntary sector and residents.**

**We would like to extend our gratitude to the groups and organisations which have supported us:**

Bigbury Parish Council  
Brixton FEOFEES Trust  
Brixton Parish Council  
Devon and Cornwall  
Police and Crime Commissioner  
Devon Carers  
Devon Community Foundation  
Devon County Council  
Devon Voluntary Action  
Holbeton Parish Council  
Inner Compass  
Ivybridge Town Council  
Livewell Southwest  
Mewstone Primary Care Network  
Modbury Caring  
Modbury Parish Council

Moorvision  
Parish of Thurlestone Society  
Rattery Parish Council  
Red Earth Counselling  
Shiatsu for Change  
South Brent Parish Council  
South Hams District Council  
South Hams Primary Care Network  
The Claire Milne Trust  
The National Lottery  
University of Plymouth  
Vocal Advocacy  
Wembury Caring  
Westbank  
West Local Care Partnership  
Yealmpton Parish Council



South Hams Community Action is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. We were established in 1995 and have been serving voluntary and community organisations in the South Hams for approximately thirty years. We are a core member of Devon Voluntary Action (DEVA), under whose umbrella we are also members of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

**Through collaboration with strategic partners and our voluntary sector, South Hams Community Action works to make a real difference to residents' lives in the South Hams.**

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