

OCTOBER UPDATE REPORT – CLLR LOIS SAMUEL

As some of you may be aware that Cllr John Hart asked me to join the cabinet last month and take on the new portfolio for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). I have been involved in various board meetings and learning as much as I can. It is going to be a challenge, but I will do my utmost to help drive improvements across Devon and to bring the changes needed for SEND to become a GOOD service for our children and families.

Although the cold weather hasn't fully arrived just yet, the health and care system is pressured as if it has arrived. Acute trusts across Devon have been reporting the highest level of escalation and serious incidences and bed occupancy rates hovering around the 95% rate. It's important that we all do what we can to reduce the demand on the system. One of the things we can do is to ensure that we receive a flu and covid jab this winter.

Here are a few other things I wanted to highlight:

- **Significantly improved personal care market sufficiency**

There's been a significant improvement in the availability of personal care since this time last year, with a 93% reduction in the number of care hours that are waiting to be arranged. This is great news not only for people receiving care, but also for the wider system, as when people are waiting for personal care, other less optimal care is put in place such as a short term care home placement, or additional and unnecessary time in hospital.

- **Skills for Care – state of adult social care sector and workforce report**

This month Skills for Care published its [annual assessment of the state of the adult social care workforce](#). The report provides local, regional and national analysis of a range of workforce related measures across the independent sector and local authority adult social care workforce. The report identifies five factors that the data suggest are key to retaining staff. Staff turnover where none of these apply is more than twice what it is where all five do:

- Being paid more than the minimum wage;
- Not being on a zero-hours contract;
- Being able to work full-time;
- Being able to access training;
- Having a relevant qualification.

The key headlines for Devon from the report are:

- The number of posts in Devon has decreased marginally against the national trend but the number of filled posts has increased to 27,000 driven by international recruitment.
- The proportions of the workforce that are full-time and that are on zero-hours contracts are stable, with the latter less than is typical regionally and nationally.
- Turnover in the care workforce in Devon has reduced from 39% to 33.2% but remains above the national and regional averages.
- The vacancy rate has also improved from 9.7% to 9.1%; if in line with regional and national trends this year this will have fallen further still.
- Sickness has reduced significantly from 7.4 days per year to 4.8 days, now well below the national and regional averages and at pre-pandemic levels.
- The gender balance and average age of the workforce in Devon is stable and similar to national and regional levels but the proportion that is non-white has grown significantly.
- Real-terms hourly pay in Devon has reduced in the last two years due to the cost of living increasing faster than wage rises; care worker pay is now less than the regional average and only just above the national average despite fee levels increasing more rapidly than is typical

There will be a deeper dive into this data which will contribute towards our Annual Report that will be published in January.

- **Integrated Adult Social Care consultations**

Cllrs across DCC have actively engaged and supported public engagement across the consultations we have held. It hasn't always been an easy and straight forward process, and nor should it be. We have listened to what people and organisations have told us and changed course or adapted approached in some instances to find common ground and solutions in partnership. I also want to put on record my thanks to all those officers who have worked so hard in challenging circumstance.

Wellbeing Exeter

- Following the draft Cabinet paper being discussed at the Special Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee in July, which provided committee members with the opportunity to comment, the paper was taken to Cabinet on the 13 September and the recommendation to cease the Council contributions to the Wellbeing Exeter Partnership Fund was agreed.

Learning Disability and Respite Centres

- The Council is considering options in relation to day services, and it is anticipated future options for consultation will be available for public comment in the Autumn.

18+ Homelessness contract

- Following the Special Scrutiny Committee Meeting on the 27 July the consultation has been paused. Contracts with providers have been extended until the end of March 2024. The Council is continuing to talk to Devon's eight District and City Councils, working together to agree a way forward that ensures ongoing homelessness support across the county.

- **Learning Disability Training for Cabinet Members**

During our consultation on the future of learning disability services we were challenged on what training Cabinet Members have received that would support any subsequent decisions we would need to make. In responding to this, and ahead of restarting our consultation of the future of learning disability services, training has been arranged for Cabinet prior to any decision needed to be made on the future of learning Disability services. The training is in three parts, with an introduction into learning disability, eLearning modules, and an all day session that including contributions from people with a learning disability.

- **Supporting Carer Friendly Devon Communities**

Communities in Devon are being encouraged to sign up to Devon Carers "Carer Friendly Devon Communities" scheme. This scheme supports local communities to understand the needs of unpaid Carers through ongoing help and training and the provision of promotional materials. A Carer is a person who looks after or supports someone who could not do without their help (not in a paid role or a formal volunteer). According to the 2021 Census, there are approximately 74,500 unpaid Carers in Devon, with other surveys indicating this number could be far higher.

The results from the Carers Biennial Survey show Carers in Devon are particularly impacted by social isolation, which makes it especially important that local communities are aware and supportive of Carers. Communities, organisations, groups and businesses who sign up to become a Carer Friendly Devon Community Supporter will be asked to:

- undertake Carer awareness training,
- consider what they can do to support Carers,
- help raise awareness of Carers,
- join in events such as Carers Week.

More information and details of how to sign up to the scheme can be found via the [Devon Carers website](#).

Identifying private fostering arrangements

Are you a professional working with children? Do you know how to identify a private fostering arrangement and who to tell?

Private fostering is a situation where someone is looking after someone else's child for 28 days or more and the child is under the age of 16 (or 18 if they have a

disability) and is not a close relative. People in Devon involved in private fostering arrangements must, by law, inform Devon County Council.

If you work with children and young people and become aware of a private fostering arrangement, it's important that you let our Private Fostering Team know. They can then work with the young person, their parents or carer, and the private foster carer to ensure the best arrangement possible is in place. You will not be breaching confidentiality by informing us. This legislation is in place to protect and safeguard children.

If you become aware of a private fostering situation, all you need to do is email the team at privatefostering@devon.gov.uk.

Funding Available

I have had the pleasure of funding various small projects around the Okehampton Rural area, which I understand has made a little difference.

The Growing Communities Fund has just had a lovely plug in the DCC News: [Is your group looking to support your community this winter? We can help... - News \(devon.gov.uk\)](#).

We are really proud - and humbled - as to the impact our Communities Team have achieved whilst administering this fund. We have very little left in the pot which we hope will provide some support at least for the onset of the colder weather.

It has been:

- Impactful: The community grant fund has made a significant difference in the lives of the beneficiaries.
- Empowering: The fund has empowered not-for-profit organizations to reach and assist those in need.
- Responsive: We have been able to adapt quickly to the changing circumstances, particularly during the ongoing cost of living crisis, providing essential support.
- Transformative: We have been shown real instances where the fund has transformed the lives or circumstances of individuals or communities.
- Resilient: Our Community fund has helped organisations to withstand challenges and continue providing vital support in difficult times with a sincere and compassionate nature.
- Transparent: Emphasize the openness and clarity in how the fund is managed and allocated.
- Collaborative: We cannot stress the importance of working together with not-for-profit organizations to effectively deploy the grant fund.
- Uplifting: Undoubtedly the Growing Community Fund has lifted the spirits and provided hope to those facing hardship.

Have a look at our slides below:

Growing Communities Fund



475 organisations across Devon
have benefitted from the fund



383 are working with
children/vulnerable adults



322 are helping families,
parents and lone parents



313 are helping people with
mental health issues



281 are helping
older people



399 are addressing health
and wellbeing



352 are working to develop
stronger communities and
tackle rural isolation



216 are addressing food
and fuel poverty



159 are addressing issues
around access to services

and so much more! The following pages show just a few examples of
how this fund is improving people's lives around the county.

Figures from Fund conception: July 2022
Icons: [Freepik](#) on [flaticon.com](#)



Eager Beavers

Tipton St John, East Devon

Organisers say: "We wanted funding mainly to improve a new woodland area adjacent to our already established community garden. We planted spring bulbs and ran foraging and drumming workshops there in the autumn. More classes have been arranged including women's circles, bat walks and moth trapping.

"All members of the community are welcome to use the area and the workshops have been well attended. The area has been very well received within the village. There are bird feeders and nest boxes nearby and residents report sitting, relaxing and watching the birds throughout the day.

"I think the community has become more cohesive following the events we've held so far, new friendships have formed and social isolation has reduced. We have also raised awareness of the need to work with nature and reduce the use of pesticides and single-use plastic."



Braunton FC Ability

Braunton, North Devon

Organisers say: "This funding has enabled us to continue providing sporting, social and community events for local children and adults with additional needs. These bring people together and give them the opportunity to try new activities.

"We've been able to offer our players weekly football sessions in a safe environment to assist with a healthy lifestyle and help them develop life skills such as communication and teamwork.

"As a result of this funding, we have been able to provide sessions in a wide range of activities such as forest skills, dodgeball, rounders, circuits, parkour, Wave Park private hire for families, players and coaches, weekly football sessions, community walks and litter picks, private cinema screening (autism aware) for families, players and coaches, football tournaments and friendlies and a Christmas party. We've also increased our membership and attracted more girls to our squad."





Broadwoodkelly Village Hall

Broadwoodkelly, West Devon

Organisers say: "This project was arranged as a starting point for a series of events aimed at combating isolation and loneliness in this small community. We chose a coach outing for the method of transport as we considered it to be better for the environment than using a number of separate cars."

"Thirty-four people came on the coach outing, including a 100-year-old lady, and several new friendships were established."

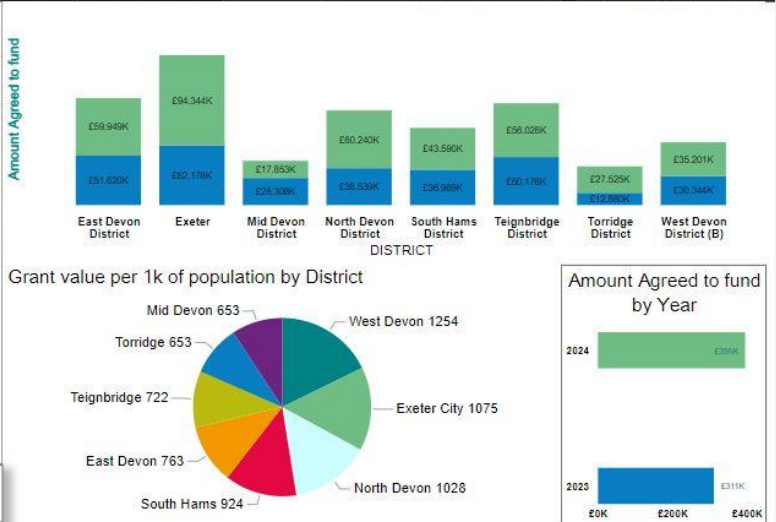
"Following on from this launch, Tea and Talk afternoons start on 1st November and, realising that food can bring people together, (as well as being very popular!), we have decided to hold Soup and Bacon lunches over the winter period and will be taking several people from the village to a local garden centre for lunch."



Growing Communities Fund 2022-23 and 2023-24

£705.74K Amount Agreed to fund

365 Number of grant awards issued



If you want to apply to this fund then please do get in contact with the localities team or myself and we can point you in the right direction for the fund.

Best wishes

Cllr Lois Samuel
Okehampton Rural