INVOLVE
VOLUNTARY ACTION IN MID DEVON

ANNUAL REVIEW

2024-25

Welcome! We are Mid Devon's Council for Voluntary Service, supporting and promoting voluntary and community action across Mid Devon.

Involve is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Involve aims to help communities in Mid Devon to be more resilient, improving the lives of citizens. We support existing and evolving charities, voluntary organisations, and community groups across Mid Devon and further the development and sustainability of local voluntary and community action in Mid Devon. We work with individuals, groups and organisations to promote, support and develop capacity and services in the community and to help individuals to feel they are valued members of their community with something meaningful to contribute.

We do this through:

- **Developing the capacity, skills and knowledge of groups throughout Mid Devon**
- **Connecting groups to facilitate and promote joint working**
- **Building the influence of the sector and helping people to become active in their community**
- **Running diverse projects to support the wellbeing of people within our communities**

During 2024-25 we have employed twelve members of staff across activities that include community development, service delivery, support for learning disabilities, and well-being and youth projects. We help individuals and organisations to develop skills, build relationships and obtain resources which will help to make their communities more empowered, dynamic and connected. We provide advice, information, knowledge, training and know-how to help the groups deliver services to their communities and make a vital difference.



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Message from Polly Colthorpe, Involve Chair



Hello again!
Much water has poured under the bridge in the past year, not just here at Involve but in the wider scheme of things. Significantly for us, the reorganisation of local government will impact directly on Involve since some of our core funding comes from Mid Devon District Council which, as a result of the proposed reorganisation, is likely to find itself part of a larger, successor entity. Be sure that Involve will be ready and will work with any new administration to continue our work with the communities we serve.

This year we have had to say farewell to Colin Slade who for some years has been a generous and supportive representative of Devon County Council on Involve's board. We thank him for his dedicated service and send him our very best wishes for the future. In his place we welcome Cllr.Steve Lodge and look forward to working with him and the newly-elected administration at County Hall. Alison Padfield, with whom some of you will already be familiar as the Chief Executive Officer of C.H.A.T., became a trustee of Involve in October 2024. We also have a new representative from Devon People First in Nicola Aver who was appointed in the spring of this year. A very warm welcome!

As usual, Involve has been busy in Mid Devon's three main towns and after much hard work we were delighted to be awarded three year's Lottery funding for our brand new 'Communities that Can' project. After the success of our Community Builders in Crediton and Cullompton, we are looking to recruit one for Tiverton - and a launch event is planned for next year. Of course this is only a flavour of the projects Involve has been supporting this year, one of our most successful being the Vintage Farmers group which is now being rolled out nationally through the National Farmers Union.

Our name isn't Involve for nothing! There are many of you out there working hard at your own special projects to benefit our communities and, as trustees, we couldn't do anything without you all. Employees and volunteers, trustees and supporters alike, you are vital to everything that Involve does for our communities and thank you all for another successful year!

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Our Services

In the course of this financial year, we held quarterly Community Wellbeing Alliance forums in each of the 3 main towns (Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton). In all 107 attendees participated in these networks - a 35% increase. The networks focus on understanding the gaps and needs in their communities and exploring how to address those needs through greater partnership working and understanding. We also facilitated a district wide Food Network which met 3 times and included 24 different groups. We produced newsletters and electronic bulletins in partnership with Devon Voluntary Action maintaining ongoing contact with 400+ groups across Mid Devon. We supported 82 organisations with 1:1 support over the year and brought in £9320 funding for our communities.

Our Community Builders were well established in the towns of Cullompton and Crediton. They supported the local community to set up much needed groups and activities to fill local need. **In 2024-25 amongst other activities our community builders:**

- Expanded our Vintage Farmers groups in Crediton and Cullompton with over 85 members with 45 meeting regularly in Crediton.
- Supported 80 young people to attend a Summer Youth programme in Crediton.
- Held 3 Mid Devon Family Hub Meetings with a total of 45 participants.
- Worked with MacMillan to set up regular cancer cafes.
- Held Listening Cafes to hear what local people want for their community.
- Set up Cullompton's first Repair café together in partnership with Uffculme Repair café.
- Set up the Food Insecurity Project in Crediton in partnership with the local food bank and school.
- Set up Eco-Threads pre-loved prom project in Crediton.

Involve continued it's Community Connector role in Cullompton supporting the development of the Cullompton Community Directory - an online directory incorporating 38 organisations used by local residents, social prescribers at Culm Valley PCN and other local groups to support signposting in the community and promote local community activities.



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During the year we have continued to provide our main support services to Mid Devon community organisations including new projects to support local communities.

Service	Details	Outcome
400+ Mid Devon groups provided with good practice / funding / advice — **Networking**	Our networks focus on understanding the gaps and needs in their communities and exploring how to address those needs through greater partnership working and understanding. We meet quarterly in Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton working together to identify the actions required to provide services to meet that need through working collaboratively, supporting individual partners and developing a collective voice to influence other agencies' direction.	• 107 attendees met in person in 3 main towns - a 35% increase. • Quarterly newsletter set up to provide up-to-date information & guidance for all groups
82 Groups received 1:1 guidance on good practice and skills building — **Community Support and Development**	Involve continued our community support in Cullompton and Crediton this year in a community building role. These roles enhance our intelligence about the communities we support and are an on the ground resource. Our Senior Community Development officer provided 1:1 support to local community groups including vital fundraising to support activities.	• Increased on the ground support in Crediton and Cullompton • Supported 82 groups with 1:1 support • New groups set up locally
283 Members in Mid Devon — **Devon Connect**	As part of Devon Voluntary Action, Involve is an active participant in the Devon-wide community platform. Devon Connect is an online hub helping people to connect to and find out what is available in their community. Involve provides the administration and moderation for the Mid Devon landing page.	• 4818 members in total - 175% increase this year. • 2445 activities all of which can be accessed by Mid Devon residents.

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Our Projects

Devon People First

Involve continued to host the award-winning Devon People First, a semi-independent peer advocacy group for people with learning difficulties managed by a board of representatives, a member of which is a Trustee of Involve. We established a new online Devon People First easy access directory of services for people with learning disabilities which received 737 visitors since its launch. **Devon People first provides:**

Individual advocacy: The service is provided by a peer advocate following an international model of working.

Victim Support: funded through the Police and Crime Commissioner and supports those who have been a victim of crime. Funding increased this year and as a result 16 individuals have been supported in 2024-25 and 23 people have received crime awareness training. Beneficiaries of the service report an increase in self-esteem, sense of empowerment and their perceptions of safety, as well as having the confidence to participate in social activities which is so often affected by being a victim of crime.

Service User Engagement: Devon People First and its volunteers delivered 23 Co-production Awareness training/ meetings for DCC commissioners, appropriate staff and strategic partners, where commissioners receive support on how to deliver new projects using co-production. There were 42 volunteer attendances.

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Friendship Groups: We continued to deliver the successful online friendship groups. We currently have 42 members of the online Friendship Groups with on average 10 to 12 attending each meeting. Devon People First achieved 515 Friendship Group attendances.

Pilot Disability Project

Involve, and DPF together with Devon Voluntary Action ran a DCC funded pilot project aimed at improving opportunities for adults of a working age with a disability to access community and voluntary sector services and resources. We set up three in-person Friendship groups in Honiton, Cullompton and Crediton for people with learning disabilities and ran Disability Awareness and Confidence training with 15 attendees.

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Culm Valley Social Prescribing

We continued to manage and deliver social prescribing support to Culm Valley Primary Care network through the employment of 3 social prescribers. These supported 206 wellbeing coordinator referrals helping people to find non-clinical solutions to improve their wellbeing with 4726 total contacts over the year. 28 people enrolled on Hope courses in Mid Devon. 31 people enrolled on Hope courses in East Devon managed by Involve.

"Thank you not just for the practical help, but for your warmth, empathy, and encouragement. It truly means a lot!" (Service user)

Mid Devon Food Network

Our regular Food networking groups across Mid Devon were sustained. Involve hosts the forums and disseminates information gathered. We ran four meetings with 24 groups this year encouraging partnership and shared experience. The informal WhatsApp group continues to help sharing of surplus food, best practice and ongoing communication.

Community Wellbeing Alliances

The Crediton, Tiverton and Cullompton Community Wellbeing Alliances work to develop, maintain and enhance services for people in our communities. The alliances bring together representatives from statutory agencies, the private and voluntary sector working in, or responsible for, health, social care and community wellbeing across the area. We met quarterly in each main town and in all 107 groups participated, approximately 35% increase from the previous year.

"The meetings across Mid Devon have the essence of true partnership working with a common goal - to help others when they most need it" (Unite Carers)

Cullompton Youth Club

We continued to coordinate the Youth project in Cullompton. Involve employs a senior community youth worker and three support workers to run the growing club. We have registered 122 young people with:

- 78 Youth Club sessions
- On average 30 attendances per session - a 50% increase from last year.
- Sports programs including boxing, yoga, pickleball, badminton, and frisbee activities.

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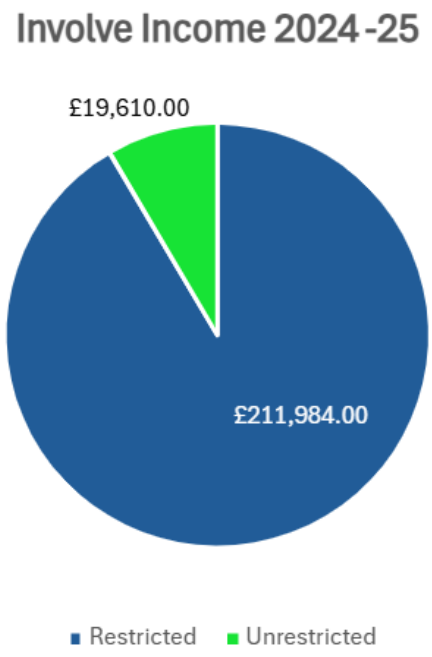
	Project	Details	Outcome
206 People supported to find non-clinical solutions & improve wellbeing	**Culm Valley Wellbeing Coordinators**	Wellbeing coordinators who work closely with the PCN and connect individuals referred by professionals to local services in the Cullompton community for their improved wellbeing. They also ran HOPE courses to build confidence and help people manage their condition.	• 4726 total contacts over the year. • Improved pathways to wellbeing in Cullompton. • 106 people enrolled on HOPE courses.
515 Overall Friendship group attendances	**Devon People First**	Project supporting people with learning difficulties to speak up for themselves through self and peer advocacy. It is run as a semi independent body within Involve, with its own management committee comprised of people that use the service. It also provides direct support to those who have been a victim of crime. Members report an increase in self esteem and sense of empowerment.	• 16 people received direct 1:1 victim support. • 23 people received training. • 79 Friendship group members with 42 volunteers meeting regularly.
4 Network meetings over the year	**Mid Devon Food Network**	An informal network which meets in different locations throughout Mid-Devon or online each to bring our ideas, experience, and knowledge to the network. Involve hosts the forums and disseminates information gathered.	• Increased partnership between 24 food related groups • Greater shared resources
122 Young people enrolled	**Cullompton Youth Club**	This exciting project was set up in response to there being no regular co-ordinated under 18 youth provision for Cullompton. Involve now employ a senior youth development worker and three support workers to run the growing club. Diverse activities are set up in collaboration with the young people.	• Approx. 30 young people per session - a 50% increase. • Reduced antisocial behaviour in Cullompton

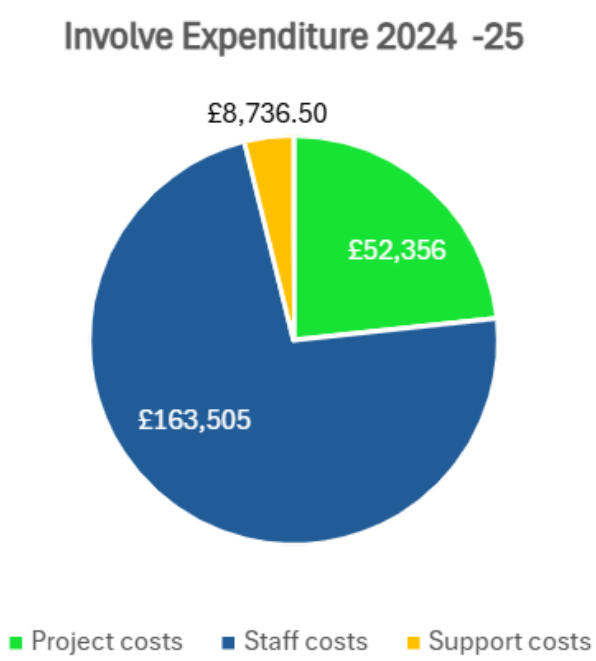
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Finance

During the period we received income of £201,984. Total income increased by just under 20% this year. Overall expenditure totalled £224,598 reflecting increased project based activity and rise in staff salaries. Gross salaries across all functions totalled £163,505. We have ended the year with funds carried forward of £135,125 of which £29,308 is allocated to reserves, an increase of 18% to cover those staff now eligible for redundancy payments.





Our reserves policy is reviewed on an annual basis and we aim to set aside funds to meet our statutory obligations and up to six months running costs.

A full copy of the examined accounts are available from our office at Coggan's Well House (CHAT), Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6LU or on the Charity Commission website. In planning our activities for the year, the trustees are mindful of the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

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Values & Working Matrix

Our organisation has identified four core values of Trust, Support, Equity and Openness to underpin our work within all areas and help to shape how we approach monitoring and evaluation to determine our future direction. Using our core values we have developed a working matrix which is the foundation of all our work no matter whether it is networking, providing advice and guidance, running activities, hosting training or providing one-to-one support.



Funding & Support

We are always grateful to receive funding and other support to enable us to continue our work with our voluntary sector and communities. We would like to extend our gratitude to the groups and organisations which support our work:

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Feedback

Knowing that there's someone like you in my corner has lightened the load more than I can express.

Involve plays a pivotal role in bringing the voluntary and community sector and statutory agencies together for community development, community support and training and networking, recognising that all communities are 'better together'.

I now have hope, gained confidence and strength from others.

If we really want to see mental health provision improve for the estimated 50,000 people in Devon struggling in the gap between primary and secondary care - these alliances are pivotal to that. Being in these conversations grows trust and helps bring empowerment to the web of health and wellbeing providers within an area.

This has been the fastest growing group we have set up here, well done!

I have been finding the networking opportunities offered at the Wellbeing Alliance meeting incredibly valuable and aren't being provided by any other services in the areas I cover.

Farming can be a lonely job and when you retire it can just get more lonely. It's great to see old friends and meet new ones. I'm so grateful for this group.

Dad always used to go to Market on a Friday and see his friends but he doesn't go now he's retired. These meet ups are great. He can now see his friends again.