

# Theme Report 7: Community Involvement and Capacity

August 2016

## Links to Better Together

When the County Council published its strategic vision, Better Together, in 2014 it posed a series of “can you” questions to communities. At its heart is the ability for communities and people to contribute to Devon being a better great to live. Devon already has strong communities, a high number of volunteers and resourceful small businesses. The following questions were explored in the survey:

### Resilient theme, can you...

- Volunteer or help run a local service?
- Manage your own needs wherever possible?
- Participate in local decision-making and consultation?
- Help out during extreme weather events or know how to help out?

### Prosperous theme, can you...

- Shop locally and support local business?
- Reduce waste, recycle, and reuse?

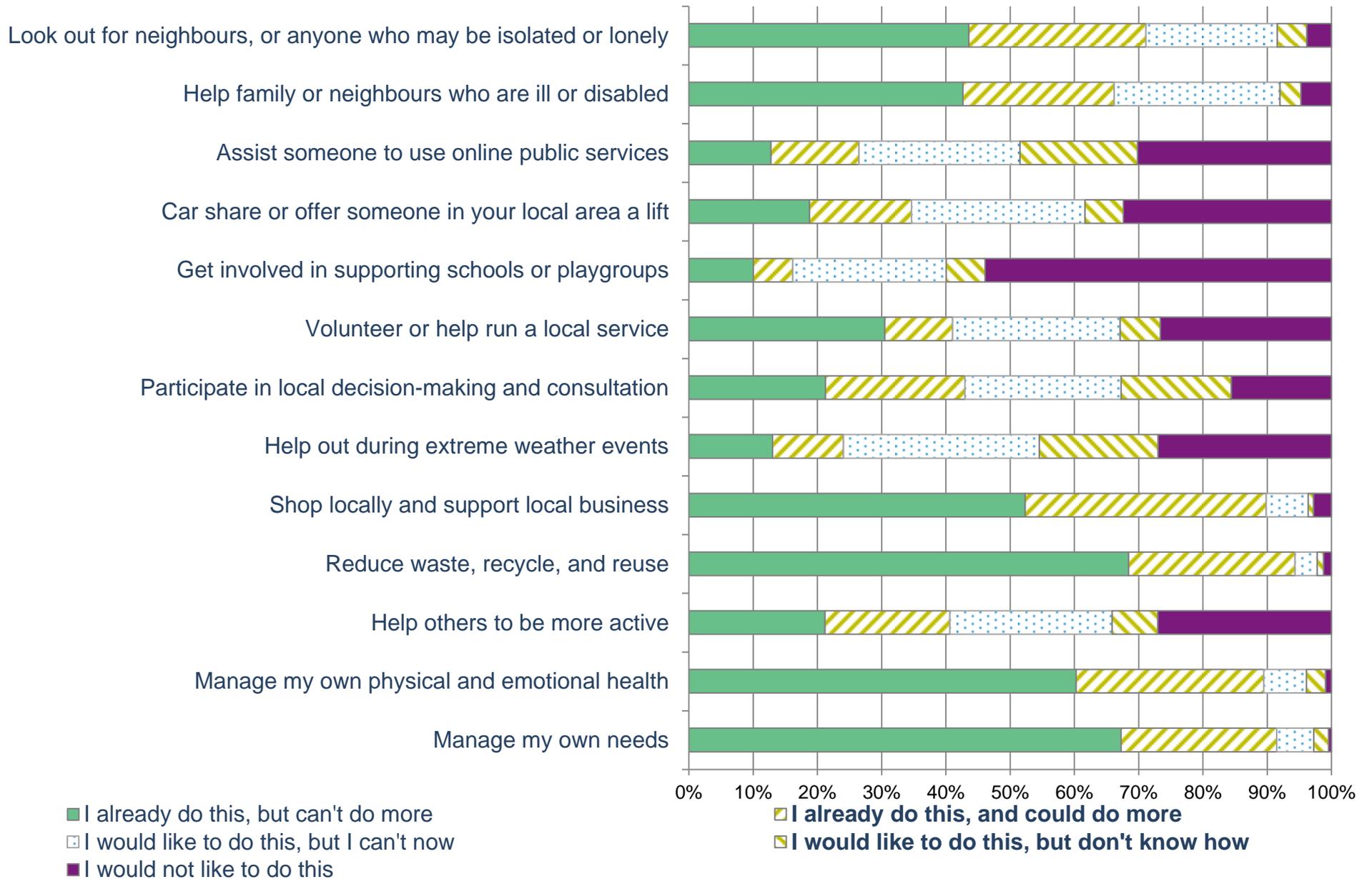
The results show that whilst volunteering and being personally active was quite high (around 40% look out for others, for example) there was still capacity to do more – either some “could do more” and perhaps required some motivation or they “ would like to do this, but don’t know how” and therefore require information. The comments highlighted some of the barriers people experienced in getting involved further in these activities.

# Community Survey

## 2015 Community Insight



## Community involvement and capacity



# Comments

Respondents were then asked: “If you would like to get more involved, what would help you?”

## Personal factors and lack of access/support seen as a barrier to getting involved

A number of respondents said that they felt they could not get involved due to older age, disability or health issues “becoming more involved is virtually impossible for me due to my health issues. I struggle to look after myself let alone do anything to help anyone else in any way”. However, there were those with disability and health issues who felt they wished to contribute, but would need understanding and enabling, “unable to get too involved, due to mobility problems”, or “would like to be involved more, but I am limited as I can't see”. Enabling examples included wheelchair access, disabled parking, providing care (for carers), meetings at appropriate times, and accommodating guide dogs. Information also needed to be provided in an accessible format. Others said that lack of personal or public transport was a barrier. Some said they couldn't shop locally because there were no local shops.

I have enough problems of my own, but help out where I can, and do what I can.

Access improvements – I am a wheelchair user.

Disabled parking spaces adjacent to the meetings.

I don't drive, so am limited in the help I can offer.

Better communication. Info in accessible format.

I am an OAP, where I live no-one helps.

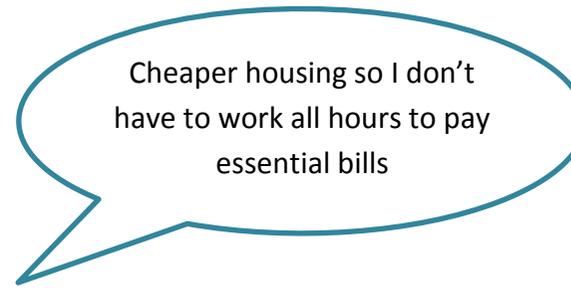
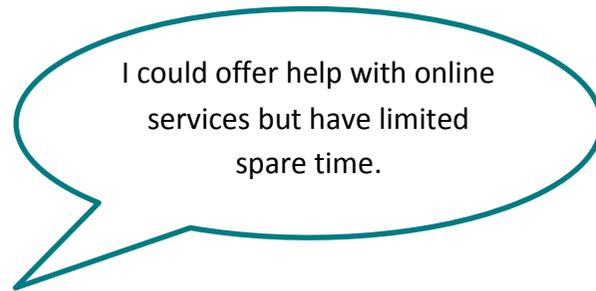
Difficult with guide dog.

I am an OAP, where I live no-one helps.

Can't get involved without adequate public transport.

## Time

Several respondents also said that time was an issue, due to current care or work commitments: “more time - possibly when retired”. Many said they already volunteered, so could not offer more time – though already contributing. Having care support or being able to volunteer on an ad hoc basis provided some opportunities for those otherwise busy with their daily lives. Other potential ways of involving people more included being able to volunteer from home, for example helping with online services.



Of those currently volunteering, many volunteered for multiple organisations already and many examples of volunteering were given.

## Resources, training and Information

Information was required on local volunteer projects. Suggestions included local directories of activities, a “simple website on how to...”, social media such as online platforms to “rally together support”, volunteer noticeboard in libraries and leaflets.

Other issues included lack of funding, insurance costs, replacing essential services with volunteers, ensuring people are listened to when they get involved, particularly in consultations, providing appropriate training, and removing bureaucratic barriers.

Local directories of activities offered in my town...

More information about voluntary opportunities...

Clear information where people can find the necessary information they need to help the local community.

Grant funding for key projects...

Training needed.

The idea of only issuing public liability insurance and not helping cover the cost of insuring and running machinery is a non-starter. Particularly when it has the potential to save the county thousands!  
(Re: Road Warden Scheme).

To be able to get out of the house and visit elderly people's homes as I love to chat with people but I don't know how I can do this.

I am not aware of lift sharing possibilities – are these online or centrally organised?

