



Results of the Disability Focus Groups

August 2016

Introduction

In the autumn of 2015 a community survey was carried out. The results, 2015 Community Insight, has given the county council fresh and deep insight into communities needs, priorities and capacity.

In addition to providing people with the opportunity to complete online or hard copy forms (including via a telephone interview for Blind people), focus groups were held for people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities to provide feedback. A meeting (separate to the survey activity) was also held between Living Options Devon and Councillor Barry Parsons and the results of that meeting are also included in this report.

Focus groups with people with learning disabilities were also held; the results are in a separate report.

The disability focus groups were facilitated through the Fusion Partnership.

Part 1 - Physical and Sensory Disabilities Workshops

This summary presents feedback on the 2015 Community Survey drawn from a focus group with people with physical and sensory disabilities facilitated by Living Options Devon. Completed questionnaires from telephone interviews with people with physical and sensory disabilities; one to one interviews with Deaf BSL (British Sign Language) users; and questionnaires completed by carers were all collated centrally by the County Council. However, this summary touches on some of the key issues raised in the comments sections of the survey.

Section 1: Being involved and informed

Involvement and influence

- Group meetings, forums and networks were highlighted by participants as being an effective means of encouraging people to get involved in consultations. Participants highlighted the benefits of organisations such as Living Options Devon inviting service users to attend Focus Groups with service representatives there so that those present can respond and have a collective voice. Carers mentioned the benefits of Carers' Network meetings.
- Telephone interview and focus group participants highlighted the need for widely distributed information about consultations to encourage people to take part. Participants in the focus group commented that information about the County Council and proposals for changes in services are only known about through the Devon Disability Network at Living Options. Without such networks, people feel they would not have the opportunity to take part in consultations. Meetings and forums organised by Living Options enable people to comment and have their voices heard. It was suggested that the County Council could use existing local groups such as Access Groups to ensure people are aware of consultations etc.
- Lack of public transport and lack of accessible transport was highlighted by telephone interview participants as a disincentive to attend consultation meetings. In addition, focus group participants highlighted that transport is a major issue. When the County Council is inviting members in the community to take part in consultations, they should provide travel expenses / transport as not everybody has access to their

own vehicle.

- Accessible information was frequently highlighted as essential to enable people to take part in consultations.
- It was highlighted in the focus group that the majority of County Council consultations and surveys are accessed on line. Participants expressed frustration that you need access to a computer to have your say when not everyone owns or is able / willing to use computers. In the focus group only three participants access information online.
- People are more likely to get involved when issues are close to their hearts or if it will have an impact on peoples' own families or communities. One service user gave the example of the consultations which took place around the closure of a care home in Exeter (Bodley House).
- It was suggested that the County Council could use teleconferencing as a way of facilitating people with disabilities to take part in consultations.
- Participants commented that confidence that that consultation would actually make a difference would be an encouragement to get involved. Participants in the focus group suggested that consultations are often tick box exercises and that decisions are made regardless of consultations. Carers suggested that the County Council should consult with the public more, and that when consultation does take place they feel that their feedback is 'ignored'.
- People have experienced a lack of response when contacting the County Council with a concern.

Being informed

- The importance of information being available in accessible formats (including BSL clips and audio on CD) was highlighted frequently in telephone interviews and in the focus group. One service user commented on the assumption made by the County Council that people will have a carer who can read information on their behalf: "The council need to understand that we are individuals and should be allowed to receive the information in a format, which is appropriate for us to access individually."
- Focus group participants commented that the County Council website is not user friendly.

- Focus group participants commented that information from the County Council tends to include a lot of jargon.
- Telephone interview participants commented on not knowing who to speak to when trying to access information about care and that there isn't enough readily available information. It was also suggested that when people do telephone, the County Council staff often do not have the necessary information.
- Two telephone interview participants particularly highlighted how they no longer receive follow up phone calls to check they are okay and that the support they need is in place.
- Focus group participants used to receive information about adult learning opportunities but this is no longer available. Deaf BSL users commented on the lack of awareness about the need for communication support and the lack of budgets for Adult Learning Centres to provide BSL interpreters.
- There was some confusion about whether the County Council or Exeter City Council are responsible for recycling.
- Comments were made about the length of time you have to wait for help or advice from the County Council.

Section 2: Community resilience and connection

Getting around

- Participants frequently raised concerns regarding the safety of paths and pavements due to cracks, potholes, uneven surfaces etc.
- Cars are parked on pavements which makes it difficult for those who are visually impaired.
- Participants suggested that there is not enough public transport.

- Some carers commented on how green open spaces are being taken up with new housing.

Computer and smartphone use

- Focus group and telephone interview participants commented that information and the means to communicate should be available in a range of formats as many people do not have computers or smartphones. Some people with a visual impairment commented that the use of the internet reduces their ability to be independent as they are relying on others to access information.
- Due to disabilities or poor transport links, not everyone has access to get to libraries to access computers.
- Many areas have poor levels of broadband that it's easier to use the post (not dependent on transport or broadband).

Social contact and living independently

- Focus group participants and carers suggested that there needs to be better joint working between agencies. This is particularly an issue when people are discharged from hospital when the transition should be smoother. Care should be in place for people when they return home, they should not have to contact their doctor or Social Services. A telephone interview participant commented that she really struggled when she came out of hospital and needed help but there was nothing available.
- Councils should use the “Reablement Toolkit” (provided by Westbank) which is a six week programme to assist those who have recently been discharged from hospital or those who are entering the care system after a crisis. It enables them to get confidence in their own personal care, dealing with daily living activities and other practical tasks so that they can continue to live at home.
- There were issues with lack of public transport and lack of accessible transport to enable people to access community activities and resources, highlighted particularly in telephone interviews.
- Deaf BSL users commented on the barriers to employment for Deaf BSL users.

- In order for Deaf BSL users to make use of community resources and activities there needs to be Deaf awareness and communication support in place and funded.
- Carers commented on the need for more drop in centres and support groups for parent carers and groups for children with special needs.

Section 3: Community support and action

Getting involved

- Focus group participants commented on high levels of paperwork with regard to volunteering.
- Telephone interview participants frequently highlighted how their disabilities and health issues prevented them to get involved.
- Carers commented on how caring responsibilities makes it difficult to take on further responsibilities.

Feeling safe and respected

- People feel vulnerable in poorly lit areas, particularly if they are unable to hear or see.

Part 2 - Qualitative engagement – feedback from a ‘Hot Topic’ forum with Living Options Devon

April 2016

Context

Councillor Barry Parsons requested a meeting with officers and the Chair of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer of Living Options Devon (LOD) to discuss engagement; this followed a previous conversation he had had at LOD. At this meeting on 20th January 2016, it was agreed to hold a different type of event that enabled Devon County Council to hear qualitative information about issues that affect people in Devon living with disability. This group are regularly consulted about issues relating to adult social care, but it was felt their life experience over a wide range of topics could provide some useful insight to Devon County Council.

Consequently, LOD held a Hot Topic Forum on 21st April 2016 with a group living with a very wide range of disabilities. Discussion was structured around the themes of Devon County Council ‘Better Together’ vision.

Every person present took part in small facilitated discussion groups that covered every topic. Louise Taylor and Caroline Rae attended for Devon County Council and explained they were there to listen, but could not promise specific action on any topic. It was a very positive morning, well organised by LOD and with some powerful messages coming out.

Each area below contains the summary of the morning discussions with proposed referral/ action points, Louise and Caroline believe could be undertaken in the short term, highlighted.

Prosperous

Summary:

How we can work together to support our community so that we benefit as a whole to prosper and to flourish? This is mainly in terms of employment, education and supporting local businesses. “Ask not what your community can do for you, but what you can do for your community”

Key Message:

Prosperity is not just about money, it is about choice, independence and opportunity. It is feeling good about yourself and what you do, where you go and the opportunities available. The more you go out, the more you learn and being “out there” enriches your life.

“In order to contribute to society, you need to be able to access it”.

Access to the community around them is a major issue for disabled people. This is due largely to transport issues but also to a lack of understanding and awareness of people’s differing needs.

“A cared for community is a prosperous one”.

What is good / what works well:

- Access to the internet means that it is possible for people to work from home, if they are unable to travel.
- Employment is extremely important for people’s feeling of self-worth. Being employed makes you feel an important member of society.
- “Attitudes and awareness towards visual impairment are generally good amongst the community which means that I am able to contribute.”
- “Prosperity often stems from education”.
- Making sure that the various barriers to education are greatly reduced would increase prosperity.
- It is important that children are able to go to school in their local area – this helps both children and their parents to engage with their community. Children with disabilities should also have this same opportunity.
- It is easy to come by voluntary work.
- Education and learning opportunities are available (even if getting to these is challenging).
- “Local tradesmen are reliable and I have been able to build a relationship with them. I trust them and know their work.”
- “They understand my needs so I am happy to pay extra for their services.”

- “Local tradesmen often recommend other tradesmen which benefits me and also the community.”
- Pubs are a hub of the community.
- Keeping local businesses mean that a community will thrive. Employment and social opportunities help money to stay in the community.

Challenges:

- Employment opportunities are difficult in Devon because of the infrastructure.
- There is a general lack of information and advice amongst professionals with regards to disability and employment.
- Poor broadband connection is an issue in rural areas and can make it difficult for people to access employment or education.
- Independence and choice are compromised by transport issues. Many people rely on public transport which is often unreliable. This means that they are unable to access local businesses, employment, education and services in the community.
- There are not many alternatives to the bus, accessible taxis are economically unviable to run and Community Transport is very expensive (90p per mile for wheelchair users).
- People have differing and changing care needs and this is not always understood.
- “There is only one independent shop on my high street”.
- Many local shops are inaccessible so I cannot support their business even though I would like to.
- It is often not possible to make local businesses accessible because of Listed Building Regulations. There are ways around these, you just need to be more creative!
- Supporting local shops can be expensive. Their prices are not competitive compared to the supermarkets.
- Many village pubs are closing down.
- Councils are poor in trying to encourage local businesses.
- Recycling is quite difficult for me as I am unable to move the bins.
- The recycling men would like to help but are unable to because there is too much red tape.
- “I have recently started a course at a local college. Getting there was initially difficult and the college’s attitude wasn’t particularly helpful.”

Suggestions for the County Council to consider for improvement:

- More support for independent/local businesses so that they can compete with larger ones.
- The recent reduction in services means that clear and reliable information should be available in accessible formats.
- Improvement to public transport i.e. more buses!

- “the County Council could use their influence to persuade businesses to employ disabled people”.

Devon County Council notes – potential areas for action:

- Accessibility – physical – Property team.
 - Buildings inaccessible.
 - Consider moving a service to a more accessible building.
 - *Use of accessible buildings for different services locally?*
 - *Vs trying to make buildings accessible.*
- Role in influencing employers to employ disabled – Economy team.
 - Volunteering easy but paid employment more difficult.
 - General lack of information and advice amongst professionals with regards to disability and employment.
 - *What role do we have in achieving the above?*
- Information in accessible – formats – Communications team.
 - *Provide other formats – communication with clients could be improved.*
- Right information about services – Communications team/ service specific
 - *Online mapping services tool.*
- Accessibility to transport – independence and choice – Transport team.
 - Concern about the limited bus service inhibiting independence and choice
 - Limiting access to employment, education and services in the community
 - *Can we influence the bus timetables / frequency?*
 - *Can we influence when ACL courses are run to be more accessible?*

Healthy

Summary:

Healthy is keeping the mind and body active and to support this we require good, accessible information; access to services and encouraging communities.

What is good/working well:

- Active and encouraging communities in some areas:
 - Topsham has lots of self-help groups locally.
 - Dementia friendly communities were highlighted as a good example of supporting people within communities.
 - Living Well Together Ilfracombe - providing exercise groups, transport, walking groups. A supportive and encouraging community.
 - University of Exeter provides a link with U3A – supportive and encouraging the groups to develop e.g. presentations, talks and help to develop research opportunities.
- Library services are valued. Exeter Central Library has good access for disabled people. It is good to reserve books online and be informed once ready - will this still happen with the changes? Mobile libraries still exist?
- Community transport schemes enable people to get out/be active.
- Technology can be useful to maintain independence. Example, equipment such as telecare alarms are really useful and reassuring.
- There is a lot of green spaces/fresh air throughout Devon for people to enjoy - good for wellbeing/Mental Health.
- Recognition of the value of support from others:
 - Good neighbours are important - knowing there is someone nearby who can help
 - Having a group of friends/others is important to share information.
- 'Generally things are going well'

What is not good/could be improved:

- Green, open spaces are being eroded by housing developments.
- Physical access to buildings and services can be an issue, especially within older buildings in Exeter City Centre

- Parking on pavements can be problematic for those wanting to get out– for wheelchair users, visually impaired people, and people with prams.
- Parish Councils don't take issues seriously enough. For example, I tried to get them to help sort out a local access issue but they weren't interested in addressing the issue properly.
- Cold callers (phone and face-to-face) have a negative impact on health due to the worry and stress.
- Wheelchair accessible taxis aren't always suitable e.g. the design of some WA vehicles doesn't leave any leg room for me.
- Devon's rurality can result in isolation. It is easy to have an 'active community' but more support is needed for vulnerable people to enable their participation.
- Transport:
 - A cut to buses reduces opportunities. e.g. bus route starts at 10.30am and finishing at 3.30pm. I am stuck after then.
 - Hospitals can be difficult to access especially in rural areas.
 - North Devon is very hilly which makes people reliant on transport. Parking an issue due to lack of accessible parking bays and the cost involved.
 - We have to plan days ahead. You can't be spontaneous!
 - I can get a bus into the town centre but not to my GP surgery, there is no bus stop. Makes me reliant on others. Those who can get public transport can find it difficult to get the transport times to fit around the Doctor.
- Cost increases, e.g. at leisure centres, creates a barrier to access.
- Lack of services- 'I used to have a local gym with equipment suitable for me to use'; there are no groups/activities in evenings or at weekends
- What is Healthwatch Devon? What is it for?
- Voice recognition software has become a real issue (they don't understand accents, people with speech impediments etc.) e.g. Exeter City Council; Devon County Councils and some hospitals are now using this.
- Care Direct:
 - Is causing a barrier between users and those who can help.
 - It is dehumanising.
 - There are too many questions before you get to what you want.
 - I used to have a direct contact with the person working with me e.g. OT and physio. Now I have to wait 6-8 weeks for a visit which I don't always need- I just want to have a quick chat on the phone e.g. to check the exercise I am doing is right. I now don't bother and try to manage myself.
- Lack of staff e.g. GPs and physios due to recruitment and retention issues. Means waiting times are too lengthy.

- Pluss - when there are issues with equipment, those you speak to on the phone often don't understand. Example: they sent a repair engineer but he didn't have the right information so didn't bring the parts. They said I had to go back to the bottom of the list again before the engineer could come back.
- GPs used to be able to write prescriptions for exercise groups.
- Good broadband is key - can be a lifeline for people e.g. housebound.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Encouragement of small communities is needed to enable them to respond to local needs and ensure there is local support. The County Council could connect more to support local community groups.
- Education could be given to Parish Councils to help them reach the 'hidden people' in their communities. Also around equality so they can promote this.
- Make cycle routes wheelchair accessible! Making the countryside accessible doesn't mean concreting over; it can just be a simple change to a gate. Getting out to the countryside improves wellbeing and Mental Health.
- Access to information:
 - Alternatives are needed to online e.g. post information! Online - can there be too much information making it hard to find what you need.
 - People need skills development e.g. in using computers.
 - Remove voice recognition software.
 - Enable people to have direct contact with the person working with them rather than having to refer back to e.g. Care Direct.
- Would like freedom to use equipment suppliers we want to use – choice!

Devon County Council notes– potential areas for action:

- Voice recognition – Adult Social Care (Purposeful Systems): Frustration with voice recognition system.
- Reaching hidden people in communities – link with Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure and Communities grant agreements (Strategy, Policy and Organisational Change team).
- Direct contact – simple help / repairs – Adult Social Care (Purposeful Systems).
- Accessibility to cycle network – gates – Public Rights Of Way team.
 - Make cycle routes accessible – simple change to a gate – getting out in the countryside improves wellbeing and mental health.
 - *What can we do to achieve this?*

Resilient

Summary:

The ability to adapt to new situations which might involve psychological, emotional and physical changes. There is a limit to how much resilience people have, and sympathetic, understanding is needed. It is difficult for people to be resilient on their own -it is easier with other people's and communities support.

Key Messages:

The impact of a small change is much much greater for a disabled person - it can completely change their world - whereas the same change for a non-disabled person can be really easy to cope with and adapt to. Disabled people have to be very resilient, just to cope with everyday life/challenges. However, resilience is reduced hugely through the 'drip drip' effect. The first time a disabled person cannot access a meeting, it is fine, and might laugh it off, BUT by the 20th time they have not been able to access a meeting then the person will lose interest in attending as do not have energy to make the arrangements needed. This can have a knock on effect on wellbeing/confidence/motivation etc. It's like a rubber band that keeps being stretched, but each time it loses some of its elasticity and eventually cannot 'bounce back'.

What is good/what works well:

- Familiarisation-getting to know my local area and people over many years.
- Strong community spirit in different areas:
 - We draw a lot from our local community - Upton Pyne village.
 - I live in Whipton and the Village Green project has really improved things recently.
 - I have a real identity with my local neighbourhood.
 - I find out things from people who are always happy to help me.
 - Local communities and being part of Living Options as a disabled person reduces isolation and helps me understand I am not alone.
 - I live in the South Hams - we all look out for each other-its great.
- People can be scared of disability but once I have broken the ice, and they get used to it, they accept me and what I am.
- If there is a crises people pull together to help and support each other.
- Our communities are a resource that we respect - disabled people need to be polite and then I find that is reciprocated.
- There are lots of people to help if you are prepared to seek them out and ask - i.e. City and County Councillors.

- Local radio is a great way to get messages of changes etc. out to disabled people.
- Getting and giving information is key - it needs to be 2 way - not lecturing.
- It depends on people - even when considering professional staff/the County Council officers, e.g. “My care package looked like it was going to reduce - then I had a new care manager who was brilliant and was ‘on my side’ and understood the impact it would have on my independence and as a result my situation has improved significantly-this has increased my confidence/resilience”.
- The police support depends on the particular officer who responds to the issue - some really understand and care about disability issues - others are just not interested/do not understand our challenges.
- I want people to understand and support me - not to take over.

Challenges:

- It is a constant challenge to get my message across as a disabled person, about the need to have access to services without sounding and feeling like a victim - which in turn reduces my resilience and confidence.
- There is so much change happening that it wears you down eventually.
- A small change can have a huge impact on disabled people and much more of an issue than for non-disabled people. Example: “as a blind person using a guide dog - the council taped off the end of my road. My guide dog simply did not know what to do as he had been trained to go home that way. I wish I had been told so I could prepare for this before it happened.”
- In Devon, in some villages it can take many generations before you are accepted.
- It is the ‘drip drip’ effect that reduces/destroys resilience. For example: “every time I go to a meeting I have to check whether, as a hearing impaired person, I will be able to hear the conversation. The first time I ask it’s fine - but after the 20th time of asking, it just seems easier not to go, and then the problem becomes isolation and loneliness etc. - but it is all just too much effort.”
- I constantly have to consider ‘how many steps will there be?’ can I get my wheelchair in there or not?’ The effect of my disability reduces my resilience - as I use all my energy on these problems and it leaves me nothing else to support others or keep myself well.
- *MyDevon* is an issue for disabled people. Most of the people on the phone are really lovely/helpful-but every time I phone up I have to repeat everything – even though I can hear them typing, so what are they writing if they do not refer to it? When I ring Citizens Advice they always refer to my notes and confirm back to me whether they are correct - that is so much more helpful.(We discussed the issues around data protection/confidentiality etc.)
- Transport is not accessible and expensive which is a real barrier to resilience.
- I tried to feedback my views through Healthwatch - but never get any response and nothing changes - this erodes my interest and confidence/motivation and resilience.

- I am totally reliant on my wife/carer - I would not be resilient/able to cope without all the support she gives me.
- I tried to get my Parish Council to help me sort out access issues-but they had no interest - they should help ensure there is equality in the village but do not seem interested at all. Example: “The post office changed hands and the previous post master understood about reasonable adjustments, but the new person does not even try to help me-and the Parish Council would not intervene.”

Suggestions for the County Council to consider for improvement:

- Planning departments need to be much more aware. Example:” there is a myth that there is nothing that can be done if the building is listed- they don’t recognise the importance and opportunities that ‘reasonable adjustments’ can make – i.e. rather than adapting the building, taking the service to another building that can be accessed.”
- Teaching and Awareness Raising/educating non-disabled people to understand how to support disabled people to be more resilient e.g. “Someone grabbing my arm – as a blind person this can damage me and means I am not in control. I need them to hold their arm out for me to hold it and guide them....and knowing not to grab my guide dog’s harness when he is working....simple things that make a huge difference”.
- Please can we have more openness, inclusiveness and involve us in the changes that affect us from a much earlier stage, rather than being told after the decision has been taken.
- Information to be put into the right format so I can access it. Example: “I was sent a letter from the County Council which I cannot read as I am blind-surely that could be done better!”
- I.T. for some people can be a real barrier – there needs to be far more emphasis on other ways to communicate with disabled people.
- Can parish councils do more to promote equality issues within their local communities?
- Community led is the very best way to secure change and develop resilient communities.

Devon County Council Notes– potential areas for action:

- Role of Parish Councils – link with Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC)
- Limit to the capacity to ‘resilience’ in a community - Strategy/Policy team?
- In dealing with a disability or illness there is limited capacity to be further resilient.
- Promoting equality issues – Equality Officer.
- Feedback from Healthwatch – People Involvement Team
 - *Would be helpful for Health watch to promote what they are there to do*

Connected

It was felt by the group that this topic would benefit from being considered from two points of view: Rural and Urban.

What Works Well

Rural

- Smaller villages: people get to know one another.
- They feel they have more of an identity.
- Local shops...people know what your access needs are (village shop is often the substitute for social services; they are the eyes and ears within the community).
- A lot happens in the village halls.
- Churches work well.

Urban

- Better access to facilities.
- Better transport networks (using free bus pass).
- Better broadband connections and more internet cafes.
- Buildings 'tend' to be more accessible
- Larger stores often provide an 'enabler'...(John Lewis, M&S, Debenhams).
- Very good community bus link giving a good 'community' feeling.
- Taking a guide dog out... more social interaction.
- Churches work well.

Issues

Rural

- Poor public accessible transport.
- Cuts in transport have left people more isolated.
- Community transport is more expensive for wheelchair users as they are transported in 'wheel accessible vehicles' which require a 'paid driver'.
- Very poor broadband connection compared with cities.
- Loss of local shops, post office, banks and even mobile library service.
- Can feel isolated as to what is happening elsewhere outside the village.
- Lack of good lighting at night.
- Poor physical access into shops.
- Footpaths: unfriendly gates.
- Fear of scams and scammers.
- Accessible parking often an issue.

Urban

- Feelings of not being 'safe'
- People don't feel involved in making decisions locally
- Broadband connection isn't always reliable
- Lack of good lighting at night
- Within towns and cities.. more people are about which increases the 'threatened' sensation
- Fear of scams and scammers
- Removal of green sites – reducing areas to go and walk, enjoy being out
- Loss of local banks
- Personal security when in towns... experience of hate crime
- Accessible parking often an issue

How could things be improved?

Rural

- More support from the County Council (and Government) for local, 'accessible' transport and better broadband connectivity.
- Increase the number of community groups...build on what is happening that works.
- More support to make areas and facilities more accessible.
- Equalities Act need more compliance from the County Council.
- Better disability awareness... not 'E' training!
- Rural bus drivers are really friendly and will assist.
- Being aware that not everyone has a computer or computer skills.
- More visible County Councillors (not often seen after elected).
- Increase in accessible parking.
- Too much reliance on the internet to get information out when broadband connection is poor or non existent.

Urban

- Within areas, such as Pinhoe, Whipton, increase community activities to develop a sense of community cohesion where people will look out for one another.
- More accessible transport ...taxi that arrive are not always what has been requested – wheelchair accessible.
- Buses don't always have sufficient wheelchair accessible space.
- Equalities Act...better policing/checking to ensure compliance.
- Better disability awareness...not 'E' training!
- Bus drivers could be more friendly!
- Better interconnecting bus services.
- More visible County Councillors (not often seen after elected).
- Increase in accessible parking.

In Summary:

In trying to be 'Connected' we find many challenges within our local communities in the following areas: accessible public transport, accessible buildings, accessible parking, poor/unreliable broadband connection, a lack of Disability Awareness.

Improvements in these and public services, better Disability Awareness would reduce personal isolation considerably.

Devon County Council notes– potential areas for action:

- Reducing personal isolation.
- Fear of scams and scammers – Trading Standards
- Disability awareness.

Safe

Group sentence: “To live my life the way I am able to and to fulfil my ambitions with confidence and respect”.

Key message – Community:

This is in the sense of people and knowing who you can rely on; this helps people to feel safe. Friends or buddy schemes provided by neighbours, friends or volunteers in the local area can support one other to reduce loneliness and vulnerability; having someone to turn to for help either by phone or in person. Local, accessible places to meet provide a way in which people can get to know each other and look out for one another.

What is good / what works well:

- It's good when people can get together and highlight issues.
- Good neighbours are really important.
- “I feel safe where I live now because I am not isolated”.
- Talking to people face-to-face or on the phone. This can highlight issues and how you can help.
- The area you live in can impact on how you feel. It helps if you know some-one who can be on the other end of the phone.
- A police presence in the community helps people to feel safe.
- Good lighting is important to help people get around and feel safe in doing so.
- Physical surroundings can impact on how safe you feel. Neighbourhood Watch is a good scheme but seems to be in decline.
- Local / community shops are a good way of engaging and getting to know people. “They would know if something was wrong or if you didn't visit when you normally do”.
- The the County Council ‘Safe at Home’ assessment team work well.
- Listening to the local radio helps keep people informed.
- Simple satisfaction forms provide an opportunity for people to feedback on services they receive and work that has been done. This helps people feel they have contributed to developing and improving services. They feel more connected.
- Sharing good ideas about keeping safe e.g. different schemes to support each other.
- Knowing what is available and when helps people support each other and feel safe.
- Community centres work well in bringing people together.

- The Home Call service is good.

Challenges:

- Sometimes, even getting to the bus stop doesn't feel safe. For example - uneven pavements or cars being parked.
- If you're not used to being on your own you can feel vulnerable.
- "When people park on a drop-kerb I can't get by. I don't feel safe as I may fall".
- Road maintenance work or repairs can put people seriously at risk. People can often end up in the road and there isn't an alternative route that is accessible.
- Physical obstacles can impact on how safe you feel when trying to move around.
- Pavements and cars parked on pavements seriously affect how safe people feel when trying to get about. "Contractors are the worst offenders!" Emergency services cannot always get through.
- "Increase the number of Community Development Workers and cut back the number of call centres!!"
- "Having a more regular bus service and one that runs later helps me to get to clubs and services that I use. It helps me to feel safe as I don't have to walk in areas that I don't know".
- Getting to know your neighbours and being known helps people to feel safe.
- "Walking in the dark makes me feel unsafe. Having someone to walk with me would help." This could be a buddy or friends scheme.
- People sleeping rough can make people feel intimidated. A lack of police presence doesn't help this.
- Group drinking can be very intimidating and increase feelings of physical vulnerability. This leads to 'no-go areas'.
- Broadband reception in all areas of Devon is vital in being able to make connections. This includes mobile reception to make that 'call for help'.

Suggestions for the County Council:

- It's really important to get a speedy response if you have a problem at home, e.g. if you have a fall and may need equipment or adaptations to allow you to remain safe at home.
- Feeling safe at home is a top priority: "If you don't feel safe at home, you don't feel safe anywhere". Quick response services are vital: a response is needed within a few days, even if it's a phone call. It doesn't help when you have to talk to lots of different people and keep having to repeat yourself.

- Repairs around the home can have a big impact on people feeling safe. For example leaks and floods can affect electrics in the home and may cause blackouts. When trying to access local authority services the voice recognition service does not work for people who have difficulty speaking. This impedes access to services and much needed support.
- Sending out communication in the right format is important when trying to convey information to keeping people safe.
- It is important to raise awareness of how important it is to keep pavements and roads clear of obstruction.
- Drink awareness campaigns need to include a message about how drinking can affect other people and make them feel unsafe.

Devon County Council notes– potential areas for action:

- People you can rely on.
- Identified in some areas a real sense of community and others you can rely on:
 - *However, how can we support this to grow?*
- Buddy / Friend scheme –consider how to publicise good schemes that exist that are replicable.
- Speedy response to issues – Adult Social Care.