



Living Options Devon

Our Impact Report 2022-2024



Welcome to Living Options Devon

Who are we

We are a charity that supports d/Deaf and disabled people to have a voice and to live their life, their way.

We know this matters as our staff have lived experience of disability too and this helps to inform the support we offer.

Our vision

Our vision is an accessible and inclusive society for Deaf and disabled people.



info@livingoptions.org

To preserve anonymity and confidentiality all names in case studies are pseudonyms.

Our mission

We are an organisation of d/Deaf and disabled people working together to promote accessibility, unlock potential, develop understanding and raise standards within society

This means we will:

- Promote accessibility – access for all is a right and applies everywhere: across industries, organisations and society
- Unlock potential – we exist to realise the limitless potential of our community, the people who use our services and our partner organisations
- Develop understanding – throughout society of the value and needs of Deaf and disabled people
- Raise standards – this is to ensure our community has more independence, freedom and the power to choose



CEO and Chair of Trustees message

We are proud to present our 2022-2024 Impact Report.

This report offers an in-depth look into our work over the past two years and highlights some of our key achievements in improving outcomes for disabled and Deaf people.

At Living Options, we are privileged to have a team of dedicated staff, volunteers and trustees, alongside the invaluable support of our partners, funders, and supporters. Together, we have continued to make a meaningful impact, even in the face of challenges such as the pandemic, rising inflation, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis - factors that have disproportionately affected the physical and emotional wellbeing of disabled and Deaf individuals.

The last two years have also been a time of transition and growth for Living Options. Since stepping into the role of Chief Executive in May 2023, we have been working together to guide Living Options toward a strong and sustainable future, ensuring we can continue to deliver the highest impact for the people we support.

To every funder, supporter, partner, staff member, and volunteer reading this - thank you! This report is a testament to the critical role you play in helping us empower disabled and Deaf people to have a voice and to live their life, their way. This remains our ultimate purpose, and it simply would not be possible without you.

Within these pages, you will discover the stories and data that highlight our collective achievements. From the introduction of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism for NHS staff - delivered by our Experts with Lived Experience - to the unwavering dedication of our Advocacy teams, who help people voice their needs, secure their rights, and access vital services, every accomplishment moves us closer to a more inclusive future. However, our work is not done. Whilst we celebrate these successes, we remain deeply committed to addressing the challenges ahead with creativity, courage, and compassion.

2025 will be a year of transformation for Living Options to ensure we are prepared to meet the evolving needs of disabled and Deaf individuals. The development of a new five-year strategy will guarantee that we are in the best possible position to continue to provide the vital support our communities need now, and long into the future.

Stephanie Lewis, CEO Andrew Barge, Chair of Trustees

Key achievements 2022-2024



Over 17,000 people with disabilities, long term health conditions, Deaf people and their families supported



Through use of our **Countryside Mobility all-terrain mobility scooters**, **9,493** people with limited mobility were able to **access the countryside**.



We coordinated **129 consultations / engagement activities** providing **opportunities for people** give their **feedback** about issues affecting their lives.



In partnership with the **Devon Advocacy Consortium**, **3,671 people** were provided with **independent professional advocacy**, helping people to say what they want, **secure their rights** and representing their interests to help get the services they need.



In 23-24 our **volunteers provided 1,025 hours** of their time to help us support disabled and Deaf people.



Our **Waiting Well** team provided non clinical support, signposting and information to **help 2,516 people on hospital waiting lists** manage their condition and get the support they need.



We provided **621 hours of professional, specialist counselling** to disabled people and Deaf BSL users.



We **supported 41** disabled and Deaf people who have been **victims of crime**.



Our **Sight & Hearing** team delivered **information, support and equipment hire** to **374 people with sensory impairments**, improving independence and confidence.



We provided **wellbeing support** to **107** members of the local **Deaf community** through wellbeing activities and groups and information and advice.



Time to Talk provided **emotional support, information and advice** helping **309 people** with disabilities and/or long term health conditions make **positive changes** in their lives.



We worked with **190 service providers / organisations** to improve accessibility through **access audits, accessibility advice, training** and delivering **accessibility solutions**.



We delivered **Disability** and / or **Deaf Awareness training** to **368 people** from various local organisations, helping to increase the accessibility of the services they provide.



We are pleased to be working alongside One Devon to deliver the **Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training for Learning Disability and Autism**. We have recruited and are supporting 13 Experts by Experience and facilitators / trainers. 502 NHS Devon staff have attended the training.

Service user feedback



98% of our service users would recommend our services to others. (n=397)



95% of our service users stated that their wellbeing has improved as a result of our activities and services. (n=849)



Average score 4.5 for how helpful have you found our support on a scale of 1 to 5* (n=377)

*with 1 being not at all helpful and 5 being extremely helpful.

Our services and projects



Devon Advocacy Consortium

Four charities, led by Living Options, provide an independent, professional advocacy service for people over 16.

Sight and Hearing Service

Equipment, information and support services for people with sensory loss.

Victim Care and Support

We are accredited to deliver victim care and support services to disabled and Deaf communities across Devon.

Waiting Well

Support, information and signposting to help people have a better quality of life whilst waiting for an NHS appointment or treatment.

Devon Disability Voice

A group of volunteer members who meet regularly to raise awareness, share information, and influence change.

Training

Deaf and Disability Awareness training to local services and organisations.

Deaf Get Active and Options for Living

In 22—24 we also ran the Deaf Get Active project supporting Deaf people to become more active and the Options for Living project supporting people when discharged from hospital and providing support around Covid and vaccinations.

Countryside Mobility

Safe, enjoyable access to the South West's most scenic locations for anyone who has difficulty walking, through an off road mobility scooter hire scheme.

Time to Talk

Free, confidential listening support and advice helpline, for those with a disability or long-term health condition.

Counselling

We provide free counselling at our accessible premises or online to people with a disability, long term health condition or Deaf BSL users.

Devon Engagement Service

The Lead agency providing a central point of contact for Devon County Council; NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and South Devon and Torbay CCG to engage Devon residents in the development of local health and social care services.

Access Auditing

Helping organisations improve their accessibility, incorporating physical access, signage, websites and marketing materials.

Over 1 in 5 people in the UK are disabled



That is over 14 million people. Disabled and Deaf people continue to experience inequalities in many areas of life, including education, work, standards of living and access to services^[1]

What is LOD doing to address these issues?

- > Accessible information, advice, support and signposting
- > Wellbeing services and support including professional counselling and peer support
- > Advocacy
- > Providing volunteering opportunities
- > Training, access audits and consultancy
- > Working in partnership to improve accessibility
- > Engagement and consultation

How does this help? (Our interim outcomes)

- ✓ People will be provided with emotional and peer support; feel listened to and less alone; more resilient and empowered to make positive changes in their lives.
- ✓ People will feel more informed; more equipped to manage their circumstances; and more able to make choices which meet their needs.
- ✓ People will feel more connected, addressing loneliness and isolation.
- ✓ People will be safeguarded, supported and empowered to express their views and wishes and involved in decisions being made about their lives.
- ✓ People will gain or maintain independence.
- ✓ People will have increased skills and confidence.
- ✓ People will be enabled to live more active lives.
- ✓ People will have the opportunity to share their experiences and views; to highlight issues that matter to them; and help to shape more inclusive services.
- ✓ A wider range of places, services and organisations will have improved awareness, accessibility and inclusivity.

What are we aiming for? (Long term impact)

- ✓ **Our Vision: An accessible and inclusive society for Deaf and disabled people**

The following pages tell you more about how we worked towards this vision in 2022-2024 and some of our achievements for each of the interim outcomes.

^[1] National Disability Strategy, July 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-disability-strategy>

People will be provided with emotional and peer support; feel listened to and less alone; more resilient and empowered to make positive changes in their lives

What we have achieved:

We provided **over 1,000 people** with **emotional support** and a 'listening ear.'

We provided **peer support** opportunities for **151 people**.



Examples from 2022-2024

- We provided **specialist accessible professional counselling** to disabled and Deaf people, offering a **safe and confidential** space for people to **talk** through their issues and concerns.
- Across our projects and services we offered people the **chance to speak** about their situation, experiences and current **challenges** providing **peer support** and **mentoring** with the aim of improving people's confidence to make **positive changes** in their lives.
- We provided specialist practical and emotional **support to disabled and Deaf victims of crime**, helping people to recover from the impact of what they have experienced.
- We facilitated **wellbeing support groups for Deaf BSL** users. The sessions provided local Deaf BSL users the opportunity to support each other; share their experiences; and participate in activities to support their wellbeing.



What people said:

- **96%** of our service users told us they felt listened to and understood. (n=50)
- **88%** of our service users said the support helped them feel less alone. (n=113)
- **58%** told us the support helped them identify and plan positive changes in their lives. (n=102)

“I am now feeling a lot more positive about moving forward into the future.”

“Thank you for the service - professional, kind and intuitive to my needs, in my time of great difficulty offering hope, support and encouragement. I felt listened to and was given practical ideas whilst I recovered.. I'm extremely grateful for the support I received.”

“Absolutely fantastic service which I needed at a time of crisis ... The peer support helped massively and made me feel less alone and supported while I was waiting for the counselling which is also helping me a lot now.”



Jane's story

“Someone telling you that you are doing okay and knowing there is someone there that understands made a 100% difference to me. I can see how much I improved since Victim Care and it made me realise how much my life had changed for the better....

Victim Care helped me put my boundaries up regarding what I will and won't accept, it was like someone gave me permission to have boundaries, be happy and to live my life... Victim care gave me practical and emotional support. I am now in a much safer place.”

Jane was initially referred to the Living Options Waiting Well service to support her while she was waiting for a medical procedure. She was signposted to Living Options Victim Care due to experiencing PTSD as a result of past experiences and issues with her neighbours.

The Victim Care team provided Jane with regular phone calls and emotional support, giving her the opportunity to talk through her past experiences with domestic abuse and bereavement. Jane felt that the support brought her out of a state of 'limbo' and helped her to realise she has the right to choose and control her own life. She was able to free her self from the past and stop living in fear of repercussions.

Jane was also given practical support, information and advice and the Victim Care team arranged for the funding and installation of a video doorbell which gave Jane a feeling of security and helped her with her anxiety.

Jane felt that the support gave her a different perspective; improved her confidence; helped her reset boundaries and empowered her to take more control of her life and feel safer.

People will feel more informed; more equipped to manage their circumstances; and more able to make choices which meet their needs

What we have achieved:

We provided **over 1,200** people with **information, support, advice and signposting**.

We gave **practical support**, for example, help with completion of forms, contacting organisations or making appointments to **over 600** people.



Examples from 2022-2024

- We provided information, advice and signposting to people whilst waiting for NHS treatment. **Waiting Well empowered people to make decisions** about their ongoing care and condition, with a focus on independence, supporting low mood, wellbeing, peer support, community support and non medical pain management.
- Through **wellbeing projects and services**, we provided **information about tools and resources to support wellbeing**, including: mindfulness; practicing gratitude; motivational tools; help for managing anxiety and low mood; and breathing techniques.
- Across all our projects and services, we provided **information on a range of issues based on each individual's situation and concerns** including: managing health conditions and chronic pain; housing problems; transport; access to services; financial support (debt, benefits, bills); grant funding schemes (for example for purchase of assistive equipment, dental treatment, vets bills).
- Our **Sight & Hearing service** helped people find solutions to day to day problems they experience due to their sight or hearing. The team are able to **demonstrate various equipment** and tools for sight and hearing, such as magnifiers and adapted telephones. People are able to borrow so they can try them out to see if they are suitable for purchasing. The team also signpost people to other organisations and sensory peer support groups.

- We provided **practical support to the local Deaf community** on a range of issues such as: housing problems; understanding household bills; understanding personal correspondence; and completion of forms. **Wellbeing groups** offered information on a range of topics including use of BSL 999 and Signhealth.
- We provided information and advice as well as practical support for people who were being **discharged from hospital** helping people to plan ahead and have a smooth transfer home with support and services in place.
- Through funding from Devon Community Foundation and Teignbridge CVS, we were able to provide **financial support to 73 households** to help them through the cost of living crisis.
- Our **Advocacy** service ensure that people are able to make **informed choices** about complex matters and events that have a significant impact on their lives.

What people said:

- **89%** of service users told us that Living Options services helped them to feel better informed. ^[n = 142]
- **87%** of service users told us they were now able to make informed choices; more able to manage their condition. ⁽ⁿ⁼¹⁰³⁾
- **68%** told us they were provided with helpful advice, tools and suggestions to support their wellbeing. ⁽ⁿ⁼⁷³⁾
- **65%** told us the support had helped them access services or support they need. ⁽ⁿ⁼¹⁰³⁾

“Very good kept me well informed plus all the staff were kind and helpful.”

“[What I value most] was talking to someone who understands sight loss and could explain and show new equipment.”

“Without services such as Time to Talk, a lot of people would struggle, there is a lot of information out there but it is hard to wade through it so a service like this makes it much easier, vital, because it is very hard at times and when you are feeling low, you need somebody who knows how to find info easier.”

“Lots of information I didn't know... Relaxation techniques. Learning about nutrition and diet.”



Tina's Story

“Jan is fantastic. She explained about devices and hearing aid functions and gave me advice. She is a diamond. Jan is so nice, and her service is invaluable. I don't know where I would be without it.”

Tina is in her 60s and acquired hearing loss in adulthood. She found out about the Sight & Hearing service through her local Audiology department.

Tina visited the Sight & Hearing service in order to get advice on personal listening devices. She was given advice on various options and a hearing aid with a Bluetooth function was recommended. She borrowed two devices to try out at home to see what would suit her needs best.

Tina was very pleased with the outcome of the visits and found a device that suited her. She found using the device she could hear her colleagues better at work and when at family meals she could hear 85% of the conversation which was a great improvement.

Linda's Story

Linda is in her 70s and lives alone. Linda was contacted by Waiting Well whilst on a waiting list for hospital treatment. The team referred her to Time to Talk for ongoing support and mentoring.

Linda found the regular support calls helpful. She felt listened to and, by talking to someone knowledgeable, she was able to identify areas where she may appreciate more support or advice and was given information and signposting based on her specific needs.

Linda really appreciated the fact that there was someone to talk to. She explained that she often has a lot of things she is thinking about and that this can be difficult when living alone. Her conversations with Time to Talk allowed her to process her thoughts in a safe and supportive way.

People will feel more connected; helping to reduce loneliness and isolation

What we have achieved:

- We provided support or services to help people feel better connected and reduce loneliness and isolation for 484 people.
- Our engagement activities were an opportunity for over 1,000 people to come together and share views and experiences.
- Our Countryside Mobility service enabled over 9,000 to spend quality time with their friends or family.



Examples from 2022-2024

- We **connected people to local peer support groups, community activities and opportunities**, through our signposting and information and advice.
- We provided regular opportunities for people in the **Deaf Community** to come together, participating in **wellbeing peer support groups and activities**.
- One of the key benefits of the Countryside Mobility Scheme identified by members has been that the all-terrain mobility scooters provide members with the opportunity to **spend time with friends and family whilst enjoying an outing together**.
- We provided people with a hearing impairment advice about **equipment** which enables them to **keep in touch and communicate** with others better e.g. telephone amplifiers, hearing aid support, neck loops.
- Our volunteers tell us one of the things they value most about **volunteering** at Living Options is the opportunity to **meet new people** and be a **part of a team**.

What people said:

- **62%** of respondents told us that Living Options services have helped them feel less lonely or isolated. ⁽ⁿ⁼⁷¹⁾
- **93%** of respondents told us that Living Options services have enabled them to enjoy spending time with other people / increased or improved contact with others. ⁽ⁿ⁼⁵⁴⁸⁾

“Countryside Mobility allows me to spend valuable time with my family and friends.”

“[I value most] opportunity to meet others and socialise. Getting out and meeting new people.”

“I get to travel to somewhere new and meeting people who are disabled and have disabilities makes me feel that I'm not alone.”

“Countryside Mobility enables me to go with my family instead of sitting in the cafe car or stay at home on my own.”

“The lady I spoke to was kind and caring and explored many options of social support with me. This allowed me to explore local groups that now means I am out and about mixing with other people.”

“It's giving me a boost and meeting other people has helped with loneliness.”

“Very friendly. They went out of their way to find subjects I might be interested in. Made me more aware of groups and activities, not always very well advertised.”



Wayne's story

“Thank you very much for all the help, support, advice and all the information. Thank you for everything you have done for me 🙏🙏😊😊 it's very much appreciated.”

Wayne contacted Time to Talk as he was experiencing anxiety and low mood. During regular check in phone calls or emails, Time to Talk provided him with a listening ear and some advice and support over a period of nine months.

During the check ins, Wayne discussed how he has been feeling and what he had been doing since the last contact. They focused on helping Wayne manage his anxiety. The Time to Talk advisor suggested Wayne keep a learning / reflection diary – writing down his anxieties and what he would do differently.

During these calls, Wayne was encouraged to attend local face to face groups and spend time on things he enjoys such as going for walks and taking photographs. Wayne was keen to attend courses and groups but needed to build his confidence to attend. They discussed options for practical courses he could do, as well as manageable social groups. Wayne was signposted to local opportunities such as courses he might be interested in and wellbeing groups, gaming cafes, walking groups, warm spaces. Time to Talk provided mentoring support to help Wayne feel ready to attend these groups or courses.

Wayne is starting to make more connections with people and feeling more able to attend groups and activities. He found it helpful talking to someone who he felt had an understanding of how he was feeling, and he appreciated being able to talk through problems.

People will be safeguarded, supported and empowered to express their views and wishes and involved in decisions being made about their lives

What we have achieved:

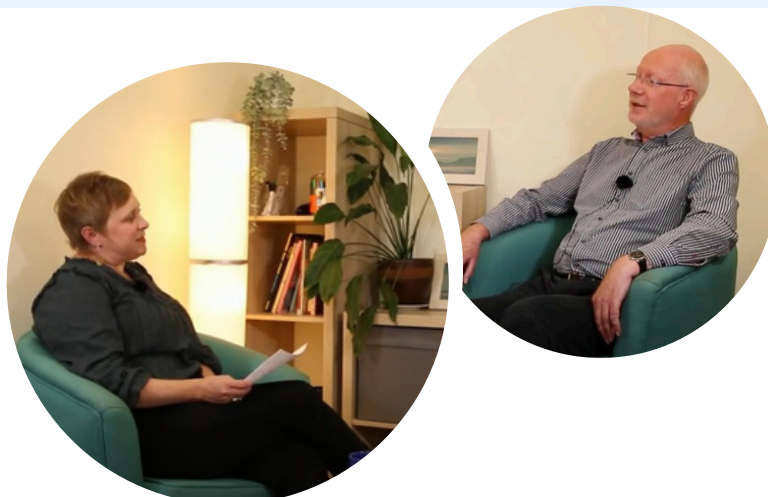
Alongside our partners on the **Devon Advocacy Consortium**, we provided over **3,500 people** with advocacy support.

Empowering people to speak up for themselves; ensuring they are **involved** with decisions affecting their lives; and **securing their rights**.



Examples from 2022-2024

- We were **awarded the advocacy contract for Devon and Torbay** for the third time in a row including, for the first time, **the Independent Health Complaints Advocacy service in Torbay**.
- In 2023 we were re-awarded the **Quality Performance Mark for Advocacy (QPM)** from the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI).
- We received **352 referrals to support people through Safeguarding processes** during this period.
- We **supported 59 parents** with disabilities going through child protection procedures.



What people said:

- **88%** of referrers to our Advocacy service reported that the Living Options advocates made a strong difference to the decision making process.
- **94%** of referrers to the service reported that the Living Options advocate ensured the client's views were heard. (n=16)

Comments from referrers:

"The Advocate involved with this situation was extremely professional and really advocated for the person concerned. This was a particularly complex case and the IMCA navigated the relationships well."

"Advocate was easy to communicate with and kept our client at the heart of all decision making."

"The Advocate was very supportive of the client in terms of having a voice and discussions with the client to gain knowledge of her wishes."



Rob's story

Rob is in his 80s and has dementia. Neighbours frequently reported concerns around the state of his property, the risk of Rob not eating and drinking, and neglecting his personal care. Rob was reported to have no insight into his diagnosis and to be suspicious of health/social care professionals. A safeguarding of adults concern had been raised.

Rob's social worker was completing an assessment of his care and support needs and preparation of a care and support plan. An Independent Care Act Advocate (ICAA) liaised with the social worker and met with Rob to gain an understanding of his situation and to ensure his voice was heard in the decision making process.

The ICAA and social worker worked to maintain Rob in his own home while setting up a care and support plan to minimise risk as far as possible. This was in line with Rob's wishes who valued his independence. The situation was to be monitored and may very well have to be reviewed as Rob's dementia progresses. However, the ICAA was keen to ensure that, in line with the Mental Capacity Act, any decisions taken reflected the least restrictive option and were, as far as possible, in line with the wishes and feelings of Rob.



People will gain or maintain independence

What we have achieved:

- Just over **1,000 people** were provided with **information, advice, training or support** to help them remain or become more **independent**.
- More than **9,000 people** were enabled to **visit countryside and heritage sites independently**.



Examples from 2022-2024

- We provided specialist support to people with sensory loss to **help people manage their sensory loss and maintain or improve their independence**. As well as information and advice, we provided equipment demonstration and loan. The equipment supports independence and helps people carry out daily tasks and activities.
- We provided **information, advice and supported signposting** to help people **maintain or improve their independence whilst on a waiting list for NHS treatment**. For example information regarding mobility equipment and home adaptations; advice and signposting regarding adult social care home assessments; and financial info / advice / signposting support including benefits, housing advice, home care services and transport services.
- One of the key benefits of the **Countryside Mobility Scheme** identified by members has been that the all-terrain mobility scooters provide members with a sense of **independence and freedom**.



What people said:

- **79%** of people who gave us their feedback stated that LOD services and projects had increased their independence. ⁽ⁿ⁼¹⁶⁾

“Independence and the ability to visit and explore. It gives back some freedom.”
(Countryside Mobility user)

“The Trampler gives me independence. I can go out with friends and not feel a burden, and it’s fun.” (Countryside Mobility user)

““[What I value most about the service] is to be shown and actually see what gadgets were available when losing your eyesight.”

“I am able to go out shopping again with the seeing AI app. I have felt encouraged .. I am reading again much more successfully now I know to move the paper not the magnifier!”



Terry's Story

Terry contacted the Sight & Hearing Service (SAHS) as he has macular degeneration and his sight had deteriorated. He wanted some advice to help him manage his daily life, in particular reading.

The SAHS advisor explained techniques for using peripheral vision which Terry practised to test where he had useful vision with TV and faces. When Terry and his wife visited the SAHS, he was already able to bring the advisor's face into more focus by looking past her. Terry and his wife were encouraged by the improvements in what he could see by using these techniques.

The advisor also discussed various magnifiers and Terry borrowed one to try at home with his reading glasses as well as some other equipment. After a trial period, Terry has decided to buy a writing guide. We referred him to the Macular Society for more Skills for Seeing practice.

Terry felt the support had made a difference for him, making him aware of options to improve his vision and make reading easier.



People will have increased skills and confidence

What we have achieved:

We provided **opportunities** for over 300 people (330) to increase their **skills and confidence** through **coaching and support, volunteering and engagement opportunities**.



Examples from 2022-2024

- Our **engagement activities** gave hard to reach people the opportunity to gain skills and build experience in **speaking up** and sharing their views in a supported environment.
- Our **volunteers** are provided with training and opportunities to **build skills, confidence and gain experience**.
- We provided cost of living skills sessions for Deaf BSL users to improve **skills in managing finances and budgeting**.
- Throughout our projects and services, **continuous mentoring and support** aim to **boost individuals' confidence and empower** them to take the next steps toward making positive changes in their lives.
- Our **advocacy** service builds people's self esteem and confidence through **recognition that their voices can be heard and make a difference**.



What people said:

- **83%** of respondents told us they feel more confident as a result of our services or support. (n=150)
- **62%** of respondents told us they have learned new skills. (n=66)

“It definitely helped me to believe that my life is not over. I have skills, knowledge and life experience, which I could share with others.”

“I am grateful for information and support that I received.. During our sessions she helped me to build up my confidence.”

“It has helped greatly with my confidence and I wouldn't have managed to accomplish travelling a year ago”

“It has helped me very much with confidence and it has helped me to take a step out of my comfort zone.” (Volunteer)



William's Story

“Living Options has given me the confidence to take the plunge, it has helped me a lot. Living Options is lovely, wonderful atmosphere, non-judgemental, welcoming and relaxed.

I am proud I have been out of my comfort zone, I feel it's the right place for me.”

William is a volunteer at Living Options Devon. He struggles with social situations but likes to go out and meet new people although he finds it very challenging. He was very nervous at first because of going to a new place and meeting new people but the team at Living Options were very reassuring and welcoming.

William is a member of Devon Disability Voice where he enjoys sharing experiences with other disabled people and discussing issues such as access barriers.

“I was in a room with other people who have difficulties and we started talking about lots of issues, like access. It felt like the right place to be and that I belonged there. I enjoy volunteering because everyone else in the room has similar disabilities and there is a sense of belonging. No judgement from the people that attend, people understand.”

William also regularly supports Living Options at events to raise awareness of the organisation and the services on offer. This has been a new experience from him and he has learned from others in the team. William feels his confidence has grown hugely through volunteering at Living Options, as well as his communication skills. He has felt a strong sense of belonging and has been able to meet and spend time with people, connecting him to his community. He has more awareness of opportunities and support in his local area.

People will be enabled to live more active lives

What we have achieved:

- **We provided safe enjoyable access to the South West's most scenic locations to anyone who has difficulty walking, through our off road mobility scooter hire scheme – 9493 people benefitted from the Countryside Mobility scheme.**

We are partnered with outdoor attractions and beauty spots across the South West to offer a network of hire locations for our off road mobility scooters (Trampers). The scheme enables people to spend time outdoors and experience the countryside independently, spending time with family and friends, all contributing to improved wellbeing.

- **Our Get Active Together team supported 423 people to become more active through volunteer buddy peer support and organised outings / activities.**

A range of accessible activities were organised including: climbing, Parkrun, tennis, table tennis, boxing, dancing, athletics gym sessions, squash, climbing, bouldering, paddle boarding and group walks. Activities were organised based on volunteer and participant interests.

Get Active Together also provided health and wellbeing resources; tips for keeping fit and signposting to relevant activity options / opportunities

- **Across our projects and services we signpost people to community assets and provide mentoring and support to encourage people to engage with these opportunities.**

These include local clubs, activity groups, hobby groups, leisure activities, peer support / condition specific support groups, training and volunteering opportunities.

What people said:

- **96%** of service users reported that Countryside Mobility (CM) membership had improved their access to the outdoor attractions / countryside locations to a great extent.
- **85%** of service users reported that CM membership had improved their confidence to visit outdoor attractions / countryside locations.
- **83%** reported that the scheme has encouraged them to visit outdoor attractions / countryside locations more often.
- **88%** reported that the scheme has had a positive impact on their general sense of physical and / or mental wellbeing. (n=397)

“I haven't felt this liberated for 20 years. The sense of freedom was overwhelming. Thank you”
(Countryside Mobility member)

“It's a great scheme and enables disabled people to live a fuller life which is so important for physical and mental wellbeing.”
(Countryside Mobility member)

“Get Active Together helped be more active by playing badminton and being more outside.”

“I am bored at home if Get Active Together had not happened. It helped me feel happy and be out and have fun and get fit and healthy.”

Alison's Story

"It is fantastic to be able to make memories like this... you can't put a price on this experience."

In 2020 Alison caught Covid which left her with lung and organ damage. Alison didn't leave the house for two years. Having previously been a teacher and Scout leader, she had enjoyed a very active outdoor life.

When Alison went to visit her father in Cornwall in 2022 he booked her a Trampler at Trengwainton. It was the first time Alison had been outside for two years. Alison remembers the day she first tried out the Trampler and thinking about that day gives her goosebumps because she could smell the flowers, hear the birds and immerse herself in nature. The Trampler is so quiet she could enjoy it all. Alison could only manage to walk four steps before this.

Since then Alison has visited other sites in Cornwall and found all were amazing. At Trebah Alison was able to access the beach. She met up with friends and their children who paddled in the sea whilst Alison sat in the sun. This would not be possible without the Trampler and Alison would have been stuck at home. "It is fantastic to be able to make memories like this."

Without the Trampler Alison couldn't get out into nature. Alison said 'you can't put a price on this experience.' Alison still gets emotional thinking about the experience, seeing things she never would have been able to otherwise. Alison now enjoys telling as many people as she can about the service, especially when she is using it.

People will have the opportunity to share their experiences and views; to highlight issues that matter to them, and help to shape more inclusive services

What we have achieved:

We coordinated 129 engagement activities providing opportunities for people give their feedback about issues affecting their lives.



Examples from 2022-2024

- Our **engagement** work enabled us to gather **feedback from disabled and Deaf people** about their experiences of **accessing adult social care and health services**. This included consultation on possible closure of day services and how to make a new Learning Disability and Autism Mental Health Inpatient Unit as inclusive as possible. Other work has focused on safeguarding and how best to work co-productively. Working alongside a broad range of engagement partners we ensure that accessibility for all is prioritised.
- **We supported people with disabilities and Deaf people** to take part in **regular meetings for Health and Social Care agencies** such as the local Joint Engagement Board; Health & Wellbeing Board; Safeguarding Adults Partnerships Board and the Commissioning Involvement Group.
- We **relaunched Devon Disability Voice (DDV)** formerly Devon Disability Network. Hosted and co-ordinated by Living Options Devon, DDV is a group of volunteer members who meet regularly to **raise awareness**, share **information**, and **influence change** on issues effecting disabled people.

What people said:

- **85%** of respondents told us that the meetings / groups facilitated by Living Options were a useful way to share views on services for disabled and Deaf people. ⁽ⁿ⁼⁸⁴⁾
- **95%** of respondents felt listened to at engagement meetings facilitated by Living Options. ⁽ⁿ⁼²¹⁾
- **86%** of respondents felt the engagement activities would make a difference. ⁽ⁿ⁼²¹⁾

“[I value most] the idea that we can together effect change.”

“[I value most] getting support to try and change for better outcomes on various disability issues.”

“[I value most] being able to contribute to improving lives for disabled people in Devon. Learning about other experiences and improving my knowledge.”



Example of our engagement work: Torbay Learning Disability Listening and Feedback Event

Torbay Council undertook a Social Care Commissioning review of community services for adults with learning disabilities in Torbay. The review made recommendations on future service provision and support (for non-accommodation-based services).

As part of the review Torbay Council wanted to make sure that future services are person centred; to assess what is working well in Torbay for people with a learning disability; and to identify opportunities to improve support for people with learning disabilities in Torbay.

Living Options coordinated a listening and feedback event . The event was attended by people with a learning disability; family, friends and carers; social workers; community and voluntary organisations; service providers; health workers; and commissioners. This was a highly successful event with 100 stakeholders attending with a diverse range of perspectives and high levels of engagement. A report summarising all feedback was produced to help inform service provision.



A wider range of places, services and organisations will have improved awareness, accessibility and inclusivity

What we have achieved:

Through providing accessibility solutions, consultation opportunities, training, access audits and partnership working we strived to make services and places more accessible.



Examples from 2022-2024

- **Between 2022 and 2024 Countryside Mobility worked in partnership with 59 countryside locations in the South West offering hire of our all terrain mobility scooters (Trampers) to enable access to the countryside for people with limited mobility.**

Partners range from national organisations such as the National Trust, Natural Resources Wales (Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru), Forestry England and the RHS, through to local authorities and independent attractions and even a small café operated by a cooperative. Our partners share our vision of enabling easy access to beautiful locations.

- **We undertook professional access audits for 77 organisations.** Places audited included our Countryside Mobility sites, Haynes Motor Museum, The Museum of Dartmoor Life, Woodland Trust Yonder Oak.

Our **access audits** take the form of a comprehensive on-site visit followed up with a detailed written report giving clear recommendations for improvements to ensure the building / site / open spaces are as compliant as is reasonable with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 / Equality Act 2010.

- We worked with local organisations to **provide accessibility solutions**. Examples include **visual guides** (written and video format) for Penzance Welcome Centre; **BSL interpretation for promo videos** for Wiltshire Wildlife Trust; **BSL tours** for National Trust Arlington and RSPB Arne; and **Audio Tours** for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter.
- We were commissioned to undertake **129 engagement activities** on behalf of local health and social care teams seeking to ensure their **services are as accessible as possible**.
- We delivered **Disability awareness and / or Deaf awareness training** to 368 people from 24 local organisations to help them make their services more inclusive and accessible. Organisations included Covid vaccination centres, Devon Rape Crisis, National Trust Killerton, Upton Country Park, Plymouth Law Fund, Welcome Centre Penzance.
- We are pleased to be working alongside One Devon to deliver the **Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training for Learning Disability and Autism** for health and social care staff. We have recruited and are supporting 13 **Experts by Experience** and Facilitators/ Trainers who co-deliver the training and 502 NHS Devon staff have attended the training.
- Through funding from **Skills for Care**, and **working in partnership with NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group** and **Devon County Council**, we coordinated **free user led training to PAs** across Devon helping to ensure **quality and safe standards of care for all**.



What people said about Countryside Mobility:

- **99%** of Trampler users stated that hiring Trampers had improved access to heritage and countryside places. (n=397)

“It's given me the opportunity and independence to visit beautiful countryside I would otherwise not manage..”

“Opens up access to areas I thought impossible and gives independence which was not possible.”

What people said about our access audits:

“From start to finish very open, honest, efficient and confidence boosting!”
(Haynes Motor Museum)

“Extremely useful process that provided expert advice and guidance.”
(Dartmoor Zoo)

“Thank you to Living Options for the comprehensive access audit. The report offers a clear roadmap for improving accessibility at Affinity Devon.

We're pleased with the recognition of our existing efforts and are eager to implement the recommended changes to create a more inclusive shopping experience for all.”
(Affinity Devon Outlet Shopping Centre)

What people said about our training provision:

- **97%** of training attendees told us that the training raised their awareness of the needs of people with disabilities/ Deaf people. ⁽ⁿ⁼³⁵³⁾
- **95%** of training attendees told us that the training would help them to feel more confident supporting, welcoming and assisting (if necessary) people with disabilities and Deaf people. ⁽ⁿ⁼³⁵³⁾
- **90%** of training attendees told us that the training highlighted what they can do to make my service more accessible. ⁽ⁿ⁼³⁵³⁾

“Really thought provoking to start me thinking about what needs to be done on site to help accessibility.” (Deaf awareness training attendee)

“Brilliant! such a valuable training session, I would recommend that anyone who wants to be able to better support the Deaf community attend!” (Deaf awareness training attendee)

“I have learnt so much about learning disability and Autism. I will definitely take away the information I have learnt to make my patients feel more comfortable and listened to.” (Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training attendee)

“I really enjoyed the training and found it extremely useful in raising my awareness. Really enjoyed the interactive elements that made me think about disability and how it affects people.” (Disability awareness training attendee)



Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training Expert by Experience case study

"I give everything, it's given me confidence, meaning and a purpose to get up and contribute to the world, these are things that money can't buy.

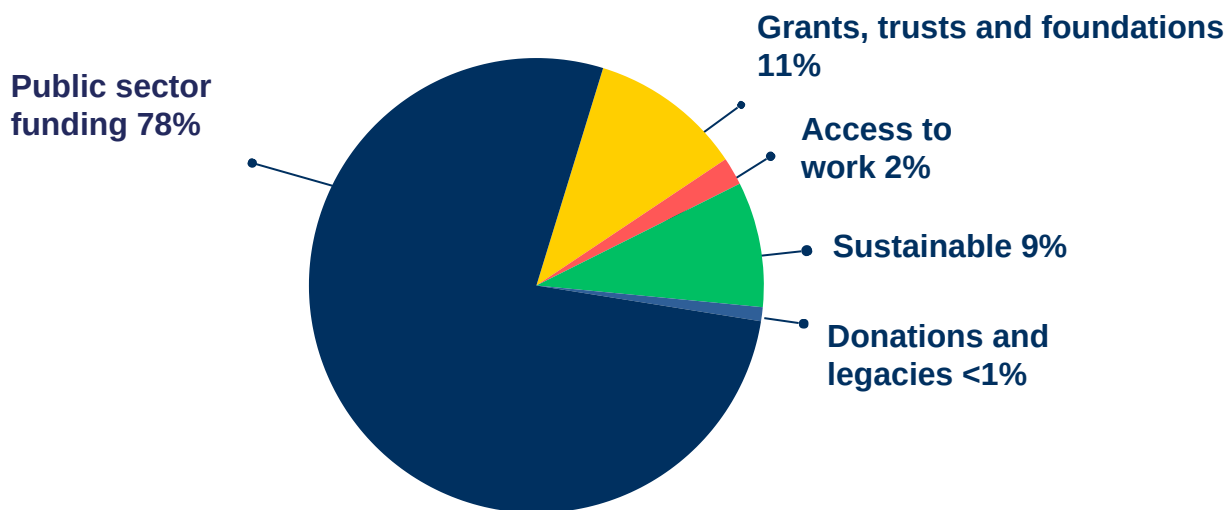
I want to do the best I can, I can see the lightbulb come on when I am sharing my experiences, there are people listening and thinking not just in regards to their job role but for themselves or their families.

Oliver McGowan feels like a massive movement to change outcomes, I feel I was meant to have this role and give my all"

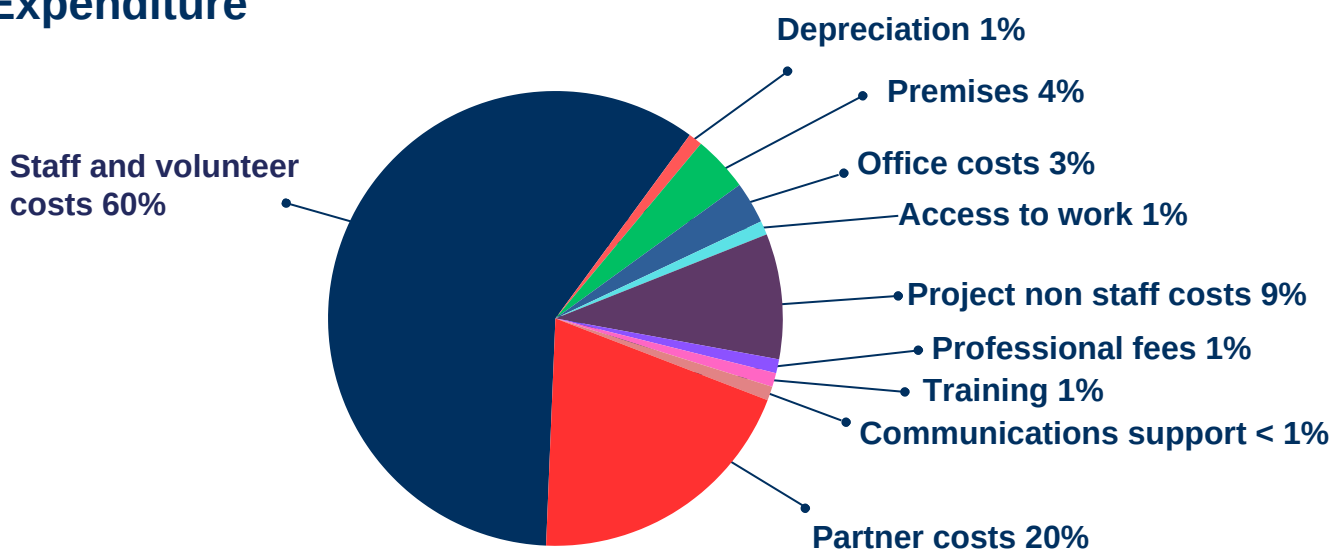
Heidi is one of our team of Experts by Experience who are co delivering the Oliver McGowan Mandatory training. She is autistic and has enjoyed the opportunity to help change people's perspective and approach to supporting autistic people and people with learning disabilities. She feel she is speaking up for people who don't have a voice and feels she is making a lasting difference.



Income



Expenditure



Thank you to our volunteers



As we reflect on another two years of making a difference for disabled and Deaf people, we are very grateful for our team of volunteers who give their time, energy and talents and help us to achieve our goals and deliver the outcomes described in this report. Without you it would not be possible.

We offered a variety of volunteering opportunities including:

- › Providing peer support over the telephone to other people with disabilities.
- › Providing office support, gaining valuable experience and skills.
- › Disability Ambassadors who welcome and connect people with disabilities, or long term health conditions into already established activities, sports, clubs or social groups.
- › Supporting the Sight & Hearing service team to provide information and advice to people with sensory impairments.
- › Devon Disability Voice – taking part in regular engagement activities.
- › Helping with fundraising activities and events.
- › Supporting our advocacy work.

100% of volunteers feel well supported and **100%** feel valued

100% of volunteers feel rewarded helping others

84% feel they are making a difference for disabled / Deaf people

84% feel more connected to their community

100% of volunteers say volunteering has improved their sense of wellbeing

85% of volunteers feel more confident

Disability Confident Leader



As a Disability Confident Leader, we are committed to having a diverse workforce and recruiting and retaining disabled and / or Deaf people and those with long term health conditions. Our commitment to equality and inclusion is central to our mission.



60% of our staff and 57% of our Trustees have a disability, long term health condition or are Deaf BSL users.

Staff wellbeing



Living Options Devon (LOD) works hard to ensure we do all we can to support the health and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers, enabling them to provide effective services for our beneficiaries. In a recent staff wellbeing survey.

- 96% of our staff would recommend LOD as a great place to work.
- 95% strongly agreed or agreed LOD is dedicated to diversity and inclusiveness.
- 92% strongly agreed or agreed that their work gives them a feeling of a job well done
- 92% of staff strongly agreed or agreed that they feel well supported at work by their line manager and 92% by their colleagues
- Staff were asked how happy they have felt at work in a given time period. On a scale of 0 (not at all happy) to 10 (extremely happy), 82% scored 7 or above. The average score was 8. 76% of staff reported that this was fairly typical of how they have felt working at LOD.
- Staff were asked how anxious they have felt at work in a given time period. On a scale of 0 (not at all anxious) to 10 (extremely anxious), 70% scored 6 or below and 48% 3 or below. The average answer was 4. 76% of staff reported that this was fairly typical of how they have felt working at LOD.

^[1] Source: anonymous staff equality and diversity survey in 2023 in response to question: Do you have a disability, impairment, neurodivergence or long term health condition - lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? Please select all that apply.



Volunteer

Join our team of volunteers working on our projects and supporting events. www.livingoptions.org/get-involved/volunteering

Work with us

We advertise our vacant positions on our website. If there are no vacant positions but you think you could make a valuable contribution to our charity please get in touch.

Leave a Gift in your will

Help us support disabled and Deaf people now and in the future through leaving a gift in your will.

www.livingoptions.org/gift-your-will

Become a corporate supporter

Whether through donations or volunteering, your company's support will help to fulfil part of your CSR plan whilst making a real difference to local disabled people.

Fundraise for us

Taking on a new challenge or running an event? Consider raising money for Living Options and make a difference to local disabled and Deaf people.

Thank you to our partners in 2022-2024

for all of your continued support

-
- Active Devon
 - Age UK Devon
 - Devon Communities Together
 - Devon County Council
 - Devon Insight
 - Devon Mind
 - Devon Partnership Trust
 - Devon People First
 - Devon Voluntary Action
 - Dimensions for Autism
 - Disability Rights UK
 - DisAbility Cornwall
 - Healthwatch (Devon, Plymouth & Torbay)
 - Hikmat Devon CIC
 - Intercom Trust
 - Libraires Unlimited
 - NHS Devon
 - Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council
 - Plymouth City Council
 - Plymouth Octopus
 - Rethink Mental Illness
 - St Petrock's
 - Sunrise Diversity
 - Torbay Communities
 - Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust
 - Westbank
 - Visionary
 - Vocal Advocacy
 - Young Devon
 - Wolseley Trust

Thank you to our funders in 2022-2024

for all of your continued support

-
- Arnold Clark Community Fund
 - B-CH 1971 Charitable Trust
 - Cornwall National Landscape
 - David Gibbons Foundation
 - Devon Community Foundation
 - Devon County Council
 - Devon County Council Growing Communities Fund
 - James Tudor Foundation
 - Ladbrokes Coral Trust
 - National Lottery Awards for All
 - National Lottery Community Fund
 - NHS Devon
 - Norman Family Charitable Trust
 - Peter Harrison Foundation
 - South West Water
 - Sport England
 - Steven Bloch Image of Disability Charitable Trust
 - Sykes Holiday Cottages
 - The Inman Charity
 - Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust
 - Ulverscroft Foundation
 - 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
 - Our individual donors and volunteers and
 - All others who prefer to remain anonymous

Living Options Devon
Ground Floor Units 3-4
Cranmere Court
Lustleigh Close
Matford Business Park
Exeter
EX2 8PW

01392 459222
info@livingoptions.org

Living Options Devon is a Registered
Charity number 1102489 and Company
Limited by Guarantee Number 4925281

www.livingoptions.org

