



Thriving Teignbridge

Insights into post-pandemic Volunteering in Teignbridge
Compiled by Teignbridge CVS—Spring 2024

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How to use this report

Teignbridge CVS supports voluntary and community organisations to take action and empower their communities.

This report is aimed at anyone who lives or works in Teignbridge and wants to know what's going on in the community; how to get involved and support some of our incredible people and projects.

The cover image of Teignmouth lighthouse has been chosen to symbolise hope after a storm, which has been much needed as we came out of the pandemic straight into the cost-of-living crisis. It's shown again later the report with a group of volunteers doing a beach clean.

Please consider the environment before printing. This report has been designed to be read online, so that you can click on the links to find out more about any organisations you come across that you'd like to learn more about.

Please contact chloe@teigncv.org.uk with any feedback or questions on this report.

Introduction

Nationally, many voluntary organisations, especially those involved with health and social care, saw an influx of volunteers during the pandemic. However, since the pandemic, they have seen volunteer levels drop much lower than they were previously. If this continues, our voluntary sector will not be able to continue to provide the incredible support to our communities that it is known for. This will put even more strain on statutory services, which are already struggling.

For this report, I've spent the last four months meeting with volunteers and Volunteer Co-ordinators across Teignbridge to better understand what's going well and where they need more support.

Some of my favourite moments have been:

- ♥ Meeting Kate, who was so excited to have the opportunity to visit Buckingham Palace in recognition of her voluntary work for Assist Teignbridge (see page 6-7)
- ♥ Visiting Our Pavilion Café, which had the most welcoming feeling, when I met Mark for a cuppa to hear how they renovated the old pavilion building during the pandemic
- ♥ Hearing Sue's story of getting her car stuck in the mud the first time she acted as a volunteer driver collecting a young person from SisterWood
- ♥ Meeting a volunteer who had turned his life around through volunteering, helping him succeed at work and bringing him closer to his son too
- ♥ Hearing about Kathrine's unique Memory Café on a steam train in Buckfastleigh
- ♥ Getting to explore Shaldon Zoo all by myself before it was open for the day
- ♥ Putting on a hard hat to see behind the scenes in the TAAG renovation project
- ♥ Blindly following my Sat Nav to Buckfast Abbey and having a quick nose around before heading on to my intended destination, the Moor Imagination Collective

This report uses the Vision for Volunteering (see page 5) as a framework to help us better understand what's working and what's not in Teignbridge at present, so that our voluntary sector as a whole can recruit and retain volunteers more effectively and continue to thrive and support the local community.

It celebrates some of the incredible and inspirational work that our local organisations and volunteers are doing to make Teignbridge a stronger, happier place to live, work, and visit. It's been such a pleasure and privilege to meet so many kind, generous, inspirational people and organisations in my research for this report. Thank you for giving me your precious time so that I can better understand your struggles and successes, it is so appreciated.

Thank you to NHS Devon and Teignbridge District Council for funding this new role to help encourage more people in Teignbridge to volunteer, whether that's doing a litter pick on your street, checking in on an elderly neighbour, coaching the local football team, leading a group of Brownies, entertaining people through amateur dramatics, listening to children read, volunteering in a charity shop, or one of the examples given in this report.



Chloe

Chloe Myers
Volunteering Development Worker
Teignbridge CVS

The National Picture

Volunteering rates were already on the decline before the pandemic. The Scottish Household Survey found that, in 2010, 31% of over 16s in Scotland were volunteering. This was down to 26% in 2019 before the pandemic and 22% by 2022. However, there was a huge increase in volunteering during the pandemic, with 12.4 million people signing up to volunteer, 4.6 million of whom were first time volunteers, according to the Royal Voluntary Service.

What stopped those volunteers from carrying on after the pandemic?

Of course, some of the need was removed once the world returned to “normal.” People who’d had extra time on their hands because they’d be furloughed went back to work. Many people who had been active volunteers prior to the pandemic found that their health and priorities had changed. And of course there was a cost-of-living crisis which meant that people couldn’t afford to volunteer – they needed to do paid work, and they didn’t have the headspace for anything extra.

But that’s not all.

There’s also been a decline in volunteer satisfaction. The Time Well Spent survey carried out by the National Council for Volunteer Organisations (NCVO) in 2019 and 2023 found that people reported that volunteering had become too much like work, with unreasonable expectations placed on volunteers.

17% of respondents said they were put off the bureaucracy and complicated sign up processes. 14% worried they’d be left out of pocket. And a whopping 30% didn’t want to make an ongoing commitment because they’re worried they’d end up letting the organisation down.

How can we address those points?

We need clear role descriptions, co-created with the individual volunteer to ensure that it suits their skills, interests and needs, and is useful for our organisations and communities too.

We need to simplify our sign up and induction processes as much as possible so that we’re not losing people before they’ve even started. Many volunteers will volunteer with more than one organisation, so how could you share information, training, reference and DBS checks to make it as smooth as possible?

It’s one thing to offer to pay out of pocket expenses, but potential and existing volunteers need to know that’s on offer and the process to claim them needs to be straightforward. Whilst some volunteers can afford not to claim their expenses and generously donate them instead, those who do want or need to claim them should feel comfortable doing so and never guilty for it.

Some roles need to be long term and continuous, but project-based opportunities may be suitable in some cases and could attract a different type of volunteer who wouldn’t be able to commit to longer term volunteering.

The Local Picture



Teignbridge's Voluntary Sector

Most voluntary sector organisations in Teignbridge are small, with 35% having an annual income of under £5,000, and 37% with an annual income of £5-25,000—but a little goes a long way in the voluntary sector!

During Volunteers Week 2017, a survey was taken to get a snapshot of volunteering. An incredible 1152 volunteers were actively supporting 3436 individuals that day alone.

More than 10% of the South Devon population are volunteers, and an additional 2.5% are employed in the voluntary sector.

The main challenges our local voluntary sector organisations report are: fundraising, volunteer recruitment, technology, premises.

Sources: Southern Devon VCSE Sector Facts and Figures compiled by DeVA and Teignbridge CVS, 2019, and Day in the Life, compiled by Teignbridge CVS, 2017.



[Vision for Volunteering](#) is a movement to create a diverse, innovative, ambitious, equitable, and person-centred future for volunteering.

The Vision for Volunteering sets out a view of what volunteering needs to look like, and how this will make volunteers feel about their roles, by 2032.

The themes identified in the vision are:

- Awareness and Appreciation
- Power
- Equity and Inclusion
- Collaboration
- Experimentation

Vision for Volunteering is led by:

[NAVCA](#), [NCVO](#), [Volunteering Matters](#) and [Association of Volunteer Managers](#).

This report uses the Vision for Volunteering as a framework to explore and celebrate what's already happening in the voluntary sector in Teignbridge.

Awareness and Appreciation

We all desire recognition for our efforts and contributions, whether they are paid or voluntary. It gives us a morale boost, which motivates us to keep going even when it's difficult. In voluntary sector organisations, recognition is even more important than in the workplace or within families and friendships, because there is no obligation for the volunteer to keep turning up – they do it out of choice. Volunteers who don't feel recognised and valued won't last long!

How can we increase awareness of volunteering?

Raising awareness of the efforts and impact of volunteers and volunteering helps keep volunteering at the forefront of people's minds, so that if they want to meet new people, learn a new skill, or build up their confidence, they are more likely to consider volunteering.

The [Teignbridge Together](#) website is an online community resource where organisations can promote their events and vacancies free of charge, helping people find out about organisations they might otherwise not have been aware of. Sue Kennard found her voluntary role with [SisterWood](#) through [Teignbridge Together](#) when she was looking to try something new. She is now one of their most active volunteers.



How can we show our appreciation of volunteers?

By definition, volunteers aren't financially rewarded for the time they give. Recognising the time and effort they give by showing our appreciation is vital to keeping volunteers on board. Many volunteers are "serial volunteers" with several voluntary roles, perhaps on top of employment and parenting or unpaid caring responsibilities too, so offering flexibility is part of showing that appreciation. As is ensuring that roles are enjoyable – at least most of the time! If volunteering feels like work, volunteers won't stay long term.

Congratulations to [Assist Teignbridge](#) who have recently received the King's Award for Voluntary Service and had the exciting opportunity to visit Buckingham Palace May (see next page). One of their volunteers, Kate Young, and I met for a coffee where she proudly told me how honoured she was to have been invited, in recognition of her decade of volunteering with them supporting people with benefits forms.

Many town and parish councils show their appreciation of local volunteers and organisations, because they recognise how important they are. Pictured left are volunteers from [TeignAid](#), a charity which supports people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, receiving a Mayor's Recognition Award at a lovely event full of inspiring stories, held at Bitton House in Teignmouth in March 2024.



Awareness and Appreciation (con't)

How has Teignbridge CVS been supporting organisations to increase awareness and appreciation of their volunteers?

Many organisations reported that they needed support with recruiting volunteers and particularly with using social media to do so. Since February 2024, volunteer stories have been shared on the [Teignbridge Together Facebook page](#) as a way to celebrate and show appreciation for those volunteers, and to help attract potential new volunteers. Efforts have been made to show a range of people in different sorts of roles, to showcase the broad spectrum of volunteers and voluntary opportunities.

On 23rd April 2024, Teignbridge CVS hosted a Compelling Case Studies workshop online for 9 local Volunteer Co-ordinators, to help them write more effective social media posts to celebrate their existing volunteers and attract new ones.

"How do you feel about writing case studies?"

Before:
Hassled, unsure,
overwhelmed

After:
Inspired, organised,
enthusiastic

"I found the session inspiring by freeing me from the type of story mode I have become used to when considering case studies. I can see the sky is the limit in how you choose to do it – and if your organisation shares a willingness to be original in their approach."

Suzy Williamson, Moorland Community Caring



Kate Young and Chrisi Marshall at Buckingham Palace to receive the King's Award for Voluntary Service for Assist Teignbridge in May

What's next?

Teignbridge CVS is planning an Awards Ceremony for November 2024 to further celebrate local volunteers and community organisations. If you would like to nominate a volunteer or organisation, or you have a business that would like to sponsor an award, please email chloe@teigncv.org.uk.

Power

Volunteering provides opportunities for those who may otherwise feel disempowered to have their voices heard and make a real difference in their communities. Volunteering can be empowering and life-changing. Many voluntary sector organisations were started by someone who had a need of their own and wasn't happy with the existing support available, so started a project to provide the help they needed. There's nothing more empowering than that!

How can we empower people to get more involved with their communities?

If we want to get more people involved in their community, to move past complaining about a problem to actively working to fix it, they first need to believe that they can make a difference.

Peer support groups are a great way for people to both give and receive the support that they need. Teignbridge CVS's Community Development Worker, Elaine Musgrave, works with peer support groups to help them get started. Juliet and Michael Hofmann moved to Devon from London. They noticed very quickly that there weren't many mixed heritage families like theirs in Devon, which left them feeling isolated, so they created [Mixed Families Together](#) as a safe space for mixed heritage families to come together, share their culture and support each other. Kevin and Helen Ashford had hugely benefitted from attending a pain café in Torquay, but weren't always up to travelling that far from Bovey Tracey, so they set up their own [Templer Way Pain Café](#) closer to home.

Dan Comer decided to do something about the unused grassland near his home. He set up the [Guerilla Gardening Group](#) with other volunteers and transformed it into a bright, cheerful community space. Achieving this empowered Dan to stand for election and become a town councillor, where he joined forces with Penny Lloyd, who reinvented the [Teignmouth in Bloom](#) private garden competition into a community project to regenerate neglected green spaces in Teignmouth.

Within organisations, how can volunteers influence the direction of the charity?

Boards of trustees are made up of volunteers, though they have distinct roles to those of other volunteers. Trustees are there to oversee the running and sustainability of the organisation, and usually bring specific knowledge, skills and experience, such as legal, finance, safeguarding, fundraising, HR. Volunteers should have regular opportunities to feedback their thoughts into the board, through things like an annual survey or at the Annual General Meeting.

[Newton Abbot CIC](#) launched its new Youth Council in April 2024, to empower people aged 11-16 to have their say and work together with the town council to make a difference. The group meets weekly to work on their ideas and gain valuable leadership skills. In Teignmouth, a new youth advocacy group has recently been set up as part of the [TRAIL \(Teignmouth Recycled Art in the Landscape\)](#) where young people will be able to share their thoughts on the climate crisis.



How has Teignbridge CVS been supporting organisations to empower their volunteers?

One of the recurring themes I found in my research was that organisations wanted to recruit trustees (and particularly treasurers) but didn't know how to find the right people, and were hoping to find someone who could be both a trustee and active volunteer. Trustees have a different level of responsibility than other volunteers, and often bring specific skillsets. Whilst some trustees might also be volunteers, it's important that the two roles have clear boundaries and are not blended into one.

Some of the most valuable trustees will not be able to give their time as volunteers as well, because they work full time – which makes them an asset because their knowledge and skills are completely up-to-date. Having that distance from the day to day running of the organisation gives those trustees a different and vital perspective that those who also volunteer may not share.

I have worked with organisations to help them understand this and change their approach to trustee recruitment and their expectations of trustees – whether they also volunteer or not. Several organisations have been signposted to [Reach Trustee Recruitment](#) as well as sharing their Trustee recruitment needs on [Teignbridge Together](#).

What's next?

[Trustees Week](#) runs from 4-8 November 2024 and we will share trustee stories on the [Teignbridge Together Facebook](#) page throughout the week.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has”

Margaret Mead

Equity and Inclusion

Many voluntary organisations are created to create more equity and inclusion and make the world fairer for those in need, by providing opportunities or support they might not otherwise have had access to. When it comes to volunteering in Teignbridge, the vast majority of volunteers are white, middle class, non-disabled, cis-het, and of retirement age. Due to the high number of retirees in Teignbridge, our voluntary sector is thriving. We are grateful for every single person that gives their time to volunteer. However, we would also like to make volunteering more accessible for all and increase the diversity of our volunteers so that they can enjoy the positive impact that volunteering brings to the volunteer as well as those they support.

How can we attract more diversity when recruiting volunteers?

Having a more diverse volunteer-base brings new perspectives and ideas, as well as providing vital role models for people who might not otherwise see themselves represented. We want our voluntary sector organisations to be reflective of the communities they serve.

Due to the cost-of-living crisis that has followed the pandemic, many people need to work as much as possible and can't afford to volunteer. However, volunteering could be the route to better wellbeing and improved career prospects. Potential volunteers who are receiving benefits have reported [concerns that they'll lose their benefits if they volunteer](#), so working closely with JobCentre Plus to understand the impact of volunteering on specific benefits is important.



Yuliia and her two children came to Devon from Ukraine in June 2022. Now settled into their new life, Yuliia wanted to give something back to thank the Dawlish community for welcoming her family to the area. She set up a chess club at the library where she can share her passion for chess, whilst meeting new people and practising her English.

How can we be more inclusive and accessible for all of our volunteers?

Once we have recruited our volunteers, it's important that we help them feel welcome and that they belong and are safe to share any concerns they might have that could prevent them from continuing to volunteer. The beauty of voluntary roles is that they can be completely tailored to suit the individual's needs, availability, skills and interests. So if someone needs to volunteer in school hours only because they're a single parent, or in short bursts because they have ADHD, those adjustments should usually be possible to provide—so long as the volunteer feels comfortable communicating their needs.

When attending a health and wellbeing fair at [Newton Abbot Library](#), I met a lovely volunteer (who has asked to remain anonymous) who has benefitted from [ReadEasy](#)'s support to help him learn to read. He told me how much volunteering for [Kingscare](#) had turned his life around by giving him his confidence back. It's helped him to feel able to speak up about his needs in his paid employment and feel more understood and valued, enabling him to keep working and supporting his family. His mental health had held him back in the past, but he beamed with pride as he told me that he had recently taken his son to a football match for the first time, despite the noise and crowds that had prevented him from doing this in the past.

Equity and Inclusion (con't)

How has Teignbridge CVS been supporting organisations to become more accessible and inclusive?

Through the [Teignbridge Together Facebook page](#), we have been showing as much diversity as possible in the volunteers featured – young volunteers, single parents, working age, elderly, people with disabilities and so on.

On 17th April, we attended the JobCentre Plus Moving Forward event for people with disabilities to come and learn about how they can improve their wellbeing and work towards finding supportive employment that meets their individual needs.

On 21st May, [Sunrise Diversity](#) ran online training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for CVS organisations. The training helped to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of being more inclusive, and the barriers that can get in the way, as well as providing organisations with practical tools they can now use to make their workplaces more accessible and inclusive.

What's next?

We will continue to work with organisations on their volunteer recruitment and retention plans to help them attract a more diverse range of volunteers and provide them with the support they need—whether that's childcare, interpreters, or other reasonable adjustments.

Definitions

Diversity

Having a mix of people from different backgrounds, including various ages, religions, ways of thinking, and more.

Equity

Making sure everyone gets the support they need to be heard and valued, especially when there are unfair differences in power.

Inclusion

Creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed and respected, and where their ideas are listened to and appreciated.

Belonging

Making sure everyone feels comfortable being themselves and doesn't feel like they have to put on an act to fit in.

“Our sense of belonging can never be greater than our sense of self-acceptance”

Brené Brown

Collaboration

When we collaborate, the results can often be greater than the sum of our parts. We can reach larger audiences, bring together more ideas to create something truly wonderful. However, there is a risk that when voluntary sector organisations are in need of all the volunteers and donations they can get, a scarcity mindset can take over and create a competitive feeling that prevents them from collaborating .

How can we encourage organisations to work together?

Small local organisations know their communities inside out and bring many strengths that a larger organisation might not have. However, the larger organisation likely has resources, such as marketing teams and budgets or bid writers, that enable them to reach a wider audience. By bringing the smaller organisations together, they can share resources and have an even greater impact. When it comes to volunteer recruitment, joint campaigns can help several organisations build on their volunteer base.

Every year in January, Teignmouth Arts Action Group hosts an exhibition featuring local voluntary sector organisations to help them reach more volunteers, clients, and donors. This year, the Teign Heritage Centre recruited two new volunteers from this exhibition.

In April 2024, Jay's AIM ran a first aid workshop for volunteers from The Alice Cross Centre, Healthscape CIC, Volunteering in Health, and the Teign Heritage Centre.

Becky Freshwater loved breastfeeding her daughters, but found it hard too. Having friends around to support her made all the difference, but she knew not everyone had that community. So she and a friend set up Hatchlings Breastfeeding Peer Support Group, with the support of Devon Public Health and Roots Community Enhancement, who helped with training and insurance, and turned a dream into a reality.

How can we better support people who volunteer for several organisations?

Volunteers are usually passionate, kind, community -minded people who care about several causes. Many of them don't just volunteer for one organisation, but several. Balancing different roles, and paperwork or training requirements can be challenging, so sharing training across organisations can be win-win. There's also a role for the Volunteer Co-ordinators to play in supporting these "serial volunteers" to have clear boundaries around their time commitments so that they don't burn themselves out.

Janet Carter lives with disabilities, so volunteering allows her the flexibility to make a positive difference in a way that works for her. Currently she stewards at the annual Teignmouth Folk Festival and is on Kingskerswell Parish Council as well as volunteering in multiple roles for Kerswella Care.

Helping Dawlish was formed by Dawlish Town Council during the pandemic to bring together the various organisations that were supporting the community, like Dawlish Community Transport, The Strand Centre, Dawlish Action for Youth, Exeter Community Energy, and Dawlish Pet Pantry, so that they could all work together and support each other. Following the pandemic, they continued to operate, moving their focus to Ukrainian refugees and host families, and the cost-of-living crisis. Working together like this allows them to have a clearer picture of what's needed and what's available and share their volunteer pool to make the greatest possible impact.

Collaboration (con't)

How has Teignbridge CVS been supporting organisations to work together?

In 2015 [Teignbridge CVS](#), brought together five local healthcare charities ([Dartmouth Caring](#), [Moorland Community Care](#), [Kingscare](#), [Totnes Caring](#), [Volunteering in Health](#)) to form the [Wellbeing Partnership](#). Collaborating gave the organisations a stronger voice and enabled them to apply for (and receive!) healthcare grants that they would not otherwise have been eligible for.

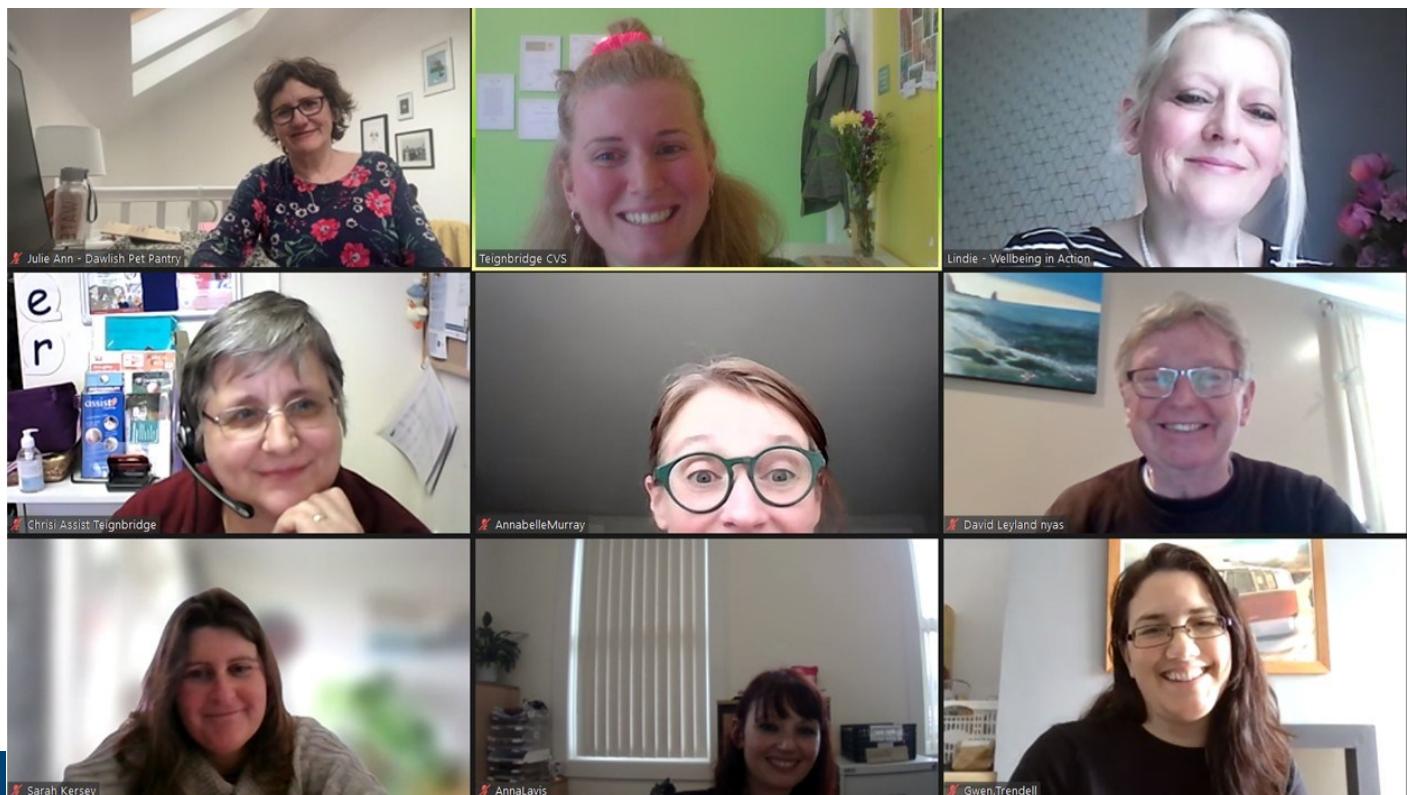
The Volunteer Organisers' Forum (screenshot below) is a regular opportunity for Volunteer Co-ordinators to come together and support each other. The focus of the March forum was linking people together to discuss how they might be able to collaborate and share knowledge and skills going forward. This led to the formation of a [Facebook group](#) for this purpose.

What's next?

In 2025, I aim to work with local organisations to encourage them to get more involved with their communities and voluntary organisations through Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

What is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?

CSR is the business practice of aligning economic goals and operations with environmental and social policies, so that organisations can have a positive impact on society by working ethically and being part of the local community. Many organisations allow their staff a set amount of time to volunteer within their paid working hours—which might be taken in one hit, for example going to paint a community centre or clear a green space, but might also be sharing their expertise by providing a free service as a one-off or as a trustee.



Experimentation

Within the voluntary sector, there is plenty of room for creativity and trying new things. There is generally less bureaucracy than would be found in large organisations, giving more freedom. Whilst being asked to constantly “reinvent the wheel” and by funders, who will only consider applications for innovative new projects, can be one of the biggest bugbears of the voluntary sector, it also encourages creative thinking and problem solving and allows organisations to try something new and risk that it might not work, which a profit-driven organisation might not be able to consider in the same way.

How can we empower organisations to try new things, even when it feels risky?

Voluntary organisations can feel forced into trying new ways of doing things so that they can apply for grants that request this. Getting clearer on the needs and then coming up with their own solutions and ideas, and then seeking funding opportunities that fit those ideas is more empowering—but when grants feel ever-more competitive this is often easier said than done.

Here are some great local “outside the box” ideas:

[Conversation Works](#) run a Memory Café on a steam train each month, travelling through some beautiful countryside from Buckfastleigh to Totnes.

[Dough Bros](#) run a weekly session in Newton Abbot for men to get together and make pizzas which they share around the fire as a way to build connection and boost wellbeing.

[Moor Imagination Collective](#) (below) is a new project in Buckfastleigh, run by Sophie Lovett and James Lucas, who have taken on the large methodist church to turn it into a community hub (right). It's a huge project and renovating the listed building will involve volunteers from across the community. Local people have been involved throughout the project, giving their ideas for how the centre could look and the sorts of services it could offer. As their name suggests, they are open to all sorts of creative and imaginative ideas! The hub is due to open summer 2024.



Experimentation

(con't)

How can we be agile and adaptable so that we are ready for the unexpected?

The pandemic taught us to expect the unexpected. It taught us that we are able to find new ways of working and adapt to them quickly. Who knows what surprises are coming next in terms of future pandemics or environmental disaster?

[Devon Community Resilience Forum](#) supports communities to develop their own community emergency plan, detailing safe places, key community people (for example, who has access to certain key buildings, who drives a 4x4, which people are especially vulnerable). These are used by the community in times of emergency and can be accessed by emergency services so that they can understand the resources available and any potential risks they should know about.

Often the people listed on these plans will be active volunteers in the community as these are the people who know the community inside out—who might need extra support and who can provide it.

Voluntary groups, care organisations or youth groups can also play a valuable role. If your organisation would like to get involved in your local community emergency plan, please contact info@devoncommunities.org.uk.

How will Teignbridge CVS support organisations to be brave and try new things, even if they're not 100% sure they'll work?

Getting clear on your values and purpose (as an organisation, in your specific role, and personally) can make idea generation and decision making much easier. Once you know your core purpose, you can align everything else to it, and if it doesn't fit then you know it's not the right move!

[Simon Sinek's Golden Circle](#) goes into more detail on this idea. Having a clear, central “why” at the core of everything you do will help keep everything in alignment. If what you offer doesn't meet the why, it needs to change! This is a way to sense check all of your services and makes it much easier to market what you offer in a more simple way, rather than listing a host of valuable services that might not immediately make sense as a set!

Try writing your elevator pitch in 1-2 sentences using this model:

- WHY you do what you do
- HOW you do it
- WHAT you're actually offering

What's next?

I will be running an online group session for Volunteer Co-ordinators to work on their values and purpose so that they can sense-check their ideas against them, empowering them to move forward with them confidently—or to let them go if they don't fit within their wider role.

Balance and Boundaries

Volunteer Co-ordinators play such an important role, but it can be a lonely role in which they are stretched in every direction, leading to burnout and turnover of vital staff. With the extra pressure Volunteer Co-ordinators now face when it comes to recruitment and retention, it's more important than ever to empower them to look after their own wellbeing, come up with creative solutions, and ultimately stay in their roles for longer. Often people coming into these roles haven't had prior management experience, in what can be an incredibly challenging leadership role – volunteers can be very part time, they come with their own specific wants and needs in terms of role and availability, and – as one of my friends put it – "it's all carrot and no stick."

How can we recruit the right people into these roles?

Many voluntary organisations wouldn't be able to survive without their volunteers, so the Volunteer Co-ordinator role is vital. Often Volunteer Co-ordinators have volunteered in the past, with the organisation they are working for or elsewhere, and this gives them a valuable understanding of some of the motivators to volunteer as well as the challenges volunteers may face.

Anna took a career break to raise her children. Once they started school, she wanted to return to work. Volunteering at their [Scouts](#) group helped her build up her confidence, and she gained lots of new skills through the training courses she was able to attend. This gave her the confidence to apply for a job with [Volunteering in Health](#), managing their volunteer drivers, which she might not otherwise have felt ready to apply for.

Jo started volunteering at [Shaldon Wildlife Trust](#) in 2019 whilst going through breast cancer treatment as a way to lift her spirits and help her socialise again. When a paid job came up, she went for it and says she's still cheering inside about how lucky she is to work there!

How can we support our Volunteer Organisers so that they enjoy their work and have a good work-life balance?

The Volunteer Co-ordinator role can be incredibly challenging. Volunteers expect to be able to speak to someone when they need support in their role (or at least, the co-ordinator may believe this), but most Volunteer Co-ordinator roles are part time so this isn't always possible.

Having clear boundaries is essential in maintaining a healthy balance, and this can be especially important if a Volunteer Co-ordinator is also a volunteer within their organisation. Within small voluntary organisations, everyone works as a team and pitches in wherever they're needed, but having clear role descriptions and communicating them with the wider team can be a really useful way to help people work within their boundaries.

Within an organisation, there may only be one person responsible for volunteers, making it a lonely role, so reaching out to other Volunteer Co-ordinators can help build a community of people who understand the pressures and challenges of the role and can support each other. The Volunteer Organisers' Forum and new Facebook group are a central place for Volunteer Co-ordinators to connect and build these relationships.

Balance and Boundaries

How has Teignbridge CVS been supporting organisations to empower their Volunteer Co-ordinators and prevent overwhelm?

Teignbridge CVS runs a learning programme for voluntary sector staff and volunteers, including Volunteers and the Law; Managing Volunteers;; Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

What's next?

A programme of regular sessions aimed specifically at people who are responsible for recruiting, supporting, and celebrating volunteers, including co-working, group coaching, 1:1 coaching, and learning sessions.



Summary

Teignbridge has a thriving voluntary sector, despite the increased need of communities and the reduced number of volunteers. There is plenty to celebrate in the Teignbridge voluntary sector, and it is aligned with the Vision for Volunteering on the whole, though there is of course always room to keep improving and developing what we do to better meet the needs of our community.

Awareness and Appreciation

On the whole, volunteers feel appreciated and valued for what they do. As [Teignbridge Together](#) grows, and with our planned awards ceremony this autumn, we hope to raise awareness of what volunteers do and what volunteering is really like, through celebrating those who are already actively involved in their communities.

Power

Many voluntary organisations are started by individuals who have gone from feeling powerless and struggling to feeling empowered to make a difference and be the change they want to see. Working with boards of trustees to help them become more inclusive and empower people who might not feel experienced enough will help organisations to develop to meet the changing needs of their community.

Equity and Inclusion

Volunteer roles are by nature flexible and adaptable to suit the needs and desires of the volunteer, so volunteering is generally accessible and inclusive. However, more can still be done around recruitment to attract a more diverse range of volunteers who can gain the benefits of volunteering and have their voices heard.

Collaboration

Voluntary organisations appear to be collaborating more than ever with joint projects and funding bids, as they see that together they can be greater than the sum of their parts. It can take time to build strong, trusting relationships, but it is a great investment that will benefit all the organisations involved, and most importantly will benefit their communities too.

Experimentation

Whilst there is a lot less bureaucracy in the voluntary sector and a lot more room for creativity and risk-taking, there can still be a hesitance to try new things. We ask ourselves, what if it doesn't work out and that money people raised goes to waste? What if we don't succeed and the funder decides not to renew their grant? But what if we asked instead, how can we make sure this will work? What if everything goes completely to plan?

Balance and Boundaries

Volunteer Co-ordinators can face a huge amount of pressure and overwhelm as they work to support the needs of the community as well as the needs of individual volunteers. Having a clear job description and boundaries is vital to avoid burnout. The new [Facebook group](#) offers a space for Volunteer Co-ordinators to connect and support each other.



Next Steps

Volunteer Awards

Teignbridge CVS will be hosting an awards ceremony in November 2024. See page 21 for more information.

Coastal Connecting

The Coastal Primary Care Network is running a Coastal Connecting scheme, based on a successful project run in Frome, Somerset. This is designed to raise awareness of the services that are available in the area through a free one off training session for bar staff, hairdressers, taxi drivers, carers and others who come into contact with lots of people. It is hoped that this will extend into the rest of Teignbridge.

Teignbridge Together

I will continue to share volunteer stories on the [Teignbridge Together Facebook page](#), to build the profile of volunteering and raise awareness of the [Teignbridge Together](#) resource, where organisations can promote local voluntary opportunities and events for free.

Volunteer Co-ordinator Support

Teignbridge CVS already runs a learning programme that includes a Managing Volunteers accredited course, and other learning sessions such as Volunteers and the Law and Compelling Case Studies.

Going forward, I will be creating a regular programme for Volunteer Co-ordinators to come together for working, group coaching, and learning sessions based on the themes identified in this report. If you're responsible for recruiting and retaining volunteers in Teignbridge, please come and join our [Facebook group](#) to stay up-to-date with this and be part of a peer support group.



Volunteer Awards

As this report shows, Teignbridge has a thriving voluntary sector. We want to celebrate and thank all the people who give their time to the community through an awards ceremony this November.

We want to encourage as many nominations as possible from across the community, so if a volunteer or local organisation has had a positive impact on your life, we want to hear about it!

Maybe it's the sports coach who gave your child their confidence back; or the kind volunteer who sat with you so patiently when you were anxious about your hospital appointment; or the befriender who comes to see you every week and always makes you smile; or your neighbour who helps keep the street tidy by doing litter picks and weeding.

Whoever has helped brighten your days, you can bet they've done the same for others too! We want to show these people our appreciation, because they make Teignbridge such a special place for everyone.

Theme	Volunteer	Organisation
Awareness and Appreciation	Someone who has raised the profile of volunteering	An organisation that effectively shows its gratitude of volunteers
Power	Someone who has bravely stepped up and made a difference	An organisation that empowers its volunteers
Equity and Inclusion	Someone who helps everyone feel welcome, no matter who they are	An organisation that builds a strong sense of belonging and community
Collaboration	Someone who has brought people and organisations together	An organisation that is always happy to share their ideas and resources
Experimentation	Someone who is great at finding innovative solutions to problems	An organisation that is doing something new and different

If you'd like to nominate someone, please email chloe@teigncvs.org.uk to say:

- ◆ The name of the volunteer/organisation
- ◆ Your relationship to them
- ◆ Which category you'd like to nominate them for
- ◆ How they have made an impact on you/others/ the environment
- ◆ Why should we choose your nominee?
- ◆ If possible, please also send a photograph of your nominee in action and their contact details

Could your business sponsor an award for £200?

- ◆ Help with shortlisting for your chosen award
- ◆ Present the award on the night (optional)
- ◆ Inclusion in awards programme
- ◆ Thank you post on our social media

Email chloe@teigncvs.org.uk to find out more.

Thank you

Thank you so much to every single volunteer and organisation that gave me their time and story for this report and/or the Teignbridge Together Facebook page. It has been such a heartwarming experience to meet you all and gain such a deep insight into some of the issues in our local community as well as the beautiful solutions that you have found to address them. We are all suffering the effects and ongoing fears of the pandemic, cost of living crisis, wars, and environmental crisis, but every single one of you is a beacon of hope that communities can pull together and help ourselves and each other. Thank you!

Action for Climate in Teignbridge	Kingskerwell Parish Council	Sage Green CIC
Alice Cross Centre	Kingscare	Shaldon Wildlife Trust
Assist Teignbridge	Living Options Devon	SisterWood
Bank Youth Project	LoveFood CIC	Sunrise Diversity
Conversation Works	Mixed Families Together	Teign Heritage Centre
Dawlish Coastguard	Moor Imagination Collective	TeignAid
Dawlish Community Transport	Moorland Community Caring	Teignbridge District Council
Dawlish Pet Pantry	National Youth Advisory Service	Teignmouth Arts Action Group
Dawlish Town Council	Newton Abbot CIC	Teignmouth in Bloom
Devon Association of Local Councils	Newton Abbot Community Shed	Teignmouth Promenade Parkrun
Guerilla Gardeners	No Limits Café	Teignmouth Town Council
Hatchlings Feeding Support	NHS Devon	Templer Way Pain Café
Helping Dawlish	Our Pavilion Café	THAT Foodbank
Homeless in Teignbridge Support	Phoenix Rising	TRAIL
Jay's AIM	ReadEasy	Volunteering in Health
Kerswella Care	Roots Community Enhancement	Wellbeing In Action

Huge apologies to anyone missed from this list—I have spoken to so many amazing organisations in compiling this report!

We'd love to know if you've found this report helpful in any way.

Please email:
chloe@teigncv.org.uk
with your questions or comments.





ALL WELCOME
FOR FREE!

YOUR NEW ONLINE COMMUNITY HUB

Teignbridge Together

DEVONCONNECT.ORG/TEIGNBRIDGE

VIEW LOCAL LISTINGS
+ EVENTS

FIND VOLUNTEERING
OPPORTUNITIES

CONNECT TO YOUR
COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Who are your stars of Teignbridge?

Help us celebrate some of the people that make the Teignbridge community what it is at our awards ceremony in November 2024.

Email chloe@teigncv.org.uk

to nominate someone; sponsor an award; or buy a ticket for the event

