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# Welcome and opening remarks

Diana welcomed attendees to the first meeting focused entirely on the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. She highlighted the goal of fostering sharing, discussion, and collaboration within the sector.

Diana confirmed there were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

# Actions

* Transport Mapping: Nikki Flynn to share findings from the community transport mapping project in future meetings.
* Collaboration on Training Resources: Assembly to consider consolidating a list of training and support providers across Devon.
* Stroke Support Update: Jo Garbett to return with updates on Stroke Association’s plans for Devon services.
* Building Collaboration: Ruth Wells to explore shared building opportunities with interested parties.

# Presentations

## Citizens Advice – Sue Julyan

* Overview: Sue outlined the role of Citizens Advice Devon and its seven local branches, providing myth-busting information about their structure, funding, and work.
* Key Points:
  + Citizens Advice is a federation of independent charities and not centrally funded by the government.
  + Services include free, confidential advice on a wide range of issues and campaigning to influence policy.
  + Current challenges include funding cuts from Exeter City Council, leading to potential service reductions.
* Statistics:
  + Over 8,000 clients supported in the last quarter, with issues ranging from benefits to housing.
  + Income maximised for clients: over £5 million in the last quarter.
* Discussion:
  + Queries on charging for services; Sue confirmed Citizens Advice’s ethos prevents this.
  + Concerns about local funding and collaboration opportunities.

## East Devon VCSE Support Project – Hannah Reynolds

* Overview: The project supports VCSE organisations in East Devon, focusing on capacity building, resilience, and connectivity.
* Key Points:
  + Engaged with 25% of the 1,000 VCSE organisations in East Devon.
  + Support includes training, funding guidance, and volunteer management.
  + Growing interest in social enterprise registration among organisations.
* Achievements:
  + Exceeded targets for organisation engagement, training participation, and funding support.
  + Delivered training on smartphone video editing for grant applications.
* Future plans:
  + Expand peer support and networking.
  + Strengthen partnerships with health and community stakeholders.
* Discussion:
  + Suggestions for business training and collaboration with other networks.
  + Confirmation that support is available to organisations based in or operating within East Devon.

## Headway Devon – Ruth Wells

* Overview: Headway Devon supports individuals with brain injuries, offering group activities, peer support, and advocacy.
* Key Points:
  + Brain injury is more common than perceived, with significant hidden disabilities.
  + Services include social care, peer support, and hospital discharge assistance.
* Challenges:
  + Lack of accessible transport and long social care assessment wait times.
  + Stigma and barriers to securing necessary benefits and support.
* Call for Collaboration:
  + Seeking shared building space in Exeter.
  + Advocating for improved hospital discharge processes and more accessible transport.

# Discussions

## Accessible Transport

* A recurring issue raised by multiple attendees, including Ruth Wells and Caroline Aird, was the lack of wheelchair-accessible transport in Devon.
* Nikki Flynn shared an ongoing mapping project on community transport providers under the Eastern Local Care Partnership.
* Megan Kenneally-Stone from Living Options expressed willingness to collaborate on addressing transport challenges.

## Collaborative opportunities

* Hannah Reynolds emphasised the value of peer mentoring and training for VCSE organisations.
* Discussion on creating a shared database of VCSE training and support services to streamline access.

## Strategic influence

* Ruth Wells shared updates on Devon Integrated Social Care Alliance’s work to improve hospital discharge and social care commissioning processes.
* Jo Garbett from the Stroke Association outlined plans to explore new service models for stroke support in Devon.

# Closing Remarks

* Diana thanked all presenters for their insightful contributions and attendees for their engagement.
* She encouraged attendees to share feedback on the meeting structure and suggest future topics for discussion.
* Meeting adjourned at 12:30 PM.