East Devon District Council

Voluntary, community and social enterprise support

July / August 2021

Background

East Devon has a vibrant and diverse Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector that provides a wide range of services, activities and support to residents in the district. The Council and its partners also have a long-standing commitment to encouraging the local VCSE groups, including capacity building and partnership working.

We witnessed an impressive effort by these groups during the pandemic and they clearly demonstrated the value of their work in communities.

Every area of Devon currently has a Council for Voluntary Service, with the exception of East Devon. There are some issues with this lack of provision, which became more evident during the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, when both existing and new voluntary and community groups came under pressure and struggled to find support. A temporary support arrangement was commissioned by Devon County Council to provide basic guidance and advice (via WestBank), but this was limited and this contract has now ended.

It's recognised that our community and voluntary groups would benefit from support enabling VCSE groups of all shapes and sizes to focus on what they do best, by helping them in ways that they want.

A commissioning brief or service specification is required to clarify the range of support and advice that voluntary, community and social enterprise groups in East Devon want and need. As a starter for this we drafted a discussion document and questionnaire to gather in the thoughts of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. This was a discussion document, at the very initial stage, everything in it was up for discussion. This was distributed to East Devon's voluntary, community and social enterprise groups along with a questionnaire. 28 groups responded.

To see the discussion document they were commenting on: https://eastdevon.gov.uk/community-engagement/voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-sector-support-consultation/

Summary

- The majority of respondents were charities and unincorporated organisations.

A - Vision

- 89% of respondents agreed with the proposed vision, 7% disagreed.
- Suggestions for adding to / changing the vision include:
  - Being more involved in decision-making bodies.
  - Explanation of how it fits with the new East Devon Community Network Coordinator role.
  - More about VCSE groups networking / working together.
  - Needs clear succinct goals.

B - Benefits

- 96% agreed with the listed benefits proposed, none disagreed.
- 5 respondents gave different suggestions for improving the list of benefits including; to reduce competition between voluntary, community and social enterprise groups / brokering partnerships between them.

C – Partnership approach

- 100% of respondents agreed with the partnership approach proposed.
- 100% respondents agreed with us working with the VCSE sector to develop the role and outcomes for this support.
- 17 respondents said they would want to be involved in developing the role and outcomes for a voluntary, community and social enterprise sector support service within East Devon.

D – A proposal for what this support could look like

- 92% agreed with our proposal for what the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector support could initially look like, none disagreed.
- 7 respondents gave different suggestions for improving our proposal for what the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector support could initially look like.

E – Common requests for particular support

Support	Percentage of respondents that say this would be very / fairly helpful
A helpline and email address where you can send a wide variety of requests for support.	96
Provision of networking opportunities. Events / spaces where VCSE organisations can get together and communicate, building relationships between and with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies. This would include a cohesive approach (possibly digital) to enable communication within the VCSE sector, sharing expertise and best practice.	93
Support and guidance around accessing funding, finding and applying for it, including help to find longer term funding and finding funding for core costs, not just for projects, so you can plan for the future.	90
Advice and guidance on building resilience and sustainability within VCSE groups, volunteers and coordinators.	89
Advice, guidance and support around recruiting, managing and supporting volunteers.	86
Advice and guidance on publicity, and how to reach your target audience.	85
Advice and guidance around legal requirements, for example equalities legislation, safeguarding and data protection.	81
Provide or signpost to training for volunteers and coordinators, including awareness training of relevant aspects such as dementia for volunteers and coordinators.	79
Help to reach those who are most isolated and disengaged, including guidance on how to encourage people who need help from the VCSE sector to come forward. How to engage with residents inbetween towns and villages who aren't sure where to get help.	75
Advice and guidance on digital services and IT support for the VCSE organisation itself and the people you are helping. This would include support with helping communities become more digitally included, so more people can access online services.	72
Signposting VCSE groups to other guidance and support, and establishing pathways for onward referral of residents where necessary.	69
Support with applying for contracts and commissions.	59
Advice and guidance on whether and how to set up as a Community Interest Company, charity etc.	53

- 7 respondents each added other, different things they would want a Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) support organisation to do.

Full Results

East Devon's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector groups were asked to have their say on our discussion document before 8 September 2021. They could do this by filling on a questionnaire, with paper copies and copies in other formats available on request.

To advertise the consultation:

- Press releases were sent out.
- Our social media accounts were used.
- Registered charities and registered social enterprises from within East Devon were sent an email.
- Town and parish councils, and East Devon District Councillors received the information and were asked to pass it on.

28 voluntary, community and social enterprise groups responded.

About you

1. **Does your not for private profit group mainly operate to benefit residents, communities and / or other groups within East Devon?**

All 28 respondents answered yes to this question.

## 2. Please tell us what type of not for private profit organisation you are:

All 28 respondents answered this question.

Type of not for profit organisation	Number of respondents
Charitable Incorporated Organisation - registered with and reporting to the Charities Commission.	12
Charitable Trust - with a trust deed these are organisations run by a small group of trustees. Will be registered with the Charities Commission if income is over £5,000 a year.	2
Charitable Company - registered with and reporting to the Charities Commission and Companies House.	1
Community Interest Company - registered with and reporting to Companies House. CICs commit their assets and profits permanently to the community by means of an "asset lock".	0
Company Limited by Guarantee - registered with Companies House, with a Memorandum and Articles of Association. Any / all profits are re-invested back into the company.	1
Unincorporated Association - unregistered but has a written constitution setting out the rules of how it will be run. It can be whatever its members want it to be, and carry out whatever activity the members choose. It is the easiest, quickest and cheapest way for a group to set itself up.	6
Community Benefit Society - owned by its members, who hold shares and control the society democratically. The society must exist primarily for the benefit of the wider community.	0
A not for profit organisation with no legal structure and no written rules for how the group will be run / what its aims are (no constitution).	0
Other	6

3. Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed vision?

28 respondents answered this question.
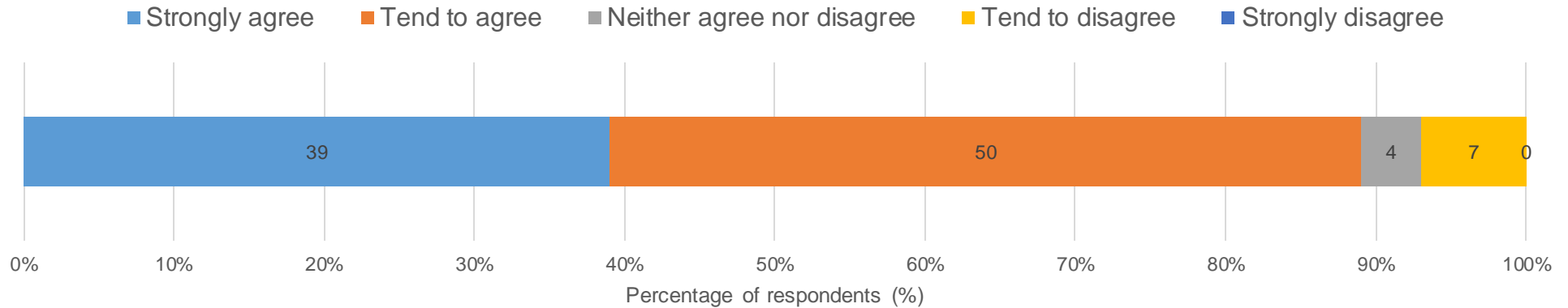
If you disagree, please tell us how you would improve it:

One person that disagreed said how they would improve it:

- Any over seeing body could be better accepted by grass roots organisations if it provided a service. One which would help small groups like ours would be an umbrella DBS checking service, similar to the one provide by Thirtyone eight (previously CCPAS).

4. Please tell us about anything you have not already mentioned that you would add to, change or remove from the proposed vision to improve it?

14 respondents commented:

- As part of the XXXX, we have received funding for a part time VCSE coordinator to work with the voluntary groups based in the WEB area and the WAKLEY area. The job description is currently being advertised.
- I love this vision, one thought i have is something around a need for community groups to work together to provide a holistic approach to supporting the communities, the more we can be a network of people who genuinely stand alongside each other the better, and support
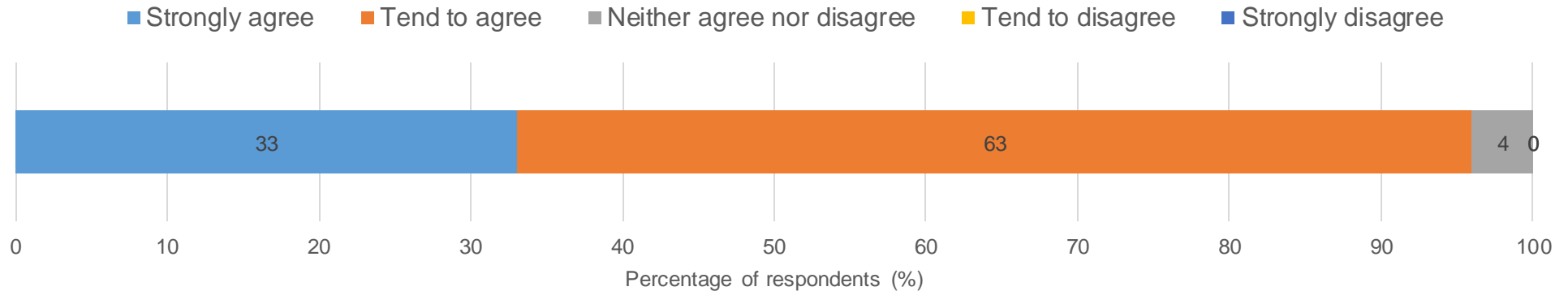
each other, complimenting the other groups the better in my opinion. This has been put in the Benefits section of the proposal, however for me this needs to be a clear vision from the start to make it a reality.

- - I would like to see it more explicit that the support should be "universal" ie: all VCEs can access all services equally, rather than, as can sometimes happen, it becoming additional support for those with the highest profile/ in certain sectors/ areas
- I feel the shared spaces in churches are not mentioned and may be crucial, for instance we operate our groups in these spaces and many churches operate support programmes in Exmouth. I.E Brixington Family Support.
- How to improve infrastructure and support to do so. Advice only goes so far, active working groups to help identify and provide facilities. Facilities, and funding to develop them, are the main barriers limiting participation, resulting in waiting lists as demand is so high
- We need support for our group as I am seeing a lot of mums with babies born in lockdown who have had no face to face support.
- How does this correlate with the new VCSE Role that's recently been advertised and being interviewed for?
- 6 monthly meetings with relevant portfolio holder. Lunch get together for networking.
- Look at more social prescribing affected by poor mental health
- Very comprehensive - is it too extensive ?? Clear succinct goals are easier to plan
- As long as clear remit, rather than just a 'signposting' or 'layer of bureaucracy '
- What we would be seeking would be some funding or volunteering support to help provide grants and activities provided they fell within the charitable objectives mentioned before.
- I think it's important to not have a one-size-fits-all approach. The VCSE sector is very diverse, ranging from small grassroots groups with very little overheads to larger, complex charities that have complex infrastructures and overheads to cover.
- The Voluntary and Community Sector needs to be granted formal representation on decision-making bodies.

B - Benefits

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed list of benefits?

27 respondents answered this question.

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Tend to agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Tend to disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree
33	63	4 0

Percentage of respondents (%)

If you disagree, please tell us how you would improve it:

As no one disagreed, there are no comments from those that disagreed.

6. Please tell us about anything you haven't already mentioned that you would add to, change or remove from the proposed list of benefits:

5 respondents commented:

- The main benefit for all voluntary groups would be access to funding. Funding is the lifeblood of every organisation.
- Ideally, there would be reduced competition between VCSOs, and so increase the efficiency of the sector
- Again too extensive
- A collective presence at social care level
- We would like to see the VCSE support that is set up acting as an umbrella organisation advising small groups and individuals on how to set up as a group, avoiding any potential local duplication. We also see the benefit of such an organisation in brokering partnership opportunities with other established groups.

C – Partnership approach

7. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal of a partnership approach?

All 27 respondents agreed with a partnership approach.

If you disagree, please tell us why:

As no one disagreed, there are no comments from those that disagreed.

8. We would want to work with representatives of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to develop the role and outcomes for a VCSE support service within East Devon. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

All 26 respondents agreed with us working with the VCSE sector to develop the role and outcomes for this support.

If you disagree, please tell us why, and how you would improve it?

As no one disagreed, there are no comments from those that disagreed.

9. Would you want to sign up to be involved in developing the role and outcomes for a voluntary, community and social enterprise sector support service within East Devon?

17 respondents stated that they would like to be involved, and left their contact details.

D – A proposal for what this support could look like

10. **We propose that the voluntary, community and social enterprise support service in East Devon would initially:**

- provide the grassroots level support the VCSE sector ask for (to be decided by the VCSE sector) to a variety of groups throughout the whole of East Devon, such as groups focused on wellbeing, health, sports, social isolation, community transport, children and young people, older people, heritage, arts & culture.
- provide other support the VCSE sector ask for, which could include things like representing East Devon's VCSE sector on the regional and national stage.
- work with the district's Coronavirus community support groups, to see if these can be developed to provide resilience and community support longer term.
- develop user friendly resources that list VCSE groups and what they can provide to East Devon's communities. Accessible to all and regularly updated. Identify & help to address any gaps in support.
- help secure future funding for this support service.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

27 respondents answered this question.
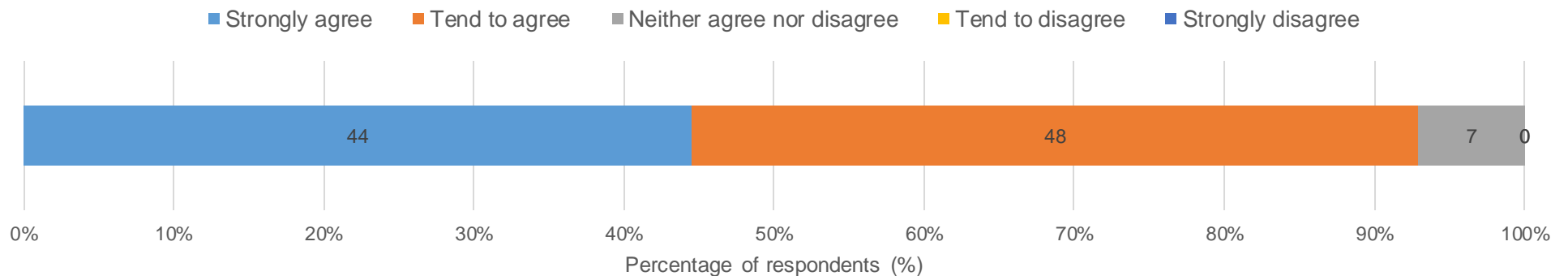
If you disagree, please tell us how you would improve it:

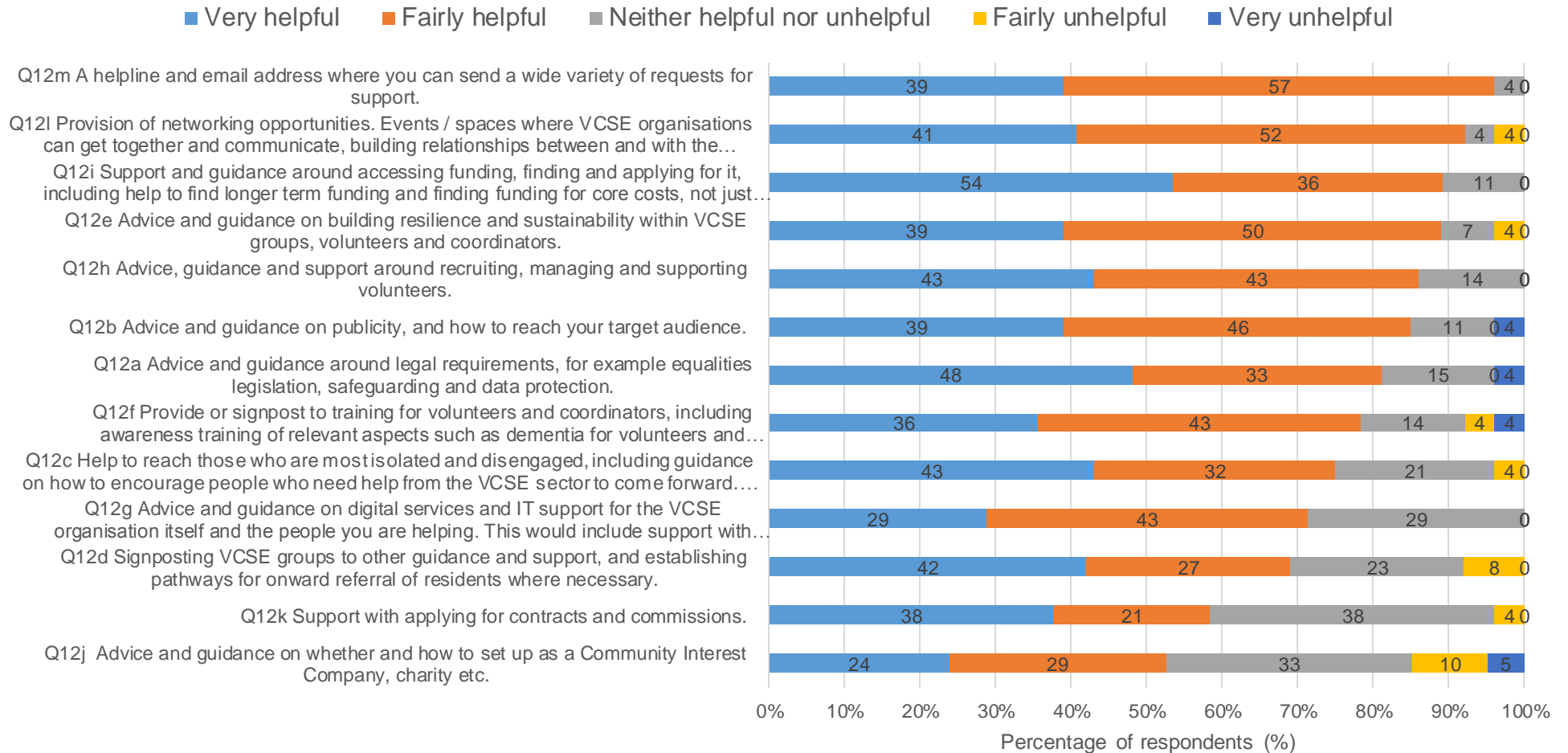As no one disagreed, there are no comments from those that disagreed.

11. Please tell us about anything you have not already mentioned that you would add to, change or remove from the list in question 10 to improve it?

7 respondents commented:

- I would be concerned if asked to provide support as a small organisation with a Christian ethos we have limited resources.
- Support for easy to access funding is vital for all community groups
- Increased opportunities for training
- Is there a sub group or separate department of East Devon Council which researches, identifies and prioritises the needs of the East Devon residents/communities?
- Over all the concepts/aims/outcome seem to met the gap and would reduce repetitiveness of task in many areas. However, I consider is important we do not dismiss the outcomes from COVID response. Where some contracts were given where there was no 'seen' on the ground level benefits in some areas.
- The VCSE support service will need to have an early and proactive Communication strategy to ensure that the wider community understands the aims and potential benefits of having such a centralised umbrella service. This will help to reduce any unnecessary concerns from established community groups of such a service interfering with their work/activities. Engage with community groups to ensure there is a clear understanding that the VCSE support service will act as an equal partner with community groups citing examples of ways that EDDC have already worked collaboratively with groups in this space e.g. EDDC COVID response and support
- We suggest that the Support includes provision of a secretariat, a joint approach for insurance, and a formal role in EDDC decision-making

E – Common requests for particular support

12. **For each of the following proposed functions of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector support, please tell us how useful your organisation would find them:** The results are shown below, starting with the function that respondents would find most helpful at the top.

■ Very helpful ■ Fairly helpful ■ Neither helpful nor unhelpful ■ Fairly unhelpful ■ Very unhelpful

Function	Very helpful	Fairly helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Fairly unhelpful	Very unhelpful
Q12m A helpline and email address where you can send a wide variety of requests for support.	39	57	4		0
Q12l Provision of networking opportunities. Events / spaces where VCSE organisations can get together and communicate, building relationships between and with the…	41	52	4	4	0
Q12i Support and guidance around accessing funding, finding and applying for it, including help to find longer term funding and finding funding for core costs, not just…	54	36	11		0
Q12e Advice and guidance on building resilience and sustainability within VCSE groups, volunteers and coordinators.	39	50	7	4	0
Q12h Advice, guidance and support around recruiting, managing and supporting volunteers.	43	43	14		0
Q12b Advice and guidance on publicity, and how to reach your target audience.	39	46	11	0	4
Q12a Advice and guidance around legal requirements, for example equalities legislation, safeguarding and data protection.	48	33	15	0	4
Q12f Provide or signpost to training for volunteers and coordinators, including awareness training of relevant aspects such as dementia for volunteers and…	36	43	14	4	4
Q12c Help to reach those who are most isolated and disengaged, including guidance on how to encourage people who need help from the VCSE sector to come forward.…	43	32	21	4	0
Q12g Advice and guidance on digital services and IT support for the VCSE organisation itself and the people you are helping. This would include support with…	29	43	29		0
Q12d Signposting VCSE groups to other guidance and support, and establishing pathways for onward referral of residents where necessary.	42	27	23	8	0
Q12k Support with applying for contracts and commissions.	38	21	38	4	0
Q12j Advice and guidance on whether and how to set up as a Community Interest Company, charity etc.	24	29	33	10	5

Percentage of respondents (%)

Full wording of each question:

- Q12j Advice and guidance on whether and how to set up as a Community Interest Company, charity etc.
- Q12k Support with applying for contracts and commissions.
- Q12d Signposting VCSE groups to other guidance and support, and establishing pathways for onward referral of residents where necessary.
- Q12g Advice and guidance on digital services and IT support for the VCSE organisation itself and the people you are helping. This would include support with helping communities become more digitally included, so more people can access online services.
- Q12c Help to reach those who are most isolated and disengaged, including guidance on how to encourage people who need help from the VCSE sector to come forward. How to engage with residents inbetween towns and villages who aren't sure where to get help.
- Q12f Provide or signpost to training for volunteers and coordinators, including awareness training of relevant aspects such as dementia for volunteers and coordinators.
- Q12a Advice and guidance around legal requirements, for example equalities legislation, safeguarding and data protection.
- Q12b Advice and guidance on publicity, and how to reach your target audience.
- Q12h Advice, guidance and support around recruiting, managing and supporting volunteers.
- Q12e Advice and guidance on building resilience and sustainability within VCSE groups, volunteers and coordinators.
- Q12i Support and guidance around accessing funding, finding and applying for it, including help to find longer term funding and finding funding for core costs, not just for projects, so you can plan for the future.
- Q12l Provision of networking opportunities. Events / spaces where VCSE organisations can get together and communicate, building relationships between and with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies. This would include a cohesive approach (possibly digital) to enable communication within the VCSE sector, sharing expertise and best practice.
- Q12m A helpline and email address where you can send a wide variety of requests for support.

13. **Are there any other things you would want a Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) support organisation to do, or offer, that haven't already been mentioned?**

25% of the 28 respondents answered yes to this question.

If yes, please tell us what other things you would want them to do, or offer:

7 respondents commented:

- Not just to provide advice and guidance - arguably that is already available in various places online eg NCVO - but actual training sessions/courses held in East Devon. We usually have to travel long distances for good quality training.
- Provide a useful service DBS checks reduced fee parking tickets for workers having to use cars
- Encouragement to keep going
- Support to identify and fund facilities - severely lacking currently and on approaching EDDC no support was offered
- Direct support with funding bids and opportunities to facilitate partnerships with other organisations
- Provide specialist advice to different VCSE sectors enabling them to access expert knowledge held within EDDC and other partner organisations e.g Health and Safety, access to community profile data, employment law Provide a vehicle through which the work of VCSE organisations and volunteers can be celebrated and disseminated
- We suggest that the Support includes provision of a secretariat, a joint approach for insurance, and play a formal role in EDDC decision-making

14. Do you have any other comments? If so please state below:

10 respondents commented:

- What we need is a focused VCSE support and linked to the new Local Care Partnership and Integrated Care System. We need everything to be 'joined up' and not be two or three different approaches. Communication is key to this.
- At XXXX we are endeavouring to work collaboratively with our community and have set up an information centre in the town. The vision for this centre is that community members can come in for any wellbeing advice, whether they are patients of ours or not. If we are not specifically able to help, then we signpost them on to the relevant organisation who can help. such as The Memory cafe/ Sid Valley Help/ Sidmouth Voluntary services. We are already striving towards some of the ideas that you set out in your discussion document.
- Thank you for co-ordinating this
- Please try to avoid over committing .....Less can be more in the end.
- XXXX an advisor, as Teignbridge works effectively
- Thank you for this idea.
- As a wildlife conservation body using science, not sure if we can be of help in your project.

- Only as mentioned, build on the community positives over last 20 months. Would be great to be 'on par' with other areas as long as its real term support lead from ground up.
- Any commissioned VCSE support service will need to have a clear understanding of the very different community profiles of the towns and villages across East Devon. Post COVID the support service will need to have a clear focus on rebuilding many of the local community links and clubs that have been broken (e.g. lunch clubs, informal social clubs and activities)
- Over the last few years, it seems that a lot of time/funding has been spent on 'mapping', 'needs assessment' etc. which then doesn't necessarily result in any extra support for the organisations who are already working very hard delivering services on the ground. It would be great if any future support from EDDC could focus on the long-term support of VCSE service delivery through funding/commissioning opportunities, in particular core funding, as well as infrastructure support, training etc.