

AI-generated overview of Community Conversations - Eastern Devon March 25

Community Insights: Health, Wellbeing & Inequalities

This summary provides a holistic overview of what matters most to residents across Eastern and Mid Devon communities—and what's getting in the way.

1. Strong Community Roots and Social Networks

- Residents deeply value the sense of belonging, mutual support, and close-knit community life.
- Social and informal support systems—friends, neighbours, church, and community groups—play a vital role in wellbeing.
- Events, clubs, and volunteer opportunities reduce loneliness and build resilience, particularly for carers and older adults.

2. Nature and the Rural Environment as a Health Asset

- The natural surroundings (moors, green space, coast, countryside) were repeatedly mentioned as important for physical and mental wellbeing.
- Walking—alone, with others, or in organised groups—is a key wellbeing activity across age groups.

3. Barriers to Participation and Support

- Transport is the most consistent and critical barrier to health, social connection, and independence—especially in rural and isolated communities. One bus a week or no evening/weekend options is common.
- Digital exclusion prevents many from accessing appointments, services, or information.
- Lack of accessible exercise, particularly for people with limited mobility, older adults, or chronic conditions, limits participation.
- Carers face burnout and struggle to access respite, transport, and support services.

4. Healthcare Access and Continuity of Care

- People value local GP surgeries, but there are frustrations around long waits, impersonal systems (automated calls), and not seeing the same doctor.
- Closure of local hospitals, outreach services, and NHS dentists has significantly impacted access and confidence in care.
- There's demand for outreach clinics, pop-up services, and increased local provision to reduce travel and digital dependence.

5. Inclusion and Accessibility Challenges

- Poor pavements, lack of drop kerbs, inaccessible buses, and poorly designed community buildings make access harder for those with disabilities or limited mobility.
- Many respondents reported mental health pressures, isolation, and the need for low-threshold social opportunities and someone to accompany them to new groups.

6. What the Community Wants

- Better, more regular public and community transport
- Expanded, inclusive social activities, including day-time and low-impact options
- Improved communication, with non-digital information routes (noticeboards, libraries)
- Greater continuity in care, especially for older adults and those with long-term conditions
- Affordable exercise and wellbeing activities (e.g. pilates, seated yoga)
- More joined-up working between health, care, community, and voluntary organisations