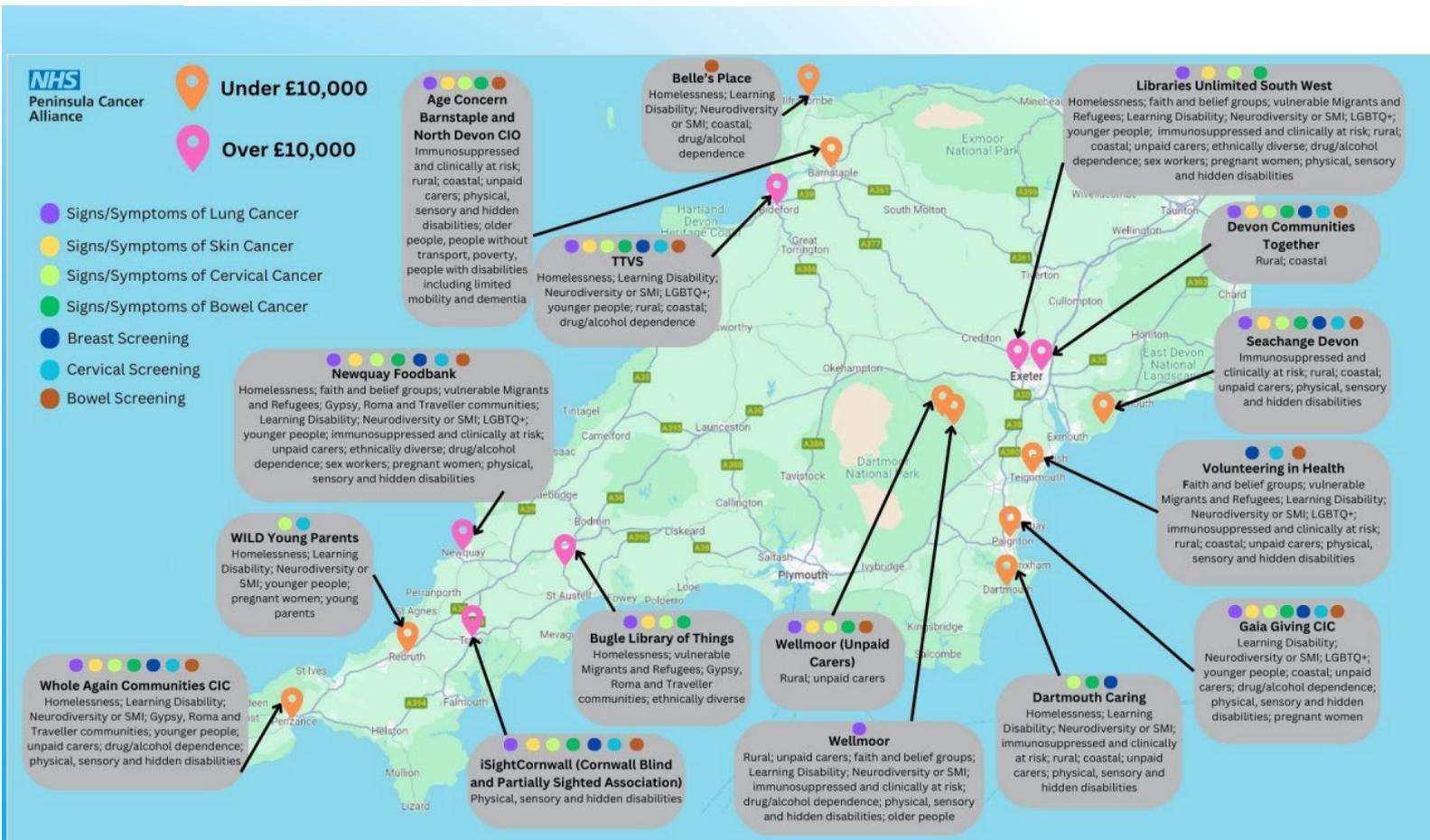


# PCA Cancer Community Grant Fund Year One

Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly



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## Executive Summary

This report covers the approach and impact of the Cancer Community Outreach Fund for Devon and Cornwall over 2024/25. This fund was awarded by the Peninsula Cancer Alliance (PCA) with the assistance of the Voluntary and Community Sector Enterprise (VCSE) Partnership Manager at Devon ICB and the Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF) Cornwall.

Projects were designed and delivered by local VCSE organisations, working with NHS partners and cancer charities to reach communities facing inequalities and low engagement with healthcare. Using trusted partners, the programme aimed to raise cancer awareness and increase screening uptake among people often missed by standard NHS communications.

This work was designed as a new approach to working with and learning from our VCSE colleagues. By using trusted partners, we wanted to reach people who are often missed so that we could spread awareness of cancer and increase cancer screening uptake.

## Achievement and Impact

Our Cancer Community Outreach Fund reached **16** different organisations and their projects across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The below graphic showcases the different types of communities these groups support and how many of them were reached by the fund. The numbers reached in these projects were not always large but that is because the work was targeted at our most vulnerable and at-risk populations. These projects ran for 6-10 months.

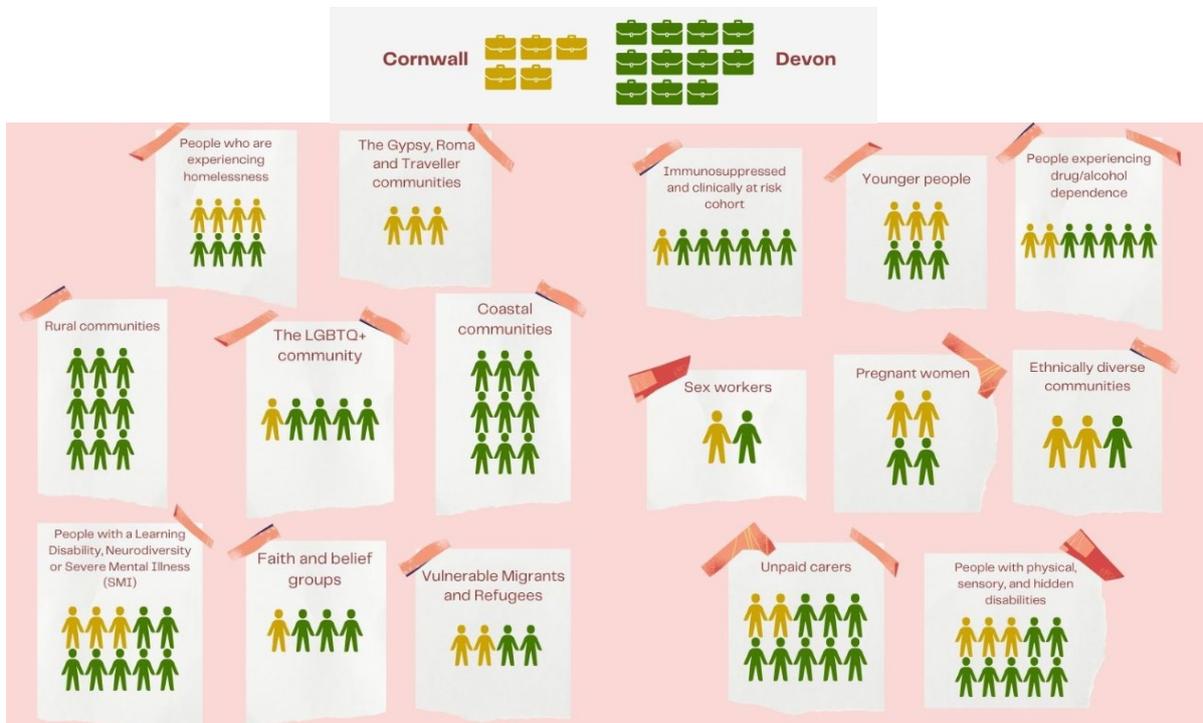


Figure 1 Identified Groups that the Cancer Outreach Fund Supported in Year One.

### Highlighted Achievements:

1. Community groups such as Seachange, Volunteering InHealth and Age UK offered transportation to **26** people to attend a cancer appointment. They offered advice and support to individuals who needed help leaving their home, attending the hospital and returning home from the appointment.
2. WILD reached **81** new young mothers in Cornwall educating them about their bodies and the importance of attending Cervical Screening. They also offered HPV vaccine education to parents .
3. Belles Place offered **22** clinical GP appointments within the charity space to those experiencing homelessness. **6** attendees were eligible for bowel screening and **1** was referred on an Urgent Suspected Cancer (USC) pathway following the clinic.
4. Taw and Torridge Voluntary Services (TTVS) developed their own Cancer Champion project and offered cancer conversations on an individual basis within people's homes as part of routine work. They provided a rough sleeper drop-in session with **28** people in attendance which included peer support and health talks.
5. iSight Cornwall developed their own accessible materials for the **4000** individuals experiencing sight-loss. These offered advice on how to tell cancer symptoms without being able to see them.
6. Wellmoor reached **75** unpaid carers in Ottery St Mary and Okehampton with their in-person event and provided a space for them to talk about and address their own healthcare needs.
7. Bugle Library of Things used their mobile hub to visit caravan sites, social housing estates and remote communities. **8** individuals were recorded as booking a screening appointment, and **3** individuals entered the NHS for cancer treatment.

A further breakdown of the 16 projects and the learning we have taken from them can be found [further down](#) in the report.

## Aims of the Project

We aimed to improve cancer communication and awareness across Peninsula communities to increase **screening attendance** and enable **earlier diagnosis**.

NHS messaging does not reach everyone; cancer prevalence is rising; local screening rates are below national targets. To address these inequalities, we enabled trusted local voluntary and community organisations to design and deliver their own projects, using the knowledge of the populations they serve.

Projects focused on:

- Increasing knowledge and uptake of **breast, cervical** and **bowel** screening; and/or
- Raising awareness of signs and symptoms for **bowel, skin, lung** and **cervical** cancer.

Co-design and co-delivery with VCSE partners strengthened engagement, brought peoples voices into the work from the start, and supported behaviour change.

## Background

Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly include areas of significant deprivation due to geography, income, education, culture and disability. In Devon, parts of Plymouth, Torbay, Ilfracombe, Barnstaple and Forches & Whiddon Valley are in the **10%** most deprived areas nationally, with 18 further areas in the **20%** most deprived. In 2025, 3% of Cornwall's neighbourhoods fall within the top 10% most deprived in England. The life expectancy gap between least and most deprived areas in Cornwall is **7.5** years (men) and **5.1** years (women).

With 1 in 2 people estimated to be affected by cancer in their lifetime there is a requirement to ensure our population are educated around the signs and symptoms of cancer, that they are able to attend their GP with concerns and that they take up the offer of cancer screening, when it is offered.

Screening uptake has decreased in the Peninsula. As of March 2024; Cervical screening was at **72%**, Breast was at **66.8%** and Bowel screening was at **71%**. Our aim is to increase this and ensure coverage and uptake expands into communities that have not previously responded to the offer.

We have chosen to focus our Early Diagnosis work around our four most commonly diagnosed cancers; Lung, Skin, Cervical and Bowel. Tumour sites like Lung also have a high rate of late-stage diagnosis (66%). When patients are diagnosed later it reduces their chances of recovery and quality of life.

As well as education this work focuses on behaviour changes so that the population are more aware of their bodies and health. We are using these projects to encourage discussions around healthier lifestyle choices and cancer risks.

The VCSE in Devon and VSF in Cornwall have strong links into their communities and voluntary sector groups. They have existing mature networks and communications methods to share information.

Working with the VCSE lead in Devon and Cornwall VSF, the Peninsula Cancer Alliance designed a programme through which local community and voluntary sector groups in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly could apply for short term funding to be able to deliver their own local projects.

[Appendix 1](#) details the process we followed to allocate the funding.

Further detail on the funded projects for Devon and Cornwall can be found in [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#).

## Identified Learning

The fund has supported 16 successful projects. The graphic in [Appendix 4](#) demonstrates the different groups each organisation supported and what their projects focused on. Most of these groups have been successful with our second-year funding and have expanded upon their initial pilots by including additional prevention advice. A few have since received National funding and are able to expand their projects out.

We have identified four themes from the range of projects.

## Trust and proximity matter

Embedding conversations in everyday, trusted settings converts awareness into action.

### Law and Torridge Voluntary Services (TTVS)

Attended community events to directly reach their population. Following feedback from the events, they developed their own Cancer Champions project and placed it under a programme aimed at making direct contact with at risk individuals and providing support. This campaign joined up other organisation serving the population and kept the cancer messaging consistent.



### Dartmouth Caring

Dartmouth Caring worked with Dartmouth Medical Practice. The practice refers non-responders to cancer screening into their service to hold face to face conversations. The team also offered support to help people get to appointments. They are a trusted community resource who used the social media campaign and blog posts to share concise and tailored information on the screening programmes whilst addressing questions/concerns directly.

### Devon Communities Together

Devon Communities Together crafted a campaign delivering presentations in village halls to custodians who could then continue to spread cancer awareness locally. They also worked with partner organisations providing a space to discuss cancer, answer questions and signpost as appropriate. The project focus was to share information, reaching people at home as well as in social settings.



## Wellmoor

Wellmoor ran two projects. One with a focus on lung cancer and promoting healthier lifestyles by providing events for walking groups. The other worked with unpaid carers in rural communities and created events for them to discuss their own healthcare needs. It showed the importance of providing a space away from their routine. People reported booking screening appointments following the events and trying to take more time for themselves.



## Remove practical barriers.

Transport, digital booking, and unclear processes prevent attendance; simple supports (buddying, on-site clinics, mobile outreach) unlock uptake.

## Seachange

Initial questionnaires sent out to the community reported transport as being a reason people were not attending screening appointments. Using this intelligence, Seachange developed a transport offer to help patients get to appointments and follow scans. The second most popular reason given was uncertainty over the process. A trusted hub in the community, they created cancer focused messaging and made materials available to inform people about what they should expect.

## Age UK

Transport poverty is high amongst the individuals they support; they created an offer to take people to their medical/screening appointments. They provided support to carers to enable them to attend medical/screening appointments through their respite care service. This organisation has been successful in receiving a lottery fund this year so they can expand their community support and transport offer in North Devon.



## Volunteering in Health

The project identified transport and the difficulties with booking appointments as principal concerns. Learning from the studies prompted further awareness sessions and campaigns with public health teams. They have developed a transport offer to help with travel and the option of having a 'buddy' to attend appointments with. Their next steps would be to develop an individual focused approach to speak to people in their homes on a one-to-one basis.

## Tailor to literacy and access needs

Creative methods (art, stories), accessible materials (large print, audio and educational levels), and direct help with NHS App/registration improve engagement.

### WILD Young Parents

Sassy Cervix Workshops supported young mothers who had literacy rates equivalent to KS2 and sometimes a distrust of healthcare and a number of adverse childhood experiences including sexual abuse. Using creativity and art young mothers improved their health literacy. Young fathers were also supported to better understand and spot cancer signs and symptoms as well as understanding healthy relationships. Support included using the NHS app to access information and book appointments. This organisation provides valuable learning for public health and commissioners around HPV vaccine uptake.



### Newquay Foodbank

Newquay Foodbank used their partner agencies and volunteers to disseminate information in the foodbanks and share message across different social media platforms. Materials were created from a working group of staff and volunteers, including a former hospital consultant and a cancer survivor. Volunteers and visitors alike shared powerful stories, and the pilot demonstrated that even brief interactions can be meaningful.



## Hyper-local insight informs service design

VCSE partners surface actionable, place-based solutions that statutory services can integrate.

### Whole Again Communities

Whole Again Communities is an organisation in Penzance which ran events and workshops focusing on specific cancers like bowel, skin, cervical and breast. These covered prevention and lifestyle choices. They also helped local GPs with meetings in which people could attend and ask questions and provide feedback. The main reason given for not going to their GP with a health concern was not being taken seriously. This learning helped with future local GP approaches.

## iSight Cornwall



Cornwall is the third highest in the UK for the number of people experiencing sight loss with an additional disability. iSight created reference groups to help develop a campaign to spread cancer awareness. They created resources which tailored advice for individuals. Community drop-in events provided a space for people to discuss their difficulties in an open forum. Transport was listed as a difficulty with attendance as well as digital screens and booking systems being difficult to navigate. Learning from these sessions have provided the Peninsula Cancer Alliance with an opportunity to look at improving the screening offer for partially sighted people. Local personal approaches from the trusted charity were very important to this group.

## Scalable Projects

These selected projects capture all the learning themes and can be scaled across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

### Gaia Giving CIC

Gaia is a community hub cafe located in South Devon. They used their wellbeing trained baristas to hold cancer conversations with the public. They hosted workshops and groups in which they would bring cancer to the conversation and offer advice on screening uptake. A few examples from the people affected by the project:

- A member of our Walking Group arranged for a suspicious mole to be checked after an informal chat at the café. It was found to be cancerous and is now being removed.
- An unpaid carer who regularly visits Gaia booked her first breast screening after being encouraged by a Wellbeing Barista.
- A neurodivergent young man, previously unregistered with a GP due to anxiety, was supported to register and now has access to screening options and sensory-friendly information.



This project provided a central resource to the community which could be used by a variety of groups. Bringing cancer into the conversation also meant giving people an outlet to voice their concerns and get the confidence to book a GP appointment. We have the methodology and the learning to scale this project up, but we will need to identify similar café hubs and funding will be required to pay for the training and materials.

## Libraries Unlimited South West

Expanded their book collection to host an entire section on Cancer which covered both non-fiction and fiction. They now have Cancer collections in **16** of their larger Devon libraries, with **2** smaller collections in other libraries. They have been working with local NHS partners such as The Mustard Tree and The Fern Centre to host cancer events in the library. Libraries are a space for information sharing and knowledge, but they are also a space for people to feel less alone. This project brought the two strands together, increasing people's confidence and understanding whilst also sending that message – you are not alone in this. Impacts from this work include:



- This year they have had **550** physical book loans across **26** libraries, by **395** borrowers. Last year, they had 81 book loans on the topic of cancer during the same time period.
- They are now registered on the cancer care map.
- Have worked with local health providers for joint events and aim to run informal discussions at book clubs or chatty cafes alongside national awareness days.
- **36%** of borrowers were children, telling us that these books can support children in understanding cancer and the impact of this on their lives through storytelling.

This project was important at being able to provide accessible resources and information for anyone who needed it. This has the opportunity to scale up to other locations. By upskilling the library workforce to hold cancer conversations we could further increase the number of people reached and provide a safe space for questions. The number of children interested in the subject suggests a scalable opportunity for family-friendly cancer information and informal support.

## Belle's Place / Combe Coastal Practice

Belle's place is a charity aimed at helping people experiencing homelessness. The team collaborated with their local GP Practice to provide outreach clinics within the charity. This work took place in an area of high deprivation with a focus on some of our most deprived individuals. The project was an important pilot into bringing services to hard-to-reach people. It has provided vital learning which could be replicated in other communities. Thirteen individuals were seen across twenty two appointments. Six were eligible for bowel screening; three returned kits, and one symptomatic patient was referred via colorectal USC.

The individuals seen in these cases were not only experiencing homelessness but had additional mental health issues and, in some cases, were drug/alcohol dependant.

The learning from this project suggests that:

## Peninsula Cancer Alliance

- A 'One Stop' Primary Care service was beneficial but there is still a requirement to travel to the nearest hospital for diagnostics and treatment. Journeys of between 15-55 miles are a significant barrier to engagement.
- Explore the use of mobile diagnostics around the county to increase access for vulnerable groups, especially those living in more remote locations.

With the introduction of Neighbourhood Health, the learning from this pilot could be instrumental in introducing mobile diagnostics to help reduce inequalities in access for communities.

### Bugle Library of Things

This project involved a meme-based communications campaign, codesigned materials and the use of their mobile hub outreach van. The project targeted communities facing significant healthcare inequalities, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) groups and recent migrants who experience high levels of discrimination, digital exclusion, and limited access to health information. The impact of this work reached a large number of people in groups that don't often engage with healthcare.

- The meme-based campaign was much more successful than anticipated with the posts being viewed **41,566** times.
- They reached **800** people directly through mobile-hub visits, pop-ups and school-based activities. From this cohort, **8** individuals booked cancer screening appointments, and **3** entered NHS cancer treatment.
- **2,400** reached indirectly through ripple-effect community interactions.



This organisation is a vital collaborator as they understand and are trusted by their local communities. The mobile hub is an important resource that is currently used to spread information but can be adapted further to host clinics or screenings for the communities. For commissioners seeking to manage population health, the pilot offers vital learning on models of care to reduce inequality.

## Recommendations

We have identified three key areas from this project which can be developed further to have a wider impact on communities in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

1. **Upskill VCSE “Cancer Champions”**. Commission **CRUK Talk Cancer** to upskill current VCSE workforce—aligning training with Peninsula Cancer Academy using Cancer Centres for local signposting. An initial cohort of **115** individuals have already been identified for Tranche 1. Build a sustainable, community-embedded network.
2. **Systemise access in Neighbourhood Health for underserved communities**. Design **one-stop access**, assisted booking/transport, and pilot **innovative mobile diagnostics** e.g. Cytosponge, FIT etc. in priority localities by working with and through local VCSE organisations; consider carers, people experiencing homelessness, those experiencing wider health inequalities and rural/coastal barriers from the outset.
3. **Commission small scale models as part of the neighbourhood delivery**. Extend library and café hub approaches; continue to invest in local, targeted and VCSE-led campaigns and support, replicate outreach clinics (e.g., Belle’s Place); adapt mobile hubs (e.g., Bugle) for clinics/screening, co-designing with people with lived experience, VCSE organisations, commissioners and public health. This will extend the work started in some our pilot sites out to other areas.

## Conclusion and next steps

This Community Outreach Fund has generated a significant body of learning for our health communities. This approach has allowed us to test a range of innovative ideas and methodologies, using the insights gained to inform future practice. Many of the successful projects centred on personalised support and the creation of safe, accessible spaces where individuals could ask questions and seek guidance.

A key learning outcome from this work has been a deeper appreciation of the capability and expertise within our VCSE partners across the Peninsula. While we initially engaged these organisations for their strong understanding of local needs, the programme has demonstrated the impact that can be achieved when the NHS co-designs and co-delivers improvement initiatives with the VCSE sector.

As the 10-year plan shifts towards a more neighbourhood-focused model, the PCA will build on the foundations established through this fund. Over the next three years, we will progress to a more collaborative programme that embeds the voices, insights, and contributions of our VCSE partners from the outset. This will support the development of a more sustainable, inclusive cancer service that is better able to provide tailored, individualised support.

## Appendix 1 Process for Funding

The funding ran from October 2024 (Devon) and November 2024 (Cornwall) until February 2025.

- The applications were made via [the PCA website](#) and were advertised over social media, and through the VSF and VCSE forums.
- The PCA worked closely with members of the VSF and VCSE to design marking criteria and feedback route for everyone who submitted.
- The panels ran separately for Devon and Cornwall and met on a bi-weekly basis. They included members of the PCA team and the VCSE and VSF teams.

To be considered under the grant funding the proposed project had to:

- Engage with specific groups and communities around cancer screening uptake to increase attendance for any of the three screening programmes (**breast, cervical and bowel**).
- Improve cancer knowledge and awareness amongst specific communities around sign and symptom recognition for any of the four most commonly diagnosed cancer types (**lung, cervical, skin and breast**).

Two levels of grants were available: **A:** Under £10,000 **B:** Over £10,000

The application was the same for both, with a higher level of expectation in impact and legacy for the bids over £10,000.

The targeted groups within the community setting were:

- People who are experiencing homelessness
- Faith and belief groups
- Vulnerable Migrants and Refugees
- The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- People with a Learning Disability, Neurodiversity or Severe Mental Illness (SMI)
- The LGBTQ+ community
- Younger people
- Immunosuppressed and clinically at-risk cohort
- Unpaid carers
- Ethnically diverse communities
- People experiencing drug/alcohol dependence
- Sex workers
- People with physical, sensory, and hidden disabilities
- Pregnant women

Those who were successful scheduled a meeting to discuss the reporting and evaluation requirements. The end date of the project was agreed so that the PCA could monitor progress. All projects ran from the date the financing was agreed with the latest finishing in December 2025.

Those who were unsuccessful received feedback describing what was missing from the bids and what the panel would like to see if they wanted to resubmit. They were all offered the opportunity to resubmit. It was decided that the chance to resubmit following feedback was to be offered to everyone.

## Appendix 2 Projects Funded in Devon

Estimated reach: **161,706** people, including highly deprived communities.

Name of Company	Project	Cost
Dartmouth Caring	Drop-ins with GP/nurse teams; targeted events; advice and emotional support to promote screening.	£9,126
Age UK Barnstaple & North Devon CIO	Awareness (lung/skin/cervical/bowel); support and transport to appointments; carer respite to enable attendance.	£9,000
Belle's Place / Combe Coastal Practice	Primary Care outreach clinics in charity space; on-site access to bowel kits with consent; peer influence to drive screening.	£7,500
Devon Communities Together	<b>12</b> presentations on <b>breast/cervical/bowel</b> screening in rural/coastal areas; accessible info and Q&A.	£10,000
Seachange Devon	Pop-up clinics; volunteer transport; recruitment/training; awareness campaigns; partnership working.	£8,795
Wellmoor (Moretonhampstead DT)	Lung cancer focus: professional/community engagement; Cancer Champions; 3 events inc. "Walking for Health" highlighting radon risk.	£5,000
Gaia Giving CIC (Gaia Coffee)	Trained wellbeing baristas; drop-ins; help with GP registration and booking; informal cancer conversations.	£3,296
Wellmoor	Unpaid carers: targeted campaign; local events with partners; training on signs/symptoms; enabling access to screening pathways.	£9,850
Libraries Unlimited South West	Permanent cancer collections in <b>16</b> libraries; <b>2</b> mobile collections; curated, evidence-based stock for inclusive awareness.	£11,967.71
Volunteering in Health	Local screening survey and analysis; transport support; education/myth-busting; person-centred outreach for behaviour change.	£9,550.00
TTVS	Embed cancer conversations into existing inequalities work; Volunteer Centre hub; train and deploy Cancer Champions; hyper-local delivery.	£11,431

## Appendix 3 Projects Funded in Cornwall

Estimated reach: **16,400** people.

Name	Project	Cost
<b>WILD Young Parents</b>	“Sassy Cervix” workshops for <b>11</b> groups; physiology, signs/symptoms, prevention; youth-led content for social media.	£9,305
<b>iSight Cornwall</b>	Awareness for sight-loss community; reference group; <b>10</b> roadshows; accessible/coproduced materials; informed choice emphasis.	£15,400
<b>Whole Again Communities CIC</b>	“Stir It Up: The Big C”—creative events, healthy food, open dialogue, inclusive outreach to reduce stigma and promote screening.	£8,313.20
<b>Newquay Foodbank</b>	Tiered approach: broad awareness & targeted wraparound support (paperwork, transport, attendance), focusing on people in crisis.	£13,840.00
<b>Bugle Library of Things</b>	Trusted outreach with mobile hub; co-created resources; targeted support for caravan sites/social housing; meme-based campaign.	£14,637.50

## Appendix 4 Map Showing Spread of Projects and Activities

