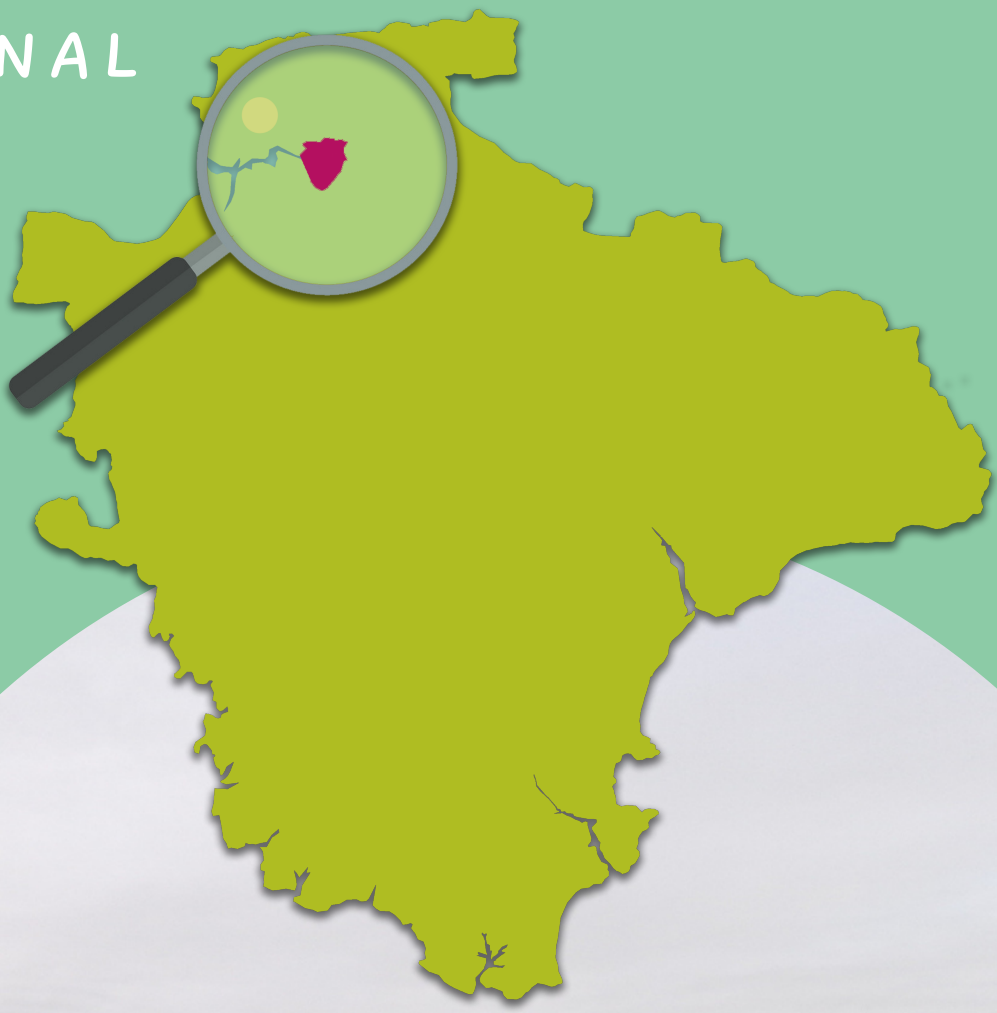
Barnstaple

PROFILE OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE

Completed: December 2021





Devon Community Foundation
Giving more locally

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What is a PAL?

A Profile of Associational Life, or PAL, provides a snapshot of what the social fabric in a place-based community looks and feels like. Communities operate in networks of public buildings and spaces, formal and statutory organisations, informal community-based societies and clubs, workplaces, reciprocity, mutual obligation, trust and the social cohesion that comes from history of a place and how the people who live there do things together. PALs map out what is available in a community and collects stories and feelings from people who live or work there.

PALS are compiled by the DCF Community Insight Team whose job it is to develop networks and connections to better support people in Devon. Contact: insights@devoncf.com



INTRODUCTION

Barnstaple is the largest town in North Devon and functions as the administrative centre for North Devon Council. It is situated at the lowest crossing point of the River Taw, which flows on into the Bristol Channel, and lies 50 miles (80 km - about two hour's drive) north of Plymouth and 34 miles (55 km - just over an hour's drive) northwest of Exeter. On the north side of the town the River Taw is joined by the River Yeo which rises on Berry Down, near Coombe Martin. The greater part of the town lies on the eastern bank of the estuary, connected to the western side by the ancient Barnstaple Long Bridge with its 16 arches. Barnstaple was formerly known as “Barum” and the name remains in use locally.

The parish of Barnstaple had a population of 24,033 at the 2011 census but the population of the built-up area, including Sticklepath, Roundswell and Bickington, was 31,616. Bishop's Tawton, Fremington and Landkey and other satellite settlements make up a wider area known as the 'Barnstaple Town Area'. For this PAL we will be focusing mainly on the built-up area.

Barnstaple is a former river port and from the 14th century it was licensed to export wool, which brought great wealth. The town centre still preserves a medieval layout and character. It also imported Irish wool until its harbour silted up, when it began to develop other industries, such as shipbuilding, foundries and sawmills. Barnstaple’s Victorian market survives, with a high glass and timber roof on iron columns, and a row of shops known as ‘Butchers Row’ which are now predominantly artisan and craft shops. Boutport Street still follows the curved line of the ditch that once ringed the outside of the town walls.



Barnstaple provides a hub of services and amenities for the district, with people from around North Devon travelling into the town for shopping, work, education, leisure and other needs. However, despite its status in the district, parts of the town feel tired and run down. We noticed a number of vacant shops, which local people mentioned too - one said she felt the town centre had been “neglected for quite some time”. Although there are some strong independent businesses, the high street is dominated by chains and multinationals giving the town centre a bit of a "clone town" feel. The size of the town and its position as a commercial centre also means that its sense of community is more fragmented than in other places we have visited for our PALs.

However, there are plans to invest in and reimagine the town. A 2020 “Vision Statement” for Barnstaple, published on North Devon Council’s website, sees the town as the “focal point for a large rural hinterland” and sets out ambitions to revitalise the Pannier Market, encourage diversification and restore historic features, which include 389 listed buildings. Other goals include “rebalancing” the town centre by reconnecting it to the Taw, improving the quality of the commercial zone south of the river and creating more coherent links between the two areas. In 2021 it was announced that Barnstaple had secured a £6.5 million investment to transform the high street and town centre. Plans include the redevelopment of Butchers Row, Queen Street and Boutport Street and the establishment of a new market quarter. There is also a lot of housing development underway on the edges of the town, although concerns were raised about whether Barnstaple has the infrastructure to support them.

Parishes that make up the wider Barnstaple area: Arlington; Ashford; Atherington; Bishop's Tawton; Bratton Fleming; East Down; East and West Buckland; Fremington; Goodleigh; Loxhore; Horwood; Lovacott and Newton Tracey; Landkey; Marwood; Pilton West; Shirwell; Stoke Rivers; Tawstock



COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Pannier Market is open Tuesday to Saturday, with a general market on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. antiques and collectables on Wednesdays and a craft and general market on Thursdays.

Fringe TheatreFest – an annual celebration of theatre that takes place in various venues around Barnstaple over four days in June.

Barnstaple Fair, held in September, is the largest fair in the West Country. It is also believed to be one of the oldest in the country, possibly dating back as far as 930. The fair is run by the Western section of the Showmen's Guild. It is opened by the Fair Proclamation, which is held at the Guildhall on the Wednesday before the fair and attended by local dignitaries such as the mayor, town clerk and chief executive of North Devon Council, as well as representatives from local businesses and organisations.

Barnstaple Fair Carnival was established in 1931 and traditionally follows Barnstaple Fair.

Pilton Green Man – a festival held in July in which the Green Man, an ancient pagan figure, meets the prior and is incorporated into the Christian church. The day begins with a parade which makes its way from the museum, across the river to Pilton. This is followed by a play, alongside stalls and other entertainment, and a flower festival in the church.

Christmas Fayre – an annual event organized by the town council, including stalls, entertainment and Father Christmas.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Barnstaple ranks as one of the most deprived communities in Devon, with an IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) rating of 982, where one is the most deprived (figures from cuf.org.uk). It also has some of the highest rates of working age poverty (15 per cent), social housing (24.5 per cent) and lone parents (34.7 per cent).

As a major town, Barnstaple is more ethnically diverse than the wider North Devon district but is still predominantly White British (97.1 per cent). There is a fairly even distribution of ages in the town and the median age of 41 is slightly lower than the Devon average. Around half of households have one car or van while a quarter have no car or van. Just over a quarter of housholds include one person with a long term health problem or disability (figures from the 2011 Census).

According to crimerate.co.uk, Barnstaple had a rate of 81 crimes per 1,000 people in 2020, significantly higher than the Devon rate of 51 per 1,000 residents. Violence and sexual offences were the most commonly recorded crimes, with 936 offences in 2020. Antisocial behaviour linked to the town's "street attached" community is also an issue in the town. Those who are street attached includes street drinkers, people who beg and rough sleepers.

Facts & Figures: Barnstaple

IMD ranking: 982 out of 12382
Working age poverty: 15%
No qualifications: 28.35%
Social housing: 24.45%
Lone parents: 34.7%
Ethnic diversity: 6.3%
Unemployed men: 4.2%
Unemployed women: 2.9%

Demographics contd.

The 2011 Census showed that just under a third of adults have no qualifications and 20 per cent of adults have level 4 qualifications or above, compared to 27.8 per cent across Devon as a whole. The number of people holding managerial or senior professional roles is slightly lower in Barnstaple than the Devon average, while the number of people working as machine or plant operatives or in elementary occupations is slightly higher.

In 2021, Devon County Council figures showed that the average weekly earnings for full time workers in North Devon was £515, the lowest out of all Devon districts. The average weekly earnings for the county as a whole was £567 in 2021. And the gap between local wages and house prices in Barnstaple is widening as more people move to the area. According to Rightmove, properties in Barnstaple had an average price of £249,729 over the last year. The majority of sales were detached properties, selling for an average price of £341,866. Terraced properties sold for an average of £198,655, with semi-detached properties fetching £240,837. Overall, sold prices in Barnstaple over the last year were six per cent up on the previous year and 10 per cent up on the 2018 peak of £226,598. At the time of writing there were 11 residential properties available for rent in Barnstaple on Rightmove, with a one bedroom flat priced at £495 pcm and a three bedroom terraced house at £800 pcm.

North Devon and Torridge Home Crisis is a group that has been set up on Facebook for residents to exchange ideas on how to highlight and tackle the housing crisis in the wider area.





PUBLIC SERVICES & TRANSPORT

The North Devon Link Road connects North Devon to the rest of Devon and the UK via the M5. The route runs along the A361 to Barnstaple and then branches off into the A39 Atlantic Highway towards Bideford and then into Cornwall.

A branch railway line connects Barnstaple to Exeter via local systems – this is the only railway line in North Devon. Barnstaple is served by fourteen trains each weekday (approximately one an hour), fifteen on Saturdays and seven on Sundays (about one every two hours).

There is a bus station in central Barnstaple with transport to most areas of North Devon and Torridge. Bus times and destinations can be found at bustimes.org. Megabus provides low cost coach travel to further flung destinations.

Community transport from Go North Devon offers a ring and ride bus, shop mobility and transport services.



GP surgeries include Brannam Medical Centre, Queens Medical Centre and Litchdon Medical Centre. Barnstaple has a social prescriber linked to the medical centres who is part of the One Northern Devon Social Prescribing Network.

North Devon District Hospital is the general hospital for the district, providing 24/7 emergency and urgent acute hospital services. It is more than an hour and a half's drive from its nearest neighbouring acute hospital (the RD&E in Exeter), making it the most remote acute hospital in mainland England. Barnstaple Health Centre is an extension of North Devon District Hospital, providing services such as podiatry, cardiac rehabilitation and sexual health.





Public services & transport contd.

Barnstaple has a police enquiry office which is open to the public from Monday to Fridays. Details of the local policing team can be found on the Devon and Cornwall Police website. The team's priorities at the time of writing were antisocial behaviour in the town centre; drugs trafficking, misuse and supply; connectivity with the community; child criminal exploitation and safeguarding the vulnerable.

Barnstaple Library is open six days a week and provides a range of services and facilities including public access computers, printing and copying, FabLab Devon Maker Space, Business and Intellectual Property Centre and a large collection of local and family history records. On Fridays during term time Pathfield School runs a a pop up café at the library. Regular activities for children include Bounce and Rhyme, toddler time, crafts and a book group while adults can join groups including knitting, colouring, Scrabble and walking. Visitor numbers to the library naturally fell off as a result of the pandemic. They have since recovered well for families and children but less so for adults and staff are keen to look at hosting events that would attract more adults, especially men, back into the space. There is also a mobile library service for some areas of Barnstaple.

Barnstaple's main post office is within WH Smith, on the high street, and is open Monday to Saturday during shop opening hours. Other post offices include Forches, Coppice Close, Bickington and Hele.

The existing North Devon Leisure Centre is due to be replaced by the new state-of-the-art Tarka Leisure Centre, on a site next to the Tarka Tennis Centre. This was under development at the time of writing. There are also a number of gyms across the town and sports facilities within Barnstaple Hotel.

North Devon Homes is the main social housing provider



TOWN COUNCIL

Barnstaple Town Council has 24 councillors, representing seven separate ward areas, and operates from its head office at Barum House, The Square. The council manages five allotment sites around the town. It also recently took over management of Rock Park from North Devon Council and has a new team of Town Rangers who maintain the park as well as other areas of the town. The team has worked closely with Barnstaple in Bloom, which started up again in 2021 after a break of about a decade. The committee and wider town were proud to take home awards at the 2021 Britain in Bloom competition.

The council was actively involved in the Covid 19 response - it was felt that this had facilitated closer community partnerships which had been retained as the town emerged from the crisis. At the time of writing the council was working with other agencies on addressing the issues of antisocial behaviour mentioned earlier while looking at ways to support those who are vulnerably housed or street-attached. Sue Petters, the assistant town clerk, said this was a multi-agency approach; “There’s definitely a feeling that it’s everybody’s problem and everybody’s solution. No one agency has to carry the load.”

The council was due to launch a consultation with local residents in December 2021. It is hoped this will be a chance to engage more closely with the community and find out what local people want from their council.

Council venues available for hire include The Castle Centre, the Guildhall and St Anne’s Art and Community Centre, which was being managed by the Plough Arts Centre on behalf of the town council at the time of writing. The council also hosts ceremonial events including the Barnstaple Fair Proclamation, Remembrance Parade and the Christmas Fayre.

Council grants are available to support projects that benefit Barnstaple and its residents. There are three types of grants; small grants of up to £1,000, annual grants between £1,000 - £5,000 and an annual strategic grant between £5,000 - £8,000.

Selaine Saxby (Conservative) is the MP for North Devon and her constituency office is in Barnstaple.

North Devon Council, which has a significant Liberal Democrat majority, also has its central administrative office in the town.

COMMUNICATION

The North Devon Gazette covers Barnstaple, as well as Bideford, Ilfracombe and surrounding areas.

North Devon Insight and EX33 are independent community magazines and directories of local businesses delivered for free throughout Barnstaple.

The Voice is a community radio station that covers most of North Devon. Its studios and media centre are based in Barnstaple.

Barnstaple has a number of community-led Facebook groups and pages. Barnstaple Community has 6K members, News Flash Barnstaple & Area has 2.1K members, Barnstaple Community and Coronavirus Support Network has 3.2K members and Gossip Around Barnstaple has 9.6K members.

We spotted a few noticeboards at shops and venues around the town displaying posters for community events and activities. However, they seemed to be quite few and far between, with the most useful located at the library. Some older residents told us that it was difficult to find out what was happening in the town, especially for those who are not online.







EDUCATION



Primary schools in Barnstaple include:

·Yeo Valley Primary School
·Newport Community School Primary Academy
·Ashleigh C of E Primary School
·Eden Park Academy
·Orchard Vale Community School
·Our Ladies Catholic Primary School
·Sticklepath Community School
·Pilton Infants School

Barnstaple has a number of nurseries and preschools and many of the primary schools listed above also offer early years settings.

Secondary education is provided by The Park Community School and Pilton Community College.

Shoreline Senior Academy provides alternative provision to support the most vulnerable students. Pupils come here at various points in their schooling, usually because their school placement has broken down.

Lampard Community School caters for 5-16-year-olds with special educational needs.

Pathfield School caters for 3-19-year-olds with profound or severe learning difficulties and for pupils on the autistic spectrum.

Marland Secondary School is a special school for students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH)

On Track Barnstaple is a not-for-profit independent special school.

Petroc College of Further and Higher Education has a campus in Barnstaple.





ENVIRONMENT

Rock Park is the town's main public park. It is owned by the town council and managed by the Rock Park Trust Management Committee. Facilities include a children's play area, outdoor gym, skate park and football pitches.

Other parks include Castle Green, Rotary Green and Pilton Park. There are also a number of children's play areas around the town. More information can be found on North Devon Council's website.

As mentioned previously, a new Barnstaple in Bloom committee has been formed and the team have been working to improve the town's natural environment, getting other clubs and groups involved too.

The Tarka Trail is centred in Barnstaple, offering routes to explore the North Devon countryside and coast by foot or on bike.

Yeo Valley Community Woodland is on the outskirts of the town and provides almost 30 acres of green space. Whiddon Valley Community Woodland and Coombe Woods are also nearby. The Anchor Wood Conservation Area is a wooded slope leading to the town's section of the Tarka Trail.





Environment contd.

On the edge of Pilton and Bradiford lie 21 acres of grazing land known locally as Manning's Pit. This is a much-loved community open space enjoyed by generations of local people. After an unsuccessful attempt to develop it for housing it was put up for sale. The Friends of Manning's Pit Community Group, which had been campaigning since 2015 to save and buy the site, joined forces with the Pilton Green Man CIO to purchase it in June 2021. Their success means Manning's Pit should now be saved for future generations, protecting wildlife and enabling community access.

Devon Wildlife Trust has a Barnstaple and District Local group. Activities include work parties at Uppacott Wood, a couple of miles outside Barnstaple. They also do voluntary conservation activities at other nature reserves, such as Swanpool Marsh in Braunton. And from September to April they meet once a month in Castle Centre for talks on a range of conservation issues.

One Barnstaple has been speaking to local people to ask them what they value about the town and what could be improved. The town's green and blue spaces came out as one of the things people like most about living in Barnstaple. However, less air and water pollution and more recycling were some of the top suggestions to make Barnstaple a healthier place to live, along with less use of plastic.

The town was hit by flash flooding in August 2020 following torrential rain, which left some places under up to three feet of water. As a result, Devon County Council has amended its list of highest priority communities in the local flood strategy to include Barnstaple. However, prevention measures are not likely to be implemented until 2023 at the earliest.



COMMUNITY HUBS

There are various halls and rooms available to hire for community activities but, aside from the library, there is no obvious central place for people to gather informally.

The Castle Centre is owned by the council and has rooms to rent. St Anne's Arts and Community Centre is currently being managed by The Plough Arts Centre on behalf of Barnstaple Town Council and hosts workshops and other events.

Roundswell Community Centre, St John's Community Centre and Forches and Whiddon Down Community Centre are available to hire and host local groups and organisations.

Petroc has spaces for hire for meetings, exhibitions and performances.

The Pausa Café at Dunelm Mill is also available for use by community groups from 5:30-7:30pm.

There are a large number of churches and places of worship in Barnstaple, many of which also provide community spaces, groups and services and work in partnership through Churches Together in Barnstaple. In 2019 it was reported that a local yoga teacher was told she could not book a church hall in Pilton because yoga was "not compatible with the Christian faith". The archdeacon of Barnstaple said at the time that, while the Church of England had "always tried to be as welcoming as possible", policies would vary from parish to parish. Although places of worship locally are predominantly Christian, the North Devon Islamic Culture Centre is based in the town too.

Barnstaple Youth House provides facilities and space for youth work organisations to support local young people. Barnstaple Town Marching Band is based at the Youth House and CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and social workers are among those who use the rooms. The charity also runs some youth groups of its own, although these were paused at the time of writing. The building was in a bad state of repair before the pandemic hit but trustees have used lockdown to carry out extensive renovations and redecorating. They have linked with architecture students from Petroc to develop a plan to transform an old abbatoir at the back of the building into an activities room. They are also looking at improving the adjoining outdoor area, which is currently rather neglected and not very safe for young people to use. The Youth House is in a central location, which trustees say helps make it a more neutral space for young people, who can be quite "tribal". The trustees are keen to work in partnership with local groups and for other services and organisations to make use of the venue. They have links with SPACE, and Queen's Theatre have also expressed an interest in using the old abattoir building for rehearsals and space for a youth theatre group when it's renovated.

COMMUNITY GROUPS



Abuse, incl. DV & rape

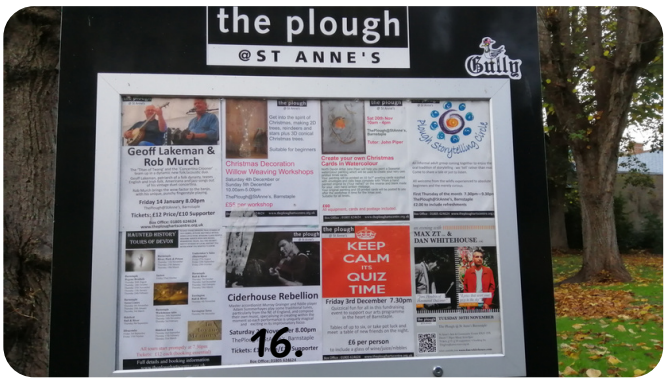
- North Devon Against Domestic Abuse (NDADA) – provides temporary refuge to women and children as well as support and help. NDADA's independently-funded, purpose-built property is the only refuge in the county – Devon's district councils operate a "place of safety" model in partnership with Devon County Council, with provision including an emergency three-bedroom house and a two bedroom flat. NDADA also has a shop in Barnstaple – the ReLove Dress Agency – selling preloved clothes for customers on a 50/50 commission basis. This helps raise funds for the charity while promoting the work it does and encouraging conversations about domestic abuse.
- MoMENtum Devon – a mutual support group for male survivors of childhood sexual abuse.
- Survivors Alliance North Devon – specialist counselling service for adults who have suffered from sexual abuse and their non-offending family members. Peer support groups for men and women.

Addiction

- EDP Drug and Alcohol Services – supports people over the age of 18 who wish to address their drug and alcohol use. EDP has four Devon hubs, including one in Barnstaple. It also runs the Flourish Cafes, which are open to all who access EDP's support, as well as anyone in the community who relates to substance misuse. The cafes are hosted by peer mentors, recovery coaches and volunteers.

Arts, culture and heritage

- Barnstaple History Group – a group for people who have an interest in the history of Barnstaple.
- The Voice Community Choir – a capella group open to everyone. No experience necessary and no need to read music.
- Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon – permanent collections and temporary exhibitions telling the story of the people and landscapes of North Devon. Free admission. Volunteer opportunities.
- Barnstaple Musical Comedy and Dramatic Society – amateur dramatic society



Community groups contd

Arts, culture and heritage

- Pilton Cinema – community cinema run by a small team of volunteers. Screenings are usually on the last Friday of the month but closed due to Covid restrictions at the time of writing.
- North Devon Academy of Music – not-for-profit organisation offering low cost music tuition for groups, ensembles and individuals.
- Art for Leisure and Pleasure – meets on Thursday afternoons at St John's Community Centre.

Bereavement

- Pete's Dragons – support people who have been affected by suicide.

Carers

- Side by Side Taw and Torridge – an informal support group for parents who care for children, young people and adults with additional needs. Meets weekly.

Community support and development

- Barnstaple Lions Club – organises and events and undertakes community projects.
- Sunrise Diversity - a grass-roots charity promoting equality, diversity and social inclusion in rural communities in Northern Devon. They work with the community to eliminate discrimination and promote strong, positive community relations through a range of services and activities, which challenge discrimination, help change attitudes and celebrate diversity. Sunrise provides a variety of services for individuals with diverse identities including advocacy, skill and knowledge sessions, English Language classes, social activities and an LGBTQIA+ group for adults. Sunrise also offer training to the wider community and organise celebratory diversity themed events.



Community groups contd.

Community support and development contd

- Barnstaple Town Centre Management - a partnership between North Devon Council, Devon County Council, Barnstaple Town Council, the police, marketing bureau, and the private sector. Its projects and activities include marketing the town, managing events and consulting with the business community to make improvements to the town.
- One Barnstaple - a partnership of voluntary, community and public service organisations in the town. One Barnstaple provides a forum to allow all local stakeholders to have a say in the future development of their local community.
- North Devon Salvation Army has a programme of community support including; practical support for homeless or vulnerable people, housing and debt advice, a youth drop in and a bicycle recycling project.
- Pilton Green Man CIO – makes small grants and/or loans available to community organisations, charities, groups and individuals to carry out projects which will benefit the people of Pilton. The money available depends on the success of the annual Pilton Green Man festival and other events the CIO organises to raise money each year.
- North Devon Voluntary Service (NDVS) - supports voluntary and community group development and capacity building in North Devon.



Crime and safety

- Barnstaple Street Pastors– trained volunteers from local churches patrol in teams on Friday and Saturday nights to care for, listen to and help people who are out on the streets.

Dementia

- Barnstaple Memory Cafe – provides support for people living with dementia or other memory problems and their carers and families.
- Memories are Made of This - monthly sessions for those living with dementia and their carers.
- Day care and fortnightly memory café at Pilton House.

Disability

- Barnstaple Ability FC– players of all ages with a range of abilities, including those with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and mental health issues.
- Pathfields Activity Club – an out of hours club for children and young people aged five to 25 with special needs.
- Parkinson's Northern Devon – support group for people with Parkinson's and their families and carers.

Community groups contd.

Disadvantaged/low income

- Freedom Community Alliance – a Christian charity supporting those who are marginalised and socially excluded. Their day centre is open Monday to Thursday, with hot drinks and cake on offer. Staff and volunteers can provide information about food banks and other support and may be able to offer emergency food parcels. There is also a free clothes store and web access and Freedom Community Alliance can provide supported housing and offer a therapeutic community programme for those suffering from addiction.
- Encompass South West – an independent charity that provides advice, information and support services around homelessness and rough sleeping, supported housing and financial inclusion.

Education, learning and training

- WayMakers Devon – autism coaching support, training and consultancy.
- Sharing One Language (SOL) – offers immersive English language programmes for students from Eastern Europe and training courses for English language teachers. SOL places students with host families in Barnstaple, Bideford and Tiverton.

Employment/business

- Barnstaple Library Work Club – a free drop-in session for job-seekers. Includes support with CVs and job applications, IT courses and support and advice around Universal Credit.

Environment

- Recycle Devon Reuse Shop – shop selling good quality used items looking for a new home.
- Plastic Free North Devon – a consortium of local organisations who are committed collectively and individually to eradicating single-use plastics in Northern Devon and building a more sustainable community for all. Often found at events offering water refills and educating people on how to become plastic free.
- Devon Wildlife Trust Barnstaple and District
- Nurdle CIC – remove microplastics from beaches and turn them into products such as phone covers.
- Extinction Rebellion North Devon



Community groups contd.

Families/parents/lone parents

- North Devon Children's Centre – parenting support, services to help under-fives prepare for school and support for parents with adult learning and employment.
- Devon Antenatal & First Aid CIC – offers antenatal courses, parent and child groups, parenting workshops and first aid qualifications.
- Who Let the Dads Out – monthly play group for dads and under fives, held at Grosvenor Church.
- Early Nourishment CIC – provides free support to families across North Devon and Torridge. This includes feeding drop ins for support with breast and/or bottle feeding and baby and toddler groups. They also offer peer support training for people who would like to volunteer to support others with feeding their baby.



Financial support/inclusion

- Christians Against Poverty (CAP) North Devon Debt Centre – debt counselling and budgeting skills for people in financial difficulty. Volunteering opportunities.

Food

- Northern Devon Foodbank – the Barnstaple foodbank is based at St John's Community Centre and is open three mornings a week.
- We also heard that there are some small, community-led neighbourhood pantries where people can help themselves to items for free.

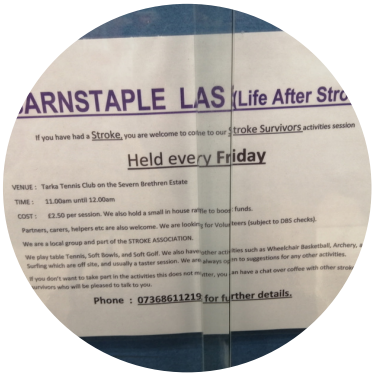
Community groups contd.

Health and wellbeing

- Over and Above – an independent registered charity that supports the work of Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust. Their Fern Centre offers information and support to those affected by cancer. They also have two charity shops, one in Barnstaple and one in Westward Ho!
- North Devon Hospice – a charity providing specialist care and support to people who are affected by a life-limiting illness.
- South West Fishing for Life – provides free fly fishing sessions for people with breast cancer. The fishing techniques have been proved to be beneficial to build up tissues and muscle for people who are suffering or recovering from breast cancer.
- Vista Wellbeing – a CIC offering specialist activity programmes for those living with long term health conditions, disabilities, or who struggle to access mainstream activities and services.
- Re-Org North Devon– outdoor activities aimed at people who are struggling with feelings of loneliness or low self-esteem.
- Headway North Devon – charity that provides support and information to brain injury survivors, their families and carers. Weekly meetings at the Salvation Army Church Hall in Barnstaple.
- Barnstaple Life After Stroke - activities session at the Tarka Tennis Club for stroke survivors and their family and carers.
- Monthly diabetes support group at Roundswell Community Hall.

Hobby and skill share

- Taw and Torridge Stamp Club – club meetings held fortnightly at the Castle Centre from September to May.
- Barnstaple Floral Art Club– for those who enjoy flower arranging and floral art. The club also organises regular classes, workshops and demonstrations.
- The Yarn Hut on Queen Street runs crochet workshops and a knit/crochet and natter group.







Community groups contd.

Learning disability

- Empowering Lives – supported living, community support and social clubs for adults and young people in Barnstaple.
- Abbey Gateway Club – social club for adults with learning disabilities/difficulties.
- Next Steps Development– employment and training opportunities for people with multi-abilities and complex needs. This includes a charity shop and café in Barnstaple, offering retail, hospitality and catering training and opportunities. They also have a joinery workshop, graphics and media department and a working farm.

Media/radio

- The Voice Community Radio

Mental health

- Barnstaple Link Centre – drop in mental health support. At the time of writing North Devon's four Link Centres were closed in line with Government Covid guidance, with telephone support being offered instead. Devon County Council was consulting on closing them permanently. There was strong opposition to this so it looked as though three of the centres (in Ilfracombe, Barnstaple and Bideford) would reopen, although possibly offering a more limited service.
- Samaritans of North Devon and North Cornwall
- The Mooring – out of hours mental health support for people who are 16 or over.
- Clarity – a mental health charity providing services and support to people experiencing mental health and emotional issues.





Community groups contd.

Older people

- Age Concern Barnstaple and District – services including home support, shopping, social activities and a drop in coffee morning.
- Barnstaple Live at Home Scheme - activities to help people over 60 living in their own homes, including a weekly lunch club, activities afternoon, befriending, shopping and outings.
- U3A - for anyone no longer in full time employment. U3A provides an opportunity to learn, exercise and socialise with others who share similar interests. Groups are formed by members for members and cover a wide range of topics, such as science, literature, table tennis and craft.
- North Devon Grandparents Support Group - for people who are denied contact with their grandchildren. First Tuesday of the month at The Royal and Fortescue Hotel.



Sport and leisure

- Barnstaple and Pilton Cricket Club
- Barnstaple RFC
- Tarka School of Gymnastics
- Barnstaple Amateur Boxing Club
- Barnstaple Town Football Club
- Rock Park Bowling Club
- Barnstaple parkrun
- Carol Anne Netball Club
- North Devon Hockey Club
- Taw Valley Hockey Club

Transport

- Devon Access to Services – assists people who might otherwise be excluded from information, services and representation across Devon. Works with community car schemes Devon and administers the Devon County Car Forum and Volunteer Driver Hospital Parking Permit Scheme.
- Go North Devon Ltd – shopmobility, ring and ride, cancer care cars and transport to health information.

Veterans

- The Veterans Charity – supports UK veterans facing hardship and distress by supplying essentials such as food, clothing and household goods.

Community groups contd.



Women

- Barnstaple Bloomers WI
- Chivenor Military Wives Choir

Young people & children

- Barnstaple Sea Cadets
- Barnstaple Youth FC
- Girl Guides, Brownies and Rainbows
- Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts
- Georgie's Youth Centre – club nights for Juniors (Years 7 and 8), Inters (Years 9 and 10) and Seniors (Years 10+). Facilities include a games room, recording studio, art room and outdoor space.
- Centre Stage School – affordable stage school offering lessons in dance, drama and singing
- Forches Youth Club - youth club and junior youth club (6-8-year-old) and school holiday activities. Delivered by North Devon Homes.
- Barnstaple Town Majorettes
- Eastside Youth AFC
- Barnstaple Youth FC
- Barnstaple Junior park run
- The 999 Academy – a youth development programme for 16-19-year-olds, delivered by volunteers from the emergency services and Petroc College. Students are taught varied skills, including basic life support and first aid, conflict resolution, cooking and personal banking.
- Barnstaple Young Generation – youth arm of Barnstaple Musical Comedy and Dramatic Society.
- Children's Summer Club – a charity providing affordable social and informal educational opportunities for young people aged 8-16 in Barnstaple. All staff are volunteers, mainly local parents.
- Family Compass – support for children and families. Services include post-adoption support, counselling, play therapy and supervised contact for siblings.
- Barnstaple Town Youth Marching Band
- Barnstaple Youth House

INDUSTRY & ROUTES TO EMPLOYMENT

Two of the largest employers in the area are the Royal Marines Base Chivenor, a couple of miles west of the town, and North Devon District Hospital. Petroc is another significant local employer.

As the main shopping destination for the district, retail work is also a major contributor to the economy, with 20 per cent working in this sector (the ratio of men to women in this type of work is fairly even). There are many large chain stores in the town centre and in the retail park. Tesco has several stores in the area, there is also a Sainsbury's superstore, an Asda superstore and a Lidl.

There are a number of manufacturing businesses based in Barnstaple and 12 per cent of those in employment locally work in this industry (18 per cent of men and 6 per cent of women). Local industrial estates include Severn Brethren, Whiddon Valley and Pottington. Human health and social work is another main industry in Barnstaple, with just over 14 per cent employed in these activities (23 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men).

As a district, North Devon's economy is historically agricultural in nature and tourism also plays a significant role, which means that work can be seasonal and low paid.

The investment in Barnstaple's town centre through the Future High Streets Fund is set to include establishing a new "markets quarter" and maximising opportunities to provide space for local artists and creators within the Pannier Market and Guildhall. Queen's Theatre has also secured funding from the government's Culture Recovery Fund.



Industry & routes to employment contd

Live Love Local is a North-Devon wide campaign to encourage residents to spend their money locally. Sue Petters, assistant town clerk, said the town council was active in promoting shopping locally and that the town's economy appeared to be recovering pretty well from the effects of the pandemic. However, we did notice a number of empty shop units and others commented on this too.

Sue added that more people moving to Barnstaple were working remotely and that versatility in terms of hybrid working would help the area. In October 2021 a new enterprise centre was opened at Devon County Council's emerging Roundswell Enterprise Park. Known as Node, the office and coworking space aims to support SMEs (small to medium sized enterprises), freelancers and start-ups in Barnstaple and the surrounding area.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

"There are pockets of community spirit and a whole host of things going on but it's a little bit segmented," said Ella McCann, community developer for One Barnstaple. She added that the size of the town and its position as a commercial centre impacts on the community feel. This was something echoed by others we spoke to in Barnstaple and our own impressions of the town during our visits. It was difficult to get a handle on the town's sense of its own identity and when we asked people what they liked about living in the town they often talked about the wider area and accessibility to nearby attractions, such as the beaches and Exmoor, rather than Barnstaple itself. While people described the town as friendly, laidback and generally feeling safe, they also talked about issues with drug use and street drinking. One resident said "there's really a rather dark undercurrent here which can be a bit unpleasant". We were told that police presence in town is "minimal" and their resources are stretched. However, we did see PCSOs out and about engaging with people on the streets during our visits.







Community comments & opportunities contd

Meanwhile, Ella pointed to Barnstaple's high levels of deprivation, the number of street-attached people and lack of affordable and/or decent housing. She said they had high numbers using their foodbank and "wages are shocking". Others suggested that Barnstaple's support network for people in crisis is not as strong as in nearby towns such as Bideford. However, Ella stressed that there are some "really great community initiatives" happening, especially out in the more residential areas of the town. She mentioned Roundswell's "thriving community association" and Pilton, which is well known for community events such as the Green Man festival. The Pilton Green Man CIO has also played a pivotal role in helping to buy Manning's Pit – a real "good news story" and a resource that has the potential to be used even more by the community in the future. She said the library was another "fantastic" community resource.

Ella felt that it is traditions passed down through generations, such as Green Man, which often bring people together in Barnstaple. This can mean that it's harder for residents in newer builds to find a reason to join forces and build a sense of local community. We found that, although there is lots going on for those who want to get involved, it can take a bit of digging to find out what's happening and where. There didn't appear to be a central point of community information, whether physical or online, so it seems to be a case of word of mouth or knowing where to look. One Barnstaple has a directory page under development on its website, so hopefully this will help address this issue.

Sarah Vingoe, chief executive officer of Sunrise, said they had strong links with local partnerships and there was a lot of good work happening locally. However, she said she'd like to see more money for inclusion and integration work and that there was a need for more community connection opportunities. She added that while Sunrise were well aware of the growing communities of diversity locally, others may not have this awareness and services are not always accessible.





Community comments & opportunities contd.

A lack of funds and capacity is a big challenge for Barnstaple's voluntary and community sector, according to Ella. "That then impacts their ability to expand or flex or be more dynamic," she said, adding that groups also often struggle to find trustees. Despite these challenges, Ella said they had some wonderful community groups and "really willing and able community members". There had been a strong response to the pandemic and this had helped bring people together more. Sue Petters, the assistant town clerk, reiterated this saying: "We had to get a response in place very quickly and volunteers just came out of the woodwork. We've managed to really retain that community partnership." She added that the Covid response had helped to find individuals that might have been "falling down the gaps".

Ella and Sue, along with other residents we met during our visits, also mentioned the return of Barnstaple in Bloom in 2021 as a very positive thing for the town. It was commented that there seemed to be a real sense of purpose behind the campaign to get the town looking nice and the committee had brought the community along with them, getting other clubs and groups involved too.

Concerns were voiced about young people and what was available to meet their needs. One resident who had moved to the town from London not long ago felt young people in Barnstaple were lacking in motivation to work hard at school. Another thought that they just got a bit bored. She said, "If you like surfing then this is the best place for it but in terms of culture and high life it doesn't happen." The library has experienced problems with young people gathering outside, with the smell of drugs and the sound of bad language drifting into the children's section. Sometimes they come into the library and can become disruptive. A member of staff there said, "We have had them spitting and swearing. The police are called quite regularly. I put it down to cuts in youth work and cuts in police force. Things can get out of hand quite quickly." He added that it required "constant vigilance" to maintain a balance between providing a public space where everyone is welcome, but also making sure that some don't spoil it for others.





