



# Strategic Plan

2023 - 2026



# Context

The last three years have been challenging for Exeter Community Initiatives, as they have been for most charitable organisations.



Whilst we continued to trade and operate our services throughout the pandemic lockdown, inevitably it has taken a while to bring the team back together and start to refresh our projects, looking towards ensuring their financial security and making sure that we are working to support those who need it most, something that has become more acute within the last year, with costs rising and people struggling to cope both physically and emotionally. This need is likely to increase over the coming years and ECI wants to be in a position to help people get through these challenges.

Our financial situation is healthy, we have successfully set up a number of new projects in response to need, however grant funding is getting tighter and we are increasingly reliant on statutory funding, something that we are looking to change due to the uncertainty around Government funding. In order to be able to successfully obtain alternative funding, such as increasing our income from grants, trusts and foundations, ECI needs to ensure that we are positioned in such a way as to make the most of the funds that are available by being clear in our vision, mission and values for the next three years and focussing on growth in the right areas, addressing need and ensuring that we remain financially robust.

ECI is a strong, agile charity – we are celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2023 and we have an incredible team of staff, managers and trustees. We are well placed to be at the forefront of addressing needs in Exeter and the wider Devon area and our new three year strategy reflects the changes in focus and direction to enable us to do this.

# Strategic Focus: 2023-2026

Over the last few years, Exeter Community Initiatives has worked on a number of different projects in a variety of thematic areas, this has led to the strategic focus and direction of the charity becoming unclear.



Whilst the individual projects are strong, the charity itself has lacked an identity meaning that people both internally and externally are unclear as to what the charity does. We have responded well to the challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic, addressing a variety of needs in both a proactive and reactive way, however post COVID we need to review the work we do, what we do best and where we can use our knowledge and expertise to create the most impact for those we are supporting.

We all know that no one's life follows a linear path. We all make good and bad choices. However we also know that there are points in life where a combination of factors can come together which leads a person down a path towards crisis if they are not supported to resolve issues at an early stage. It's said that we are ALL only three bad decisions away from homelessness which demonstrates the need to reach people at the point where they can benefit from the support to make the RIGHT decision to stay on a stable path. This also translates to communities too; putting the right structures in place, empowering communities to work together and encouraging communication and ideas means that neighbourhoods are starting from a strong foundation, reducing the risk of crime and anti-social behaviours.

# Strategic Focus: 2023-2026



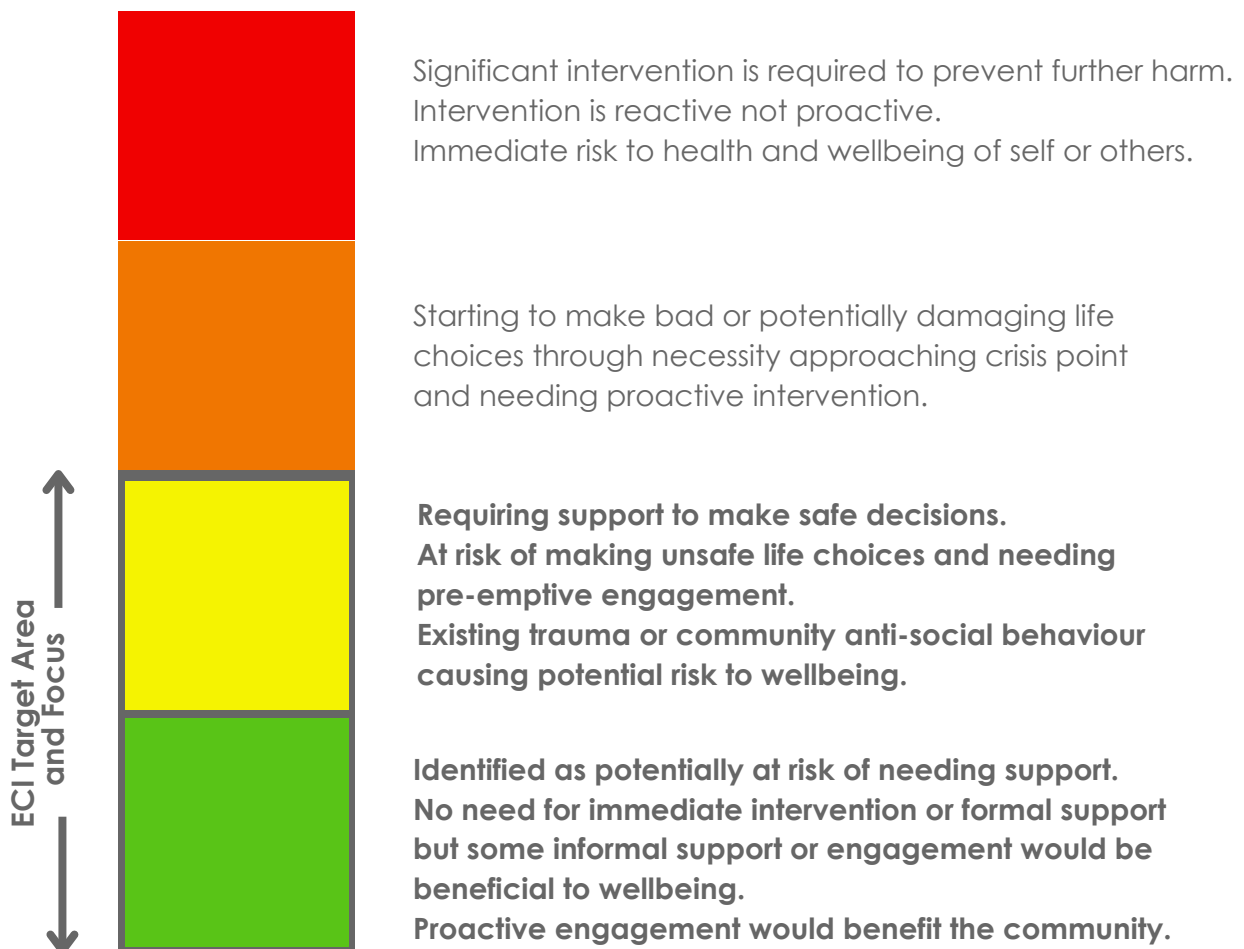
As the cost of living crisis, recession and other challenges continue to bite, there are a number of charities in Exeter, ECI included, who are trying to keep up with the needs of the communities we work with. Food poverty, homelessness and anti-social behaviour have all increased over the last 18 months since the end of COVID and this is likely to get worse before it gets better.

There are a significant number of organisations focussed on dealing with crisis and those on the road towards crisis, but our research and data from both Exeter City Council and Devon County Council, as well as the local voluntary sector, show that there is a lack of organisations focussed proactively on trying to ensure that people don't start down this road by helping them make choices at the very start of potential difficulties.

# Targeted Area and Focus

The focus for Exeter Community Initiatives over the coming three years will be around early intervention and prevention in a number of key, focussed areas.

By providing this early intervention we can prevent people's lives descending down a path to crisis by providing specific projects designed to support people's mental health, reduce social isolation, help to secure safe homes, improve the wellbeing of families and support the development of diverse, self-sufficient communities.





# Our Staff Team

Exeter Community Initiatives has a current staff team of 46 and a management team of seven.



In the last year we have seen significant staff changes over a number of different areas of the business and the plan going forward for the next 12 months is to try and stabilise the staff team and increase staff retention. A new CEO was appointed in November 2022 and we now have a new focus and direction for the charity. A significant part of developing the new strategy included consultation with our staff, ensuring that their voice was heard and they played a part in shaping the new strategy going forward.

A recent survey of the staff team identified a number of key issues that the team feel are important and these will form part of the strategy for the coming three years. The main themes were as follows:

- Staff feel siloed in their individual projects rather than part of the charity as a whole.
- They are unclear as to the definition of ECI as a charity.
- There needs to be better communication between staff, management and trustees.
- They want to understand more about all the other projects that ECI do other than the one they work in.

We have listened to the team and have put in place measures to address these issues.

# Our Board

We currently have a Board of 10 people, all have a broad range and depth of knowledge in areas including equality and diversity, finance, IT and HR.

We are looking to rationalise and shape the Board over the coming three years to introduce a new Treasurer and increase the skills we have on the Board in order to ensure we are fit for the coming years in terms of our knowledge and support.

# Our Brand

We recognise that over the last few years, Exeter Community Initiatives' identity has been somewhat lost amongst the individual project brands.

We have spent time reviewing this and will be concentrating on ensuring that people, both internally and externally, are clear on the mission, vision and purpose of the charity as a whole. Our branding going forward will be focussed on:

- Clarity – who is ECI and what do we do?
- Consistency – the 'golden thread' of our brand and mission running through all of our work.
- Continuity – the team live the values and mission of the charity every day and in all that they do.

# Our Vision, Mission and Values

Exeter Community Initiatives' focus over the next three years is to ensure support is given to people and communities at an early stage to prevent a decline down a road towards crisis.



## Our Vision



To create a City where people are able to work together to create happy, healthy families and strong, diverse communities whilst promoting inclusion and developing life skills through meaningful activity.

We want to reduce the risk of people getting into crisis by providing early intervention support at the point where people need it most.

## Our Mission



Exeter Community Initiatives works to ensure that people are supported at an early stage to reduce the risk of crisis, promote empowerment and allow people to thrive in happy, strong and diverse families and communities.

## Our Values



- **Inclusion** – We promote a culture where everyone can contribute, people are valued for their differences and services are available to everyone.
- **Trust** – we are authentic, reliable and committed to our mission.
- **Innovation** – we are responsive to new ideas, develop and leverage our talent and collaborate to creative new ways of meeting need.



# Delivering Our Mission

We have identified four key areas where we will offer services to deliver this mission:

## 1. Skills and Innovation



- Developing back to work skills to empower people to take control of their return or entry to the workplace.
- Providing meaningful activity to support mental health and reduce social isolation.
- Ensuring that people are given the knowledge and skills to maintain wellbeing and take control of their lives.

## 2. Community Action



- Providing support to communities to empower them to take control of their neighbourhoods and develop strong, healthy and diverse communities.
- Enabling the growth and development of projects designed to address need within communities.
- Promoting and facilitating change within the sector at a more strategic level, including focus groups, networks and events within the community.

## 3. Family Resource



- Promoting happy, strong family dynamics to encourage healthy relationships.
- Supporting young people to thrive.
- Enabling families to access a variety of services to support them through one direct route.

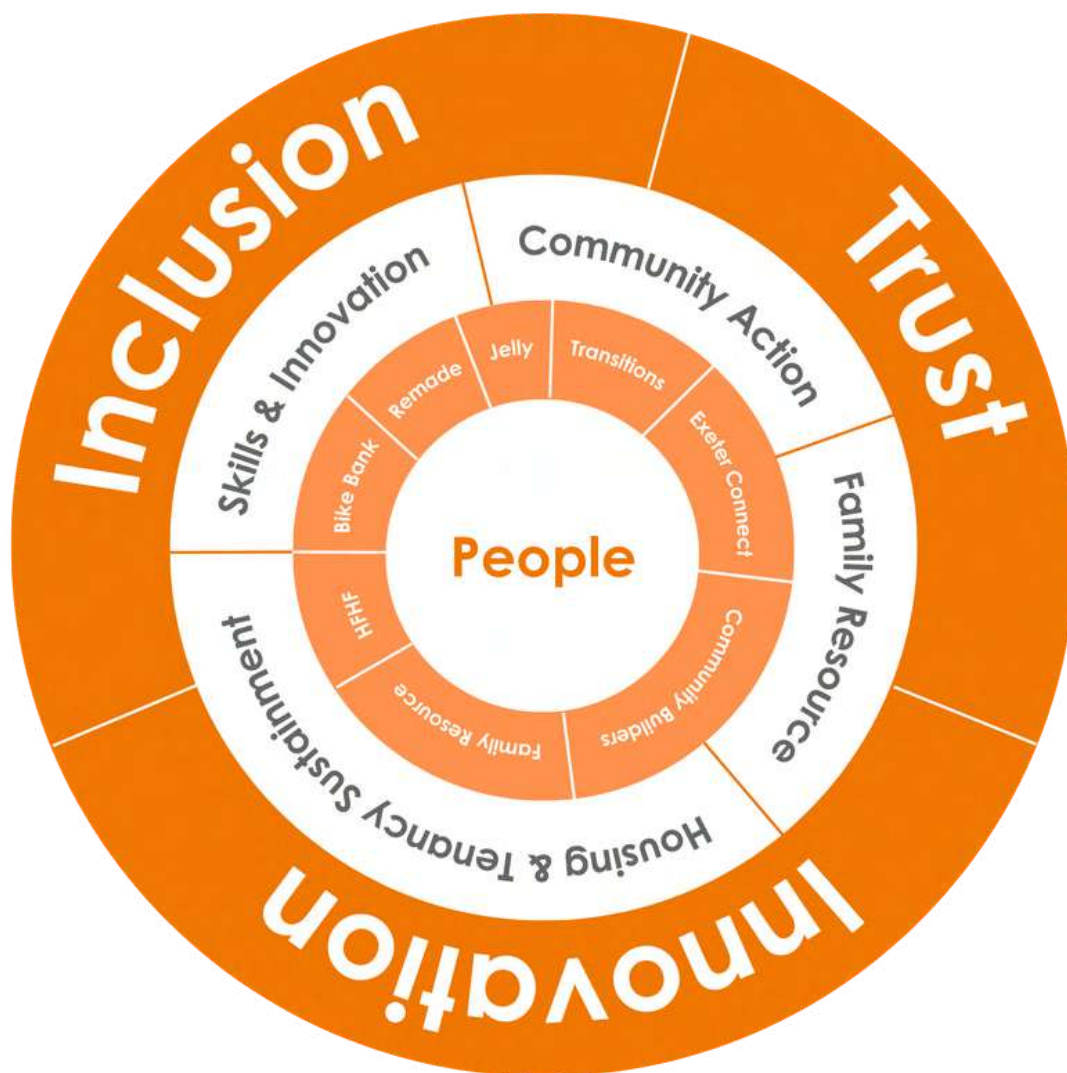
## 4. Housing and Tenancy Sustainment







- Enabling people to gain the skills and confidence to successfully manage a tenancy.
- Ensuring that people are able to access the help they need to prevent their homes being at risk.
- Supporting and empowering people with additional needs to thrive within their home and community.

# Our Model

Our model has people at the very heart of what we do, with the framework around this to support them in the way that they want and need to ensure that they stay on the right path.



# Theory of Change

<b>Mission</b>	<p>Ensuring that people are supported at an early stage to reduce the risk of crisis, promote empowerment and allow people to thrive in happy, strong and resilient families and communities</p>
<b>User</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 10px 20px; border-radius: 5px;">Families</div> <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 10px 20px; border-radius: 5px;">Individuals</div> <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 10px 20px; border-radius: 5px;">Communities</div> </div>
<b>Approach</b>	<p>Providing a range of support at an early stage to empower people and communities to make positive life choices</p>
<b>Focus</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; text-align: center;"> <div style="width: 20%;">   <b>Family Resource</b> </div> <div style="width: 20%;">   <b>Community Action</b> </div> <div style="width: 20%;">   <b>Skills &amp; Innovation</b> </div> <div style="width: 20%;">   <b>Housing &amp; Tenancy Sustainment</b> </div> </div>
<b>Tools</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; text-align: center;"> <div style="width: 15%;">Community Engagement</div> <div style="width: 15%;">Workshops</div> <div style="width: 15%;">Therapeutic Intervention</div> <div style="width: 15%;">Skills Training</div> <div style="width: 15%;">Meaningful Activity</div> </div>
<b>User Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="width: 50%;">• Improved mental health</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Strong, resilient communities</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Reduction in social isolation</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Enhanced employability</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Improved family communication</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Reduced risk of homelessness</li> </ul>
<b>Sector Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="width: 50%;">• Reduction in unemployment</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Reduced pressure on adult social care</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Cost savings for NHS mental health services</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Reduced rate of eviction and homelessness</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Reduction in anti-social behaviour in neighborhoods</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Improved outcomes for children and young people</li> </ul>



# Strategic Objectives: 2023-2026

Our overall strategic aims for the next three years are:



1. To ensure financial stability for the coming years to enable us to create and maintain **sustainable projects** that fulfil individual and community need.
2. To support our staff team to **thrive**, feel a part of the focus and growth of the charity and **live our values** in all their work.
3. To be able to articulate and embed a **clear mission and vision** both internally and to the wider sector and be the **market leader** in our work around early intervention for communities and families.

## Year One – 2023/24

**1. To strengthen our existing projects by making sure the funding is robust and as secure as possible for the coming years.**

We will do this by:

- Creating a **strong fundraising strategy** to focus on diversification of income streams to ensure long term financial health of the charity.
- Increasing unrestricted income to allow for **growth** and respond to **demand**.
- Look at whether our existing income sources are still **fit for purpose** and help us to deliver our mission.
- Ensure that our existing projects still meet need and whether resources could be **better utilised**.

## **2. To grow our portfolio of offerings in our workstreams of Community Action, Family Resources, Skills & Innovation and Housing & Tenancy Sustainment.**

We will do this by:

- Look at **merger opportunities** that fit our vision and mission and could strengthen our offering as a charity.
- To strengthen and grow our **partnerships** with other charitable organisations to create opportunities for growth.
- Start to look at opportunities for growth into the **Housing & Tenancy Sustainment** workstream.
- Begin to develop work around increasing our reach to **new client groups** specifically those with learning disabilities, neurodiversity and mental health conditions.

## **3. To improve our brand recognition through consistent branding, new website and clarity on the mission and values of ECI as a charity.**

We will do this by:

- To ensure **consistent branding guidelines** are embedded throughout the organisation.
- A new **website** is completed and launched.
- All staff recognise themselves as **employees of ECI** rather than only identifying as part of their specific project.

## **4. Increase staff retention and general wellbeing within the team.**

We will do this by:

- Implementing bi-annual **Away Days** to bring the team together.
- Encourage **joint working and shadowing** across projects.
- Amend appraisal process to better reflect **KPIs based on our values**.
- Implementation of **MyECI and Lamplight** systems to improve working practices across the organisation.

## Year Two – 2024/25

### 1. Reducing our reliance on statutory funding from 72% to under 50% of our total income.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring that we have **robust funding streams** in place including major donors, corporate partners and donations as well as the traditional grant funding streams.
- Build **stronger relationships** with grant and foundation funders, improving our reporting and increasing multiyear and continuation funding by 10%.

### 2. Improving our impact and evaluation monitoring and reporting.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring that we are taking an overall, **holistic and person centred approach** to measuring impact and evaluating our projects.
- Ensuring that **impact and evaluation** are forming a key part in our project development.
- Striving to be the **voice of the sector in early intervention** in families and communities.

### 3. Building our financial resilience through traded income.

We will do this by:

- Fully utilising our existing trading arm of the **Jelly shop**.
- Building on **other models of traded income** within our projects.

## Year Three – 2025/26

### Outline of key outcomes

1. Ensure that **no single income stream** makes up more than 30% of the charity turnover.
2. Have a **robust three year fundraising plan** to take us to 2029.
3. Ensure that all of our workstreams and individual projects are **fit for purpose** and still responsive to need.





🏠 Exeter Community Initiatives, 148 - 149 Fore Street, Exeter, EX4 3AN

☎ 01392 205800

✉ info@eci.org.uk

🌐 www.eci.org.uk



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