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Turning the tide of isolation amongst Deaf people in the South West

Deaf people in the South West who are facing daily inequalities in accessing health, education, social care and employment, are to be helped in a ground-breaking new project

Living Options Devon has just received confirmation that it is one of only 61 organisations chosen from 2,000 applicants around the country.

The money is coming from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Chief Executive of Living Options Devon, Diana Crump, said: "This is absolutely wonderful news both for Living Options Devon in that our project was clearly seen as of such high quality, and also for Deaf people all over the South West."

The money will be spent on recruiting and training a Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) user to work with isolated Deaf people whose first language is BSL and help them understand their rights and what services are available. A peer group support network will also be set up using visual aids such as Facebook, websites and webcams, to help people increase their social contact and access to information.

Drop in sessions will also be set up for members of the Deaf community, and research will be carried out that will be used to influence the local, regional and national delivery of services ranging from local government and police to health and education.

It's thought there are around 1,200 Deaf people who are currently living isolated lives, particularly in rural areas of the South West.

Diana Crump added: "The drive behind this project has been the vision of two members of the Deaf community who are employed by Living Options Devon. We held a number of workshops to accurately gauge how people felt and this is what they came up with.

"There is no other work like this in the county. Some of them are living extremely isolated lives and are even victims of hate crime. We believe this project will go a long way into turning this situation around."

Living Options Devon has received £351,306 over three years for the project which is the second highest award nationally and one of only three projects given funding in the South West.