

## State of the Walsall voluntary, community and social enterprise sector

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# State of the Walsall Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector

**March 2019**



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# Foreword



## Welcome to One Walsall's first State of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Report.

The objective of the report is to highlight the impact Walsall's VCSE Sector delivers for communities and local partners, and its current and future opportunities and challenges. We intend the report to act as a resource for VCSEs; to demonstrate what is being achieved, and to highlight ways in which partners, commissioners and funders can best engage with and support the Sector.

As this is the first time a survey of this depth has been undertaken in Walsall, it provides an opportunity to set a benchmark from which to assess the state of the Sector in future years. Where possible, reference has been made to national or similar local authority area data to demonstrate how Walsall's Sector compares. To analyse change in future, we intend to produce this report on a three-yearly basis.

Full details of our findings can be found in pages 8 to 22, along with case studies of Walsall's VCSEs which bring these findings to life. Our recommendations, based on analysis of the findings, can be found on page 7.

Many encouraging trends have been identified, and lots of reasons to be positive, with many VCSEs demonstrating a cautious optimism about the future. Yet, there are also several significant concerns, not least how the rising numbers and growing needs of services users might offset a relatively positive outlook about future financial sustainability.

The role and potential of a strong VCSE Sector is currently very prominent. Many strategies and programmes progressing in Walsall include an explicit ambition to harness the potential of an active and engaged population by supporting local voluntary and community action. Our Sector has much to offer, not least a unique position of reach into, and relationships of trust with, the communities from which many organisations have grown and remain a part. We hope this report is a valuable resource to help fully realise this value and inform future support.

*Alex Boys*

*Chief Executive*

*One Walsall*





# About Us



One Walsall is an independent charity with a 30-year history of supporting voluntary and community action in the borough. We provide infrastructure services to not-for-profit organisations including charities, community groups, faith groups and social enterprises (collectively referred to as “the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector”). Our aim is to support a strong and diverse VCSE Sector in Walsall, and to inspire our communities to engage in local social action.

Our Development Team offers vital practical support to not-for-profit organisations including one-to-one development sessions, training, information and events. Following a major organisational development programme undertaken in 2017, our work is delivered on a locality basis, with a Development Officer dedicated to supporting VCSEs in each of the borough’s four localities. Our nationally accredited Volunteer Centre supports organisations to deliver best practice in volunteer recruitment and coordination, offers advice to residents seeking volunteering roles and advertises hundreds of local opportunities.

In 2017/2018 we supported the Sector to secure over £1.8 million funding from outside of the borough and connected over 350 individuals with local volunteering opportunities.

We are a membership organisation, with membership available to any VCSE operating in Walsall. Our Board of Trustee/Directors is comprised of representatives of the Sector, ensuring we remain responsive to, and representative of those we exist to support.



The Institute for Community Research and Development (ICRD) works with and for our local communities to deliver effective community-based transformational projects. Drawing on a history of collaborative research across our faculties of Social Science, and Education, Health and Well-being, ICRD uses interdisciplinary expertise to affect positive change in local communities, increase knowledge and shape local and national policy. ICRD undertakes pioneering community development studies that improve the life chance of individuals in the region and works with our partnership networks to champion for change.

The Survey data has been analysed and written up by Dr Rachel Massie (Research Fellow) and Professor Laura Caulfield (Founding Director of ICRD).

## **Acknowledgements and thanks**

We would like to thank all the organisations that responded to the Survey and provided invaluable insights in to the activities and structure of the Sector. We would also like to thank partners who have supported us to promote the Survey, including Walsall Community Associations Network, Walsall Council’s Localities and Partnerships Team and local libraries.

# Methodology

## State of the Sector Survey

The State of the Sector Survey was launched on 19 March 2018 and closed on 31 August 2018. The Survey was available via an online link, promoted through One Walsall's e-bulletin and social media, our One Voice Locality Forums and other events, and through partner communication channels. Printed versions of the survey were also distributed to community venues across the borough.

In cases where respondents felt less confident completing the survey alone, or where there were access issues, One Walsall staff and volunteers provided support. However, the answers were always the respondents own, with only assistance to physically complete the questionnaire provided.



The survey was designed to cover a range of topics regarding the VCSE Sector which are regularly reported on, with questions based on similar surveys conducted in other parts of the country. Anonymised data was then provided to the ICRD for independent data analysis.

Two £500 grants were offered as an incentive for organisations to complete the survey, with the winners chosen at random from all complete responses that included contact details.

## Response Rate

85 responses were received. Based on One Walsall's VCS database and local knowledge, this represents a response rate of approximately 15%. This is comparable to that achieved by similar organisations carrying out similar surveys in other parts of the country<sup>1</sup>. Whilst aiming for a higher response rate, the number and diversity of respondents is believed to be a sufficient sample from which to draw conclusions. The range of respondents is typical of the range of organisations which One Walsall frequently works alongside.

## Other Sources

In addition to the Survey, we have drawn on data from the Charity Commission's Register of Charities<sup>2</sup> and NCVO's Civil Society Almanac 2018<sup>3</sup>. Both sources provide data on Registered Charities only. We recognise that a great many VCSEs in Walsall are not Registered Charities and we have therefore been cautious when drawing comparisons with this data. We have also made some comparisons with findings from similar surveys conducted in similar local authority areas (see Appendix for further details).

<sup>1</sup> Members of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) – the umbrella body for VCSE Infrastructure Organisations - report response rates of between 8 and 20% as typical for surveys of this type.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/>

# Walsall's VCSE sector in numbers

1591

The number of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations estimated to be operating in Walsall today

377,800

The number of individuals supported by Walsall's sector last year

31

The average number of years a VCSE organisation has been operating in Walsall

£10.6 million

The estimated annual value of the 26,000 hours volunteered in Walsall each year

2600

The estimated number of full-time equivalent staff the sector employs each year

£10,000

The maximum annual income for more than half of Walsall's VCSE Organisations

10%

The percentage of the sector's income derived from local commissions and contracts

66%

The percentage of organisations with less than six months reserves

75%

The percentage of organisations which hold or are working towards an industry recognised quality standard

68%

The percentage of VCSEs working in partnership with voluntary or statutory organisations to deliver their activities

# Recommendations



## **Better recognise the added social and economic value small VCSEs bring to Walsall**

- The added economic value the VCSE sector brings should not be overlooked. The sector employs a significant number of people in Walsall, and evidence has shown small, local VCSEs are much more likely to employ people within their locality (The Value of Small, Sheffield Hallam (2018)), further enhancing the economic value of these organisations.
- The immense value of Walsall's micro and "below the radar" VCSEs should be better recognised. Our findings demonstrate these small organisations are the biggest mobiliser of voluntary action, with a much larger proportion of volunteers engaged per £1 of income received.

## **Consider how changes to funding practices and support could improve access and sustainability**

- The percentage of income from local contracts and commissions is small. This is not a Walsall-specific issue, and the challenges current commissioning practices raise for small-medium VCSEs have been well documented elsewhere. However, it suggests that more support should be provided to help these organisations compete for local tenders, and commissioning practices reviewed to ensure they are not automatically disadvantaged.
- Given the high numbers of VCSEs investing resources in obtaining quality standards, funders and commissioners should consider how they recognise the value of these in local funding arrangements.

## **Focus volunteering support on capacity building small groups and seek opportunities to pool volunteering intelligence**

- A greater focus on supporting smaller organisations to recruit and coordinate volunteers should be considered. Similarly, funders/commissioners should recognise the costs associated with effective volunteer coordination in funding arrangements.
- Consideration of a more streamlined "single front door" approach to volunteer recruitment that will enable more organisations to access an increased pool of potential volunteers and range of skills.
- Better recognition of the true social and financial impact of volunteering in Walsall should be explored by engaging in efforts to pool intelligence across sectors and organisations. Approaches to collect further data about the social impact of volunteering in Walsall should be explored to help understand the wider value of the sector to both volunteers and service users.

## **Support VCSEs to build ever stronger relationships with one another and statutory partners**

- Supporting increased collaborative working within the sector to address the rising number of service user/needs and maximise service delivery and sustainability should be explored and supported.
- Public sector organisations should consider how they are working with One Walsall to provide more genuine opportunities to develop relationships with local VCSEs and engage them in genuine codesign of services.
- The Survey doesn't allow for full consideration of VCSEs views on the strength and relevance of partnership with some partners. Further investigation should take place into the Sector's views on these relationships to better understand why the VCSEs feel there is little relevance or poor partnerships with some bodies, including housing providers and Walsall CCG.

# Detailed Findings

## Size, structure and income

Estimating the number of VCSEs represents a real challenge because a large proportion of organisations are small, local and not formally constituted in a form which requires registration. As a result, they do not appear on formal central records such as the Charity Commission Register or Companies House. These organisations are often referred to as 'below-the radar' and operate at a hyper-local level.

We know the 85 organisations which responded to the survey represent only a fraction of the those operating within Walsall, as our own database includes many hundreds more which we are in regular contact with.

We have taken the definition of VCSEs to include formal registered VCSEs, including registered charities and social enterprises, alongside the many more unregistered, informal groups "below the radar" groups.

We have used NCVO's Civil Society Almanac 2018 data which calculates there are two registered voluntary organisations per 1000 population in the West Midlands and combined this with Mahon et al (2010) calculation of 3.66 "below the radar" groups per 1000 population to estimate the number of VCSEs operating locally. Through this calculation, it is estimated:

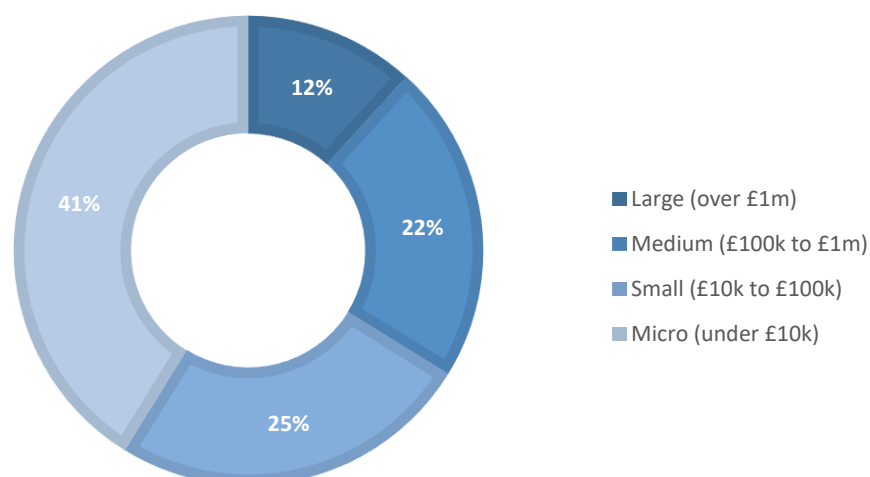
## There are 1,591 VCSEs operating in Walsall today

Respondents were asked to select, from a list of categories, the structure of their organisation. 74% of the respondents were from a Registered Charity, a Constituted Community Group, or a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Based on the date they were established, the average Walsall VCSEs have been operating for is 31 years. However, 20% were established in the last three years and several have been operating for over 100 years.

The size of organisations that responded to the survey varied, yet the majority (66%) had an income of less than £100,000 per annum. This is broadly in line with national statistics<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 1.1 Organisation size according to annual income in Walsall**



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-register-statistics/recent-charity-register-statistics-charity-commission>

# Case Studies



## The Smiley Club



Based in Pleck, south Walsall, The Smiley Club provides activities for members of the community aged 55 and over. Afternoon sessions take place twice a week providing an opportunity for people to take part in fun social activities such as bingo and raffles, or just relax and chat over a cup of tea. The Club also organises trips throughout the year, that give members a chance to get out and enjoy something different, especially around Christmas or when a member has a “big” birthday.

Members of the Smiley Club include individuals who might be vulnerable to loneliness and isolation without the opportunities the Club provides. The club is also a valuable opportunity for local partner agencies to offer support and advice. For example, One Walsall recently helped the club’s membership connect with the local Neighbourhood Police Team, which provided information about personal safety and home security. One member, who was left feeling isolated and vulnerable after her home had been burgled, commented that the club had been a real lifesaver in terms of helping her to regain her confidence and become reengaged with her community.

## SOORA

SOORA started as a small group of families who had recently moved to Walsall from Somali. There is only a small Somali community in Walsall, particularly compared to other local areas like Birmingham, so the group wanted to start a project to help those new to the area feel connected and reduce feelings of isolation. SOORA were awarded funding from the Active Citizens Fund to run sessions to introduce families to other local cultures, help learn English and engage in the job market, whilst helping young people avoid crime and negative behaviours.



Following this initial success, the group has gone on to secure funding from other local funders to expand in to delivering ESOL courses and job clubs. SOORA is a perfect example of starting something small, doing it well, and growing. The value of this small community organisation to those within a specific community looking to reduce their barriers to work is significant.

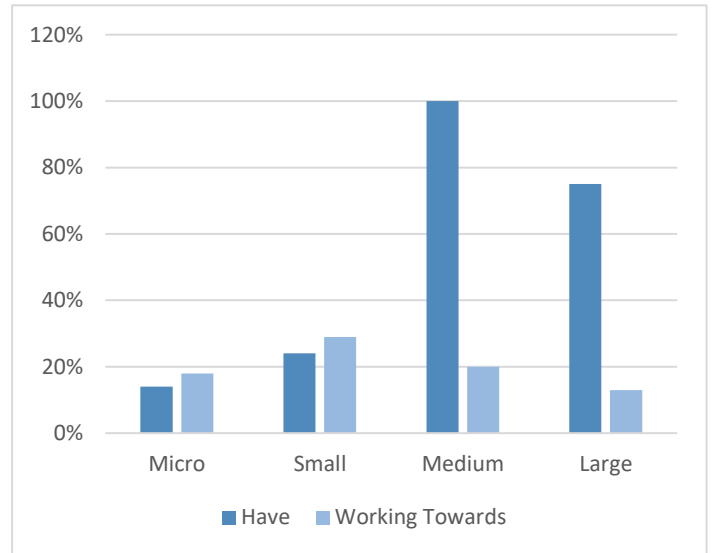
# Detailed Findings

## Quality and Impact Measurement

VCSEs were asked whether they held a recognised quality standard or whether they were working towards one. Over 60% of all respondents have or are working towards a quality standard. The larger an organisation by income, the more likely it is to hold or be working towards a quality standard but, interestingly, it is the medium sized organisations who are most likely to hold a quality standard, a significant proportion of small and micro organisations also hold or are working towards these.

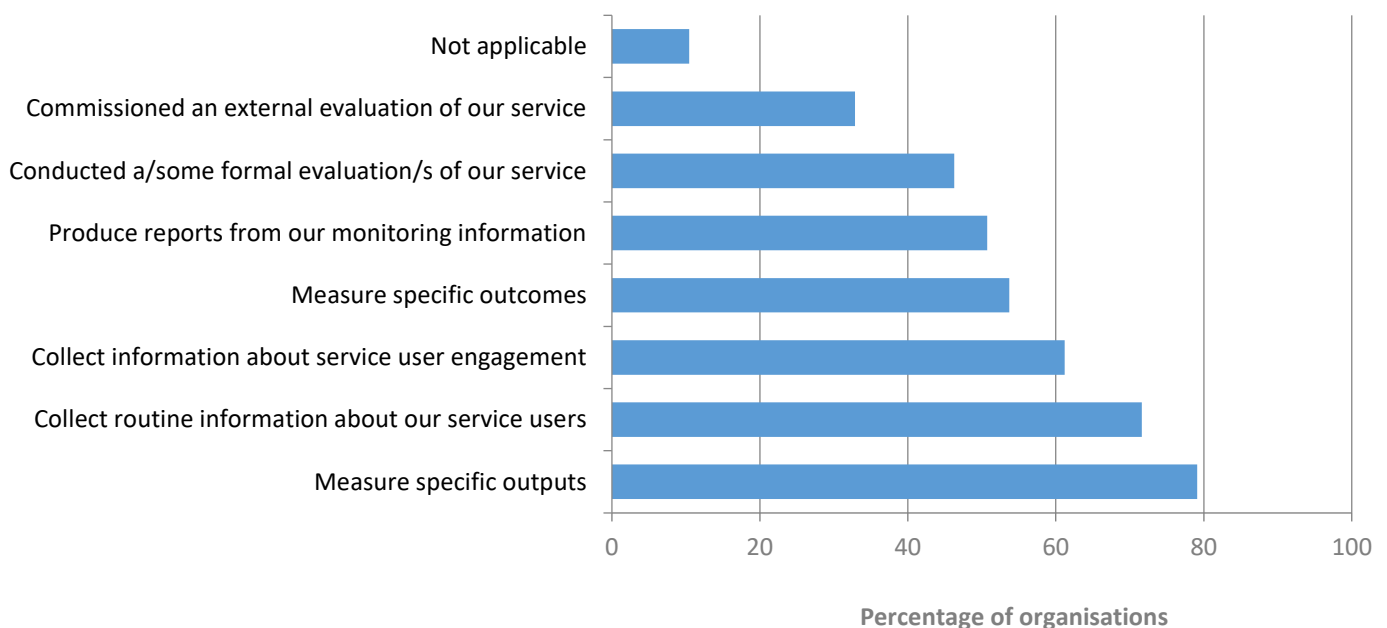
The most common quality standards held by Walsall VCSEs are Investors in People and PQASSO. Of those working towards a quality standard, the most common are Investors in Volunteers and PQASSO. But some respondents noted the prohibitive cost of achieving these marks

**Figure 1.2 Organisations holding or working towards quality standard by size (income)**



Asked about monitoring and evaluation practices, over 70% report routinely collecting demographic information about service users and outputs delivered, but only half (54%) report collecting monitoring on impact, and the numbers conducting evaluation were less.

**Figure 1.3 Monitoring and evaluation practices of VCSE organisations**



# Detailed Findings

## Services and activities

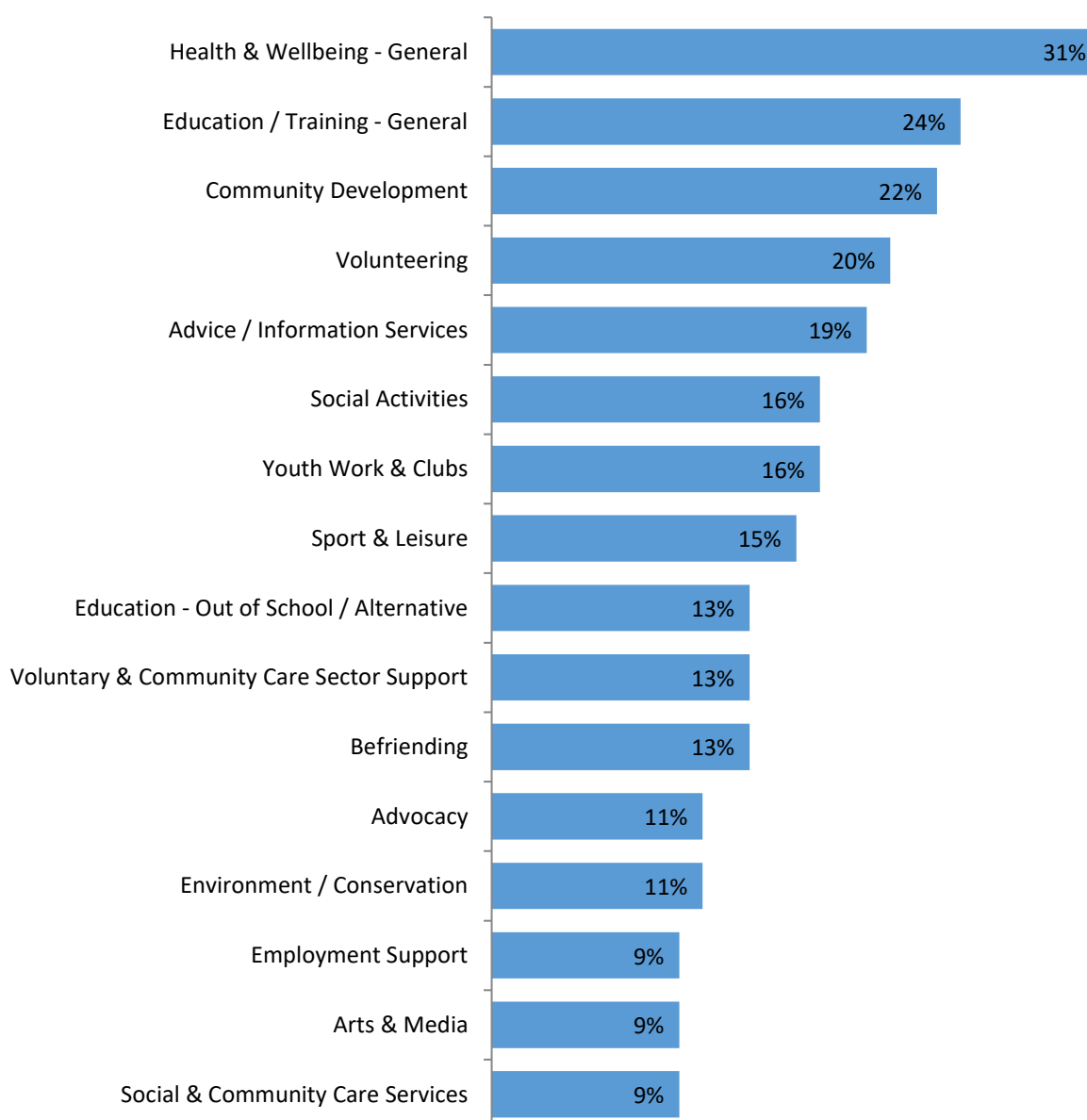


Respondents were asked to report the primary service/activity and up to three secondary services/activities. The most frequently reported services delivered in Walsall, in line with State of the Sector Surveys in similar geographical areas<sup>5</sup>, include:

- Health and Wellbeing (31% of respondents)
- Education and Training (24% of respondents)
- Community Development (22% of respondents)

Figure 1.4 shows the top *primary* services being delivered by VCSEs in Walsall. However, this only illustrates the main service, but most organisations deliver a wide range of activity.

**Figure 1.4 Top 15 primary services that VCSE organisations in Walsall deliver**



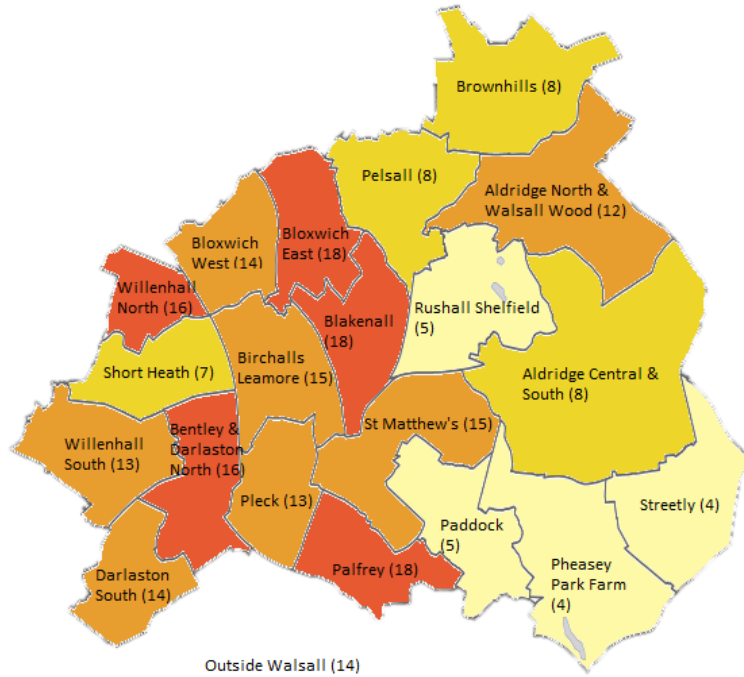
<sup>5</sup> According to CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model for English authorities

# Detailed Findings

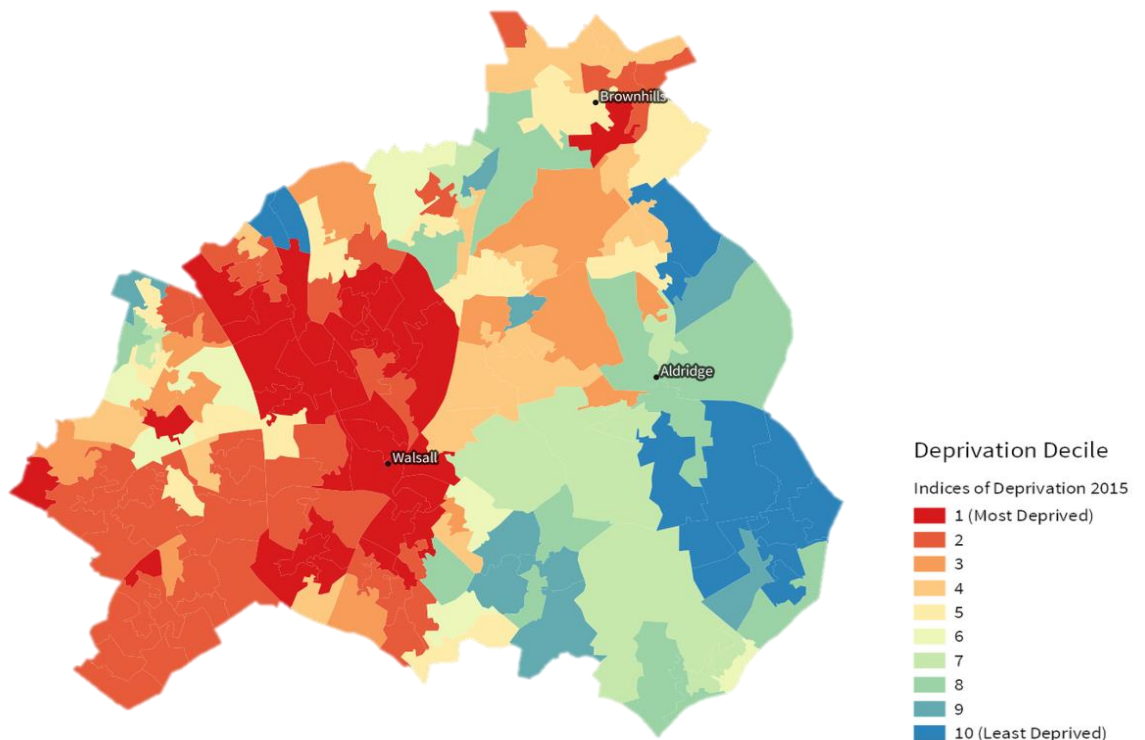
## Location and premises

The wards in which most organisations' beneficiaries reside are shown in Figure 1.5 below. This suggests a reasonable spread across the borough and maps relatively consistently with the map of index of multiple deprivation (Figure 1.6). Approximately one quarter (28%) deliver services from their own premises and almost half (45%) rent facilities. Of those who rent, only 60% have a lease, and the majority of those (73%) have a short-term lease of less than seven years.

**Figure 1.5 Map of residence of organisation beneficiaries**



**Figure 1.6 Map Index of Multiple Deprivation for Walsall**



# Detailed Findings

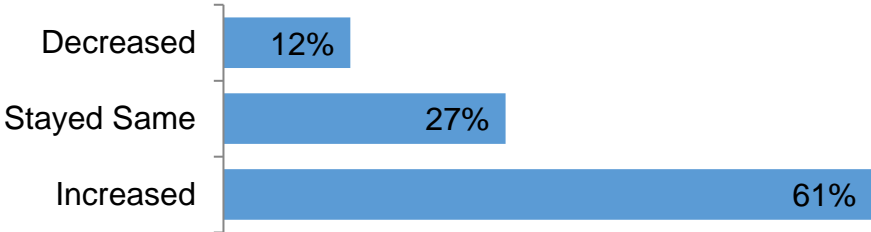
## Beneficiaries

Survey respondents were asked how many individuals their organisation had supported in the last year. Responses ranged from 5 to 250,000 and correlated roughly with size of organisation by income<sup>6</sup>. A total of 377,804 people were reportedly supported by responding organisations, with a breakdown as follows:

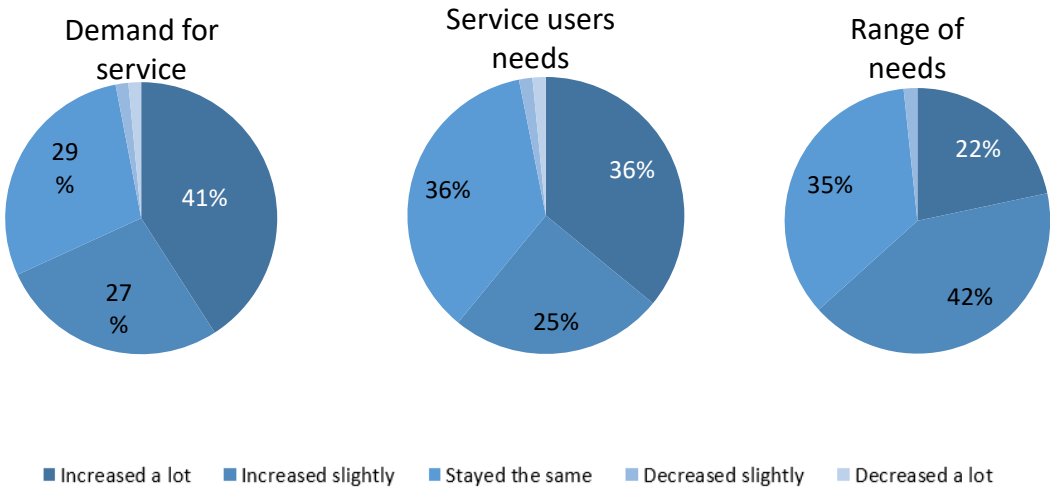
- 22% of organisations supported up to 100 service users per year
- 41% of organisations supported between 100 and 500 service users per year
- 12% of organisations supported over 5000 service users per year

The survey asked organisations how many service users/clients they had supported over the past year. It is possible, as discussed in previous state of the sector surveys conducted in Greater Manchester, that some organisations may have instead reported the number of interventions delivered, rather than individuals per se, which makes further analysis challenging. For example, recent analysis by the Walsall Community Network (a group of 9 medium-sized registered charities) estimates the cumulative total of visits to their combined centres is more than 75,000 per month. Almost two thirds of respondents reported an increase in the number of service users supported over the last financial year 2017/18 and over two thirds reported an increase in demand for services and/or an increase in the needs of service user.

**Figure 2.1 Change in number of service users**



**Figure 2.2 Change in service demand over the past financial year 2017/18**



<sup>6</sup> The data is not normally distributed therefore a nonparametric correlation test was conducted using Spearman's Rank correlation. Income data were provided in ranges – for the purposes of running the correlation, an average figure from the range was used. A moderate positive correlation was found between income and number of service users ( $\rho = 0.49, p \leq 0.01$ ).

# Detailed Findings

## Workforce and Volunteering Capacity

### Paid workforce

45% of the organisations that responded to the survey employ staff, with an overall total of 348 FTE paid staff (509 employees). Figure 3.1 shows an indicative breakdown in the number of staff employed by the Sector. Three quarters of organisations employed less than five FTE paid staff members.

Assuming the national minimum wage (£7.83 per hour for adults over the age of 25) as a low estimate of salary costs, survey respondents spent in excess of £5 million on employing staff in the year 2017/18. With the distribution of numbers of FTE staff in VCSE organisations in line with other areas, an estimated:

£34 million was spent on employing over 5,600 staff in registered VCSEs in Walsall in 2017/18.

Figure 3.1 Organisations by numbers of FTE paid staff

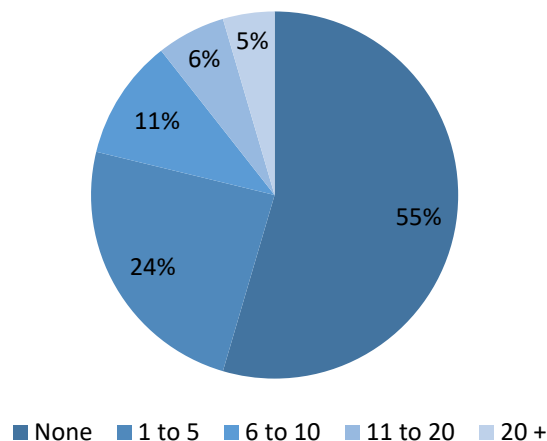
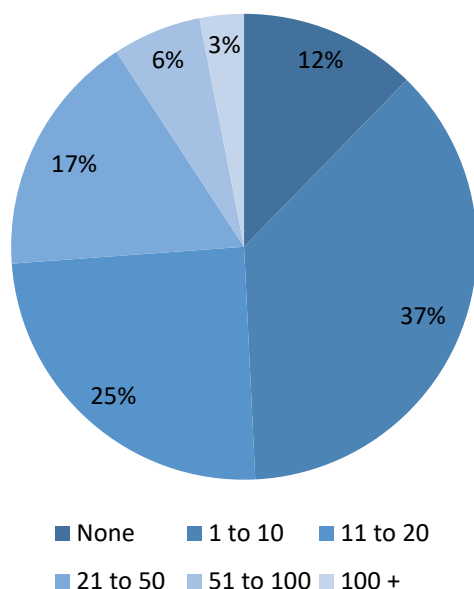


Figure 3.2 Number of volunteers supporting organisations



### Volunteering

88% of the respondents use volunteers to help deliver their service, with an estimated total of 1474 volunteers supporting the 68 responding organisations, volunteering an estimated total of 1121 hours per week. This presents only a snapshot based on those responding to the survey. It is difficult to attribute a value to the contribution volunteers deliver, given both the economic and social impact of their work. However, assuming the national minimum wage (£7.83 per hour for adults over the age of 25) it would have cost £456,500 annually<sup>7</sup> to employ staff to do the work of the volunteers in the Walsall voluntary sector.

Taking the total estimated 1,591 registered and “below the radar” VCSEs in Walsall:

Over 26,000 hours are volunteered each week, valued at £10.68 million per year.

Further qualitative work with organisations, to further understand the nature of the work of their volunteers could help provide a more accurate picture of the contribution and value of volunteers in Walsall. The sector recognises the value of the volunteers that support their organisations, highlighting that recruitment and retention of volunteers is a key priority moving forward for 36% of respondents.

<sup>7</sup> This is likely to be an underestimate of hours and value as some respondents did not state the number of volunteers working for their organisation, or the number of hours given by volunteers. Only 68 organisations provided information for use in the analysis.

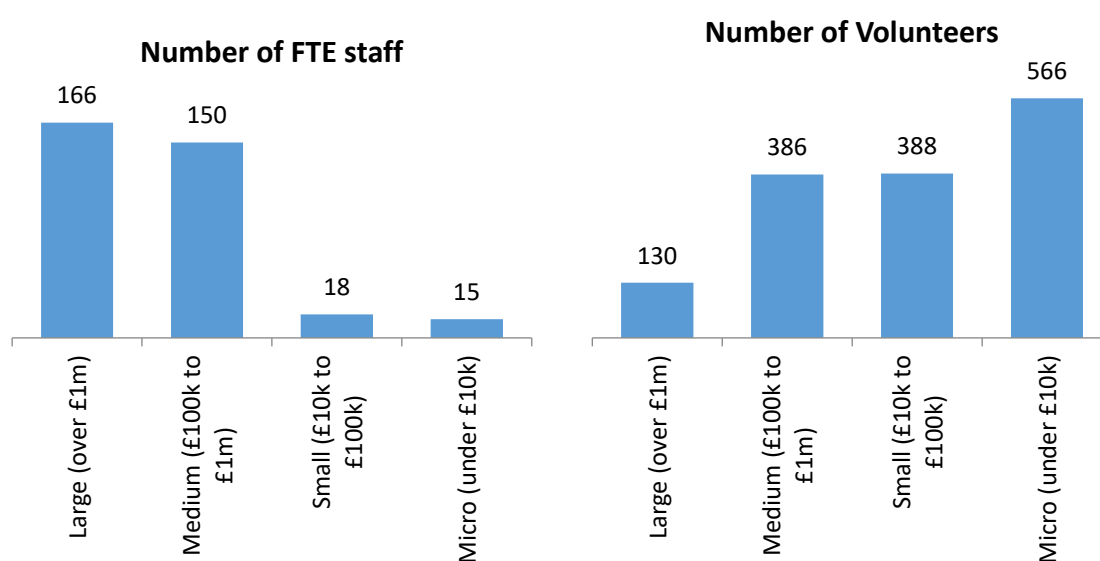
# Detailed Findings

## Volunteering Capacity



Figure 3.3 demonstrates a relationship between the number of employed staff and volunteers relative to an organisations size. Organisations with a larger annual income tend to employ more staff, whilst smaller organisations are supported by a greater number of volunteers. In total, over 60% of all volunteers identified as supporting the Sector are involved in small and micro groups. This demonstrates that Walsall follows national trends, and that smaller VCSEs tend to deliver more added value in the form of volunteering than larger organisations<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 3.3 Number of FTE staff and volunteers by organisation size**



Further, organisations have demonstrated the value of volunteering in supporting people into paid employment, with 40% of organisations reported having employed someone who initially supported their work as a volunteer.

When asked how the number of volunteers involved their work had changed over the last 12 months, the majority reported the numbers had increased (46%) or stayed the same (40%), with only 14% reporting a decrease. The reasons reported for the changes focused on access to specific resources in place to focus on volunteer engagement, planning for volunteer recruitment, and the impact of financial challenges.

Half of respondents report having a designated volunteer coordinator role within their organisation, and most (76%) report being happy in managing, training and retaining their volunteers. 69% of organisations currently offer internal training programmes for staff and volunteers, but external training opportunities are only budgeted for by 44% of the organisations that responded to this survey.

The area in which organisations may need more support is with attracting volunteers, with 38% of organisations stating it was difficult or very difficult to attract volunteers, as shown in Figure 3.4.

Organisations reported recruiting volunteers through several routes, with the top three being:

- Word of Mouth (52%)
- One Walsall Volunteer centre (21%)
- Media advertising – including social media, websites, newsletters and radio (14%)

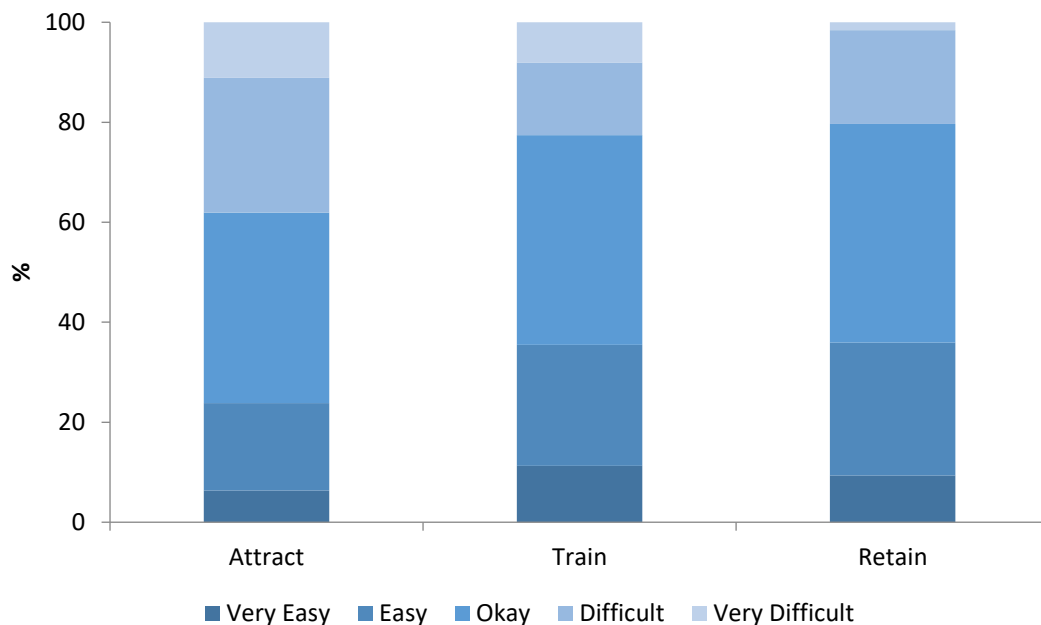
<sup>8</sup> *The Value of Small*, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (2018), p10

# Detailed Findings

## Volunteering Capacity

When comparing attracting, managing and training volunteers between different size organisations, micro organisations appear to report greater difficulty than larger organisations. When asked about retaining volunteers, there appeared no difference between different sized organisations.

**Figure 3.4 Ease by which organisations attract, train and retain volunteers**



## The value of volunteering to the community and the individual

“Manor Farm Community Association is a registered charity delivering a huge and varied programme of services and activities giving a wide range of volunteering opportunities. We have celebrated many years of providing high-quality services to local people and were proudly awarded the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service in 2018.

People come to us for a variety of reasons, but frequently their desires are to gain new skills and experience that will enhance their CV, or they want to give something back to the community they are a part of.



My own journey began with a voluntary role supporting community activities with Manor Farm Community Association. An NVQ Administration qualification, a period of paid clerical work and some years later, I now deliver the role of Charity Manager. We value and support all our volunteers, regardless of their motivation for volunteering.

Many volunteer roles will result in people gaining paid employment, but all are guaranteed to result in enjoyment, fulfilment and ongoing sense of purpose. As one of our current volunteers recently said, “Volunteering has given me a new lease of life and I would say to anyone thinking about becoming a volunteer – just go ahead and do it - you won’t regret it!”. Sue Evans, Charity Manager

# Detailed Findings

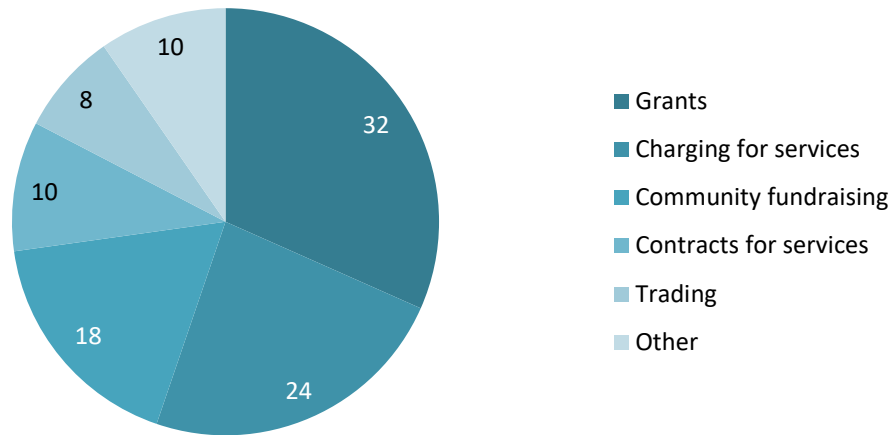
## Funding and Sustainability



Funding is the top priority for VCSEs reported by 73% of the respondents to this survey.

The Sector's income is derived from several sources, with the largest over the past year being grants (32%) and charging for services (24%). Contracts and commissioned services made up only 10% of the income of those who responded.

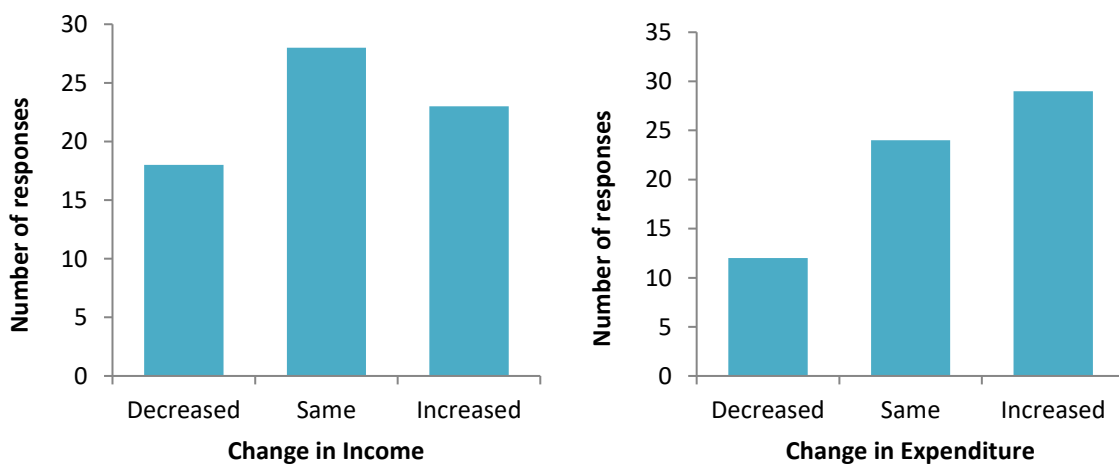
**Figure 4.1 Percentage of income achieved from different sources**



Micro organisations source significantly more income from community fundraising activity compared to larger organisations; meanwhile larger organisations source considerably more income from contracts for services than micro organisations<sup>9</sup>. No significant differences were found for the percentage of income from grants, charging for services or trading. The total estimated expenditure of respondents in 2017/18 was £34 million<sup>10</sup>.

The Survey provides a mixed picture about the change in income and expenditure for voluntary organisations over the past year (Figure 4.2). Almost half of the respondents reported funding to have stayed the same, but one third of organisations reported a decrease in funding (Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.2 Changes in organisation income and expenditure over the last 12 months**



<sup>9</sup> One-way ANOVA to compare the difference in income from different sources between organisation size. \* Fundraising ( $F = 5.46$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) and Contracts for Services ( $F = 2.43$ ,  $p = 0.07$ ).

<sup>10</sup> Total of 51 organisations responded to this question, with a further 8 organisations unable to provide this data.

# Detailed Findings

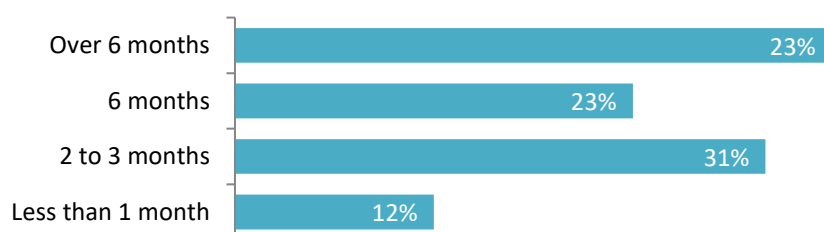
## Funding and Sustainability

The primary reasons respondents gave for changes in income and expenditure over the past year included

	Income	Expenditure
<b>Increased</b>	Working collaboratively with others	Change in Service User Needs
<b>Decreased</b>	Change in Funding	Change in Funding

Over a third reported having used reserves to continue operating during the last 12 months, and when asked how long they could continue if they received no further funding into the organisation, responses show a mixed picture, with almost half stating they could rely on their reserves for six months or more (Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3 Length of time organisations can continue operating with no further income**



Nevertheless, when asked to rate their future financial sustainability on a scale of 1 (“very sustainable and secure”) to 10 (“in danger of closing in the next 6 months”), overall respondents were positive. 74% of respondents provided a rating of between 1 and 5, and 26% of respondents a rating between 6 and 10. The average rating was 4.5.

When asked about future financial plans, 38% of respondents are currently expanding the service they deliver, but 5% are reducing or at risk of closure. However, over half reported not having a business or funding plan setting out future plans for generating income and over 70% reported that they do not have plans in place for when paid staff or volunteers leave.

**Figure 4.4 Percentage of organisations reducing, maintaining and expanding services**





## Walsall Bereavement Support Service



WBSS is a Registered Charity established in 1996. Their qualified counsellors offer their skills on a completely voluntary basis, providing caring and sensitive support to bereaved children, young people and those bereaved by suicide. They work with hundreds of people affected by bereavement each year and provide them with the support and resilience to overcome the challenges of losing someone close to them, the effects of which can be amplified for a child. Until 2017, WBSS also provided a support service for families who had lost a child.

In 2017, WBSS was notified that contracts with Walsall Council and Walsall Clinical Commission Group were not going to be continued. Whilst the notice period was within the required timescales, it was a significant financial shock to the organisation which stood to lose significant proportion of its income in one hit. WBSS felt the impact of the combined loss of contracts hadn't been considered by the commissioners and it left a successful local charity at serious risk of closure.

Working with One Walsall, the Head of Service reengaged with the Big Lottery Fund and made an application for funding to re-establish its adult service and expand work to support local peer support groups. WBSS was recently informed of their success in securing three years funding and has begun to rebuild the adult service that was lost. One Walsall is continuing to work with WBSS to help mitigate the chance of a financial shock like this happening again.



# Detailed Findings

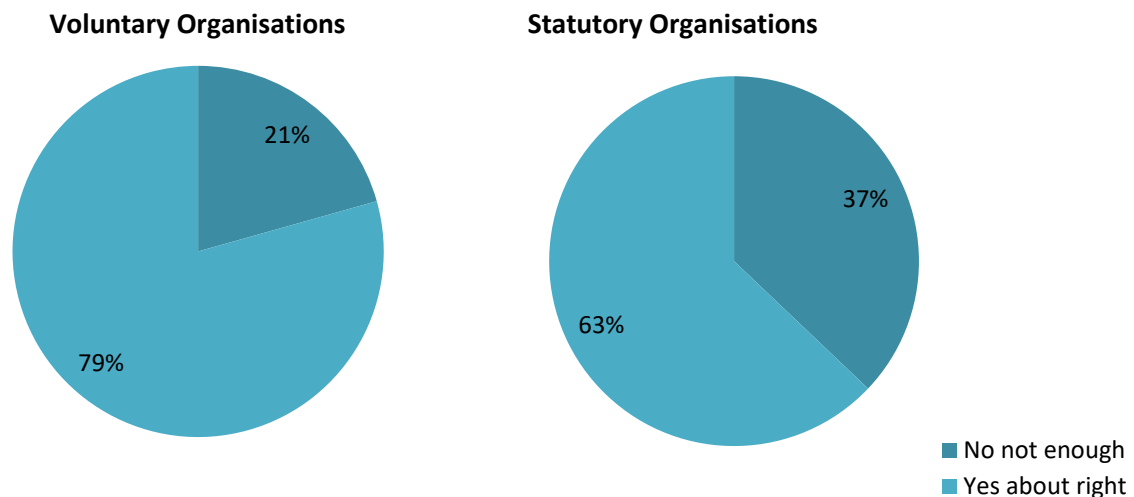
## Relationships and Partnerships

68% of the organisations that responded to the survey work in partnership with other organisations, of which 74% are informal partnerships. On average those who worked in partnership supported a larger numbers of service users compared to those who reported not working in partnership with other organisations (2500 vs 500, respectively).

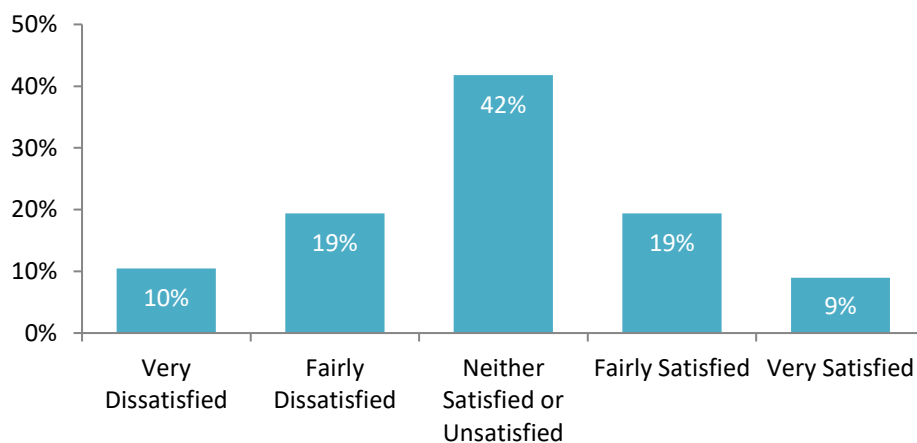
The majority of VCSE organisations are happy with the opportunities to engage/interact with other community/voluntary organisations (79%), and 68% report an increase in working collaboratively with other VCSEs over the last year.

However, there is less positivity about opportunities to work collaboratively with statutory organisations. The data reveals that more than one third of respondents want more opportunities to engage and interact with public bodies (Figure 5.1) and there are higher rates of dissatisfaction about their ability to influence local decisions (Figure 5.2). 93% of respondents to whom the question was relevant thought it was important for them to be listened to and would welcome “true coproduction when planning new services or changes to service delivery” and knowing who to communicate with in statutory organisations was also highlighted as a significant or severe threat by almost half of respondents.

**Figure 5.1 Opportunities to engage or interact with voluntary and statutory organisations.**



**Figure 5.2 Satisfaction of organisation’s ability to influence local decisions**

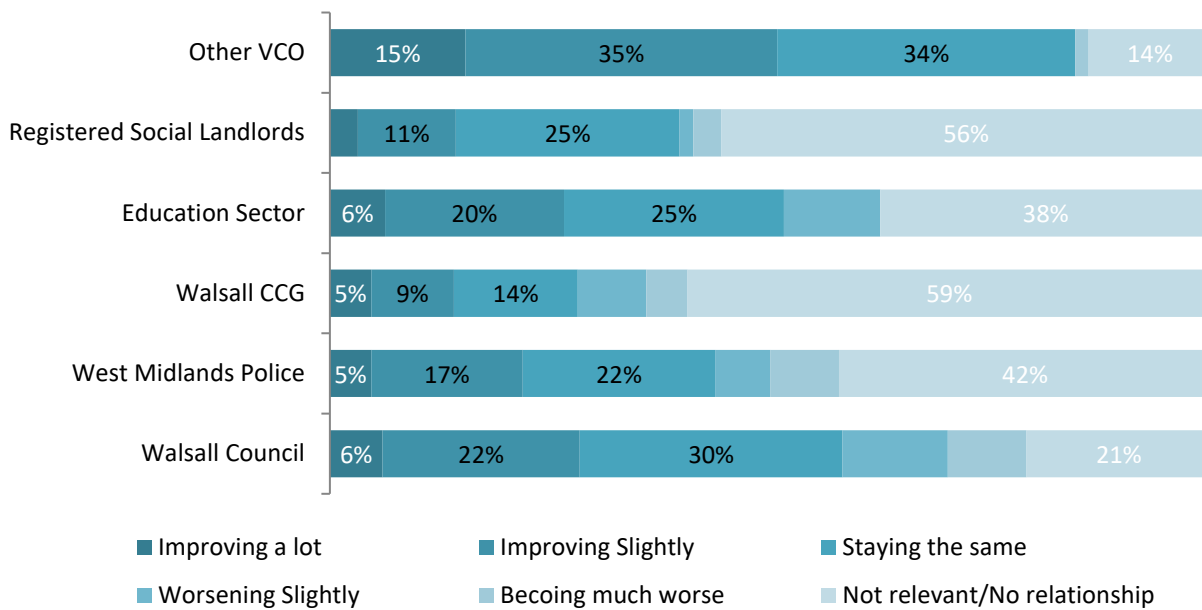


# Detailed Findings

## Relationships and Partnerships

Relationships with organisations in and around Walsall are shown in Figure 5.3. Relationships with other voluntary organisations are very positive, with 85% of organisations reporting static or improved relationships<sup>11</sup>. However, a significant number of VCSEs reported no relationship/not relevant in relation to key statutory partners; Walsall CCG (59%), Registered Social Landlords (56%) and West Midlands Police (42%). These are key areas for further investigation, particularly recognising that combining “not relevant” and “no relationship” into a single answer makes it impossible to distinguish whether important relationships are missing or genuinely irrelevant to the respondents.

**Figure 5.3 Relationships with other organisations in Walsall**



## Partnership Working at Pelsall Hub



When Walsall Council offered community organisations the opportunity to take on former library buildings, Brownhills Community Association, expressed their interest in taking on the Pelsall Village Centre space. In 18 months the Pelsall Hub has grown to now boast a book exchange, tea room, gym and a huge range of activities for families. Supported by 100s of volunteers and accessed by 100s of community members each week, the success is certainly down to the tenacious attitude of Brownhills CA, the support of the community. But the great partnership working between Brownhills CA, Walsall Council and local NHS providers (the building also houses a GP Practice) has been central to starting and sustaining this success. *“This project shows how cross-sector working is really all about breaking down barriers. If the community want to do something, it just takes a few small things and the rest will follow”* Jan Davis, Brownhills CA

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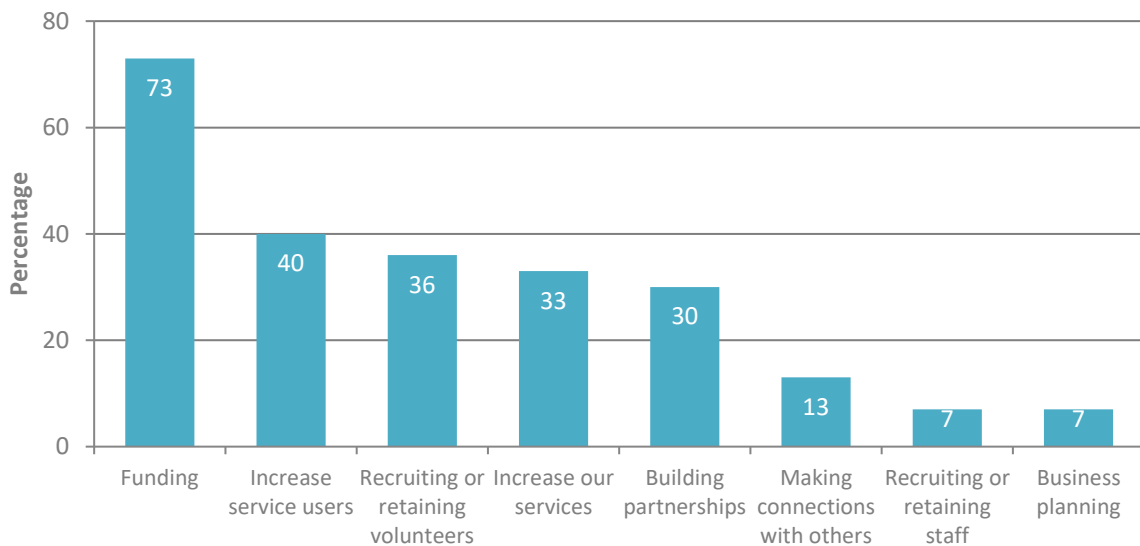
<sup>11</sup> No data on previous relationship status to understand the baseline from which the changing relationship is based upon.

# Detailed Findings

## Future Priorities and Risks

Respondents were asked to select their top three priorities from a list of suggestions. Funding was the highest priority for most, with increasing service users, recruiting/ retaining volunteers and increasing type/geography of services also featuring highly.

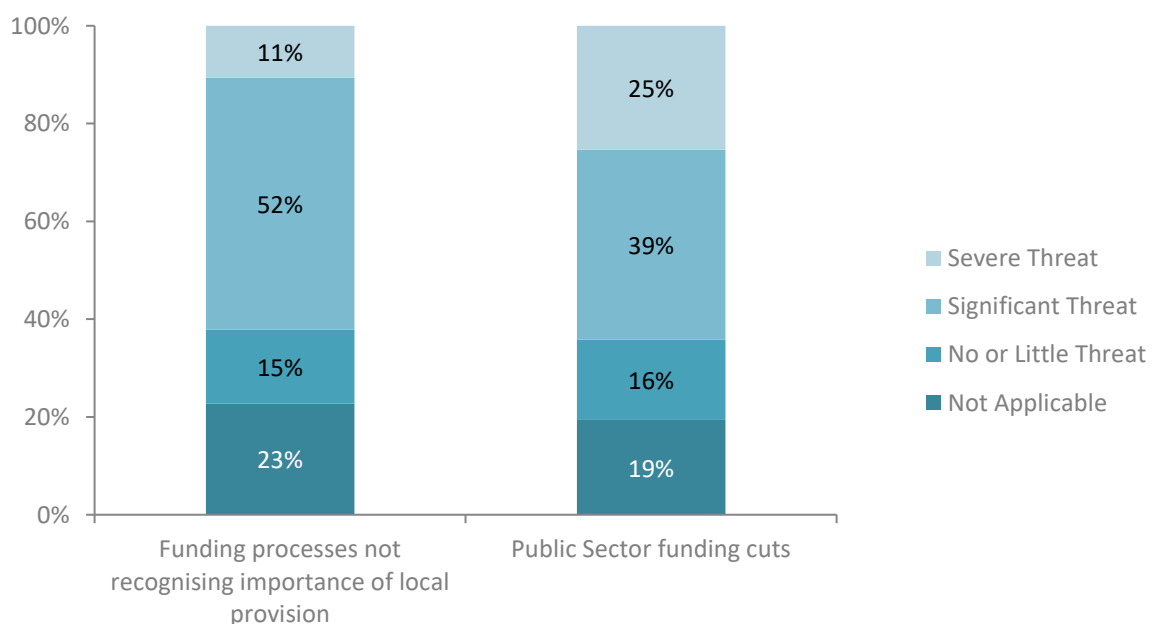
**Figure 6.1 Main priorities of VCSE organisations in Walsall**



When asked what they felt were the biggest risks to their organisation, respondents highlighted their two biggest fears for the Sector to be:

- Public sector funding cuts/change in funding priorities (raised by 62% of organisations)
- Funding processes that do not recognise the importance of locally based provision (raised by 64% of organisations).

**Figure 6.2 Two main threats faced by the voluntary sector**



# Appendix

## Similar Area Reports



We reviewed similar reports and publications on the state of the VCSE Sector in these areas to compare findings with our own. The Children's Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking Tool and Adult Social Care Spending Efficiency Tool were used to identify local authority areas with similar demographic and social-economic characteristics as Walsall.

Links to these reports are provided below:

**Bolton:**

<https://www.boltoncvs.org.uk/Bolton%20State%20of%20The%20Sector%202017>

**Rochdale:**

[https://www.gmcvo.org.uk/system/files/state\\_of\\_the\\_vcse\\_sector\\_-\\_rochdale\\_0.pdf](https://www.gmcvo.org.uk/system/files/state_of_the_vcse_sector_-_rochdale_0.pdf)

**Rotherham:**

[https://www.varotherham.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Rotherham-SOS-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.varotherham.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Rotherham-SOS-Report_Final.pdf)

**Tameside:**

<https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/tameside-state-vcse-2017.pdf>

**Sandwell:**

[https://www.scvo.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Investing\\_In\\_Sandwell\\_Final.pdf](https://www.scvo.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Investing_In_Sandwell_Final.pdf)



Visit our website to download an electronic copy of this report, find out more information on Walsall's VCSE Sector, or to access advice, support and information

[www.onewalsall.org](http://www.onewalsall.org)