

The Voluntary Sector in
Bromley today

THE STATE OF THE SECTOR 2024



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. FOREWORD..... | 6 |
| 2. METHODOLOGY | 7 |
| 2.1 Background to the report | 7 |
| 2.2 Methodology. Our approach to the data | 7 |
| 3. THE SIZE AND SCALE OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR IN BROMLEY | 9 |
| 3.1 VCSE organisations: size of the sector..... | 9 |
| 3.2 Where are organisations based? The geography of the sector | 10 |
| 4. GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURE | 11 |
| 4.1 Legal Status | 11 |
| 4.2 Trustees..... | 12 |
| 4.3 Trustees competencies | 13 |
| 4.4 Summary | 14 |
| 4.5 Recommendation | 14 |
| 5. STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS | 15 |
| 5.1 Staffing profile..... | 15 |
| 5.2 Staffing in the Bromley sector | 15 |
| 5.3 Number of volunteers and volunteer hours and economic value..... | 16 |
| 5.4 Changes in number of volunteers | 17 |
| 5.5 Volunteering recruitment drivers..... | 18 |
| 5.6 Summary Staffing and volunteers..... | 19 |
| 5.7 Recommendations..... | 19 |
| 6. INCOME AND FUNDING..... | 20 |
| 6.1 National Picture | 20 |
| 6.2 Local picture..... | 20 |
| 6.3 Types of Income..... | 21 |
| 6.4 Income and running costs | 22 |
| 6.5 Assets | 24 |
| 6.6 Summary | 24 |
| 6.7 Recommendations: Income and funding | 25 |
| 7. SERVICE DELIVERY AREA | 26 |
| 7.1 Service Groups..... | 26 |
| Areas of activity | 26 |
| 7.2 Beneficiaries in Bromley | 27 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 7.3 Summary | 28 |
| 8. BROMLEY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT | 29 |
| 8.1 Networking | 29 |
| 8.2 Representation | 30 |
| 8.3 Recommendations: Engagement and relationships with statutory partners | 33 |
| 9. THE FUTURE | 34 |
| 9.1 Concerns about the Future and Challenges | 34 |
| 9.2 Challenges..... | 35 |
| Demand pressures..... | 35 |
| Financial Pressures | 35 |
| Funding | 35 |
| Staff and volunteer recruitment | 36 |
| Accommodation/Property | 36 |
| Miscellaneous issues | 37 |
| 9.3 Opportunities..... | 37 |
| Changing political landscape..... | 37 |
| Influencing statutory partners | 37 |
| South-East London Integrated Care System | 38 |
| Digitisation | 38 |
| Developing local partnerships | 38 |
| Equalities..... | 38 |
| 9.4 Recommendations..... | 38 |
| Staff and volunteer recruitment (9.2) | 39 |
| Summary (9.3) | 39 |
| 10. RECOMMENDATIONS | 40 |
| Methodology (section 2)..... | 40 |
| Governance (section 4) | 40 |
| Staffing and Volunteers (section 5) | 40 |
| Income and Funding (section 6)..... | 40 |
| Engagement and relationships with statutory partners (section 8)..... | 41 |
| The Future (section 9) | 42 |
| Staff and volunteer recruitment (9.2) | 42 |
| Summary (9.3) | 42 |
| APPENDIX 1 | 43 |

| | |
|---|----|
| State of the Sector 2024 - Questions..... | 43 |
| APPENDIX 2 | 45 |
| List of people interviewed..... | 45 |
| List of people who commented on the draft | 45 |

1. FOREWORD

We are pleased to present our latest State of the Sector report which examines trends, changes, opportunities and challenges within Bromley's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. The report is based on survey responses between February and March 2024. It is also based on qualitative interviews with 8 local charities, as well as desk top research on the sector, and feedback collected as the Voluntary Sector Strategic Network meeting in June 2024.

The report reflects the contributions of many different voices from Bromley's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and concludes with a series of recommendations from the sector, recommendations for our statutory partners, recommendations for funders and recommendations for Community Links Bromley.

The sections that follow give considerable detail about the challenges, as well as opportunities, faced by the sector in 2024-25. Despite growing demands, in part the result of the cost-of-living issues, the sector in Bromley continues to demonstrate resilience and adaptability.

We trust that you will find the following information and analysis of interest, and our thanks go to all respondents, to those who commented on the draft and to CLB staff and Trustees for their contributions in making this report possible.

Janet Tibbalds Chair of Trustee Community Links Bromley

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Background to the report

The core objectives of this report are fourfold:

- To provide a snapshot of the state of the sector current in Bromley in 2023-24.
- To highlight some of the key challenges faced by the sector locally.
- To put forward recommendations from the sector to our partners including the Council, the Integrated Care Partnership, One Bromley, and Community Links Bromley to help improve all aspects of the sector.
- To identify development needs and opportunities for the sector

The report builds upon the previous asset mapping undertaken in 2020, pre-pandemic, enabling a comparison and highlights any significant trends which can inform the future provision.

2.2 Methodology. Our approach to the data

We set ourselves a target of achieving 60 responses to the survey¹. This target was achieved. Where appropriate throughout the report, we have used these responses to draw some assumptions about the wider sector by providing an estimate of what the data would tell us if applied to the sector as a whole.

Survey: A questionnaire was developed and distributed using a variety of means including: CLB e-bulletin and targeted emails. The questionnaire had a total of 44 questions relating to:

- Organisational structure
- Governance
- Capacity, staffing and volunteers.
- Service delivery and beneficiaries.
- Income and funding
- Assets, skills and knowledge
- Sector engagement and decision making.
- Challenges for the future
- CLB services

A copy of the questions used for the survey can be found as an appendix to this report.

Whilst the relatively small sample size means we cannot be as precise as we would perhaps like to be, we think that the findings are still robust, and we hope illuminating.

¹ A total of 61 organisations returned completed questionnaires. If we assume that 687 organisations in the borough received the CLB e-bulletin, it can be calculated that the response rate for our research is 8.8 % of the sector.

We remain committed to undertaking further work to understand the needs of charitable organisations of all types and sizes especially micro charities and Under the Radar groups/organisations in the borough. To do this effectively we would like to undertake outreach to enable direct engagement with groups, to complement the surveys.

To place the data in context we have also drawn on previous CLB's survey data as well as nationally available data from NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac Insert hyperlink - [UK Civil Society Almanac 2023 | NCVO](#) as a bench marking tool. First published in 1996 and annually since, the UK Civil Society Almanac is the definitive resource on the state of the voluntary sector. Drawing on a range of sources, the Almanac produces insights on what voluntary organisations do, their income and spending, workforce, volunteers and the sector's impact.

The report also references unpublished work undertaken by Superhighways. They have used open-sourced Charity Commission data to map the sector in London. Our thanks to Superhighways for sharing this data.

Where recommendations are made these can be found at the end of each chapter, as well as consolidated in the final chapter of this report. Suggested ownership of the recommendations is also made.

Where it is recommended that CLB lead this is indicated by a (C); where the suggested lead is the Borough this is shown as a (B); where joint ownership is suggested this is shown by the Borough and the ICB, whether place based or at system level, this is shown by (B) + (H); where a wide conversation is suggested with funders, this is shown by an (F); where a partnership approach is suggested this is shown by (P).

Recommendation

- CLB undertakes further work to understand the needs of charitable organisations of all types and sizes especially micro charities and Under the Radar groups/organisations in the borough. That this work includes outreach to enable direct engagement with small/micro VCSEs to complement the surveys. (section 2.2) (C)

3. THE SIZE AND SCALE OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR IN BROMLEY

The most recent review undertaken by CLB of the size and scale of the VCSE in Bromley was undertaken in 2020. Based on publicly available data from the Charity Commission it showed that there were 776 registered charities active in Bromley (2019). They had an aggregated income of £222,839,132. This compared to 878 registered charities active in Bromley in 2015. More recent data available from Superhighway² suggests that this now stands at 709 registered charities.

In addition to registered organisations there are many small groups, and organisations operating in the borough. There are known as “under the radar” (UTR) organisations. However, based on the formula from the University of Southampton and the NCVO, which states ‘that the average estimate of the number of UTR organisations is 3.66 organisations per 1,000 of the population,’³ it is estimated that in Bromley in 2024 there were approximately 1,207⁴ UTR organisations providing charitable services in the Borough.

3.1 VCSE organisations: size of the sector

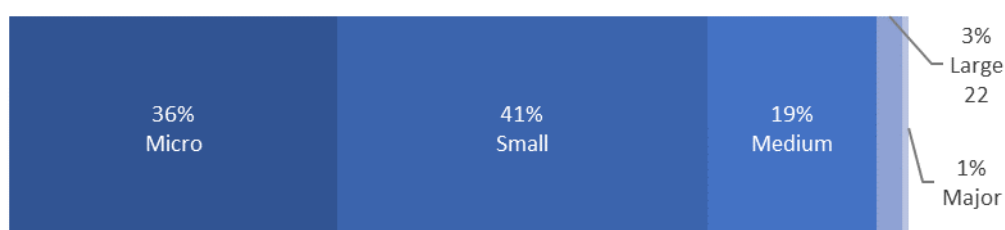


Figure 3.1: Charity sizes across the Borough of Bromley, based on NAVCA data.

Aside from the UTR groups, smaller organisations made up the vast majority (76%) of the sector. These include micro-organisations, those with an income under £10,000; and small organisations with an income between £10,000 and £100,000.

² <https://superhighways.org.uk> – offers advice, training and IT support to help small charities and community organisations.

³ John Mohan, David Kane, Karl Wilding, Julia Branson, Fiona Owles, ‘Beyond ‘flat earth’ maps of the third sector’, *Northern Rock Foundation* Issue 3, February 2010, <http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/downloads/NRF-TST-Summary-Beyond-Flat-Earth-Summ.pdf>, last accessed 17.11.2015, p.2

⁴ Whilst it is useful to be able to use this official data from the Charity Commission, it is acknowledged within the VCSE sector nationally that registered charities are only one part of the VCSE sector. Other elements include those groups and organisations that are undertaking charitable work but do not reach the financial threshold (turnover of over £5,000) of becoming a charity or groups and organisations that do not want to have charitable status. This includes community groups; forums; networks; voluntary organisations; and faith-based groups, as defined in the UK Civil Society Almanac (NCVO).

There is also a constituency of groups that are often defined as ‘Under the Radar’ groups. It is important to define what is meant by ‘Under the Radar’ (UTR) as this term is increasingly being used in literature regarding the sector. However, the lack of an authoritative definition has led to a lack of coherence in the understanding of UTR groups.

3.2 Where are organisations based? The geography of the sector

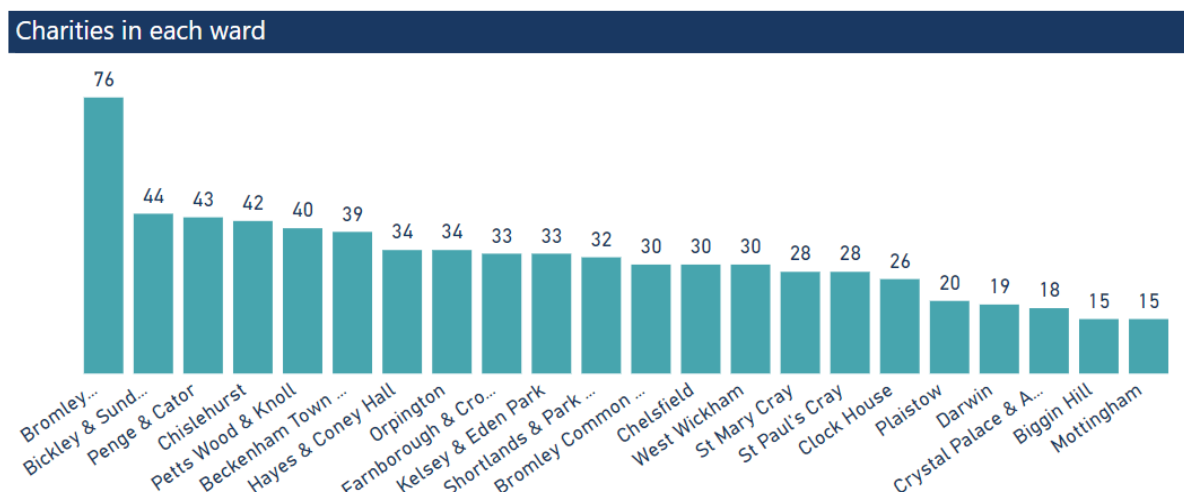


Figure 3.2: Charity by Local Authority Ward, based on Charity Commission data.

An analysis of charities by ward shows an uneven distribution. The greatest number can be found in the Bromley Town ward (11%). By contrast Mottingham and Chislehurst North has the lowest number of charities. This is unchanged since the last review⁵.

A previous detailed analysis undertaken for CLB highlighted that charities' income by wards also revealed large variations with 62% of income concentrated in three wards, namely Bromley Town, Orpington and Crystal Palace.

Other wards have a higher concentration of micro and small charities. Evidence from NCVO suggests that smaller voluntary organisations are more likely to work locally. These are also concentrated in wards with higher levels of deprivation, though a notable outlier is Mottingham and Chislehurst North, which is the most deprived ward and has the fewest micro and small charities. This area does, however, contain one of only five major charities in the borough.

⁵ We recognise that Bromley Town includes the town centre where there is more office space, and that organisations based there may have a borough wide role rather than locally focused.

4. GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURE

4.1 Legal Status

This refers to how VCSE organisations are established and defined in law. There are a number of legal forms that a VCSE organisation can take: the form chosen is set out in its 'governing document'.

The type of structure affects how the charity will operate, such as:

- who will run it and whether it will have a wider membership
- whether it can enter into contracts or employ staff in its own name
- whether the trustees will be personally liable for what the charity does

There are four main types of charity structure:

- charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)- introduced by the Charities Act 2006
- charitable company (limited by guarantee)
- unincorporated association
- trust

An organisation must have a minimum annual income of £5,000 to be registered as a charity.

The legal structures of organisations that contributed to this research are as follows:

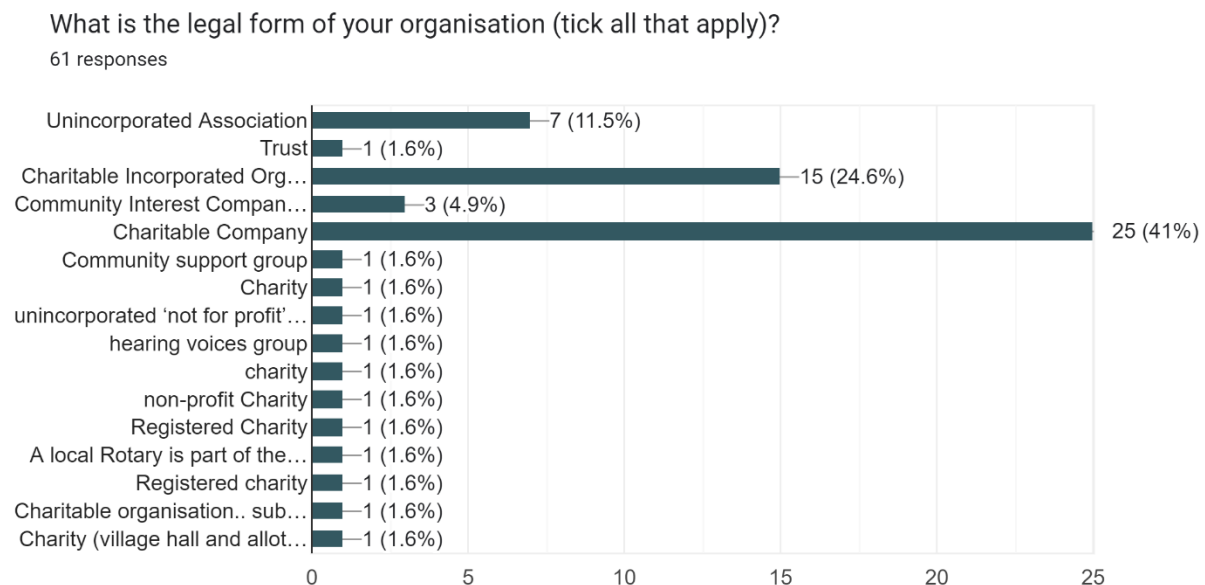


Figure 4.1: Legal status of organisations

The above chart shows that many respondents to this research are registered charities (41%), followed by Charitable Incorporated Organisations (24.6%). The responses from under the radar organisations totalled 11.5%. We have previously estimated this to be about 1,207 organisations.

4.2 Trustees

Our previous reports have emphasised the critical role that governance plays in the sector’s capability to develop and grow. Trustees play a very important role, always unpaid, in a sector that contributes significantly to the character and wellbeing of the Borough.

Superhighways analysis of data from the Charity Commission suggests that there are 3,375 people in trustee roles in the Borough, with an average of 6 per organisation.

To understand both capacity and capability we asked respondents to consider board size, skills and vacancies.

How many Trustees/Management Committee Members does your organisation have?

61 responses

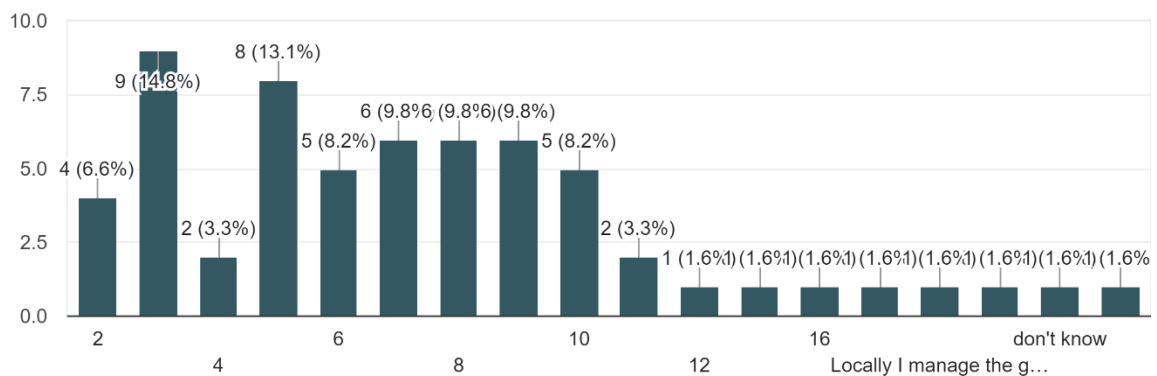


Figure 4.2 Number of trustees/management committee members

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of respondents (53%) have between three and eight trustees or management committee members.

We separately asked about trustee vacancies.

Do you have Trustee vacancies?

61 responses

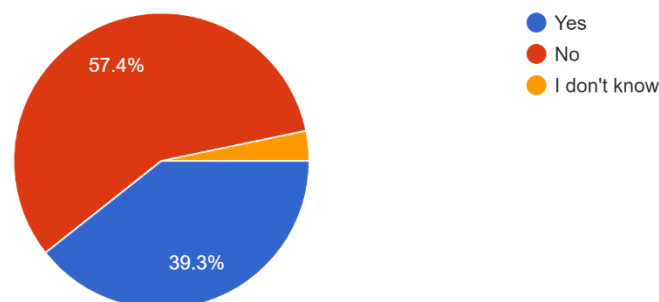


Figure 4.3: Trustee vacancies

39.3% reported vacancies. Whilst this is a high figure, it is lower than the previous survey in 2020 where 45% reported vacancies.

4.3 Trustees competencies

To complement data on numbers of trustees we asked about skills and gaps on Boards:

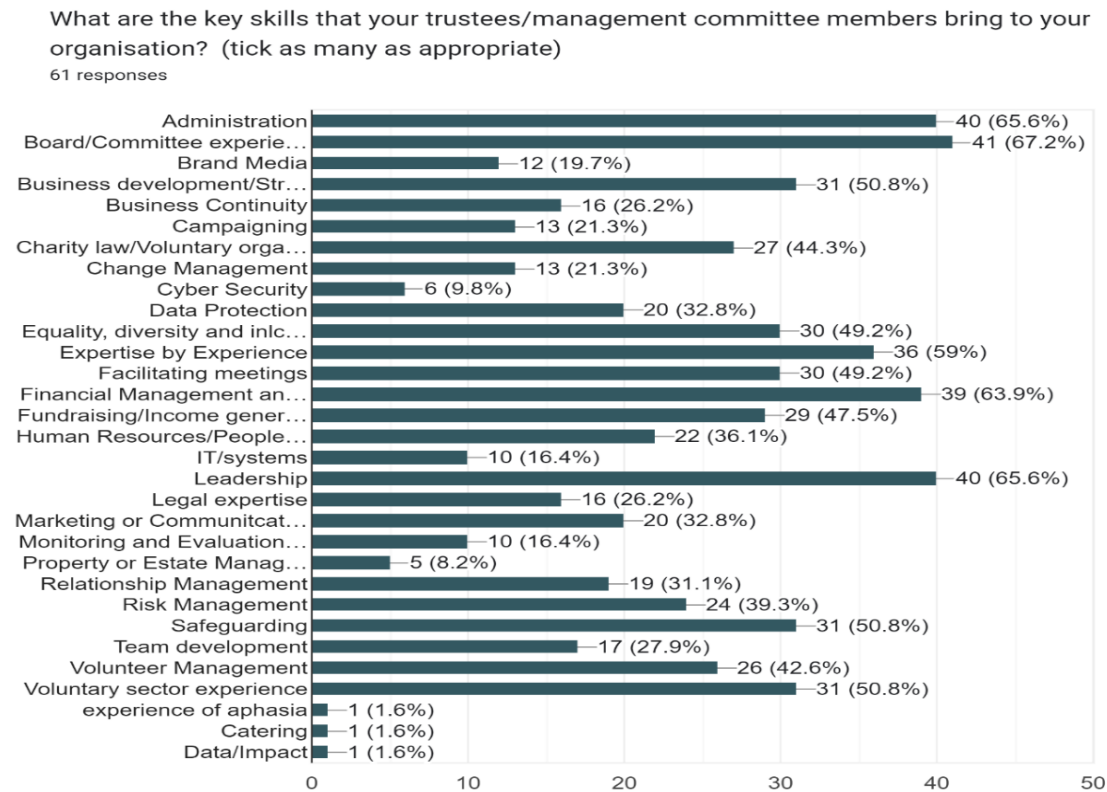


Figure 4.4 Trustees skills

The respondents reported that their trustees bring a wide range of skills to their boards (see Figure 4.4), the majority covering finance, charity governance, committee experience, voluntary sector experience, administration and leadership. By contrast, less than 15% report that their trustees bring relationship management, IT or property skills.

This is supported by Figure 4.5 where 41% of respondents reported that there were IT/systems skills gaps in their trustees. Over a third of respondents also reported gaps in marketing, fundraising and legal skills.

What are the skill gaps in your board/management committee? (tick as many as appropriate)

61 responses

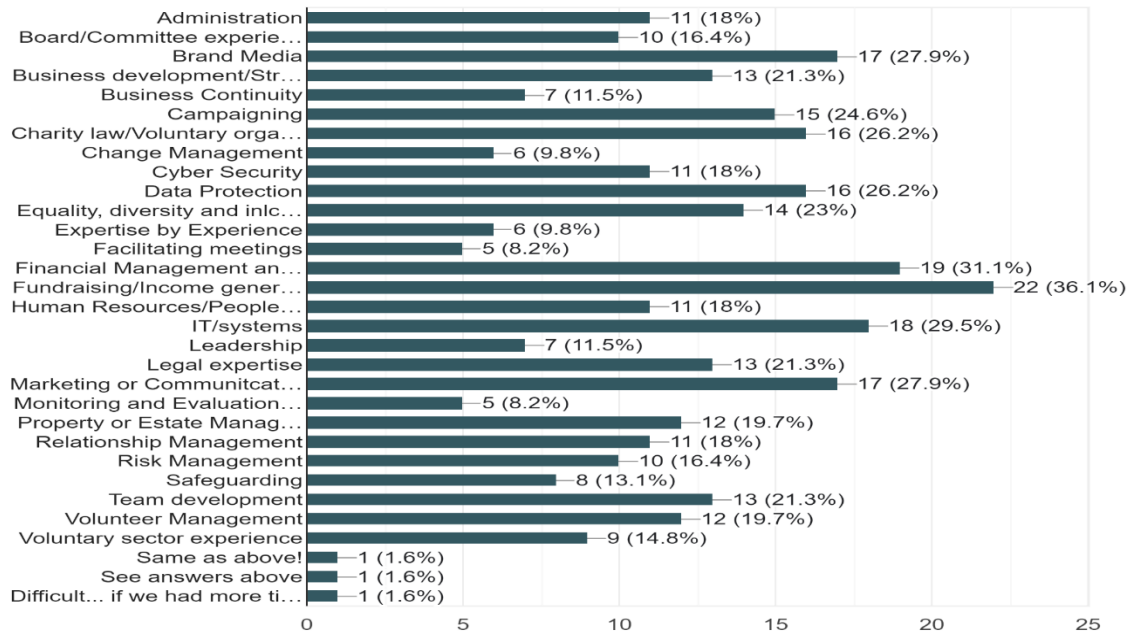


Figure 4.5: Trustee skills gaps

4.4 Summary

Elsewhere in this report we explore organisational challenges (see section 9). Leadership and trustee recruitment figured highly as challenges and this data highlights the scale of the challenge with 39.3% having vacancies, with gaps in many areas of competency.

4.5 Recommendation

- CLB to lead on developing an action plan to consider Trustee skills gaps across the sector and develop proposals for addressing them (section 4.3)

5. STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS

Evidence from the most recent NCVO almanac⁶ shows that there has recently been a decline in both the number of organisations and the size of the workforce in the sector nationally.

5.1 Staffing profile

According to the NCVO Civil Society Almanac 2023⁷, in figures relating to the national situation

- A little under one million people worked in the voluntary sector in 2023, about 3% of the UK workforce. The voluntary sector has grown rapidly over the last decade, up by about 24% or the equivalent of about 180,000 people since 2011. During the same period, the public sector and private sector each grew by 13%.
- However, in spite of that overall increase, NCVO reported a decline of 4% since 2022, reversing the previous pattern of increase, in a return to 2019 levels of employment.
- Slightly more than half (56%) of voluntary sector employees work for smaller organisations with fewer than 50 employees.
- Around a third (32%) of the voluntary sector employees work from home or do hybrid working – generally higher than public and private sectors.

5.2 Staffing in the Bromley sector

How many people does your organisation have in paid employment?

61 responses

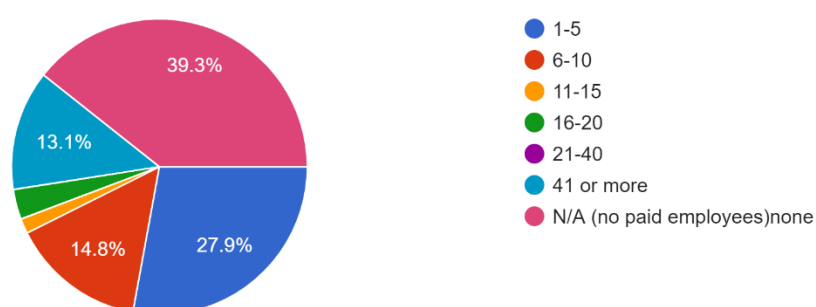


Figure 5.1: Number of employees employed in charitable organisations in Bromley

⁶ 18 October 2023

⁷ <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/>

Figure 5.1 presents the local picture, showing that 60.7% of respondents have paid employees, of which 42.7% have between 1–10 staff (42.7%). By contrast 13.1% reported having more than 41+ employees, in a mix of full and part time roles.

It is challenging to extrapolate from this data to the scale of staff employed by the sector in Bromley as a whole. However, if one assumes 3% figure nationally translates to local data, we estimate that 5,280 are employed in the sector in Bromley⁸.

The biggest employer is My Time Active with 3,212 employed.

Demographics

The survey did not enquire about the demographics of employees in the sector locally. Advice will be sought on how best to source this data for future editions. Instead, we present below NCVO data, which highlights a number of national trends:

- The diversity of the sector's workforce remains low and but is higher among volunteers, while young people are still least likely to be involved in the sector.
- Women and older people are well represented in the charity sector, both in volunteering and workforce. Women make up two-thirds of the voluntary sector workforce and the sector has the oldest workforce when compared to the public and private sectors, with one in four staff aged 55 and above.
- Young people (25-34 age group) are the least represented (12%) in formal volunteering. However, the proportion of informal volunteering by young people rose during the pandemic from 24% to 31%. This may be partly because large numbers of older people were shielding during the pandemic or the increased reliance on digital literacy, which younger generations are more familiar with, enabled them to volunteer. Charities are relying more on digital forms of communication, engagement and volunteering, some groups, particularly older people, may find themselves it more difficult to become involved because of lack of confidence in the use of digital systems.
- EU nationals working in the voluntary sector declined after the EU referendum, but the decline has stalled, and levels remain stable. In 2019, the proportion of EU nationals working in voluntary organisations was 4%, after peaking at 5% in early 2016.
- Disabled people (19%) are as likely as non-disabled people to formally volunteer. Their numbers (23%) are also growing, with 1 in 5 employees identifying as disabled.

5.3 Number of volunteers and volunteer hours and economic value

Volunteering is also good for the local economy. Previous research by Andrew Haldane, a former Chief Economist at the Bank of England, estimates the size and value of volunteering to be around £50 billion a year, which equates to 3.5% of annual UK GDP. This is formulated

⁸ Working age population in Bromley estimated as 176,000.

on the basis that there are around 15 million regular volunteers in the UK, who contribute around 4.4 billion hours of work a year. With this figure doubling when one includes informal volunteers, he states that the Office for National Statistics estimates that the value of volunteering is around £50 billion per year. To place this into context, this equals the size of the national education budget.⁹

In Bromley, Charity Commission data suggests that there are 14,485 volunteers active in the Borough.

How many volunteers does your organisation work with?

61 responses

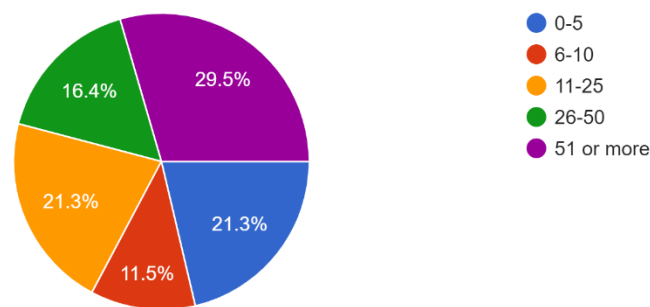


Figure 5.2: Number of volunteers working with charitable organisations in Bromley

The central role that volunteers play is illustrated by the fact that 67.2% of organisations have 11 or more volunteers. We know from previous research that the majority of volunteers contribute up to ten hours a week (58%), so this is an important asset base in our community.

5.4 Changes in number of volunteers

The data suggests that volunteering remains stable in the Borough with 50.8% of the organisations responding reporting no change in the number of volunteers. 26.2% had gained volunteers in the last year, with only 19.7% reporting a loss (Figure 5.3).

⁹ Andrew G Haldane, 'Why volunteering is good for the economy', The Independent, 22nd December 2015

Have you experienced a net gain or loss of volunteers in the last 12 months?

61 responses

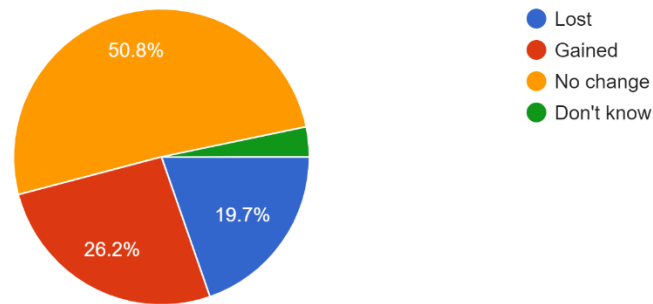


Figure 5.3: Change in volunteer numbers in the last year.

With 77% of respondents stating that they are experiencing either no change or growth, this suggests that volunteering in general remains healthy in Bromley. However, this masks skills shortages and gaps amongst trustees and many organisations locally continue to place volunteer recruitment and retention at the top of their list of challenges.

Evidence from NCVO reflects this and suggests an ongoing decline in volunteer numbers since the covid-19 pandemic 2019/20. They explain that “This is, of course, likely to have been further impacted by the cost-of-living crisis since late 2021. These challenges are likely to be greater for certain groups within the population, with a need to create flexible, inclusive and accessible volunteering opportunities”.

5.5 Volunteering recruitment drivers

To understand the pressures driving recruitment locally, we asked organisations to provide feedback on this topic. Respondents reported a number of factors which impact on volunteer recruitment, both positively and negatively.

On the debit side:

- Cost of Living pressures, as well as the end of COVID¹⁰. This was a theme for several respondents. One observed that, “People having to work more for their own financial stability, and wellbeing.”
- Other responses were: “Time challenges”, “Lack of time mainly because our volunteers are parents of children and young people with disabilities. Their caring commitments prevent them from devoting regular time to volunteering” and another said that people are “very busy”.
- The impact of COVID, ageing volunteers and retirement was mentioned as a factor by numerous organisations with the need to bring in younger volunteers. Typical of

¹⁰ We have assumed that to mean that people who were on furlough and able to volunteer having to return to their jobs

this was the comment that, “We are not bringing younger active people into the group and existing active volunteers are getting older”. This was recurrent theme with another saying, “We have an ageing group of volunteers/helpers who have given freely of their time previously, but many are no longer able to do so”.

On the positive side

- Some have gained volunteers via a number of different routes that include word of mouth, as well as by raising the profile while advertising volunteering vacancies in part through social media channels or paid marketing. This improved charity visibility was also raised by others with increased promotion on social media, and “awareness of the Charity”.
- Another organisation attributed improved recruitment to training delivered by Community Links Bromley: “Better Understanding of the 4 R's Recruit, Resource, Reward/Recognise, Retain.” Accordingly, CLB is exploring the feasibility of re-running this session.
- Others have actively sourced recruits from new sources with “New interests from students and recent graduates,” and an “Increased number of younger volunteers” or via “a professional network”.

5.6 Summary Staffing and volunteers

Most charitable organisations employ at least some staff, although nearly two thirds have either five or fewer employees.

Volunteers contribute many hours of work for charities, with some volunteering more time than would be expected for most full-time jobs. Consistent with national trends of stability in volunteer numbers, [OBJ] few organisations reported a loss in volunteer numbers and those that did reported small decreases.

There is a challenge in relation to an ageing volunteer profile and a need to encourage younger volunteers. Recruitment and retaining qualified staff and volunteers can be challenging (see section 9).

5.7 Recommendations

- That CLB in collaboration with the Volunteer Managers Forum considers a sector wide approach and action plan to working with younger volunteers. (section 5.2); that such an approach includes engagement with FE Colleges and Universities locally, seeking to position volunteering as part of student pathways into employment.

6. INCOME AND FUNDING

To understand the financial health of the sector locally we asked a series of questions. This included questions on annual income, sources of income, changes in funding, factors influencing change; whether funding covered costs; how shortfalls were managed, expectations for the next year, cuts in service and assets.

6.1 National Picture

The most recent data available nationally from NCVO reports¹¹:

1. Compared to the previous year, overall income dipped by 6% or £3.6bn.
2. After initial fast growth in the early 2000s, income and spending plateaued from about 2007/08 and started growing again in 2012/13. However, the rate of increase slowed over time, with a reversal of this pattern in 2020/21, when both spending and income declined.
 - Nationally after adjusting spend in previous years for inflation (2020/21), combined income fell for charities of all sizes. There was a faster rate of decline for micro, small and medium-sized organisations (organisations with income under £1m) at 11% than for large, major and super-major organisations (income over £1m) at 6%.
 - Micro and small organisations make up 3.6% of the sector's total income. Their income fell from £3.1bn in 2007/08 to £2bn in 2020/21 (a rate of decline of 35%). For medium organisations, their total income fell from £9.5bn to £7.5bn (a 20% decline) during the same period.

Even though the number of all but micro-organisations has declined in 2020/21, over the longer term, larger organisations have received an increasing amount and share of the sector's total income, while in 2020/21 income of smaller organisations is shrinking at a much faster rate.

6.2 Local picture

The most recent analysis undertaken by CLB using publicly available charitable data shows an aggregated income of £222,839,132. No similar analysis was undertaken as part of the 2024 survey of the sector. However, if the local picture is consistent with the national data, we assume that the current income stands at¹² £216,153,959. This is still a significant contribution to the local economy.

The following pie chart shows the annual income of the respondents to our survey. It shows that 65.6% charities have a reported income of under £100,000; 13.9% between £100,001-£500,000; with 24.6% reporting an income of over £500,001.

¹¹<https://data.ncvo.org.uk/> NCVO Almanac 2023 report

¹² 222,839,132 - 6685173.96 = 216,153,959

What is your organisation's annual income?

61 responses

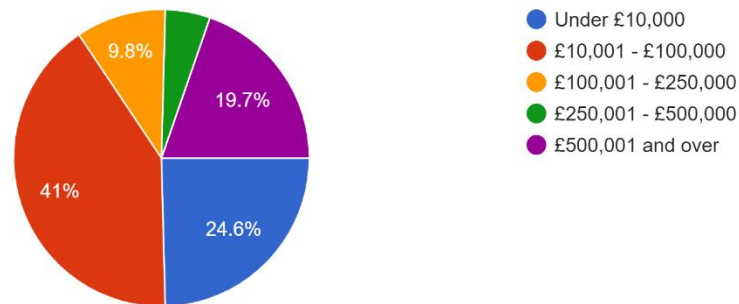


Figure 6.2: Organisation's annual income

6.3 Types of Income

What are the sources of your organisation's funding? (tick all that apply)

61 responses

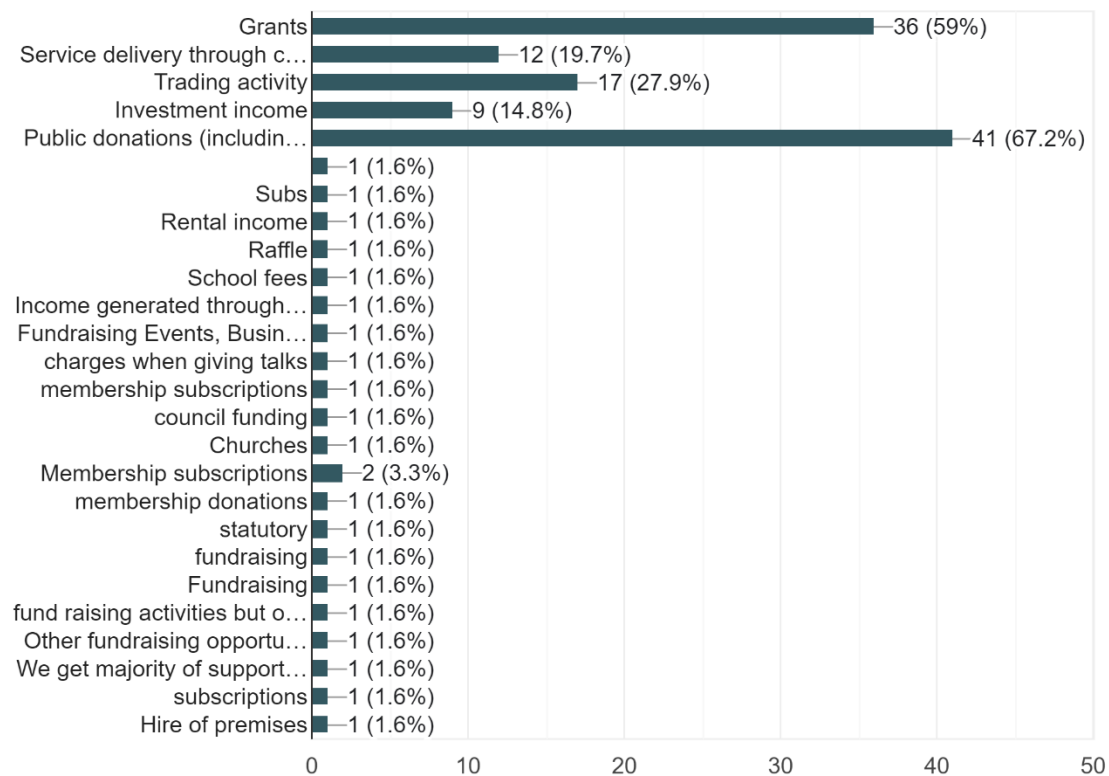


Figure 6.3: Source of organisational funding

Public donations including legacy are the top source of funding with 67.2% of organisations reporting this as a source of income. This is followed by grant income received by 59% of charities. By contrast 19.7% of organisations report commissioning as a source of income. Interestingly, this represents a change from our previous survey (2020) when local contracts were reported by 34% of respondents. This dominance of public donations and grants that may be attributable to local and central government is in line with the national picture of funding sources.

We are mindful that this is a significant risk as real pressures remain on central/ local government funding availability and notwithstanding the new government, the possibility of further reductions is possible. However, given the importance of grant funding to local community and voluntary organisations further discussion on this with our statutory partners would be welcome. In this regard we note that the current local grant programme is limited to the Innovation Fund. Whilst this is an important investment in provision locally it is currently not available to support children’s services. Further groups can only apply for a maximum of two years. This limited the amount of time available for test and learning. It is recommended that consideration be given by Bromley Borough and the Integrated Care Board to multi-year grant agreements from the Bromley Innovation Fund. It is further recommended that consideration be given to the establishment of a grants programme for organisations supporting children and young people in the borough.

We are mindful from our exchanges with funders that Bromley is seen as a “cold spot” for funding and investment, that it is often perceived as an affluent borough despite areas of high deprivation within it. Further conversations are planned with funders to explore the reasons for the lack of funding investment into the sector in Bromley.

Funders also highlight to CLB the absence of a central sector contact person within the Council, when considering funding needs. We feel that this could be easily addressed by identifying a named point of contact to further develop these conversations.

6.4 Income and running costs

Has funding over the last 12 months covered the total cost of running of your organisation for this period?

61 responses

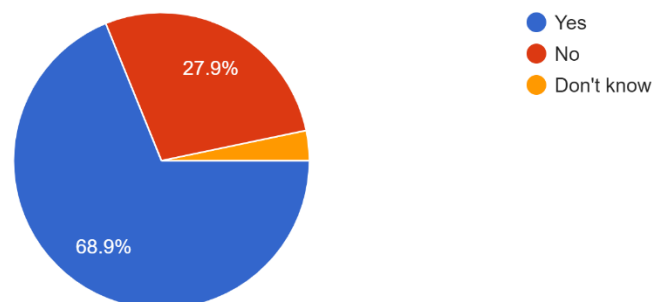


Figure 6.4: Funding covering running costs

27.9% of local charities have had insufficient income in the last 12 months, to cover running costs, resulting in deficit budgets. The result of this is that numerous organisations report that they have had to cut services due to funding pressures.

However, this does not mean that the impact of these changes has been even across the sector. NCVO data indicates that the fall in sector income was not evenly spread among voluntary sector organisations. It was felt more by smaller organisations (those with income below £1m) compared to larger organisations (those with income over £1m). Small organisations saw a significant income reduction of 11% in 2020/21 compared with the previous year.

Further, smaller organisations are also much less likely to receive income from statutory sources, which grew in 20/21, than larger organisations. Smaller organisations are also far more reliant on public giving – which declined in 20/21 – than larger organisations.

Consequently, small charities were more exposed when the cost-of-living crisis created more demand and more financial pressures on their services resulting in the number of smaller organisations continuing to decline as a proportion of all charities.

To understand the implications of these funding pressures we asked organisations what the implications were and how they managed this shortfall. A number of approaches were identified.

They included:

- Using reserves
- We are developing a “fundraising strategy”.
- “Reserves, reserves, reserves”
- By drawing down and spending some of our unrestricted reserves
- Reduced staff and activity

To understand the position for the forthcoming year we asked about the forthcoming financial year 2024-25.

Over the next 12 months do you expect your financial position to
61 responses

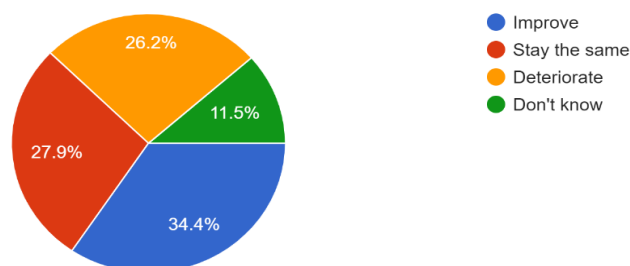


Figure 6.5: Expectations for financial position

62.3% of organisations reported that the position would either improve or stay the same. However, over 1 in 4 charities (26.2%) advised that the position would deteriorate showing that a significant proportion of the sector is financially vulnerable.

6.5 Assets

National data from NCVO shows that assets are predominantly held by large, major and super-major organisations.¹³ Assets reported as held by Bromley organisations are shown in Figure 6.6 which shows that 65.6% have reserves, which compares to 77% of organisations in the NCVO dataset. This local figure may be driven by the number of small and micro charities in the area. Although nationally, only 13% of micro and small organisations own property, 23% of Bromley charities report doing so and 9.8% also report holding land.

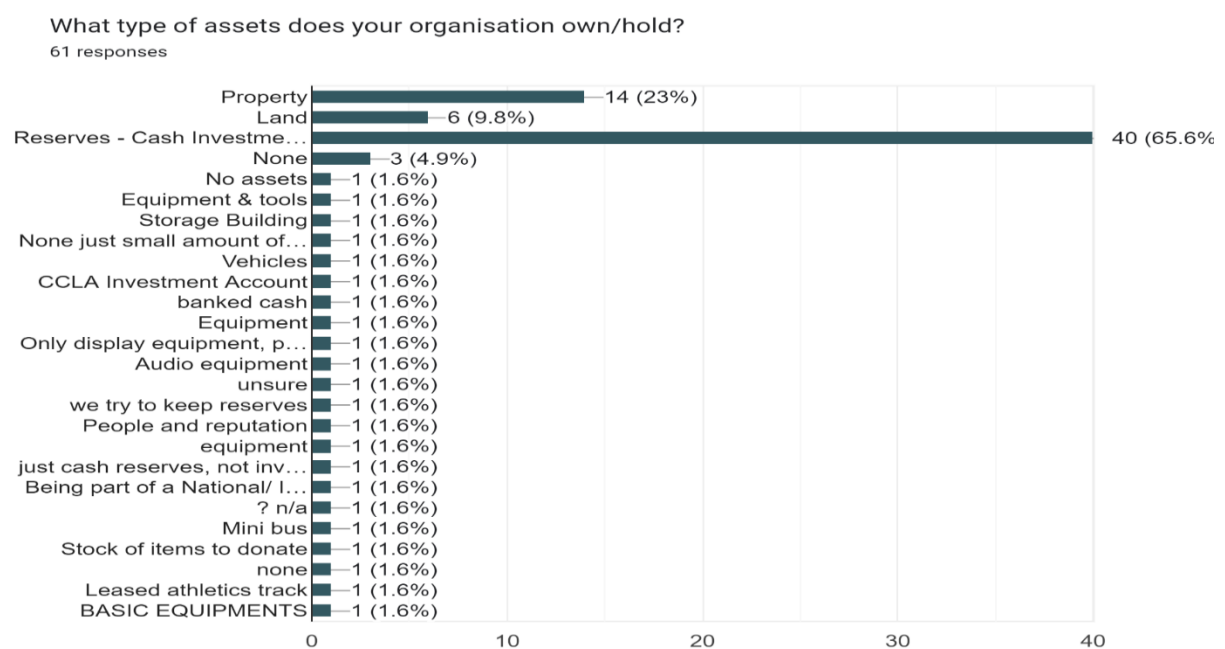


Figure 6.6: Assets held by Bromley organisations

6.6 Summary

Public donations remain the most important source of income for Bromley charities, and grant funding remains important to the sector locally. Rising operational costs, such as inflation and utility bill, can strain budgets and many organisations struggle to balance income with expenses.

¹³ <https://almanac.fc.production.ncvocloud.net/financials/assets-and-reserves/>, accessed 19 October 2019

6.7 Recommendations: Income and funding

- That CLB continue to host regular bid writing training and meet the funder style events to give local groups the best chance of success. (6.3) (C)
- That CLB convenes a Funder Round Table to lead discussions on inward investment into Bromley. That the forum further explores issues regarding Bromley as a “Cold Spot¹⁴.” (6.3) (C)
- Alternative approaches to diversification of funding are explored with the sector locally. That this includes corporate sponsorship, social investment models and earned income. Sector training support needs in these areas will be explored (6.3) (C)
- Bromley Borough and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) consider the introduction of multi-year grant agreements from the Bromley Innovation Fund. Further, that we aim to develop a Bromley wide approach for multi-year grant agreements to increase sector sustainability and stability. (B) + (H)
- That the Borough and ICB consider the development of suitable funding streams to support local children and young people’s charities (not currently eligible to apply for Innovation Funding).¹⁵
- That the Borough’s inward investment strategy considers the needs of the sector and that this is seen as integral to the strategy. (Borough’s Economic Development Team).
- That there be an identified Bromley Borough Office contact for external funders (section 6.3)

¹⁴ In January 2022 a report, commissioned by the Greater London Authority, entitled ‘Civil Society Roots 3: Identifying cold spots – Rapid Evidence Group’14 found London Borough of Bromley to be one of 10 ‘cold spots’ in Greater London. These boroughs were identified as needing support to strengthen support for community led groups

The conclusion to the report stated that the GLA would develop a grant and capacity building programme to support groups disadvantaged by structural inequalities.

The programme is to focus on:

- Building relationships and networks
- Developing and strengthening collective voice
- Increasing capacity and skills

The key recommendation therefore is that this information should be publicised widely by CLB and that VCSs including CLB itself, should be encouraged and supported to apply for grants to address the consequences of their position in an identified ‘cold spot’.

¹⁵ Despite different categories being available, there is a clear alignment between the wider all Bromley data and the sample which completed the State of the Sector report, with organisations working with children/youth dominating the responses. Youth or children’s charities make up 42.6% of the respondents to the survey and over a third of the NAVCA dataset (38%).

7. SERVICE DELIVERY AREA

7.1 Service Groups

To understand service provision within the borough we asked a series of questions:

- Which part of the sector does your organisation work in?
- What services does your organisation deliver?
- Does your organisation work with a particular section of the community?

Areas of activity

Youth or children’s charities make up the largest numbers of respondents to the survey (42.6%); with charities working on social welfare and disabilities the next highest, closely followed by mental health and health-based work.

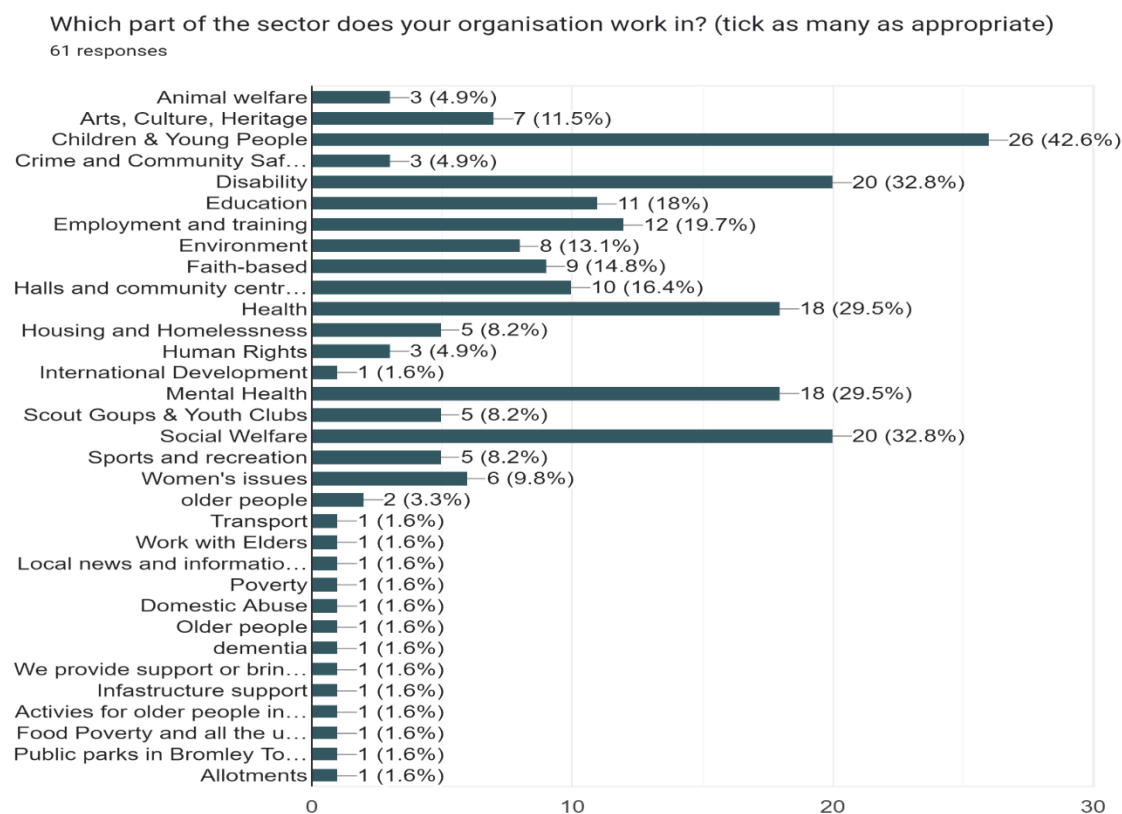


Figure 7.1: Part of sector

Within the themed areas a range of services are delivered with nearly half of providers giving some sort of advice and information at 47.5%

What services does your organisation deliver? (tick as many as appropriate)

61 responses

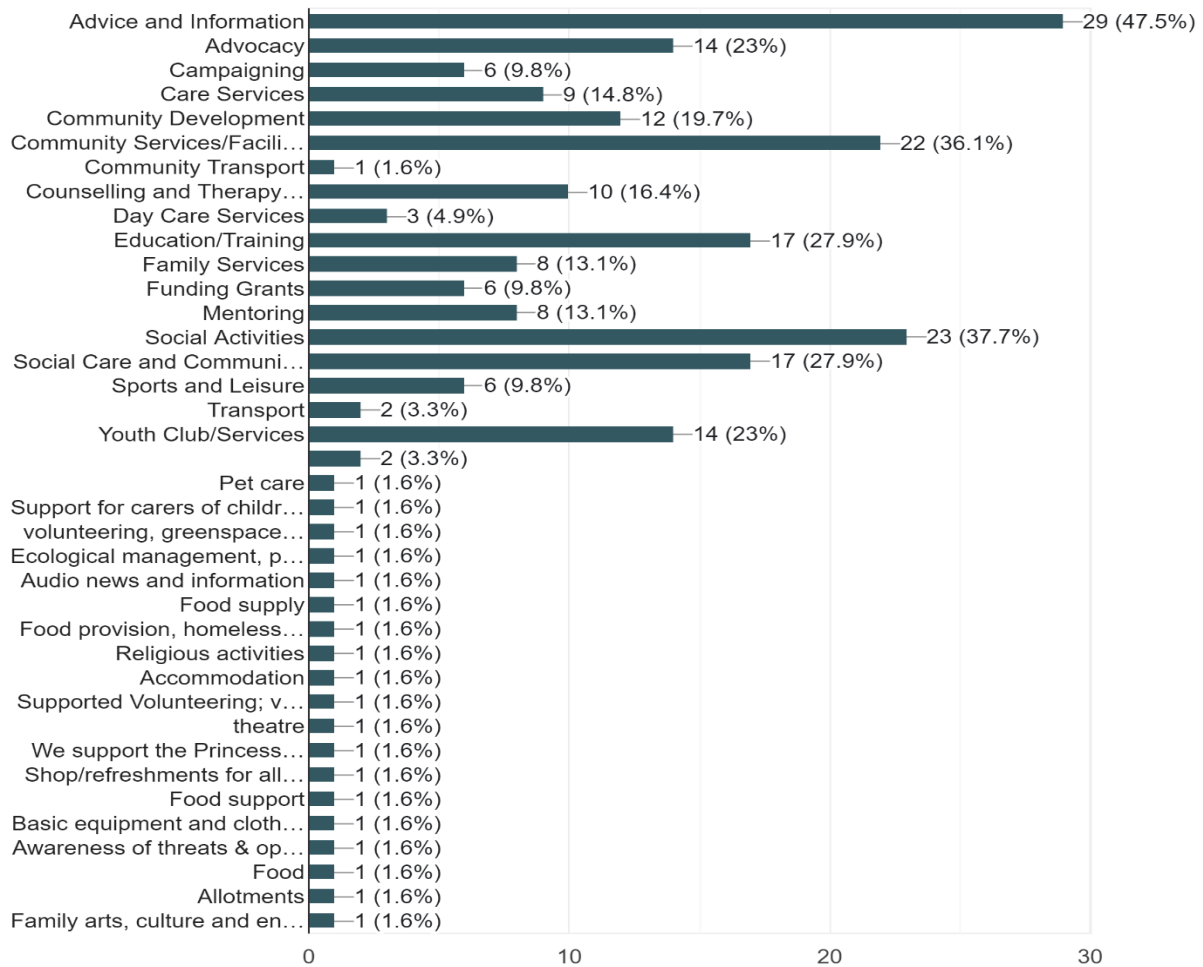


Figure 7.1 (2): Services delivered

7.2 Beneficiaries in Bromley

To understand which part of the community was supported we asked: Does your organisation work with a particular section of the community? 57% answered yes to this with the table below highlighting the diverse communities served. 43.6% supported young people, with a similar figure for older people.

Less focus can be seen on support for offenders or ex/offenders, substance misuse, survivors of abuse, refugees.

The data also suggested that there is limited provision for LGBTQ+ and BAME communities.

If you answered yes, please select all that apply

39 responses

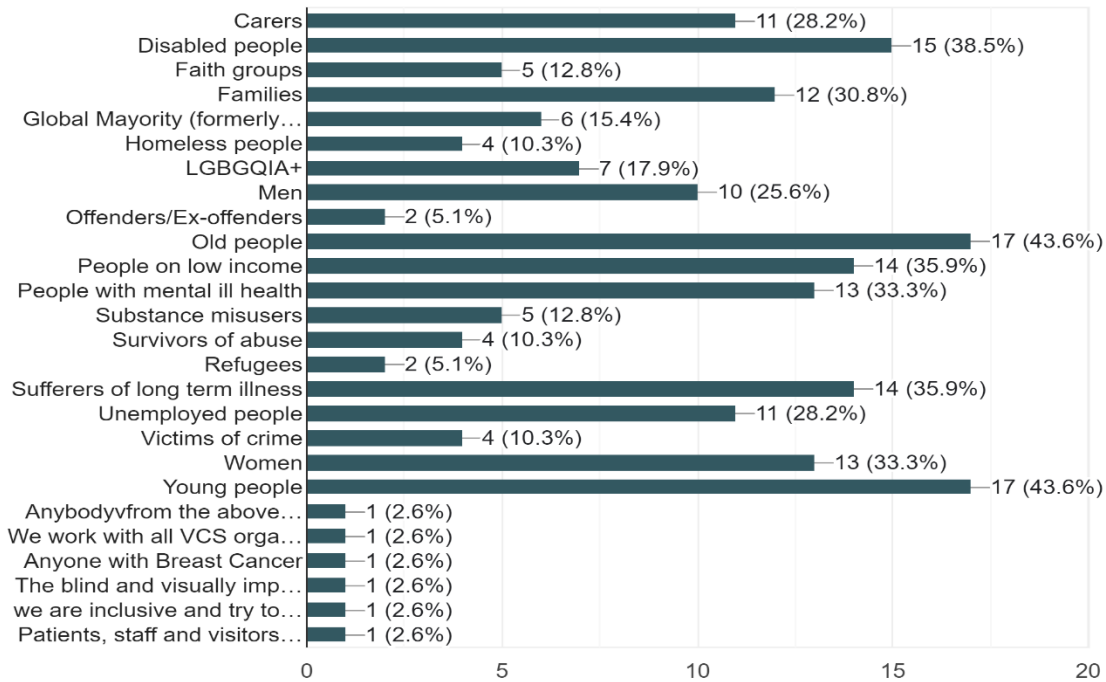


Figure 7.2: Beneficiaries

7.3 Summary

This local data is encouraging as it shows that the services provided by organisations are wide-reaching in the Borough, with every beneficiary group being represented in some form. This means that the VCSE is able to access the range of communities that live in the Borough.

However, separate data also suggests that services are not distributed equally within the borough. While this is to be expected, there are very low levels of groups that work with certain beneficiaries.

In view of the above it is recommended that consideration is given to undertaking some modelling to check how far the gap is between support targeted for each group and their proportion in the local population.

The feedback however is consistent with the NCVO national data that shows that there is a strong provision of services for younger people within the borough.

8. BROMLEY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

We asked a series of questions in relation to sector engagement. This included questions on networks and hence how groups relate to one another, but also engagement with decision makers.

We asked, “Do you feel that the views of the sector are represented to decision makers?” and “Do you have any suggestions about improving representation?”

8.1 Networking

Are you involved in any networks?

61 responses

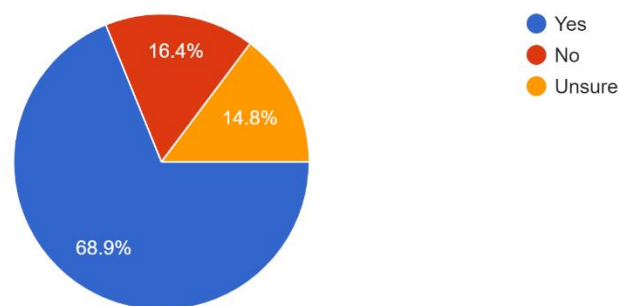


Figure 6.6: Involvement in networks

A large majority of respondents reported already being involved in networks (68.9%) - an increase since the previous survey when the figure was 57%. 43 respondents provided details of which networks they were involved with and 62 were identified. This is a substantial increase on the previous survey.



The word cloud highlights some of the spaces, forums and communities that groups interact with.

A number of networks including the Voluntary Sector Strategic Network (VSSN), Community Links Bromley and Bromley Well were mentioned a number of times, as well as more specific networks relating to organisations’ specific aims e.g., Cleaner and Greener Bromley, Bromley Theatre Guild, Bromley Scouting and Transform Bromley Borough.

However, there is currently no network available for those from global majority organisations. This gap could be improved with funding of a strategic network that

focuses on this cohort.

8.2 Representation

Do you feel that the views of the sector are represented to decision makers?

61 responses

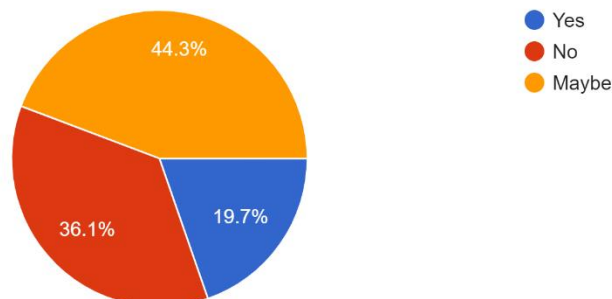


Figure 8.2: Sector representation

The majority of respondents either did not feel adequately represented or weren't sure whether they were adequately represented to decision makers.

We received 43 comments in response to this question that give a good insight into the varied feelings of VCSE groups in Bromley. We asked, "*Do you feel that the views of the sector are represented to decision makers?*" with one provider commenting "*No!*"

We separately asked respondents to explain the response to the question.

Responses varied here with much of the feedback focused on the decision makers as opposed to the quality or nature of the representation. Typical of this view was a comment that, "*views can be put forward to the decision-makers, but they are not always listened to.*" Another commented, "*Money is the prime concern of decision makers. Too many 'bean-counters' and too much effort in contracting services out to the detriment of local situations*". This applied to local as well as national decision making with decision makers seen as "*generally out of touch as they do not engage on a local level with communities and rely on surveys, data and reporting from quarters that have agendas*". Another said, "*I think there are many voices from charity sector to government. Doesn't mean they listen*".

For some there is an absence of a clear mechanism to influence local decision makers with some commenting that, "*We have no access to decision makers*", that "*we don't feel that there are meaningful ways in which our voice is asked for and listened to*", that collectively "*I feel that we are a silent sector*" whilst another said, "*I am not sure how this occurs*".

However, the *challenge of getting the message across* in a consistent way was acknowledged. "*Difficult to do across such a wide-ranging sector*".

The result was that there was, "*No sign of continuous pressure/conversations with decision makers - any support is short lived and doesn't provide sustainable solutions*", that there is a "*Lack of recognition of how big the problem is*".

Sector representatives were not exempt from criticism. One explained, *“When we have attended VSSN meetings it has been difficult to get our voice heard, our feedback is not taken on board; or that “BTSE appear to have monopoly on influence in the Borough”.*

On the relationship with the local authority, the picture is mixed with some parts of the Bromley Borough seen as more open and receptive than others. For instance, one said that *“the Bromley Borough connects with us regularly”*, another that *“We are widely represented throughout the borough on groups, forums and networks to speak up for and represent the views of the people who use our services and who are members of our organisation”*. However, another commented, *“Bromley have been running a combating loneliness event in the borough for a year or more and we have never been involved or asked to be involved in anything they have planned or asked for our views and opinions about what is important to service users and carers”*. Another said, *“Not really sure who is making any decisions about our sector”*. Another commented, *“Sometimes...and sometimes not!”*

The consequences of the absence of voice were *“Some social issues are diminished by decision makers and presumed to be irrelevant to the borough of Bromley”*; another said, *“It is uncertain to what extent decision-makers understand the challenges confronting third-sector organizations. There is a need for more cohesive strategies to align the objectives of local authority initiatives with the pressing issues that impact various community segments, which is the primary focus of many community-led organizations. When provisions remain unaligned, a disconnect persists, and the resulting gap becomes apparent when the needs of society are not sufficiently addressed”*.

There was also a perceived disconnect at national level with *“decision makers are generally out of touch as they do not engage on a local level with communities and rely on surveys, data and reporting from quarters that have agendas”*. Another said, *“I think there are many voices from charity sector to government. Doesn't mean they listen.”*

The role of national organisations was highlighted to emphasise the role they play in influencing and shaping social policy. For example, one organisation explained, *“local Bromley Borough Data about our work is presented to the Government by Trussell Trust. Some information is sent to the”*.

We separately asked, *“Do you have any suggestions about improving representation?”*

A range of solutions were suggested.

The need for “inclusiveness” was emphasised including involvement of those with experience on London Borough of Bromley and Integrated Care System groups, as well. This included a need for *“True face to face engagement with communities and stop relying on biased reporting streams”*. *“Being invited to attend budgeting meetings on issues that impact our work, being a part of decision-making processes that impact the people we serve. Listening to the insights of people with lived experience on these issues and having them at the heart of policy changes.”*

The resource implications of undertaking the representation were recognised. One observed, *“It takes those in positions of responsibility and profile to influence.”* Similarly,

another said, *“inclusiveness is very important and funded personnel to ensure effective communication.”* *“Half the issue is having the time to campaign when you are working in a small charity. Increased partnerships and communication locally but time is always the biggest challenge.”*

The role Community Links Bromley can play here was emphasised by a number of respondents. For example, one recommended “Community Links could arrange face to face meetings for members, either sector by sector (or probably more usefully) area by area. Once established, these could invite Bromley Borough officers and councillors to attend and account for decisions made. In a Borough like Bromley, the sector needs to take back control.” Another said, *“CLB needs to provide more dedicated support to the 70 plus Associate members of BTSE; CLB needs to hold LBB to account more and support us to get our voices heard by facilitating meaningful, transparent and honest dialogue - the experience I have had in other Boroughs has been a much more meaningful level of collaboration amongst the VS and with the LA”.*

Another highlighted the diversity of the sector and questioned whether one voice on forums/ partnerships and Boards was sufficient. Here, the need for more diversity on the Bromley Resilience Forum was emphasized.

Decision making in relation to health and wellbeing was commented upon by some participants. For instance, one said, *“we need to have more low-level mental health support groups, and also better communication between those groups and the NHS services.”*

The following addition suggestions were made by survey respondents:

- Regular surgeries with Chief officers and elected members
- Make it compulsory for local government to support and consult with charities in their area.
- Greater publicity/sharing information.
- An additional Trustee that is prominent in the community and passionate could be an additional asset to the Club, to provide stronger links between the Bromley Borough, Community and Club.
- In Bromley, the Local Authority attempts to sincerely address various local issues, particularly concerning families within the disability community. However, substantial gaps remain, with families often unaware of the available provisions, let alone accessing them. It is crucial to examine this situation closely to bridge these gaps. Additionally, there is a considerable distrust among families towards the Local Authority's intentions, leading to numerous misunderstandings about expectations and making it exceedingly difficult to establish any impact, even when provisions exist.
- The local government should collaborate with community-led organizations and identify the most effective ways to assist them in meeting the societal requirements and current issues that these organizations address. Whenever possible, the local authority should partner with them to ensure that provisions reach the grassroots level and that the community's needs are adequately fulfilled.

8.3 Recommendations: Engagement and relationships with statutory partners

- That the ICS and Borough develop consistent approaches to co-design across statutory services; that approaches include where appropriate involvement of those with lived experience at LBB and ICS level.
- That ICS and Borough work with CLB to develop an agreed approach to reward and recognition and reimbursement of VCSE time and expertise when participating on Partnership Boards. (B) + (H)
- That we recognise the acute need for the development of further thematic and geography-based forums to develop sector engagement and connectivity. (C)
- That the Bromley Resilience Forum consider the addition of VCSE representation.
- That funders note that there is currently no network available for those from global majority organisations. This gap could be improved with funding of a strategic network that focuses on this cohort.

9. THE FUTURE

9.1 Concerns about the Future and Challenges

On a scale of one to five, do you think there is a possibility that your organisation could close in the next 12 months?

61 responses

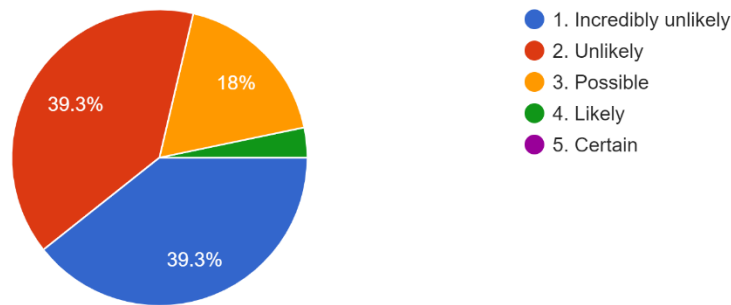


Figure 9.1: Do you think there is a possibility that your organisation could close in the next 12 months

Organisations were asked to rate the possibility of their closure within the next 12 months. Encouragingly, the large majority (78.6%) reported that they thought this was either “unlikely” or ‘incredibly unlikely.’ Only 18% of respondents thought this was ‘possible’, with only 3.4% indicating it was likely, with none reporting that they were ‘certain’ to close in the next 12 months.

Hopefully, this suggests that despite funding pressures, the local sector appears to remain healthy.

This seems corroborated by the follow up question, asking organisations to say how concerned they were in regard to the future of their organisation.

On a scale of one to five, how concerned are you in regard to the future of your organisation?

61 responses

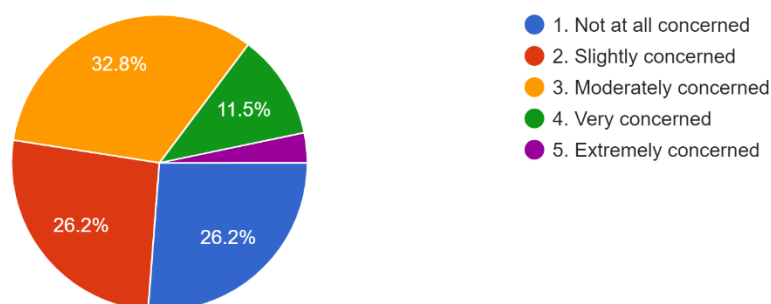


Figure 9.1b: Concern about the future

Over half of the 61 respondents (62%) were either 'not at all concerned' or only 'slightly concerned' for the future. This is an increase on the previous survey, where 41% reported either of these two categories. A further 30% in the current survey were 'moderately concerned' and only 7% were either 'very' or 'extremely concerned'. This is lower than in the previous survey, where 24% of respondents were 'very' or 'extremely concerned'.

Looking at these responses in the context of the previous question, we can see that while 7% of organisations were 'very' or 'extremely concerned', none of them were certain they would close within a year, and only 4% thought it was likely they would close.

9.2 Challenges

We asked, 'Can you tell us the top three challenges you face in the next five years?' and received 61 responses.

A number of recurrent themes and challenges emerged. They relate to:

- Increasing demand and service pressures
- Financial and cost pressures
- Funding challenges
- Staffing, volunteering and leadership challenges
- Accommodation issues
- Miscellaneous

These are explored below.

Demand pressures

- Many providers commented that they were experiencing increasing or excessive demand pressures. In part this demand appears to be driven by cost-of-living pressures; growing needs of beneficiaries and service users as well as the increasing complexity of the help requested. One provider remarked, "*due to growing need, being able to meet demand, we have had to restrict the postcodes that we support due to increasing numbers.*"

Financial Pressures

- Financial pressures resulting from rising costs and the need to "balance the books" emerged as a strong theme. These pressures were expressed in different ways but included "wage inflation," "cost of living," "rising costs and financial security;" "raising funding for major repairs and renovations" "meeting day to day running costs," "lack of resources." The result for one provider was a challenge in "Keeping the doors open."

Funding

- Funding challenge was remarked upon extensively. For some it was the "*pressures and the challenge of income generation.*" For other the challenge was of income diversification, and the "*the need to find more corporate partners,*" "*growing corporate partnerships,*" "*the need for sustainable funding,*" *the resulting uncertainty as result*" as well as "*the challenge of running fundraising events.*" The challenge was articulated in diverse ways, for some the issues was "*funding for operational cost,*" for others it was "*funding for proposed services/activities.*" The "*unequal commissioning environment,*" and "*lack of support from the Local Authority*" was commented upon.

- This challenge was not just revenue – it applied also to “*The challenge of Capital funding needed to pay for building improvements,*” as well as support for core cost or “*Securing funding for local projects*” and “*Resourcing capacity.*”
- For others, the issue was capacity. One provider commented on the need for “*Time to fundraise/submit grants when at the same time we are delivering service.*”
- The looming challenge and “*potential financial difficulties in the local authority*” was noted.

Staff and volunteer recruitment

- There were frequently mentioned challenges in relation to recruitment and retention of staff as well as volunteers. This applied to a range of skills and competencies. “*Retaining staff in such challenging times;*” “*staff & volunteer fatigue*” and recruiting younger people.

Other staffing challenges related to change in management; leadership; and, for smaller providers, succession planning, “*continuity if something were to happen to the two of us that run it*”.

- Recruitment and retention issues were mentioned by a number of providers in relation to volunteering. Some had set ambitious targets in this area. For example, a local Rotary Club was committed to “*Attracting new members with goal to increase by at least 15% in the next Rotary year.*” Others highlighted specific skills gaps from finding new gardeners, or “*more athletics coaches and maintaining our volunteer base*”.
- Elsewhere we highlight the skill gaps in relation to governance and Trustee skill gaps. Organisations talked about “*trustee recruitment challenges,*” succession planning, the need to secure more committee members, management committee shortages, “*availability of trustees for leadership.*”
- “*Developing a really good flexible new Rotary model to include all members when they have busy lives and running families, businesses, caring and indeed not killing off the retired who would like some time to do those things we thought we would do in retirement as well as volunteering !!!!!*”
- “*Securing more active members prepared to donate their time.*”

Accommodation/Property

- Property issues were identified, and a range of issues emerged. They included “*the challenge of property management*”, security of tenure, appropriate venues, possible decant or closure of services due to building works, lack of office space, maintenance of an old building; short term leases in community buildings, availability of venues, space - having the room/storage for growth in services were all mentioned.

As well as the availability of suitable accommodation, others highlighted the cost implications, from the need for “*Capital funding needed to pay for building improvements;*” possibly new accommodation, and “*additional expenditure due to*

changes of the lease with increased rent and maintenance; and raising funding for major repairs and renovations.”

The inter-relationship of some of these issues were identified by one provider who commented, *“Having to operate like a large-scale business just to serve local community, increase in clients, decrease in donations from the community (cost of living crisis, government support only provides short term relief- no long-term solutions in place) publicity and committee succession”.*

Miscellaneous issues

- Finally, a range of miscellaneous challenges were also presented. They included increasing voluntary sector competition; government policy was mentioned including the implication of a potential policy changes or funding cuts in health and social care by a change in government; government inactivity on Universal Credit; IT challenges; maintaining the website; capacity/waiting times for statutory services; competition from other charities; Marketing; dealing productively with Bromley Council; barrier of the single point of access¹⁶.

To test these findings, we undertook a series of deep dive interviews with 10 providers and held a workshop at the Voluntary Sector Strategic Network VSSN (June 2024). They endorsed the emerging findings and stress going cost pressures and demands as a result of the cost of living pressures.

9.3 Opportunities

We asked organisations: What are the top three opportunities in the next 12 months?

Many responded with ideas and plans that they had for development, growing audiences or reach or the provision of new services. It included ideas for “reinvention; fresh vision; fresh start;” new services such as free will provision or fundraising events and activities and the development of new strategies.

A number of themes did emerge:

Changing political landscape

- A number of organisations highlighted the possible changing political landscape with pending elections for the Mayor and General Election. On this theme others stressed the need for closer links with local MPs & those that can influence funding & build community support. It was suggested that a potential new government may open new sources for funding.

Influencing statutory partners

- The need to influence statutory partners was also stressed by some as was the need to consider commissioning opportunities.

¹⁶ The Single Point of Access is the route into Bromley Well services

South-East London Integrated Care System

- Interestingly only one provider mentioned the Southeast London Integrated Care System as an opportunity. This suggests that more work is needed locally to enhance understanding of the integrated care system and resulting opportunities.

Digitisation

- A number of organisations mentioned digitalisation and connectivity as opportunities.

Developing local partnerships

- The need for partnership working was emphasised by a number of providers. For example, one said, we need to “*make links with other organisations.*” Other comments included ‘*attending events to support the combating loneliness campaign in Bromley; “deepening connections with organisations who refer to us, networking more;” “Building more connections with other local community service providers”; “developing deeper local partnerships” and “Building new partnerships in the community”.*
- This also included a recognition of opportunities outside Bromley such as the need for collaboration with the London wide Disability movement.

Equalities

Become “*more diverse. Better support to wider community.*”

Summary.

The feedback received suggests that many organisations are ambitious and aspirational in what is clearly a challenging landscape, that there is a commitment to partnership working.

Less was said about potential opportunities resulting from system changes such as the developing Integrated Care System. Other notable absences included the need for regional and sub-regional working or any agenda around equity and equalities.

Little consideration is given to the need to adapt to the big social, environmental and technology shifts.

9.4 Recommendations

Accommodation (9.2)

- That the ICB and Bromley Borough consider the need for an accommodation strategy for the voluntary and community sector in Bromley.
- In partnership with the CLB, the ICB and Bromley Borough complete mapping of existing community space and assets currently being led by the ICS.
- Consideration is given to the establishment of a sub-regional/regional advice service relating to premises, finding spaces, lease advice, funding rents and community assets.
- That Bromley Borough include in the borough’s planning process a definition of “affordable” workspace for the VCSE and look at using funds to improve existing spaces.

- In determining rent levels, Statutory Partners consider the added social value the sector brings to the borough.

Staff and volunteer recruitment (9.2)

- That the sector considers the need for fair wages and benefits to attract and retain staff, including consideration of the London Living Wage. That discussion is held with Citizens UK to explore this.
- Training and development: That we explore Partnership wide approaches to develop a comprehensive cross-sector training and skills borough wide offer. (P)

Summary (9.3)

- That CLB and partners from the Integrated Care System VCSE Alliance undertake further work locally to increase understanding of Integrated Care System and the potential opportunities resulting from system changes.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The list of consolidated recommendations to be found here, mirror the recommendations and rational from the main body of the report. Suggested ownership of the recommendations is also made.

Where it is recommended that CLB lead this is indicated by a (C); where the suggested lead is the Borough this is shown as a (B); where joint ownership is suggested this is shown by the Borough and the ICB, whether place based or at system level, this is shown by (B) + (H); where a wide conversation is suggested with funders, this is shown by an (F).

Methodology (section 2)

- CLB undertakes further work to understand the needs of charitable organisations of all types and sizes especially micro charities and Under the Radar groups/organisations in the borough. That this work includes outreach to enable direct engagement with small/micro VCSEs to complement the surveys. (section 2.2) (C)

Governance (section 4)

- CLB to lead on developing an action plan to consider skills gaps across the sector and develop proposals for addressing them (section 4.3) (C)

Staffing and Volunteers (section 5)

- CLB in collaboration with the Volunteer Managers Forum considers a sector wide approach and action plan to working with younger volunteers. (section 5.2); that such an approach includes engagement with FE Colleges and Universities locally, seeking to position volunteering as part of student pathways into employment. (C)

Income and Funding (section 6)

- That CLB continue to host regular bid writing training and meet the funder style events to give local groups the best chance of success. (6.3) (C)
- That CLB convenes a Funder Round Table to lead discussions on inward investment into Bromley. That the forum further explores issues regarding Bromley as a “Cold Spot¹⁷.” (6.3) (C)

¹⁷ In January 2022 a report, commissioned by the Greater London Authority, entitled ‘Civil Society Roots 3: Identifying cold spots – Rapid Evidence Group’¹⁷ found London Borough of Bromley to be one of 10 ‘cold spots’ in Greater London. These boroughs were identified as needing support to strengthen support for community led groups

The conclusion to the report stated that the GLA would develop a grant and capacity building programme to support groups disadvantaged by structural inequalities.

The programme is to focus on:

- Building relationships and networks
- Developing and strengthening collective voice

- Alternative approaches to diversification of funding are explored with the sector locally. That this includes corporate sponsorship, social investment models and earned income. Sector training support needs in these areas will be explored (6.3) (C)
- Bromley Borough and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) consider the introduction of multi-year grant agreements from the Bromley Innovation Fund. Further that we aim to develop a Bromley wide approach for multi-year grant agreements to increase sector sustainability and stability. (B) + (H)
- That the Borough and ICB consider the development of suitable funding streams to support local children and young people's charities (not currently eligible to apply for Innovation Funding).¹⁸ (B) + (H) + (F)
- That the Borough's inward investment strategy considers the needs of the sector and that this is seen as integral to the strategy. (Borough's Economic Development Team). (B)
- That there be an identified Bromley Borough Office contact for external funders (section 6.3) (B)

Engagement and relationships with statutory partners (section 8)

- That the ICS and Borough develop consistent approaches to co-design across statutory services; that approaches include where appropriate involvement of those with lived experience at LBB and ICS level. (B)+(H)
- That ICS and Borough work with CLB to develop an agreed approach to reward and recognition and reimbursement of VCSE time and expertise when participating on Partnership Boards. (B) + (H)
- That we recognise the acute need for the development of further thematic and geography-based forums to develop sector engagement and connectivity. (C)
- That the Bromley Resilience Forum consider the addition of VCSE representation. (B)
- That funders note that there is currently no network available for those from global majority organisations. This gap could be improved with funding of a strategic network that focuses on this cohort. (F)

-
- Increasing capacity and skills

The key recommendation therefore is that this information should be publicised widely by CLB and that VCSs including CLB itself, should be encouraged and supported to apply for grants to address the consequences of their position in an identified 'cold spot'.

¹⁸ Despite different categories being available, there is a clear alignment between the wider all Bromley data and the sample which completed the State of the Sector report, with organisations working with children/youth dominating the responses. Youth or children's charities make up 42.6% of the respondents to the survey and over a third of the NAVCA dataset (38%).

The Future (section 9)

Accommodation (9.2)

- That the ICB and Bromley Borough consider the need for an accommodation strategy for the voluntary and community sector in Bromley. (B) + (H)
- In partnership with the CLB, the ICB and Bromley Borough complete mapping of existing community space and assets currently being led by the ICS. (B) + (H)
- Consideration is given to the establishment of a sub-regional/regional advice service relating to premises, finding spaces, lease advice, funding rents and community assets. (C) and other Regional CVS's.
- That Bromley Borough include in the borough's planning process a definition of "affordable" workspace for the VCSE and look at using funds to improve existing spaces. (B)
- In determining rent levels, Statutory Partners consider the added social value the sector brings to the borough. (B) + (H)

Staff and volunteer recruitment (9.2)

- That the sector considers the need for fair wages and benefits to attract and retain staff, including consideration of the London Living Wage. That discussion is held with Citizens UK to explore this. (C)
- Training and development: That we explore Partnership wide approaches to develop a comprehensive cross-sector training and skills borough wide offer. (P)

Summary (9.3)

- That CLB and partners from the Integrated Care System VCSE Alliance undertake further work locally to increase understanding of Integrated Care System and the potential opportunities resulting from system changes. (C)

State of the Sector 2024 - Questions

1. What is the legal form of your organisation (tick all that apply)?
2. How many Trustees/Management Committee Members does your organisation have?
3. Do you have Trustee vacancies?
4. If you have any Trustee vacancies and would like us to contact you about support to recruit Trustees, please add your contact details below.
5. What are the key skills that your trustees/management committee members bring to your organisation? (tick as many as appropriate)
6. What are the skill gaps in your board/management committee? (tick as many as appropriate)
7. How many people does your organisation have in paid employment?
8. How many of your employees are full time? (type in N/A if not applicable)
9. How many of your employees are part time? (type in N/A if not applicable)
10. How many volunteers does your organisation work with?
11. Have you experienced a net gain or loss of volunteers in the last 12 months?
12. Please indicate in your own words what factors do you believe have driven the changes
13. What is your organisation's annual income?
14. What are the sources of your organisation's funding? (tick all that apply) [OBJ]
15. Has your funding changed in the last 12 months? [OBJ]
16. If it has changed, please indicate what the factors have driven the change and, if possible, by what percentage or amount? (please type in N/A if not applicable) [OBJ]
17. Has funding over the last 12 months covered the total cost of running of your organisation for this period? [OBJ]
18. If no, how have you managed the shortfall? (please type in N/A if not applicable)
19. Over the next 12 months do you expect your financial position to
20. Have you had to cut any services due to funding pressures in the last 12 months?
21. If you answered yes to the previous question, please describe what services and why in particular (please type in N/A if not applicable) [OBJ]
22. What type of assets does your organisation own/hold? [OBJ]
23. In what Bromley wards do you work? (tick as many as appropriate) [OBJ]
24. Which part of the sector does your organisation work in? (tick as many as appropriate)
25. What services does your organisation deliver? (tick as many as appropriate) [OBJ]
26. Does your organisation work with a particular section of the community?
27. If you answered yes, please select all that apply
28. How many beneficiaries do you currently provide services for?
29. If you provide services to a much higher number of beneficiaries than listed above, please state it here (please type in N/A if not applicable) [OBJ]
30. If your organisation did not exist, do you think that there is another organisation that could provide the services you deliver? [OBJ]
31. On a scale of one to five, do you think there is a possibility that your organisation could close in the next 12 months? [OBJ]
32. On a scale of one to five, how concerned are you in regard to the future of your organisation? [OBJ]
33. Please explain your rating entered in response to the previous question

34. Can you tell us the top three challenges you face in the next 12 months? [OB]
35. What are the top three opportunities in the next 12 months? [OB]
36. Are you involved in any networks?
37. If you answered "yes" on the previous question, please list the networks and what benefit they bring.
38. Do you feel that the views of the sector are represented to decision makers?
39. You can explain your response to the previous question here
40. Do you have any suggestions about improving representation?
41. Have we provided information, advice and guidance on volunteer recruitment in the past 12 months?
42. Have we provided support for your organisation with funding advice or organisational support in the past 12 months?
43. Have we provided support and training on networking in the past 12 months?
44. What additional support or signposting would you like to see Community Links Bromley offer?

APPENDIX 2

List of people interviewed

- Sarah Smith, (Director) Bromley Better Beginnings
- Martin Pointing, (Centre Manager) London Bromley Citizens Against Poverty (CAP) Bromley
- Mark Gilyead, (Area Activator) Goodgym Bromley,
- Rebecca Day, (Operations Manager) Living Well Bromley,
- Nicole Shilling, Centre Manager Saxon Day Centre,
- Isaac Ngugi (Promotions and Marketing) Advocacy for All
- Olufunke Adelaye (Founder and Chief Responsibility Officer) OAKonsult Disabilities Outreach
- Mercedes Yearley (Director) Quest Soul Theatre CIC MY – Drama group

List of people who commented on the draft

- Brenda Parsons Vice-Chair Rotary Basic Education and Literacy Action Group
- Nicola Burgess, CEO, Bromley Experts by Experience
- Derek Holl Jubileechurch.co.uk, VSSN
- James Asfa, Assistant Director, Citizens UK
- Tal Rosenzweig, Director of Voluntary Sector Collaboration & Partnerships (SE London ICS)

