Doing Good in Gateshead 2017

Looking at the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead

March 2017

Acknowledgements

Contents

Executive Summary

Since 2010 there have been major changes in the voluntary and community sector (VCS). These have been driven by government policy changes, commissioning and procurement requirements, reduction in funding for local councils, the impact of welfare reforms and many other factors. Most VCS organisations have experienced external changes to their income - clearly some haven't been able to adapt to this 'New Normal', and have closed or become very different. The greater emphasis on income generation has enabled new structures such as Community Interest Companies (CICs) to develop and become established.

Voluntary and community organisations have had to rely more on unpaid volunteers, social media and different ways of delivering services and attracting funding. At the same time there's been ever-growing demand for support from local people and communities. The third element of the 'perfect storm' of reduction in funding and increase in demand is the complexity and problems of the people who are now approaching the voluntary sector for support. The reduction in statutory services means many people who would have been previously supported by local authorities and the NHS are now supported by the voluntary sector.

Yet there is a greater expectation than ever before that charity and volunteers will 'step up to the mark'. We are not yet clear what a 'Shared Society' means yet – is it resources, responsibilities or power-sharing; a combination of these or none of these? The concept of the Big Society is now firmly pushed away as it appears to have become the smokescreen for cutting back public services and a distraction. However, some key elements - the National Citizen's Service and the empasis on social finance are still important and emphasised within the current Government. But one of the Big Society platforms of social action, encouraging and enabling people to play a more active part in society, is actively encouraged by the voluntary and statutory sector.

As Gateshead Council faces major budget reductions of £70million in the next four years, inevitably one of the potential solutions is the more appropriate use of local voluntary and community organisations. Similarly as the NHS approaches its own budget problems and the complexities of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), it has discovered 'social prescribing' and the potential support from voluntary and community organisations.

This study is from the perspective of the voluntary and community sector and tries to illustrate our views. There is still an optimism and willingness to engage in addressing major challenges, but we need to be involved from the start of the process, not invited in at the end as an afterthought.

Many of the comments reflect the frustration that people are trying to do their best in difficult times, and in some instances they are being thwarted by others. Funding clearly remains the key issue as many organisations are concerned about what would happen to the people and communities they support, if they no longer existed.

There are concerns about the recruitment and retention of volunteers and that the management of volunteers has costs, which are hard to cover financially.

Although the findings are not surprising to those who know the sector in Gateshead, the figures on the breadth and the scope of sector are illuminating and illustrate the potential of what could be achieved, if the sector was properly supported and involved.

Background and Methodology

As part of its policy and research role, Newcastle CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) carried out a study of voluntary and community organisations in Gateshead. It was the first time for many years that an independent study had been carried out. In 2016 Gateshead Council staff had carried out survey about 'access to advice, guidance and representation for Gateshead's community groups and organisations'. There have been studies such as the VONNE study for North East England, but of the 100 organisations that participated, only three worked solely in Gateshead, and another eleven organisations covered Gateshead. At the time of writing, the results from the North East and Cumbria Third Sector Trends Study 2016 are being written up. Clearly there are national studies, which are referred to throughout this report; but the cohort for this study are those organisations that are based in Gateshead, but might provide services elsewhere.

The information in this report was generated from a survey carried out in December 2016 and January 2017, visits made to over 30 voluntary and community organisations in 2016, discussions at the Gateshead Voluntary Sector Leaders Group and the experiences of the CVS staff who have been working in Gateshead since April 2016. The survey was promoted through e-inform the Newcastle CVS fortnightly e-bulletin, Twitter, Facebook and direct email. The survey asked about questions about organisations' status, their achievements and challenges, and what pressures they had identified for the future.

87 responses were received by directly contacting around four hundred organisations. The breakdown of the type of the respondent group illustrates that, as usual, smaller, community organisations are under-represented in the respondents. However the profile of the respondents is very similar to that of registered charities in Gateshead.

The following response was received from an organisation, which illustrates the complexity and limitations of the study.

"We are the X society. I am finding it very difficult to answer your questionnaire as I am not sure about the interpretation of some questions and many are not relevant to us. The Gateshead Drop-in is a satellite group of the main Newcastle Branch, which is part of the north Region and that is part of the national organisation. We have recently started three new drop-ins – but it is still very early days for those. The groups are actually run by volunteers, with staff oversight.

The Gateshead group has no independent accounts. Both income and expenditure are part of Newcastle Branch accounts. Our client group is anyone affected by X either patient or carer or any family members or friends. All are welcome to seek information and advice to cope with X. We do not have "challenges" and we do not measure change. We just publicise our services in various ways and just offer an informal drop-in situation."

Clearly this is the type of organisation that is 'doing good'; it needs some professional overview and support but it is run mainly by local volunteers, some of whom suffer from the condition and their carers. But while this type of doing good is hard to quantify and won't necessarily be covered from the survey respondents, it clearly contributes towards the overall health and wellbeing in Gateshead.

Key Findings

Funding is the most pressing issue for voluntary and community organisations in Gateshead. This is regardless of whether they are small, medium or large organisations.

More than seven out of ten organisations noted an increase in demands for their services in the last year. A number of organisations reported year on year growth in demand for several years.

The recruitment and retention of volunteers is the second largest area of challenge. This concern was shared across small community organisations, which were totally run by volunteers and larger voluntary organisations.

Despite the challenges, the majority of respondents remain optimistic about the future of their organisations. Over a third want to increase the number of beneficiaries, nearly half want to increase services, nearly two thirds anticipate more volunteers and a quarter want to increase staff in the next year.

Two thirds of organisations had developed new areas of service, projects, initiatives and events during the last year. The push to innovation was still happening, despite restructures, funding cuts and other challenges.

The key challenge for the people using the services and facilities was the impact of welfare reform. There was a noticeable growth of poverty within communities, set against a background of withdrawal of statutory services and a loss of general activities.

There are over 400 registered charities, mutuals and CICs based in Gateshead with another 500 charities, based elsewhere, providing services in Gateshead. There are another 700-1000 small, local groups and organisations.

Voluntary and community groups are beginning to use their reserves to keep going rather than use them for strategic development. This is inevitable with less funding available.

Grants from charitable foundations and trusts were the most common form of income for voluntary organisations. Income from public sector grants and contracts was not the major source of income for a number of organisations.

Two out of five organisations noted an increase in income since the previous year. Income stayed the same for just over a third of organisations and just under a quarter saw a decrease in income since last year.

Most organisations were aware of the values and challenges of partnership working. Most organisations had made decisions about partnership working which were appropriate to their capacity, resources and challenges.

The big challenge remains of greater demand, fewer resources and clients having more complex needs. The issue of the number of clients with a much higher level of needs, and more problems needing resolution is a major challenge.

How big is the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead?

As in most areas, the voluntary and community sector can be divided into three different groups. The first group is the large number of smaller and community organisations, mainly with an income of under £25,000; the second is the middle group with an income of usually £25,000 - £500,000; the third is the small number of larger registered charities, with an income of over £500,000. Clearly this is a generalization and some organisations will have characteristics pertaining to more than one group.

All charities and Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) are listed on the Charity Commission website. We explored the website in January 2017 and 342 organisations were listed with an office in Gateshead. However on searching for registered charities with an area of benefit in Gateshead, there were 844 charities listed. The majority of these organisations will be based in Tyne and Wear. There will also be national organisations that provide support to Gateshead residents, even though there is no local base e.g. through advice and information and support through helplines and provided digitally. The suite of publications about small community organisations published by the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) came up with the observation that for every registered charity there were three or four small local organisations, which may or may not be formally constituted and offer more informal and semi-formal activities. So it is estimated there are around 1,000 of these types of (micro) groups and activities in Gateshead.

There are also a number of Community Interest Companies (CICs) that are registered at Companies House. There are currently 42 CICs registered with a Gateshead address. There are 24 organisations based in Gateshead listed on the Mutuals Public Register. These are mainly defined as 'working-men's clubs'. Although the term 'social enterprise' can be used to describe some organisations, it has no legal definition, and so is not included in these figures.

So there are around:

- 342 registered charities based in Gateshead

- 24 mutuals

- 42 CICs

- Between 700-1000 small, local groups, activities and organisations

- 502 charities that are not based in Gateshead, but cover Gateshead in their activities

Community organisations and small voluntary organisations

There are many hundreds of these organisations in Gateshead. Some are loose associations with very little income, not properly constituted (and maybe don't need be) – and consist of local people volunteering and doing good. Our experience is these many local organisations and activities often have minimal funding and just get by; they don't employ staff but can be seen as essential to the structure and well-being of local communities. Other organisations might be a bit bigger (and need to register as a charity or Charitable Incorporated Organisation if their income is over a certain level). Being incorporated means they can get a bank account and have the power to employ staff and take on a lease and are regarded as a 'legal entity'.

In the years since 2010, there has been an assumption, across the UK in line with

David Cameron's 'Big Society' initiative that volunteers and voluntary and community organisations would take over the running of many community facilities and functions. The reality has been different to the rhetoric with mainly medium-sized and larger voluntary organisations being more able to successfully take over the risks and liabilities that come with asset transfer. However there are examples of smaller, volunteer-led organisations taking over assets. In some instances these appear to have been successfully transferred, mainly because of the amount of support offered by Gateshead Council staff. It is not clear what will happen in the future as Gateshead Council reduces these resources.

Medium-sized, mainly local organisations

The second group is of those organisations, all based in Gateshead, many of which work only in Gateshead, but some have changed their boundaries and scope in order to increase their income. Most of these organisations are charities, but some are CICs (Community Interest Communities) that generate their income through trading. Some of these organisations were initially set up and run by Gateshead Council. These organisations can be 'squeezed' as the bigger organisations (see below), often employ bid-writers, and swoop in to pick up contracts that they have otherwise delivered.

Several of these organisations lost significant funding in 2010 and 2011, due to changes of Government policy and funding streams, and the loss of regeneration funding. Some organisations have lost funding from Gateshead Council. Nearly all of these organisations have experienced significant changes in their funding mix.

Large Organisations

There are a small number of large charities that are based in and work in Gateshead and other areas. There are other large organisations. These organisations get their income through contracts (local and national), through the NHS, manage and lead large Big Lottery bids, trading and fund-raising. They employ staff, provide social care, improve health and well-being and often manage complex projects and funding. Most of these organisations have grown over the last five years. Most of these organisations engage in Gateshead strategic activities. All the organisations that CVS visited or engaged with were keen to work with Gateshead Council and improve the health, wealth, well-being and environment of the communities in Gateshead. The key focus for some wasn't necessarily just Gateshead, but they have capacity and resources and want to extend their services; however they don't necessarily know who to talk to / where to go.

Discussion

There is an active voluntary and community sector in Gateshead, who can take on a number of roles, but it is not able, nor does it want, to run everything. Gateshead has had a number of volunteering initiatives going back many years, and clearly the use of volunteers in 'Friends of' and other environmentally focused groups have provided a valuable resource. There have been asset transfers of community centres and volunteer-led libraries. But across the country, volunteers are being asked to do more. People will volunteer only for those causes they feel strongly about. They need support, training and encouragement. They want to offer complementary services and there are concerns voiced – by volunteers, workers, and Trade Unions, if they step into the shoes of (previously) paid workers. The issue of recruitment and retention of volunteers was the second biggest item of concern to survey respondents.

"The current climate seems to expect full time employed people who have previously been happy to volunteer to take on responsibility for making money and growing the organisation. They don't want that, it's not why they joined and they will leave. The system that rewards national governing bodies for the degree of participation in their area yet relies on volunteers to drive that participation is broken, there is an imbalance between wealthy charitable organisations and those of us acting locally on small sums of money."

"Financial self- sufficiency in the wake of funding cuts and hardship for the people using us. Negative publicity regarding the area of work we are engaged in. Replacing volunteers who want to volunteer, not run a business. They are being forced to think commercially which was never part of the attraction."

"Maintaining volunteer numbers. Maintaining the present level of fundraising. Maintaining the present levels of community awareness to our initiatives."

"As with a lot of volunteering groups age is a big factor. In our group we have an age problem and whilst the enthusiasm is not questioned maintaining levels of hands on physical engagement is at times difficult but we try to fulfil our levels of community support."

From the discussions with voluntary sector leaders, the visits and the survey, there is still concern that the public sector in Gateshead doesn't really understand the breadth and depth of what the voluntary and community sector is, does and can offer. The impact of welfare reforms, the reductions in Gateshead Council's budget, and the retraction of the NHS (particularly for mental health support) meant that voluntary organisations were dealing with people at critical parts in their lives, they were often in crisis. There was still a perception that some people still regarded the voluntary sector as dealing with non-statutory and 'fluffy' issues. This report tries to explain the breadth of the sector and its offer from very small volunteer-led local community groups, through to major charities providing statutory services and employing highly trained professional staff.

The impact of welfare reforms and increased poverty within and between communities was raised a number of times. There are more poor people, more communities in need, fewer statutory services and longer waiting times for the services that still exist.

"Austerity effects of reduction in other services including pressure on statutory services, longer waiting times, reduced eligibility for mental health services."

"Older people: health / frailty; managing with reduced abilities; Asylum seekers: learning

English; integration; Families on benefits: impact of being sanctioned; poverty."

"The problems faced by our members are extremely varied. They are generally men facing difficult times in their lives, bereavement, mental health problems, being a carer, and resulting social isolation etc. We feel that all these problems will be exacerbated by the inevitable post Brexit economic downturn, and we are glad that we can provide a vital social connection and relief from stress during the tough times ahead."

"Significant reductions in council services leading to gaps in service or increasingly disjointed services. Increasing pressure of household budgets as cost rise and people unable to cope, particularly with benefit cuts/ sanctions."

"We work with carers, so they are facing an increase in their levels of care due to social care being either not available or being so expensive that they can't afford it for their cared for and so the carer has to take on even more caring responsibility. The carer's own health and wellbeing will suffer, as will their financial situation if they have to give up work to care or take reduced hours to care."

"Coping with the welfare reforms and reduced income. Coping with tougher sanctions on their benefits. Generally avoiding homelessness as they struggle to manage their budget."

"Service provision (i.e. there is little or none). Cuts to social care and health budgets: being cast adrift in a system that does not look after this vulnerable group but which is struggling to deal with critical needs let alone substantial or moderate. This will have very detrimental effects on people with learning disabilities and their families and is a false economy as the 'prevention' costs they are saving from closing provision or making people ineligible to access provision is a short term solution.

Adopting a preventative approach with services being available and accessible during life will help to reduce the longer term care needs (and therefore the costs to the State and local government) of this group. It's not rocket science. Vulnerable people such as people with learning disabilities are in danger of becoming more isolated and marginalised than they were 20 years ago under this current national programme of austerity with years of good work potentially becoming undone. This approach will cause a much heavier long-term financial burden to this country. We feel incredibly sad for the local councils and the levels of cuts they are experiencing nationwide but the austerity measures are not a long term solution and will end up costing more both morally and tangibly, in the long term. The current welfare system overhaul which is very hard indeed on people with learning disabilities and fails enormously to take their needs and position into account causes health and anxiety problems for PWLD and is leaving them feeling isolated and alone."

"More poverty, lower incomes due to benefit sanctions, benefit caps. Struggling to meet the costs of childcare. Lack of Council funded activities and provisions. (ie; social care for adults with learning disabilities)."

"Changes to benefits (Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance, Universal Credit etc). Changes to service provision due to cuts within the public sector which also has in impact on the third sector. Quality of life/wellbeing as a result of these challenges."

"Lack of mental health services. Benefits under attack. Disability hate crimes and prejudice."

Other commentators have described the position of local authority areas in the North East – the low Council Tax base, the inheritance of a post-industrial landscape and the general health and well-being status of local people. Gateshead has been

characterised by its approach to arts and culture, the green environment, the Metro Centre and the close working between stable public services. Residents and workers feel very proud of Gateshead, and this makes the loss of well-loved public services and facilities even more missed.

The public sector in Gateshead – the Council, the NHS, Police, Fire and Rescue Services, and criminal justice system have all experienced major cuts in their funding and have had to reorganise and reduce their services. This has inevitably meant changes in people, with the associated loss of organisational memory, partnerships and relationships. One of the features that identified Gateshead was the strong sense of place and the 'Gateshead Family', but as many public services undergo reform, there are fewer Gateshead-only service boundaries and focus. Gateshead Council is going through very senior appointments, the NHS is now focussing internally on its own budget issues and the Sustainable and Transformation Plan (STP), and other services have undergone major transformation and reforms. The Gateshead Strategic Partnership process is undergoing review and there has been an external LGA Peer review process; the results of these two reviews have not yet been shared. Voluntary organisations appreciate their involvement in partnerships and would welcome the outcome of the reviews and a refresh of the relationships.

"It is vital that all local organisations, the council and the NHS and others are involved in working within a partnership as each can bring their specialist knowledge and expertise to any project that we may wish to develop."

"Fine as long as there is an acknowledgement that funding must be viable and the partnership is not just a tick box exercise and develops into both collaboration and co- production and meaningful outcomes."

"Over the years we have had great relationships with other services, but all our time is consumed by fundraising, we don't have enough time to network."

"Our organisation has been built on strong partnerships - with the Council, local GP practices, local schools, Gateshead Learning Skills and many others. In this way we can bring the best services to our communities, work more effectively, and share skills and expertise. Particularly at a time when resources are scarce, then working effectively together must become a priority for us all, otherwise our communities will be even harder hit. We have found that the most effective partnerships are based on good relationships, shared ethos, transparency and trust."

The geography and history of Gateshead means that many community buildings and facilities are at the heart of their communities, and there are often strong relationships between community associations and local Councillors; in a number of cases Councillors are trustees. There has been a programme of asset transfer, but there are still a number of facilities that haven't been transferred. In some cases there are reservations about the capacity and capabilities of some organisations to do this. There has been strong support previously from Council staff for community buildings, and the inevitable withdrawal of some of this support has exposed that some local groups are not able to manage buildings and services. This is a similar position to many other areas; and the next step could be that instead of assuming volunteers will manage all the facilities, there could be a realistic consideration of shared services and future viability.

Organisations have been encouraged to scale up, collaborate, merge, and grow, which makes perfect sense in some instances, but not all. Experience elsewhere

has demonstrated that new procurement processes will bring in new providers, and the existing (losing) contract-holder will often have to restructure for their organisation to remain sustainable. Contracts can be won by those organisations that have better bid-writers rather than by the organisations who are the more experienced, local providers. The use of Social Value in contracts, in order to prioritise the areas important to the commissioner is one way to ensure that services reflect the commissioner's priorities.

"There will be no services, in the future. Big charities have an advantage with commissioning rather than small charities, and also commissioning is difficult for single gender work. Commissioning wants one service that delivers all (because it's easier)."

Many organisations have had to restructure and completely shift their funding model and become more efficient and effective in this process. Sometimes this internal focus can mean the diversion from providing frontline services.

Many organisations expressed frustrations at not being able to do more. Organisations clearly felt the pressure of increased demands with less capacity and resource to meet them. There were comments such as:

"Inability to meet greater local needs. Public Sector funding squeeze. Decreased capacity."

"Sustaining the organisation with a reduced budget. Dealing with higher levels of referrals and decisions about how and what to diversify into."

"Generating sustainable unrestricted income. Dealing with an increase in demand for our services. Managing ongoing change for the benefit of our service users with less resources."

The competition for funding is getting fiercer. Organisations are becoming more competitive and moving into additional geographic and thematic areas in order to bid for different tenders. At the same time organisations are encouraged to work together, whilst they are competing for funding.

Income generation can also mean that organisations are developing new services (for them) which are now in competition with other, existing services. An example raised by a local councillor was of a not for profit nursery offering similar services to the local school. Inevitably as organisations become more entrepreneurial and develop their business plans, they will compete with others for customers (and funds).

The issue of charging is always difficult, but if charges for admission, rentals, facilities and services go up too much, then the costs to the customer can become prohibitive.

Public sector grant aid is a declining source of funding; this is borne out by the NCVO Almanac 2016, which noted that the government grants (National, local and NHS) are less than half the level they were at ten years ago. The most common form of income for the Gateshead organisations that participated in the study was from charitable trusts and foundations. Forty–two organisations that responded had received public sector grants. For thirty-seven of these organisations, public sector grant aid formed less than 20% of their income.

However public sector contracts still form a useful source of income for the medium size and larger organisations. Thirty organisations that responded held public sector contracts. These contracts were with the Council, NHS / CCG, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and central government. Of these thirty organisations, six organisations got more than half their funding from that source and

seventeen organisations got less than 20% of their income from the public sector.

So there is clearly less reliance on Gateshead Council for many organisations in the form of funding; however a number of organisations indicated they wanted to participate in commissioning processes. Until Autumn 2016, there had been fewer services advertised through the tendering process (NEPO Portal), but since September 2016, there had been a noticeable increase of contracts being openly advertised. Voluntary organisations welcomed this, but noted that contract monitoring needed to be more proportionate.

There has been an amount of noise in the national press about some charities and their dubious fund-raising practices. It isn't clear yet whether this has filtered down into local communities as clearly there is a lot of trust and reliance on local organisations.

The NCVO Almanac 2016 notes that 3.22% of all charities by number receive 79.7% of the sector's total income. So there is a very uneven distribution of resources with those charities of an income of more than £1million getting nearly 80% of the overall funding. The Charity Commission register notes only ten Gateshead-based charities with an income of more than £1million.

Organisations gave several examples of how they contributed to the overall health and wellbeing of Gateshead's communities, including improving economic development.

"This sector brings much needed investment to the borough. The eyes of the country and often the international community focus on this region because of some of the important work we all do as a sector. We fight hard to provide services to help people in the borough. The money we bring in as a sector is in the £millions and it is all reinvested straight back to benefit local residents. We are not for profit but we are very valuable and complement services in the area. We should make sure this is acknowledged and our voices heard and considered at least as important, if not more important, than the commercial sector (the profit making sector) when decisions are being made."

Findings

Profile of Respondents

This section describes the structure, size and activity of the organisations that responded to the survey.
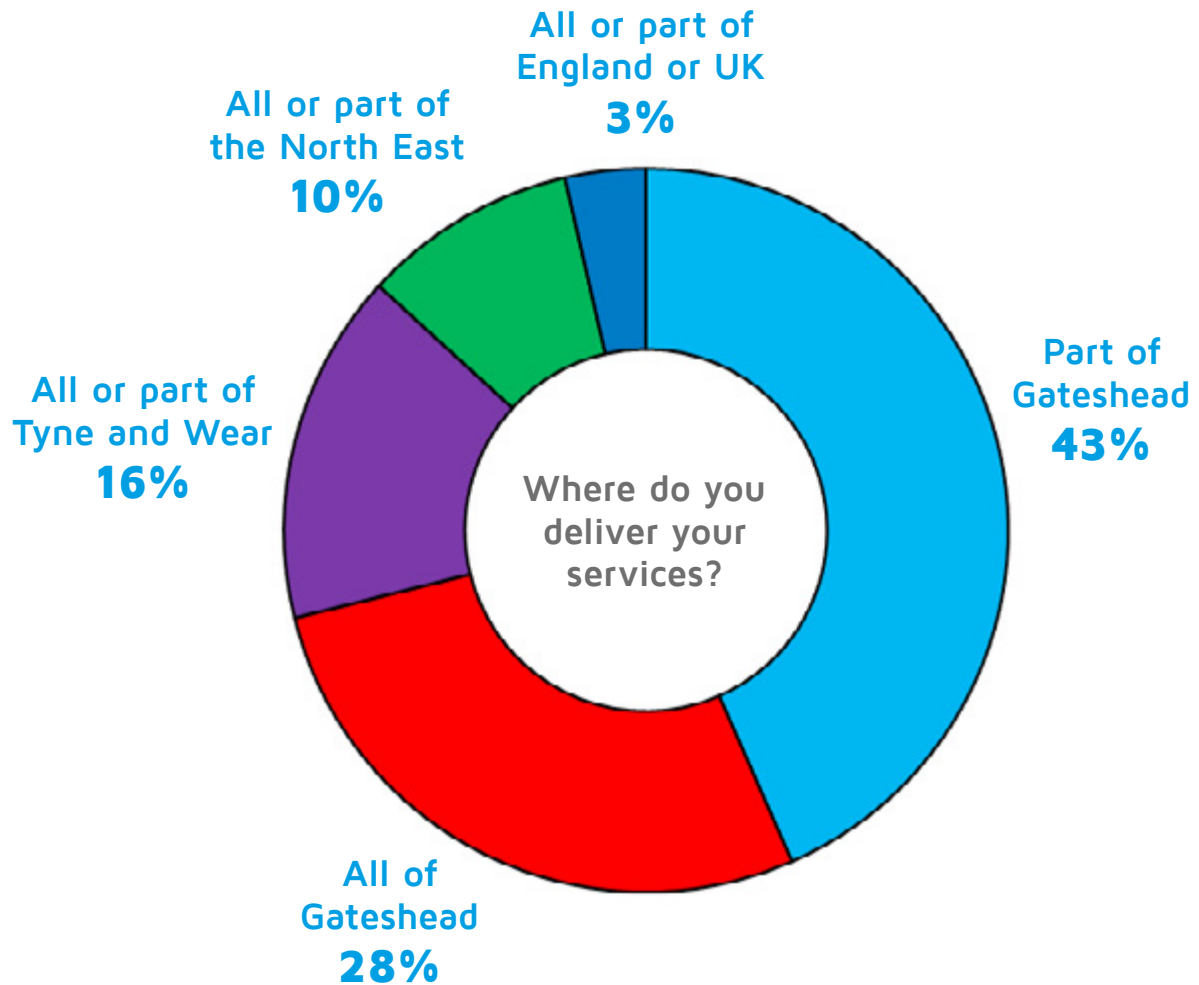
Question One : What is your organisational structure?

Registered charity   62%
Community Interest Company (CIC)   13%
Charitable Incorporated Organisation   16%
Company limited by guarantee   22%
Charitable trust   3%
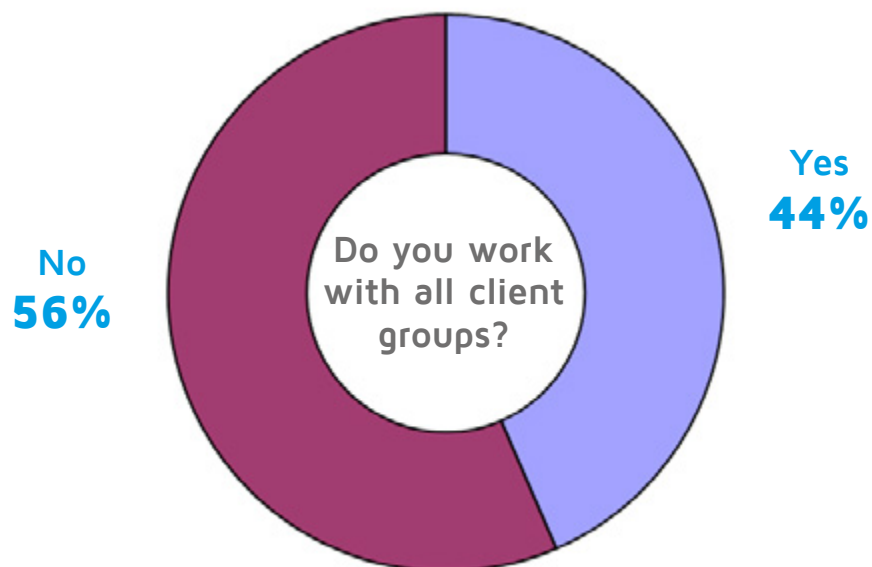Unincorporated association   11%
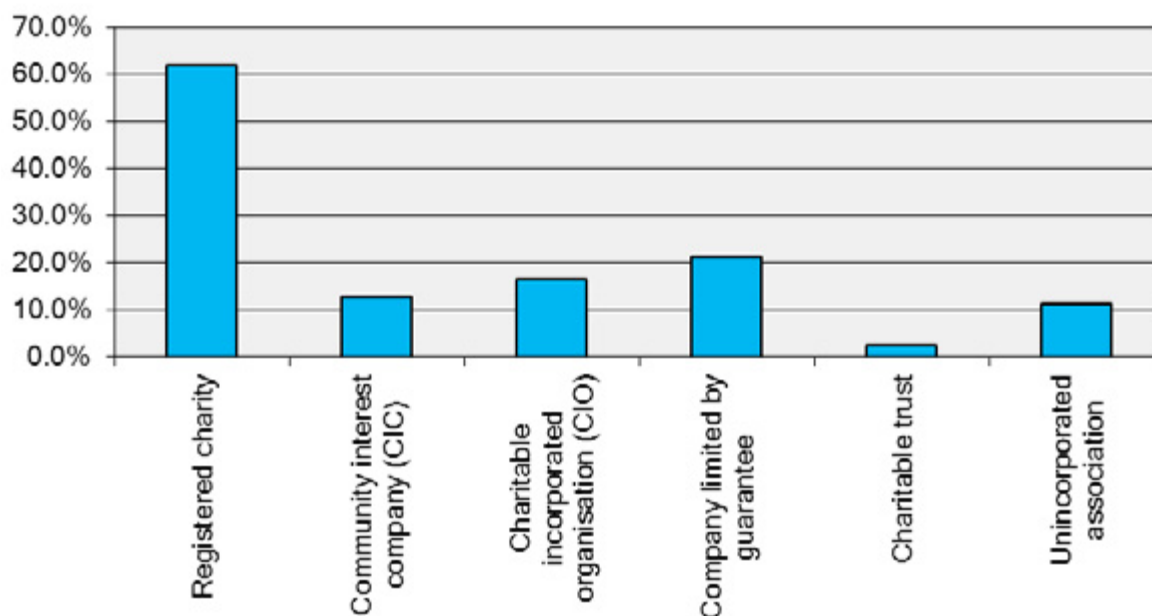
An organisation can have more than one form of structure, for instance Newcastle CVS is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

Question Two :

All or part of
England or UK
3%

All or part of
the North East
10%

All or part of
Tyne and Wear
16%

Part of
Gateshead
43%

Where do you
deliver your
services?

All of
Gateshead
28%

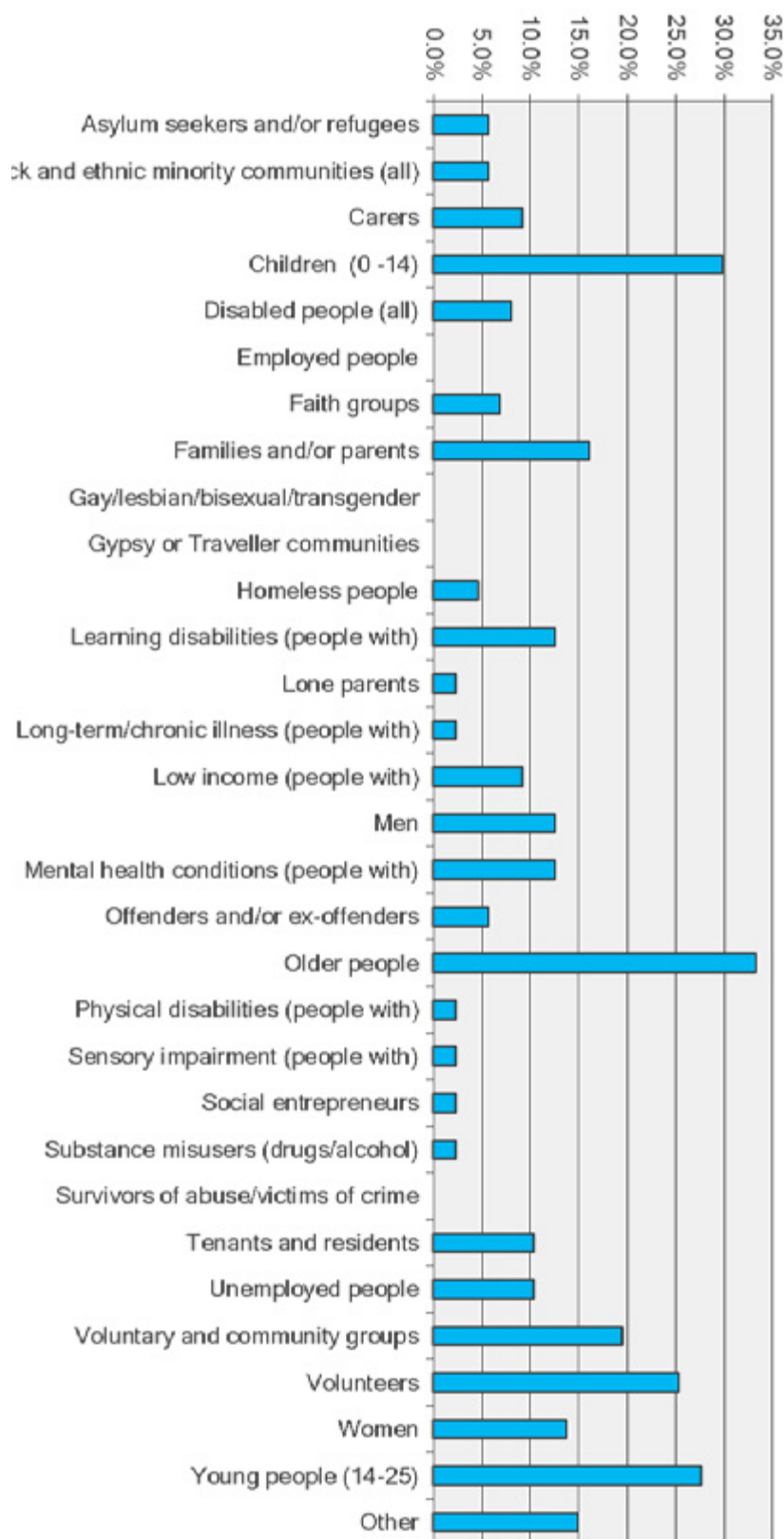**Question Three:**

No
56%

Yes
44%

Do you work
with all client
groups?

Question Four: If not, who do you work with?

Question Five: How many people are involved in your organisation?

a) Number of full time employees

0 – 1	52%
2 – 4	22%
5 – 10	8%
11 – 20	6%
21 – 50	3%
51 – 99	2%
100 or more	8%

b) Number of part time employees

0 – 1	51%
2 – 4	23%
5 – 10	16%
11 – 20	4%
21 – 50	3%
51 – 99	1%
100 or more	1%

c) Number of volunteers

0 – 1	1%
2 – 4	10%
5 – 10	22%
11 – 20	29%
21 – 50	21%
51 – 99	11%
100 or more	6%

d) Number of trustees/Management Group members

0 – 1	1%
2 – 4	23%
5 – 10	61%
11 – 20	13%
21 – 50	1%
51 – 99	0%
100 or more	0%

Recent guidance illustrates there should a minimum of four 'responsible persons' involved with any organisation. Experience has demonstrated that some trustees / management committee members are involved with more than one organisation, so adding the totals isn't helpful. However, this does illustrate several hundred people are directly involved with the management of voluntary and community organisations in Gateshead.

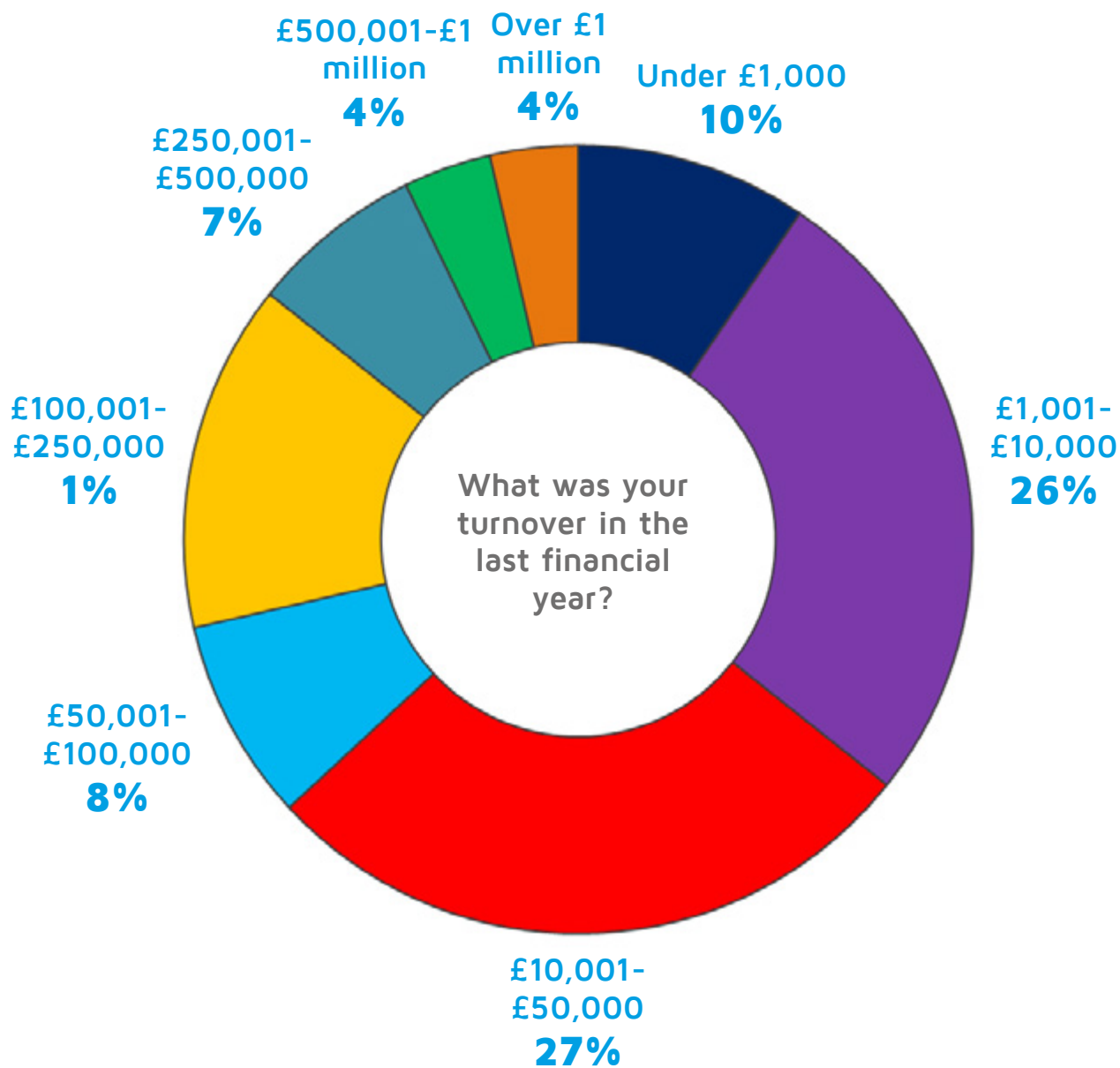e) Approximate number of people who benefit from your organisation

0 – 1   0%
2 – 4   0%
5 – 10   3%
11 – 20   5%
21 – 50   10%
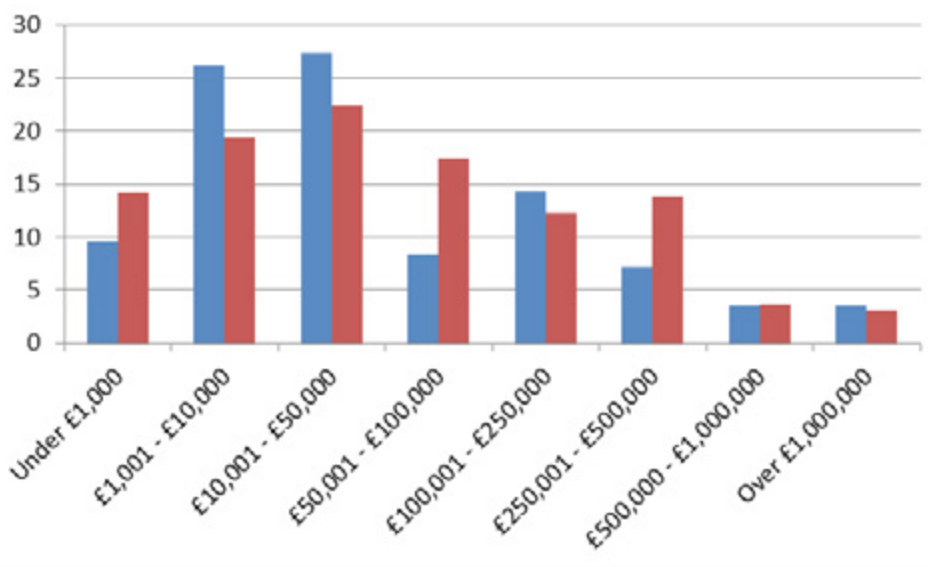51 – 99   13%
100 or more   70%

It would be wrong to conflate these figures as there will be inevitable double-counting, but clearly local voluntary and community groups in Gateshead support many thousands of local residents, as well as making the environment a better place to live and visit.

How many	Full time staff (%)	Part time staff (%)	Volunteers (%)	Trustees/ Management Group (%)	People benefitting (%)
0-1	52	51	1	1	0
2-4	22	23	10	23	0
5-10	8	16	22	61	3
11-20	6	4	29	13	5
21-50	3	3	21	1	10
51-99	2	1	11	0	13
100 or more	8	1	6	0	70

Question Six:

£500,001-£1 million **4%**

Over £1 million **4%**

Under £1,000 **10%**

£250,001-£500,000 **7%**

£100,001-£250,000 **1%**

£50,001-£100,000 **8%**

What was your turnover in the last financial year?

£1,001-£10,000 **26%**

£10,001-£50,000 **27%**

Turnover of respondents and charities in Gateshead

Key

Blue reflects the participants in the survey according to turnover
Red reflects registered charities with a base in Gateshead according to turnover from the Charity Commission website.

This illustrates that the survey participants are mainly reflective of charities in Gateshead. The CVS study attracted more participants from charities with a turnover of £1,000 to £50,000, and fewer in the £50,000 - £500,000 range.
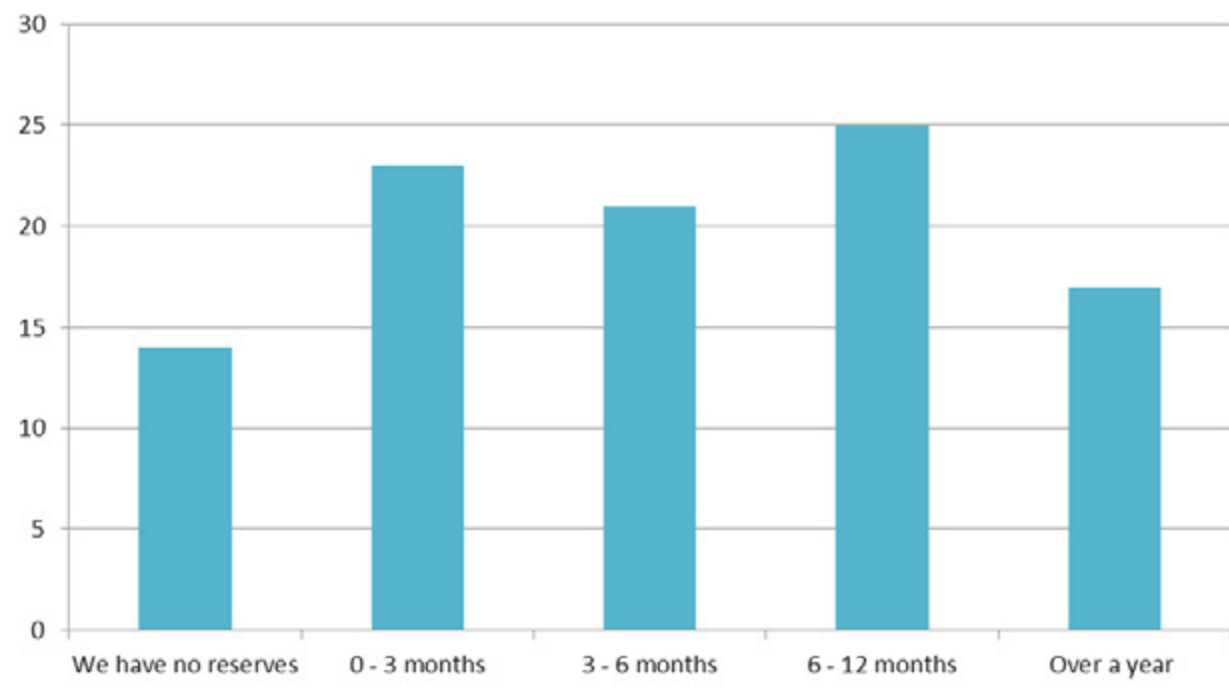
Question Seven: If you had no funding or income from tomorrow, how long could your organisation keep running on its reserves?
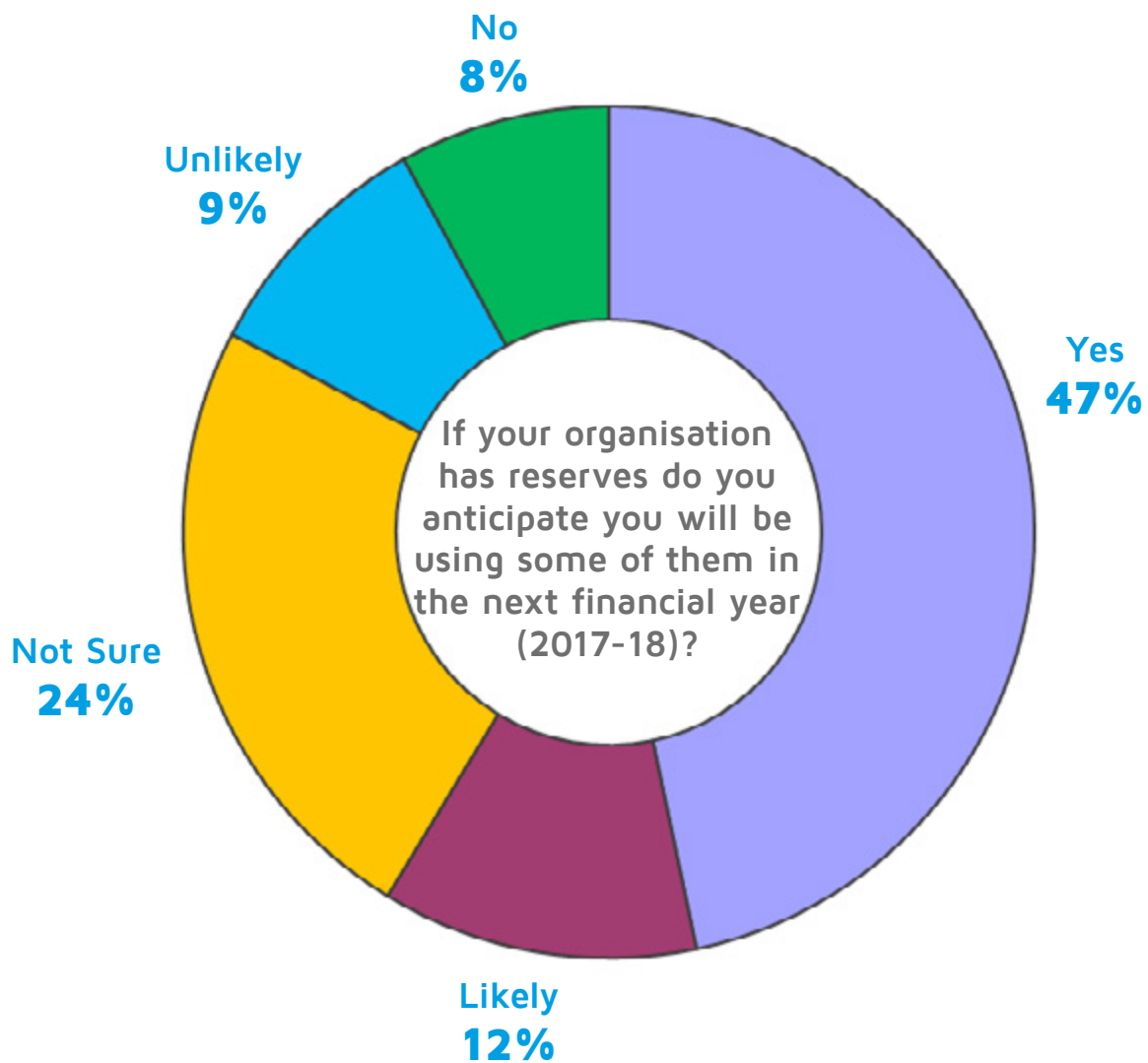
We have no reserves	14%
0 - 3 months	23%
3 - 6 months	21%
6 - 12 months	25%
Over a year	17%

This is a similar profile to information collected in other authority areas.

Reserves profile

Question Eight:

No
8%

Unlikely
9%

Yes
47%

If your organisation has reserves do you anticipate you will be using some of them in the next financial year (2017-18)?

Not Sure
24%

Likely
12%

This question does not reflect liabilities and some organisations might have to keep reserves to cover loans, pension debt etc.

Question Nine : Please estimate what percentage of your annual funding (based on the last financial year for which you had figures) comes from?

This was probably the most complex question asked and organisations had to break down what percentage of their income they received from different sources. Seventy-one organisations responded (82% of the total). A number of organisations might not have understood the question, or the breakdown of sources was too difficult. There appeared to be a correlation between the size of organisations and the sources of funding; for example, larger organisations appeared more likely to get a greater percentage of their income from public sector contracts. However the numbers in the sample were too small to demonstrate statistical significance.

Thirty (of the seventy-one) organisations held public sector contracts. These contracts could be with the Council, NHS / CCG, the Police and Crime Commissioner, or central government. Of those thirty organisations that held public sector contracts, only six organisations got more than half their funding from that source. Of the thirty organisations that held public sector contracts, 17 organisations got less than 20% of their income from the public sector.

Forty–two organisations had public sector grants. For thirty-seven of these organisations, public sector grant aid formed less than 20% of their income.

Grants from charitable trusts and foundations constituted the most common form of income. For the forty-seven organisations that received income from charitable grant aid, charitable grant aid formed less than 20% of the income for 26 organisations.

Thirty-five organisations had received grants from the Big Lottery Fund. For twenty-four of these organisations, this formed less than 20% of their income; but for 5 organisations, it formed more than 50% of their funding.

Fifty-one out of seventy organisations had generated income from selling goods and services. Twenty-four of these fifty-one organisations raised more than 20% of their income this way. As ten CICs participated in this survey, this is not surprising. Generating income includes trading such as room rental, and trading services.

For fourteen organisations, charitable fund-raising and donations formed more than 20% of their income.

Only three organisations received income from endowments and investments.

Only one organisation had social investment finance; this accounted for between 6-10% of the organisation's income.
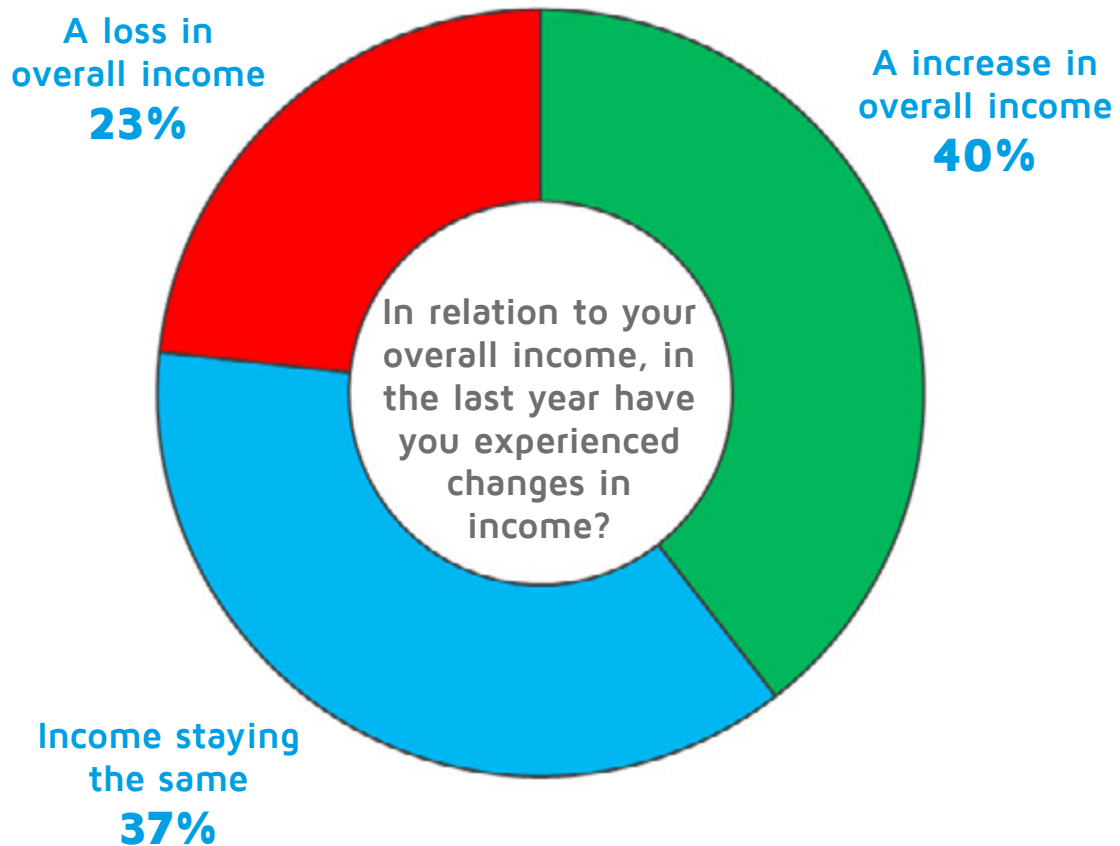
These figures generated locally were checked against recent national reports. The NCVO Almanac 2016 (which is based on information taken from charity returns for 2014) indicated that for the first time since the Almanac began, giving from individuals (£19.4billion) was greater than the giving from government (£15billion). Of the £15billion from government, over £12billion came from contracts, with less than £3billion coming from grants. The amount from government grants is less than half the amount given ten years ago. The term 'government' means national and local government, including the NHS; individual giving

refers to donations, legacies, fees for services and general fund-raising.

The other national reference point was the Small Charity Index produced by the Foundation for Social Improvement (FSI). This is a quarterly tracker and the most recent outturn indicates one in ten small charities reporting a decrease in statutory income, and 8% an increase from this source. Eighteen percent of small charities reported an increase in earned income/ trading in the last quarter. Less than 1% have used Social Impact Bonds in the last year. A small charity is defined by having an income of less than £1million by the FSI and covers nearly all the organisations based in Gateshead

This funding profile of the Gateshead participants reflected the national position, with public sector funding no longer being the primary funding source. As this was the first year of this survey, longitudinal impacts couldn't be studied, but some comments were made during the interviews which indicated public sector funding, particularly for the smaller organisations, formed a smaller source of their income, as compared to five years ago.

Question 10: In relation to your overall income, in the last financial year have you experienced?

A loss in
overall income
23%

A increase in
overall income
40%

In relation to your
overall income, in
the last year have
you experienced
changes in
income?

Income staying
the same
37%

This might be a surprising response given the comments on funding and the sustainability of voluntary and community organisations; but these respondents are the ones who have come through the storm, although the waters remain choppy. There have been some notable closures of organisations that have had to close for a variety of reasons. Again these responses are similar in other areas – usually around a third /a third / a third; but Gateshead respondents are slightly more positive than other areas. However before believing confidence is high and all is well, please read the comments made towards the end of this report.

Question 11: Over the past twelve months have you experienced changes in staffing numbers?

An increase in staff	27%
No change in staff levels	59%
A decrease in staff	12%
Some paid staff becoming (unpaid) volunteers	5%
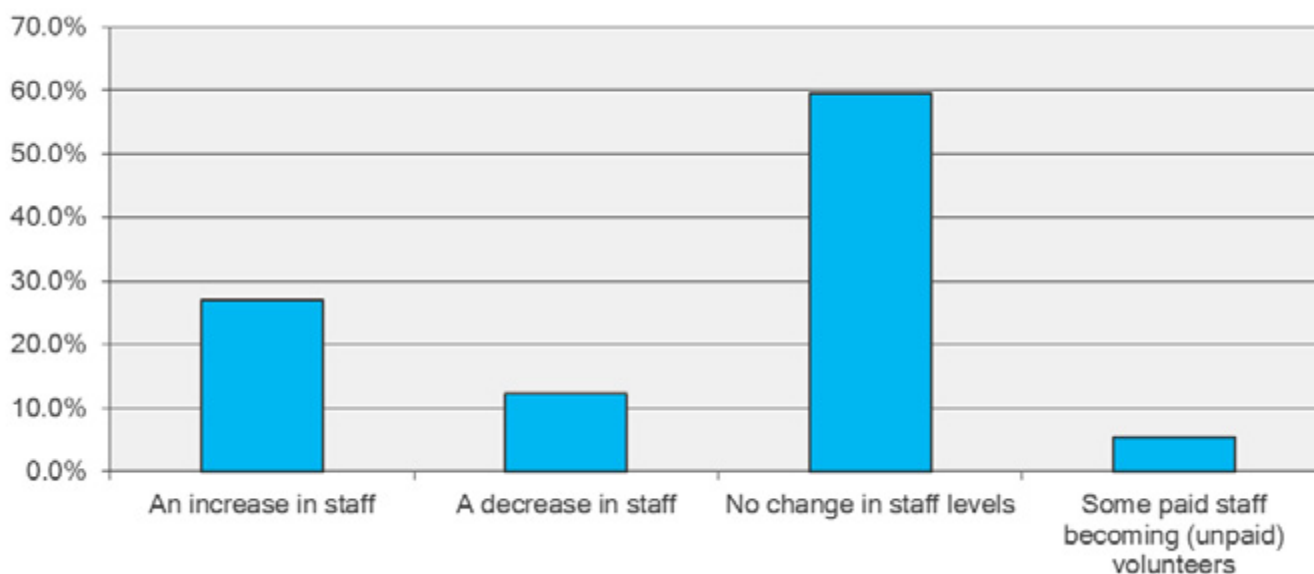
Clearly staffing changes relate to income. The comments reflect some of the churn and changes within organisations. Organisations try to avoid redundancies where possible and will sometimes use reserves to keep staff. The comments from voluntary organisations indicate that in some instances whilst the number of staff overall remains the same, there are shifts in the number of hours they work; often because of short term contracts.

Question 12: Over the last year have you experienced changes in volunteer numbers?

An increase in the numbers of volunteers	34%
Volunteer levels staying the same	48%
A loss in overall volunteer numbers	18%

It is interesting to note that one in three respondents reports an increase in the numbers of volunteers, yet the second biggest challenge (after funding) was the recruitment and retention of volunteers. As organisations become more reliant on volunteers, this is clearly a crucial area of work.

Question 13 : Over the last year have you experienced changes in demands for your services?

An increase in demands for your services?   72%
No change in demands for your services?   21%
Decrease in demands for your services?   7%

Studies done elsewhere (see references at page 40) have consistently identified a 70 – 75% year on year increase in demand for services. This needs to be seen at the same time that organisations are going through their own changes and reorganisations. In the comments and in discussions, organisations frequently report that not only are they seeing more people, but the complexities and needs are changing. As statutory services are tightening their criteria for access into services, this means many people who would have received statutory services, both commissioned and / or delivered by the NHS, local authorities, probation services etc five years ago, are now excluded. So they go to the place available – the voluntary and community sector. Or they don't go anywhere at all. Organisations have had to consistently reorganise, restructure and reshape to accommodate these demands for services.

Question 14 : During the last year, has your organisation developed any new areas of service, projects, initiatives or events?

Two thirds (66%) of the 86 respondents answered yes to this question. It is a tribute to the creativity and innovation of the voluntary and community sector, that even with all the difficulties clearly experienced, two thirds of all the respondents had developed new services. Clearly in some instances services will have been developed in order to generate income, whether additional or replacement funding.

Question 15 : In the next financial year (from April 2017) do you anticipate?

Increasing staff levels   24%
Reducing staff levels   7%
Engaging additional volunteers   61%
Reducing the number of your volunteers   1%
Expanding the number of services you provide   49%
Closing services you provide   10%
Closing the organisation   1%
Merging with another organisation   7%
Increasing the number and type of beneficiaries   37%
Reducing the number and type of beneficiaries   3%

The interesting point here is that despite clear worries and concerns, there is still positivity that the organisations will grow, engage more volunteers, offer more services and help and support more people. Again this fits in with studies from elsewhere, and those with a sample from much larger organisations (Social Landscape 2017). This expression of optimism

and enthusiasm against the background of tough of challenging times can succeed only if the right circumstances and resources are available. Some organisations have changed how they work in order to cope with reduced public sector income and direct support, in an environment of increased demands and clearly many believe they can do more. But policy makers need to consider that their decisions don't inadvertently discriminate against voluntary and community organisations.

Views of Respondents

This section describes how organisations felt about what was happening, their opinions, views, hopes and fears.

Question 16: What do you think will be the three top challenges that your organisation will face in the next two years?

Eighty organisations responded to this question, with (unsurprisingly) more than half noting funding. This is in line with other surveys, both locally and nationally, but was clearly problematic, regardless of the size of the organisation.

As well as the general funding comments, there were a number related to changing the source of funding – from grants to contracts, and a much greater emphasis on trading and being more business minded. These comments came from organisations of all sizes as even smaller, community organisations, which once had a number of their costs picked up by Gateshead Council had come to the realisation that this was no longer the case and they would have to pay for goods and services that were previously 'free' to them.

The second most common issue was volunteering; the problems of recruiting and retaining volunteers. GVOC, the former local development agency, had previously provided support around volunteering; this service is now based in Gateshead Council. There was a document on the Council website listing organisations with volunteering opportunities, but this was from September 2016. A number of the interviewees had commented that the previous system offered more individual support, particularly to people from disadvantaged groups who wanted to volunteer as often they needed additional

support, and it wasn't clear if this was available and where from. Other comments included that as Gateshead Council had its own system of volunteering to complement those services that they previously provided e.g. libraries, environment and leisure (similar to many other councils), there was now a "competition for volunteers". It wasn't clear where or how smaller organisations got their support around volunteering.

The issue of increased cost pressures – rents, utilities, cost of the workforce when people were employed is common to all organisations – private, public and voluntary. Yet there is still a perception in the minds of many outside the sector that these are free goods, VAT isn't paid and there are zero business rates. Indeed the Gateshead Council budget changes in March 2017 make it more likely that a number of charities will lose the 20% discretionary rate relief they currently have, and local charities will be subject to the national changes in business rates similar to other organisations.

A number of comments noted the need to maintain or increase membership. This is separate to attracting and retaining volunteers, but volunteers would usually come from members. In some cases these would be paying members, which is linked to funding. This comment is typical "Decline in membership due to ageing of members and reluctance of younger people to join community groups." The issue of an older generation and a different set of priorities and interests for younger people emerged through several comments. There could also be the factor of smaller communities in some areas, and it isn't clear what work has been done about community engagement with newly established residential communities.

There was a sense of realism from the respondents; these are organisations that

have had to make substantial changes to how they operate. All organisations have to operate in a very different environment, and there are different drivers in implementing change. Volunteer trustees and management committee members have different motivations to paid staff, and dealing with radical restructures, redundancies and new obligations, are hard for most people. A number of volunteers get involved to set something up, respond to a need, put something right and don't want to be involved in high level organisational development and making difficult decisions.

Clearly people felt very strongly about their work and wanted to keep going, so the responses also included sustainability over a longer term, and how that could be managed. Clearly trading and new and different business is one way forward for some organisations, but they need to be clear about the product, customers, market and competition – not necessarily the language of small community groups.

The responses also included the problems of trying to manage increasing demands, whilst dealing with increased costs, and the pressures that this can create. This applied to all sizes of organisation, and for those that are volunteer-led; this can create even greater pressures for volunteers.

A selection of these comments are quoted below, but it is significant that the majority noted funding, with nearly a third raising volunteering:

"Maintaining volunteer energy and support. Finding the right expertise to develop our social enterprise model."

"Getting enough volunteers; keeping Politics (please notice the capital "P") out of the organisation. "

"An ageing membership. Shortage of volunteers for administrative and organisational duties. Possible increase to hall hire fees."

"Inability to meet greater local needs. Public Sector funding squeeze. Decreased capacity."

"Rent increase, funding, volunteers."

"Maintaining volunteer levels, maintaining users of service, expanding services and activities."

"Local Authority charges for use of leisure facilities. Club dynamics. Replacing ageing equipment."

"Community engagement and sustained income against inflationary measures. Retention of players. Need to continue capital investments to keep the club attractive."

"Increasing membership. Affording the cost of the hall for our meetings if the charge is increased. Publicising the Group. We advertise the group on Facebook, posters in local libraries, and on the OurGateshead web site."

"Maintaining our path to sustainability, already achieving set goals - two more years to full sustainability. Recruitment of volunteers. Finding external funding for major repairs to the roof and heating plant."

"Obtaining sufficient funds to keep the Library open. Retaining and recruiting volunteers. Providing events to increase usage of the Library."

"Finance and funding. Local authority cooperation. Cuts to other services pushing up demand dramatically."

"Negotiating a long term lease. Financial stability. Developing service expertise to expand our programmes."

"Reaching break-even point. Recruiting volunteers."

"Sustainability. Succession funding following BLF

including attracting contract. Worker retention."

"Recruiting, training, maintaining and managing volunteers. Finding someone to take on that responsibility. Need to expand size of kitchen - so issues with premises. Raising money to develop the lunch clubs and maintain them."

"Lack of funding for employee wages such as youth workers. We currently have a waiting list for a number of our services, this is not getting shorter and we have to limit numbers due to staff numbers."

"Top of the list will be finding the funding to improve the X Park and Town Centre. Keeping everyone on board with the project. Bringing other organisations on board to improve and expand the whole project."

"Funding, plus closure of libraries staffed by paid employees of Gateshead Council."

"Increasing number of volunteers. Help the community to be aware of the community centre's existence & availability. Improve the energy efficiency of the community centre."

"Keeping Y Library open. Increasing membership applying for grants."

"Unlike most services we have no paid staff and Z is entirely run and managed by members – people with mental health problems. So our greatest challenges are to continue running the service and get our model recognised as a good option for people with mental health problems nationally."

"Enabling and empowering our membership of Q community groups to realise their unique potential to be active agents in supporting the settlement and integration of their communities. As their role is being overshadowed by other VCS agencies and intermediary agencies who seek to use Qs merely as gateways to beneficiaries for their own services and projects and fail to see Qs as partners in collaborative

work and do not share any resources with them. Finding funding for collective advocacy based work and work to support the capacity and voice of community groups themselves is increasingly difficult as most funding supports outcomes measured by movement of individual beneficiaries from A to B, and reject work they classify as infrastructure support."

"Maintaining funding. Developing new areas of work Maintaining and developing volunteer roles."

"Gateshead Council's use of K where we provide our services. Potential sale of the Centre Change of staff at the Centre."

"Increasing membership for adults and children. Finding other ways of generating income. Grants for improving our premises especially for the disabled."

"Level of income. Less support from Commissioners. Reduced opportunities for additional funding."

"Meeting demand (exceptional record breaking growth year on year for last 5 years) with 2017 projected to be another record breaking year. Outcome of the LA/CCG review of M services. The ending of key contracts and grants in 2017 representing 40% of income."

"Budget cuts, increased demand, work load increase."

"The current climate seems to expect full time employed people who have previously been happy to volunteer to take on responsibility for making money and growing the organisation. They don't want that, it's not why they joined and they will leave. The system that rewards national governing bodies for the degree of participation in their area yet relies on volunteers to drive that participation is broken, there is an imbalance between wealthy charitable organisations and those of us acting locally on small sums of money."

"Funding for our services difficulties in finding volunteers time available for us to provide swimming lessons at Gateshead Leisure Centre due to the increase in number of children who want lessons but limited time the pool is available for us to provide lessons."

"Sustaining the organisation with a reduced budget. Dealing with higher levels of referrals and decisions about how and what to diversify into."

"Moving away from being reliant upon 'grant seeking' to income generating."

"Generating sustainable unrestricted income. Dealing with an increase in demand for our services. Managing ongoing change for the benefit of our service users with less resources."

"Maintaining current contracts. Winning new contracts. Being able to retain staff and offer pay awards. This could have a knock on effect on consistency and quality of service provision. Increased competition for funding via grants and paid customers. Maintaining our membership Increased costs of existence - due to increasing success of the band requiring more highly paid conductor, increased rent of band room due to more rehearsals, and our new youth band."

"Financial stability. Attracting more volunteers. Supporting volunteers."

"Financial self- sufficiency in the wake of funding cuts and hardship for the people using us. Negative publicity regarding the area of work we are engaged in. Replacing volunteers who want to volunteer, not run a business. They are being forced to think commercially which was never part of the attraction."

"To start earning from the services we provide and have the business start paying for itself as we are currently relying on grant funding. Maintain the staff levels that we have got. Get some of our volunteers converted to being paid staff."

"Securing sustainable funding, particularly for core costs and building organisational infrastructure. Developing streams of unrestricted income. Keeping pace with demand and recruiting good staff."

"Managing growth and avoiding 'cliff edge' scenarios as large funding strands come to an end. Managing national programme staff who are remotely located. Meeting demand with appropriate resources."

"Premises that are available and accessible in Gateshead. Income generation. Increased demand for services due to public cuts."

"Reaching new markets. Recruiting and supporting volunteers. Developing corporate links."

"Volunteer capacity to carry our services we would like to. Fighting to keep our level of funding year on and on, makes it difficult to plan. Strengthening our partnership working with our CCG/Health."

"The likely reduction in funding in general. The need for substantial investment in buildings. Recruitment and retention of cadets."

"Maintaining volunteer numbers. Maintaining the present level of fundraising. Maintaining the present levels of community awareness to our initiatives."

"Running our charity as a business, keeping up with the costs of gas, electric and water (currently £11,000 +). Managing staff and wages."

"Funding. Lack of staff to cope with demand. Staff stress levels will rise due to not being able to accommodate everyone with the support they need."

"To provide an environment and activities that attracts and keeps volunteers. To provide activities that the public will support."

"Attracting funding if our core funding/contracts

are withdrawn or reduced . Increasing our capacity as we diversify our income streams to increase sustainability. Maintaining the same level of service provision, at the same standards, as we move through the possible changes in challenges."

"Lack of opportunities to exhibit our work to a broader community . No support from Local council either financial or in any other respect – e.g. networking. Very difficult to source information about other art clubs from a central point."

"Paying for running costs. This is essential to keep the Library open. Continue to provide services to the public which attract customers. Motivate existing volunteers to be proactive in transforming the Library into a Community Hub - many signed up to keep the library open and not to run a business."

Question 17: What do you think will be the three top challenges that your beneficiaries / the people you work with will face in the next two years?

Seventy six organisations responded to this question about the top challenges for their beneficiaries in the next two years. Most of the responses were framed around resources – the lack of personal finance that people would have because of benefit changes and the increased poverty in local communities as a result of this; the impact of the Council's own funding cuts and the increasing difficulties in accessing public services. As a result of these and external policy changes, reference was made to the general loss of activities and the 'running down' of communities, which could lead to loneliness and isolation.

Organisations were also aware of the impact of their own charging policies and changed (reduced) access into their own services which could discourage potential and existing

users. Participants responded in terms of their own client group but there were still some common themes. Certain themes – older people, refugees and asylum seekers, people living with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities and young people, came out in several responses as they had been the subject of several policy changes.

It is notable that the words 'poverty' and 'austerity' are now used openly and are acceptable terminology within non-academic circles; again this is a shift and maybe reflective of how quickly people are accepting situations which would previously have been untenable. One of the saddest responses was the bleak "Poverty. Neglect. Mental health."

Another theme that comes through is that people and communities have several challenges; it isn't just individual benefit claims, but less money means fewer people have access to services. Also poorer people are more likely to spend their money locally; so this has an impact on the local economy. The geography of Gateshead means that for some people it isn't a single bus ride to a service, even if they can afford the bus fare. Organisations were clearly well-informed about welfare reforms/ benefit changes, but concerned that their beneficiaries didn't have the same level of understanding, or just didn't want to face the next set of changes.

The impact on health and wellbeing also featured as participants clearly recognised the links between the loss of personal income, loss of services and change in thresholds to access services which resulted in exclusion. There were references to the importance of prevention work and the resultant problems if this didn't happen. This was illustrated by the stark *"Lack of service. Being alienated from the community. Benefit cut."*

There were a number of references to jobs/ employment and training opportunities. Clearly the nature of work, and its insecurity was a concern. There were several references to sanctions (from the DWP in relation to benefit payments).

"Austerity effects of reduction in other services including pressure on statutory services, longer waiting times, reduced eligibility for mental health services."

"Financial pressures. Insecurity in employment. Housing developments around our community."

"God knows; depends on the local Councillors and their overarching plan for the larger area."

"Welfare Benefits reductions. Child Cap on Tax Credits. Community safety and Security Safe Digital Inclusion."

"A reduction in income/no pay rises making it harder to make ends meet. Cuts to local services. Having to travel to access services i.e. we no longer have a post office in our village."

"Access to affordable arts programmes. Realistic career in the arts and their aspirations. Opportunities to affordable health and wellbeing opportunities."

"Older people: health / frailty; managing with reduced abilities; Asylum seekers: learning English; integration; Families on benefits: impact of being sanctioned; poverty."

"Budgeting their income and costs. Loneliness. Health issues."

"Coping with the loss of X Library if it closes. Finding alternative garden space in the middle of X. Finding central meeting space."

"The three top challenges I would say will be benefit issues, lack of mental health services and support, being stigmatised or marginalised by the majority of society."

"The implementation of the Immigration Act 2016 from spring 2017 - most crucially the withdrawal of Government support for refused asylum seekers and shifting of that role to the discretion of Local Authorities, who are already operating on low budgets. This is likely to see an increase in destitution, and could now include families rather than just adults."

"The problems faced by our members are extremely varied. They are generally men facing difficult times in their lives, bereavement, mental health problems, being a carer, and resulting social isolation etc. We feel that all these problems will be exacerbated by the inevitable post Brexit economic downturn, and we are glad that we can provide a vital social connection and relief from stress during the tough times ahead."

"Becoming older and less able to contribute. Fewer places that they can be accommodated with a reduction in services means people have less income overall and need greater support to participate."

"Austerity in the Health and Social Care sector. Reduction in services as a result of the above. Not being consulted on change."

"A potential reduction in the services we are able to offer to carers (see above) . Ongoing cuts to LA and health budgets - reduction in services for disabled people and the impact of that on carers. DWP drive to cut benefit entitlements – PIP etc."

"We work with carers, so they are facing an increase in their levels of care due to social care being either not available or being so expensive that they can't afford it for their cared for and so the carer has to take on even more caring responsibility. The carers own health and wellbeing will suffer, as will their financial situation if they have to give up work to care or take reduced hours to care."

"No funding for people from deprived areas to access the service. Difficult to access statutory services."

"Continued unemployment. Social exclusion. Poverty."

"Moving on to independent living. Finding mainstream work. Financial stability."

"Reduction in service availability/increase in threshold to access services. Benefit reductions. Local Housing Allowance."

"Falling income, cuts in social services and benefits."

"Securing sustainable employment. Maintaining good health and wellbeing. Accessing essential services."

"Coping with the welfare reforms and reduced income. Coping with tougher sanctions on their benefits. Generally avoiding homelessness as they struggle to manage their budgets."

"Significant reductions in council services leading to gaps in service or increasingly disjointed services. Increasing pressure of household budgets as cost rise and people unable to cope, particularly with benefit cuts/ sanctions."

"Loneliness. Reduced services. Incoherent or lack of joined up sign posting."

"Service provision (i.e. there is little or none). Cuts to social care and health budgets: being cast adrift in a system that does not look after this vulnerable group but which is struggling to deal with critical needs let alone substantial or moderate. This will have very detrimental effects on people with learning disabilities and their families and is a false economy as the 'prevention' costs they are saving from closing provision or making people ineligible to access provision is a short term solution. Adopting a preventative approach with services being available and accessible during life will

help to reduce the longer term care needs (and therefore the costs to the State and local government) of this group. It's not rocket science. Vulnerable people such as people with learning disabilities are in danger of becoming more isolated and marginalised than they were 20 years ago under this current national programme of austerity with years of good work potentially becoming undone. This approach will cause a much heavier long-term financial burden to this country. We feel incredibly sad for the local councils and the levels of cuts they are experiencing nationwide but the austerity measures are not a long term solution and will end up costing more both morally and tangibly, in the long term. The current welfare system overhaul which is very hard indeed on people with learning disabilities and fails enormously to take their needs and position into account causes health and anxiety problems for PWLD and is leaving them feeling isolated and alone."

"Change in benefits that means hardship for our carers. School changes that means our carers who have children with SEN makes life difficult. Local Authority having funding to carry out their statutory duties i.e. respite care etc for our parents."

"Tightening of family budgets to support the young cadets. Money. Jobs."

"More poverty, lower incomes due to benefit sanctions, benefit caps. Struggling to meet the costs of childcare. Lack of Council funded activities and provisions. (ie; social care for adults with learning disabilities)."

"Changes to benefits (Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance, Universal Credit etc). Changes to service provision due to cuts within the public sector which also has in impact on the third sector. Quality of life/wellbeing as a result of these challenges."

"Lack of mental health services. Benefits under attack. Disability hate crimes and prejudice."

Question 18: How do you feel about partnership working? This could be with other local organisations, the Council, the NHS or others?

Seventy nine organisations responded to this question. In some instances this was interpreted by working with others – Gateshead Council, other organisations nearby or in the same building. Partnership working tends mean contributing resources to achieve a greater impact than if those organisations had been working separately.

A number of the comments reflect how focussed individuals are in getting their own organisation to succeed or even be sustainable. This approach could mean there wasn't necessarily the resources or capacity to engage in partnership working if the main focus was on core work and fundraising for the project.

Many organisations do not have sufficient internal capacity for partnership working. Some do not understand the value. In some instances it is hard to see how it could be applied to some projects. Organisations, especially those that are volunteer-led, are focussed only on that organisation, so it seems anathema and strange to engage with others when there is no immediate impact or benefit.

For some of the medium-size and larger organisations, the issue of competition can be difficult. As there is a shift towards contracting through competitive tenders, and often for larger contracts, it can be difficult to engage with those organisations who are competing for 'your business'.

The Bluestone Consortium can provide a mechanism for partnership working for some organisations, but members are expected to engage and contribute, not just be recipients of information.

Some respondents saw opportunities in sharing core and support services as a natural advantage to partnership working.

"Welcome it. Already work in partnership with others."

"More could be done to mobilise the assets of sports facilities to progress fitness and wellbeing programmes. These are available for partnership working but H+WB's need to be more active in recognising their community resources."

"The centre has always worked in partnership with other organisations including Gateshead Council, NHS, Gateshead Evolve, local schools and other community organisations in the area."

"We would welcome partnership working and have worked with the council in partnership over the last three years. The layout of the Library / lack of space and limited parking are problematic. Closer links with other agencies is an area we need to develop."

"Positive but we are very small and seem to come under the radar in many ways."

"It is vital that all local organisations, the council and the NHS and others are involved in working within a partnership as each can bring their specialist knowledge and expertise to any project that we may wish to develop."

"We are very keen on partnership working, that is one of our key areas. Y is more than a building and framework that other services use to support their users. Over half of our activities and groups are held by different organisations."

"We are strong advocates of collaborative/ partnership working that involves a genuine and resourced role for grassroots community organisations. As themselves are unique and valuable assets both in assessing needs but also in delivery of solutions. They are not

simply gateways to a hard to reach sector of the community. They are collaborators in change. Working through collaborations and partnerships is vital, both in developing and in delivering an initiative. It's an essential, even if it's a challenge. The communities themselves are the assets to address issues. But there is a vital need to support the communities' capacity to do this. Commissioners need to have a clear appreciation of the key features of effective collaborative working and build this into commissioning and tendering processes. Commissioners should probe project/service proposals to identify if these elements have been considered in the development of the proposal, and if so whether there is evidence they have been considered appropriately. This could enable commissioners to assess whether the project/service is likely to reach the diversity of the intended beneficiary community and whether it has been designed on a strong enough evidence base to deliver a service which responds to their distinctive needs. They can also assess if claims made about delivering the work 'in partnership' are genuine claims – whether there is evidence that those partners were actually involved in identifying needs as well as have a clear and resourced role in delivery of the actions."

"Fine as long as there is an acknowledgement that funding must be viable and the partnership is not just a tick box exercise and develops into both collaboration and co- production and meaningful outcomes."

"Positive approach to partnership working. The VCS has done this for years. The successful integration of health and social care needs to include the voluntary sector."

"All for it, I am sure that some core services could be shared between organisations locally."

"We believe partnership working is very useful and are always open to new opportunities."

"We are working in partnership with other organisations, and this is very helpful."

"This is very good thing as it helps communities to learn from each other, it opens up ideas and opportunities and can identify sources of support. But it can also add layers of management and expectations that become a burden to volunteers. The community centre support systems in Northumberland can teach us a lot. ACRE, West Northumberland Consortium etc."

"Depends on the local organisation. X is an odd place, and not always pleasant."

"Only when realistic approach is taken to capacity and resources. Full cost recovery should not be a luxury – and volunteers also cost money!"

"Over the years we have had great relationships with other services, but all our time is consumed by fundraising, we don't have enough time to network."

"I wholeheartedly welcome working in partnership with any organisation to enhance our beneficiaries experience of increasing their own wellbeing."

"We will work with anyone to improve the outcomes for young people, we already work in partnership with other agencies, i.e. social workers, family nurse partnership, health visitors, midwives."

"We already work in partnership on a number of contracts. It can be difficult at times as we are also in competition in other areas."

"We already work in partnerships with other local organisations in small ways and hope to develop them further."

"In principle it is fine but who does the work? None of us are paid for doing this yet we are expected to generate everything to help tick boxes for these organisations."

"Our organisation has been built on strong partnerships - with the Council, local GP practices, local schools, Gateshead Learning Skills and many others. In this way we can bring the best services to our communities, work more effectively, and share skills and expertise. Particularly at a time when resources are scarce, then working effectively together must become a priority for us all, otherwise our communities will be even harder hit. We have found that the most effective partnerships are based on good relationships, shared ethos, transparency and trust."

"We have no problem partnership working and do on a local, regional and national level with other Y Forums such as ourselves. Therefore working in partnership with the council, NHS etc is actually part of our grant within our DfE funding."

"We do work in partnership but they send us referrals because they cannot cope with demand on their services."

"We regularly work in partnership with other third sector organisations, the NHS and the Council on a variety of projects and services."

Question 19: Are there any other comments you would like to add?

Twenty-nine organisations took the opportunity to make a response. These comments illustrate the breadth and richness of the voluntary and community sector in Gateshead. A number reference Gateshead Council. They reflect hopes, fears and some thanks.

"No two community centres are the same. I would like to see a stronger system of support - by networking meetings perhaps by district West and East or Northish and Southish. I would like to have an attached adviser to offer advice and keep energy and commitment levels up during hard times. I would like more training packages

on offer at weekends to catch volunteers who work."

"Thank you for conducting this survey. Percentages above were approximated due to time constraints but believe it paints a broadly accurate picture. We feel it is vital that supreme efforts be made to reduce the speed and depth of the endless public sector funding cuts if the third sector is to adjust in order to survive. Also that crucially government be made to understand that the North East is in no position to be cut loose from central government funding support by 2020. That is a guaranteed crisis in the making."

"If you can direct us to any funders that might help us to develop our community centre - please advise."

"We have received help from Gateshead Council and GVOC in the past and been most grateful for the guidance and funding provided."

"Thank you very much for CVS support."

"We find that funding is often dependent on having a new project. Operating costs and day to day expenses etc are more difficult to get funding for. Advice and information on suitable organisations that could help would be appreciated."

"Library services are in decline we recognise this is our core business but in order to survive we need to find ways of generating income. We have a business plan but rely on grants to keep the library open. Developing into a community hub is the way forward."

"After only four months everyone in our organisation is pleased with the input and the commitment from all concerned that have helped to get our project underway."

"We have been a volunteer library since 2013, necessarily less council support/funding each year. This year we have had noticeably

diminishing footfall, and have lost a few volunteers. The Council have never owned the land the library stands on, nor the surrounding two acres, and we are told the landowners now want all the land back for a social housing development. A deal has been just about done and this building in all likelihood will be demolished. Our CIO will be wound up in March."

"We work with a greater number of groups than your survey allowed."

"The value of the Voluntary sector is not appreciated by some of the Officers within Public bodies and they see us as a resource to be over controlled - whether this is through monitoring or by a tender process that excludes innovation. There is reduced confidence that the Council and CCG actually possess the organisational memory to fully understand the power of the Voluntary sector."

"Not interested in commissioning."

"Professional fund raising is now too busy and increased use of computers is making it harder. So?????????????"

"The planned reduction in housing benefit will hit us hard."

"We are a residents association in X covering about 280 homes, but with only 30 members who pay £2 per household, annually."

"There will be no services, in the future. Big charities have an advantage with commissioning rather than small charities, and also commissioning is difficult for single gender work. Commissioning wants one service that delivers all (because it's easier)."

"We find that social enterprises do not have as much support from funding organisations such as Community Foundation there seem to be a preference of charities - how do we overcome that or get them to understand that our mission and vision is similar."

"Gateshead council should expand opportunities for more commissioned services open to the voluntary sector within Gateshead and offer practical help in ex-local authority services secure appropriate site. The record of asset transfers that have been undertaken seem to very closed quietly decided actions based on conversations between limited parties. Very little public information shared regarding opportunities for asset transfer or future property options."

"This sector brings much needed investment to the borough. The eyes of the country and often the international community focus on this region because of some of the important work we all do as a sector. We fight hard to provide services to help people in the borough. The money we bring in as a sector is in the £millions and it is all reinvested straight back to benefit local residents. We are not for profit but we are very valuable and complement services in the area. We should make sure this is acknowledged and our voices heard and considered at least as important, if not more important, than the commercial sector (the profit making sector) when decisions are being made"

"Our organisation has had to move three times is as many years because of being evicted due to landlord wanting to sell building and Council leases etc. The council have been very supportive in helping us with yet another move we will have to make next year, but it puts a lot of pressure on us and we feel our parents are just fed up of our moves."

"People that could fill in grant forms for us and other small groups."

"Only that in the past Gateshead Council and their representatives have been very supportive and very constructive at all times - we could not have had a better organization to help us. Even if all the funding dries up, as it may well have to do, we will remember the great work you have done. Thanks!"

"As with a lot of volunteering groups age is a big factor in our group we have an age problem and whilst the enthusiasm is not questioned maintaining levels of hands on physical engagement is at times difficult but we try to fulfil our levels of community support."

"We still have a good relationship with our local council."

"The benefit cuts have caused huge problems and the difficulty filling 40 page forms for PIP is another ongoing issue."

"As an amateur theatre group, our volunteers are our membership and our beneficiaries are paying patrons, and so many of these latter questions don't seem particularly applicable to our situation. But I hope this all helps!"

References

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About Newcastle CVS

Newcastle CVS gives people who struggle to be heard a voice, supports voluntary and community organisations to be resilient and sustainable and promotes a fairer society by influencing and challenging the debate.

Our established reputation, extensive networks and integrity and strength of approach makes us the go to source in supporting voluntary and community action.

We improve the quality of life in Newcastle and Gateshead by supporting the voluntary sector.

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