# skillsbridge
creating alliances

# VCS 2020 Understanding Current Support to the Voluntary and Community Sector delivering in Newcastle City

March 2015

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## Introduction

In November 2014, Newcastle CVS and SkillsBridge Ltd were commissioned by Newcastle City Council to undertake some research that would help in "Future proofing the sector". The entire research project was split into three parts:

I.   What might the voluntary and community sector (VCS) look like in 2020?
II.  The VCS within public sector reform
**III.  Understanding current support to the VCS**

The last part is the element that SkillsBridge undertook and this report will focus on the findings.

## Scope of the research

The research aimed to understand the following;

What support functions are currently available to the VCS in Newcastle?  Within this there were more specific questions the research was aiming to understand

- How reliant are we on support provided by non-Newcastle organisations?
- How are these functions organised in the city?
- Is there good coverage of all functions?
- What scale are the functions currently delivered at?
- How are these functions delivered e.g. web based, face to face etc.?
- What measureable benefits are accruing locally?
- What about relationships, initiatives and experiences with other primes, consortia and partners?

**Approach/Methodology**

The research conducted by SkillsBridge was split into two sections. The first section focused on 'frontline' VCSE organisations, the second section on organisations providing support to VCSE organisations, often referred to as infrastructure organisations.

In section 1 SkillsBridge contacted 22 organisations and interviewed 20 VCS organisations operating within Newcastle City. About half of the organisations were chosen from the SkillsBridge database to ensure there was appropriate coverage by size based on turnover, community interest group, and city geography.

In section 2 SkillsBridge contacted eleven VCSE support organisations and interviewed nine. As SkillsBridge is a VCSE support organisation we in turn were interviewed by Newcastle CVS and this data and information included bringing the total number of support providers to ten. Three of the organisations interviewed are based in Tyne & Wear but not in Newcastle, however all deliver services in the city. Despite repeated attempts to engage NCVO as a national support provider they did not take part in this research.

Appendix 1 provides a list of all the organisations that were interviewed for this research.

A series of in-depth structured face to face interviews were undertaken with the Chief Executive or Senior Manager of each organisation. (Appendix 2 Questionnaires).

# Section 1 – Interviews with front line VCSE organisations

The questionnaire included three main parts,

- What was the awareness of support provision in Newcastle?
- What support had been accessed over the past 12 months?
- What were the current and future challenges for the organisation?

**Profile Capture**

**Key statistics of the 20 organisations interviewed**

840 employed
326 volunteers
£24,636,792 turnover

There was one outlier in the sample an organisation that employed 500 people and had a turnover of £16 million plus.

**Where VCS organisations were delivering services**

■ Local  ■ Regional  ■ National

- 70%
- 25%
- 5%
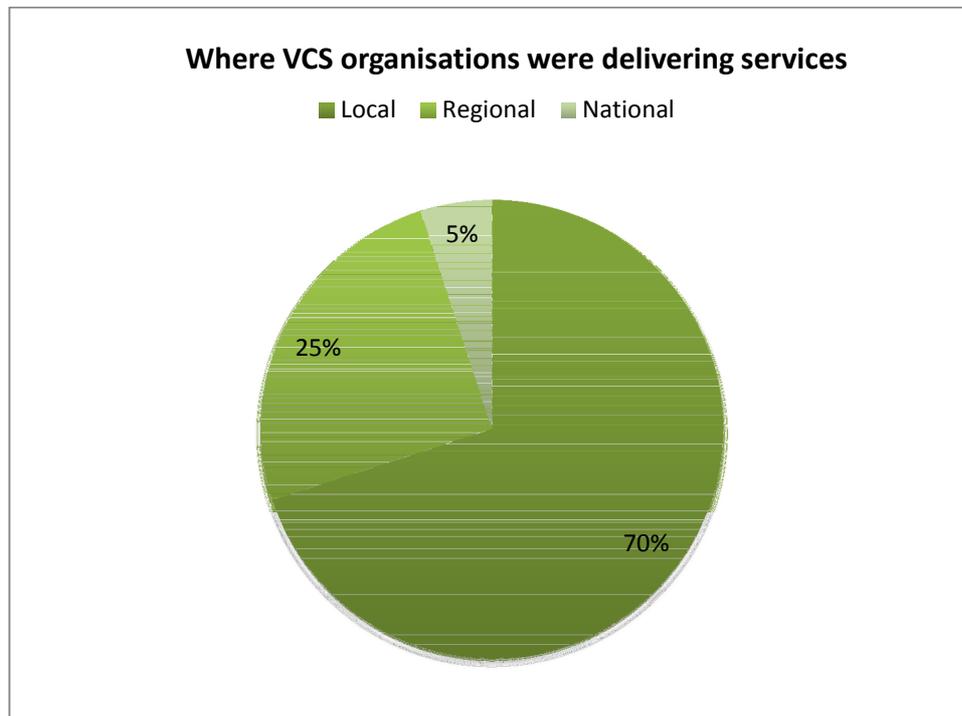
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

The majority of VCS organisations interviewed were operating locally, either in a specific part of Newcastle or across the whole city.  A few organisations were operating at a sub-regional or regional level across Tyneside or the wider area.  One organisation was delivering services at a national level but their headquarters were in North Tyneside and they were also delivering services across the City.

**Operating balance**



**Operating balance for organisations**

■ surplus   ■ deficit   ■ breakeven

5%

33%

62%
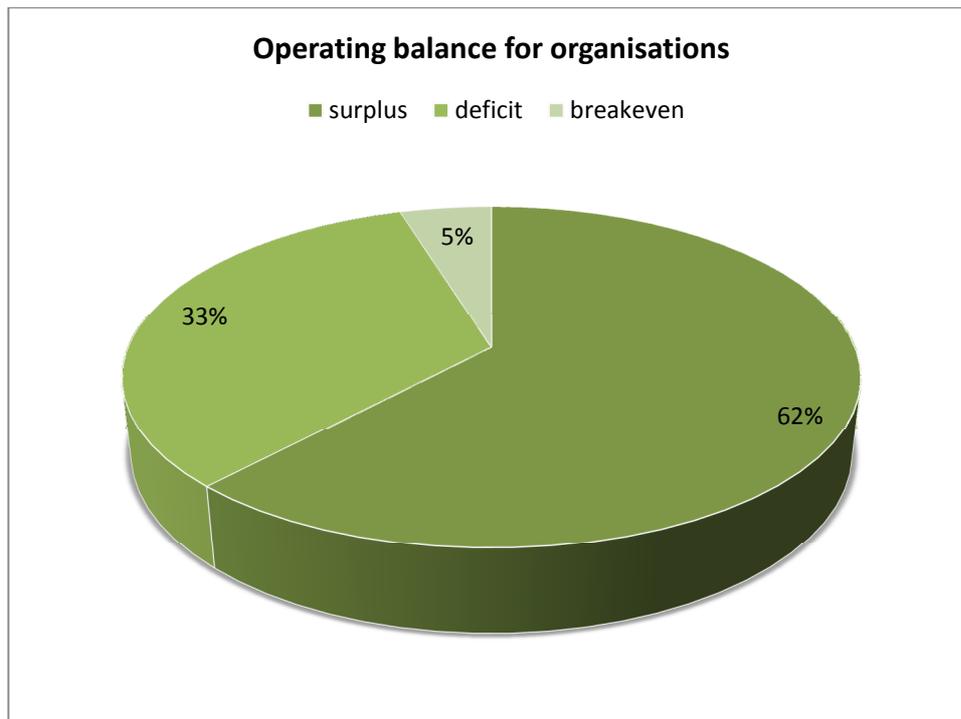
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

VCS organisations were asked if they were operating with a surplus, deficit or were breaking even in their last reported accounts. 62% were operating with a surplus and 33% were operating with a deficit. In one instance a charity had chosen to run down its reserves in order to make themselves more attractive to funders. A few organisations had identified the fine line from a funder's perspective between operating with a comfortable surplus and operating with too much surplus where it might be perceived that there was no need for funding.

## Demand for services

**Please describe the demand for your services in the last 12 months**



No Change
30%

Increase
65%
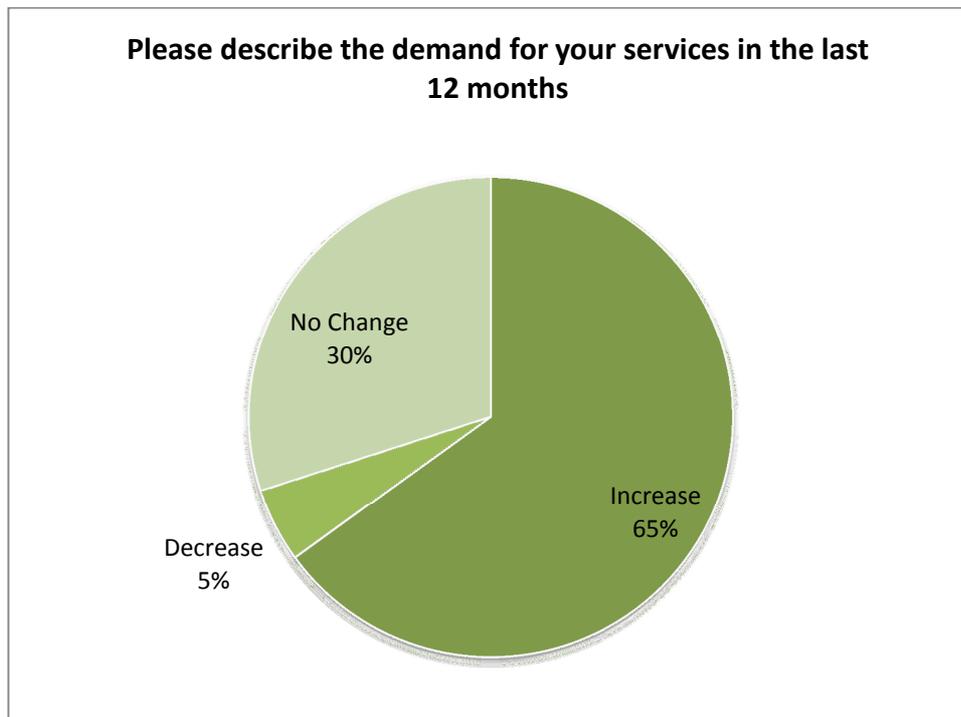
Decrease
5%

Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

There has been an overwhelming rise in demand for VCS services over the last 12 months with 65% of organisations reporting an increase.

## Capacity within VCS to deliver services

**Please describe the capacity of your services over the last 12 months**



No Change
25%

Increase
30%
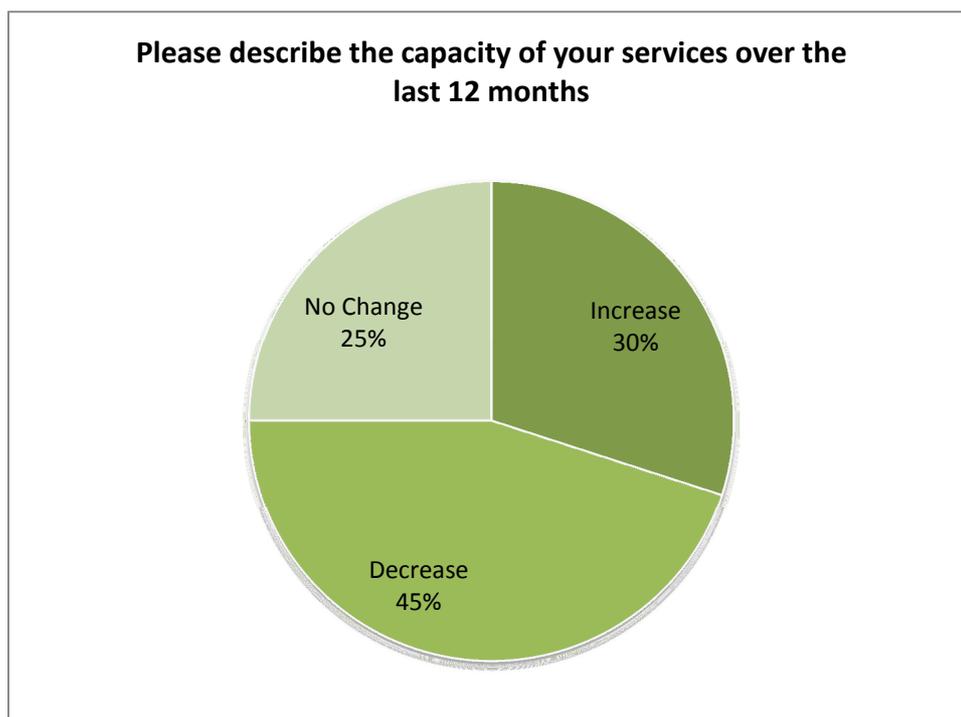
Decrease
45%

Overall the VCS climate continues to be one of operating with rising demand for services and falling capacity. 45% of VCS organisations had experienced an actual decrease in their capacity to deliver services. There is a continuous requirement to stretch resources and make them go further for service users.

A significant minority (30%) had managed to increase their capacity to meet the rise in demand for services.

**Awareness of Support provision in Newcastle**



| Organisation | Members Of | Heard Of |
|---|---|---|
| Tenants Federation | 5% | 68% |
| NESEP | 5% | 42% |
| SES | 0% | 42% |
| CITA | 5% | 68% |
| Ouseburn Trust (Open Doors) | 0% | 89% |
| Becon | 5% | 47% |
| Business In The Community | 11% | 68% |
| Cranfield Trust | 0% | 26% |
| Vonne | 68% | 84% |
| Volunteer Centre | 74% | 89% |
| SkillsBridge | 68% | 79% |
| NCVS | 89% | 100% |
| NCVO | 16% | 84% |
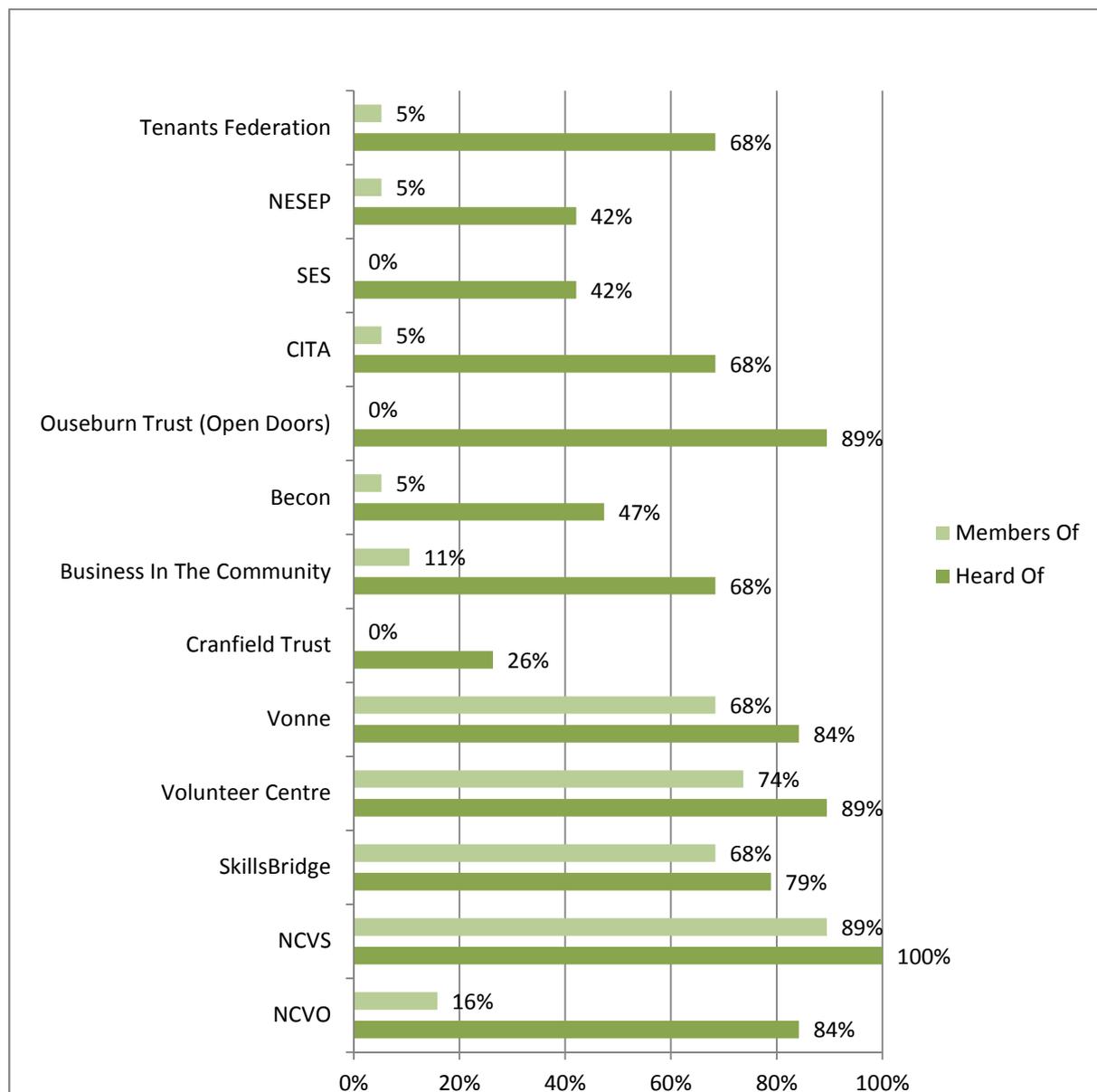
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

The chart shows VCS organisations awareness of the available infrastructure support in the City. At a local level, Newcastle CVS, Volunteer Centre Newcastle, VONNE and SkillsBridge had particularly high levels of awareness amongst local

VCS organisations. There were high levels of awareness of the Ouseburn Trust for their role as primary deliverer of the Open Doors programme.  At a national level NCVO was particularly well known.

There were other voluntary sector infrastructure organisations mentioned including the following;

| Other VCS infrastructure organisations named | Local/National/Regional | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| Project North East | Local operates internationally | Accessed training around fundraising strategy and paid £75. Once the training had ended and all sessions attended PNE cancelled the £75 |
| NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) | National | They are like the next step up from VONNE and operate nationally |
| LGBT fed | Regional | |
| Enactus Newcastle | National/Regional | A university student based organisation that aims to improve the standard and quality of life of people through enterprise |
| North East Women's Network | Regional | Small organisation but seem to be doing a lot<br>Punching well above their weight, providing working groups looking at women, health, violence against women and girls |
| University via Science City | Regional | Provided support with a website |
| VODA (Voluntary Organisations Development Agency) | North Tyneside | Offer services in partnership with Newcastle CVS |
| ACEVO (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations) | | |
| Mental Health Providers Forum | | |
| Ella Foundation | National | Leadership development programme |
| Small Charities Coalition | National | |
| VOLSAG | Regional | Part of MHNE, but perhaps would make more sense to be part of Newcastle CVS |
| GVOC | Local | |
| Pilot light | National | Got some funding off them and now have applied for a business advisor mentor, but will have to go down to London and am not keen on this bit. |
| Small Charities Network | | Small charities buying project |
| Trustee Net | | Have used Trustee Net to recruit trustees |
| South Tyneside CVS | Local | |
| Mental Health North East | Regional | |
| Locality | National | Host events, manage funding and networking |

**How important is flexibility and responsiveness of the service to you?**

■ Very Important  ■ Quite Important  ■ Not Important

5%

26%

69%
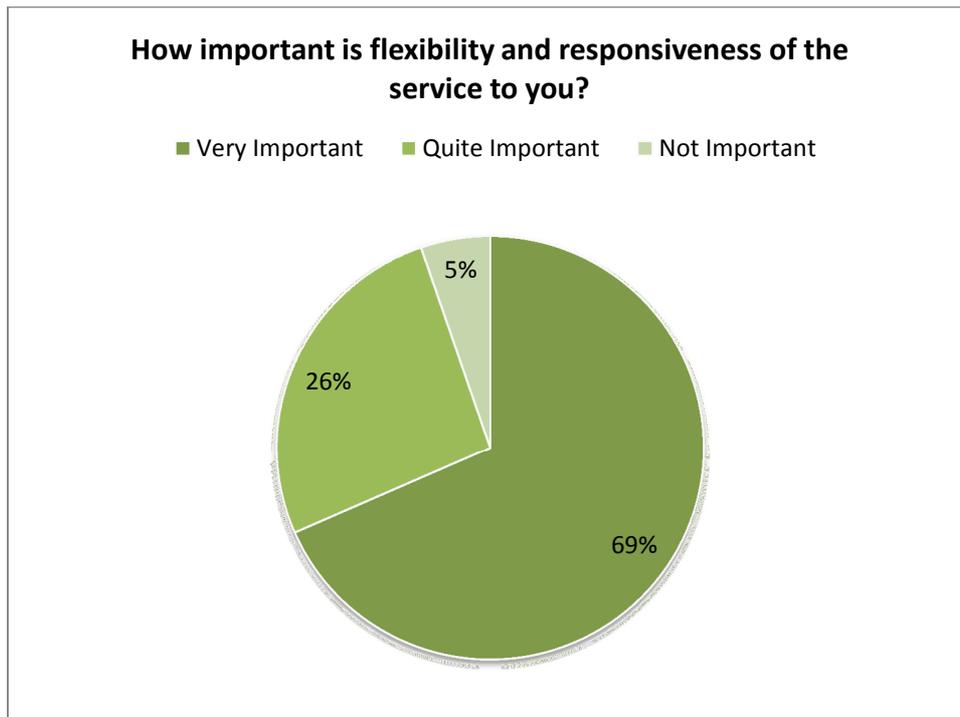
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

69% of organisations felt flexibility and responsiveness of support was very important. One explained that they accessed infrastructure support in times of crisis and so responsiveness was critical for them.

When asked to describe their experience of times when support had not been flexible one organisation had this to say

*"…the main problem is that infrastructure organisations often focus on delivering services when it is convenient to them rather than when these services are actually needed. Many of us are volunteers and have day jobs, so we need to be offered services when we can access them."*

Another organisation suggested menu based approach to increase responsiveness, where certain elements of support could be fairly generic, but for other elements e.g. tendering, the support might be different depending on the size of the organisation.

This organisation felt that big voluntary organisations with in-house support and infrastructure might also have a role to play in supporting smaller organisations practically as well as through peer support. The organisation felt strongly that the sector needed large and small players in it.

**If the support you used was no longer available what impact would this have on your organisation? (%)**

No Impact 10%

Small Impact 32%
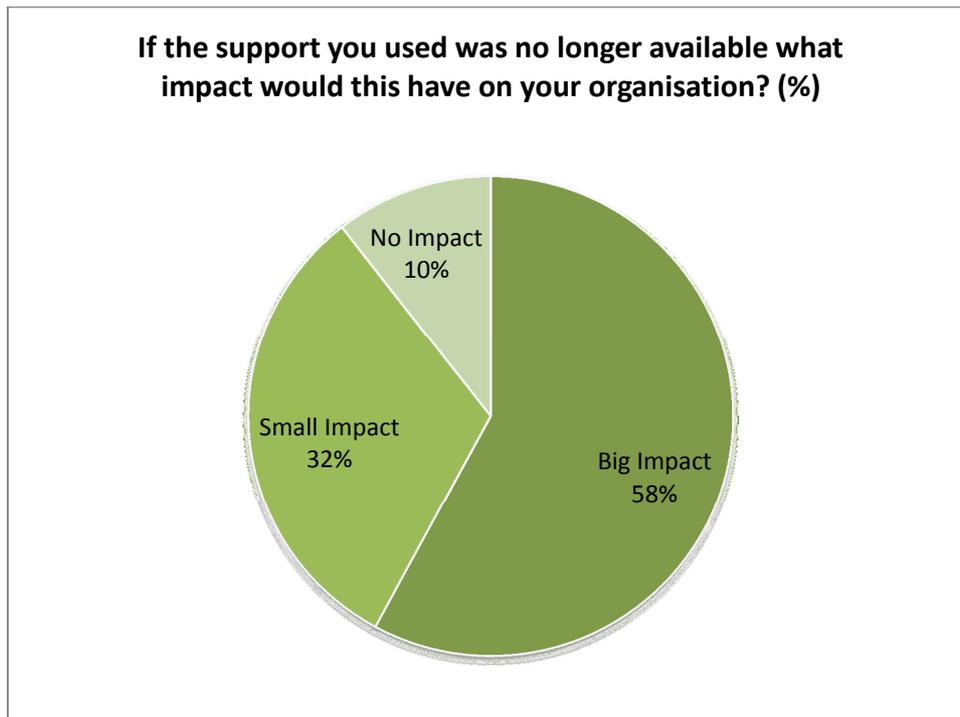
Big Impact 58%

Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

58% of organisations felt that there would be a big impact on them if VCS infrastructure support was not there. In particular Newcastle CVS, NCVO's Funding Central and VONNE were mentioned in relation to funding support, information from newsletters and Ellison services. A few comments provide a flavour of what was said;

*"We have had about three different smaller projects funded, we would have never heard of those funding streams."*

*"Use Newcastle CVS and VONNE quite regularly for information…"*

*"Rely upon information on accessing funding, without this it is likely that services would become reduced and the organisation may eventually close."*

*"We would struggle to raise enough through fundraising without the help and support of Newcastle CVS."*

*"We would feel isolated, less aware of what the sector is experiencing, feel less skilled and less able to keep up to date with policy…"*

*"Ellison Services is critical to us…"*

*"There would be a capacity issue around sourcing the information and then having the knowledge and expertise to know if you actually have the right information."*

**How important is it to have support such as representing, influencing and lobbying?**

■ Very Important   ■ Quite Important   ■ Not Important

5%   5%

90%
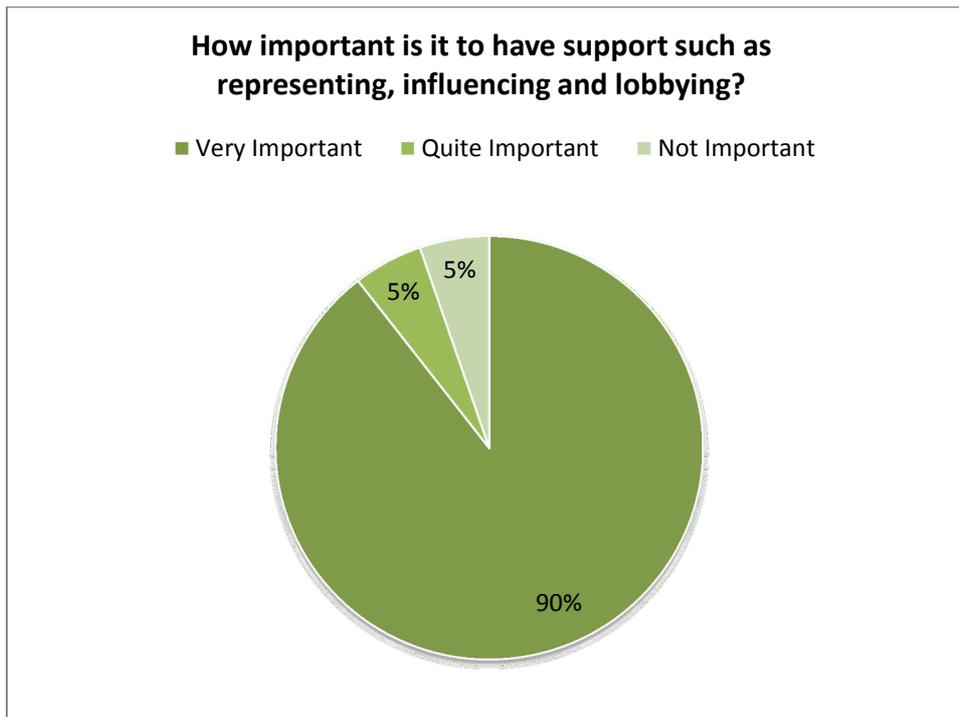
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

There was an overwhelming majority (90%) that felt it was very important to have representing, influencing and lobbying support for the VCS sector. Many felt this was critical at a time when VCS organisations were being squeezed. Many small organisations felt they would be unable to have a voice at the table without this support. Some organisations felt they would be unable to find the time and the capacity to represent themselves, others felt they would lack the knowledge and expertise to lobby.

*"With everything being squeezed, it is important that organisations exist to support charities as well as provide other activities such as networking…"*

*"Newcastle CVS plays a big part in stopping the bulldozer effect that the City Council has and possibly could have on the sector."*
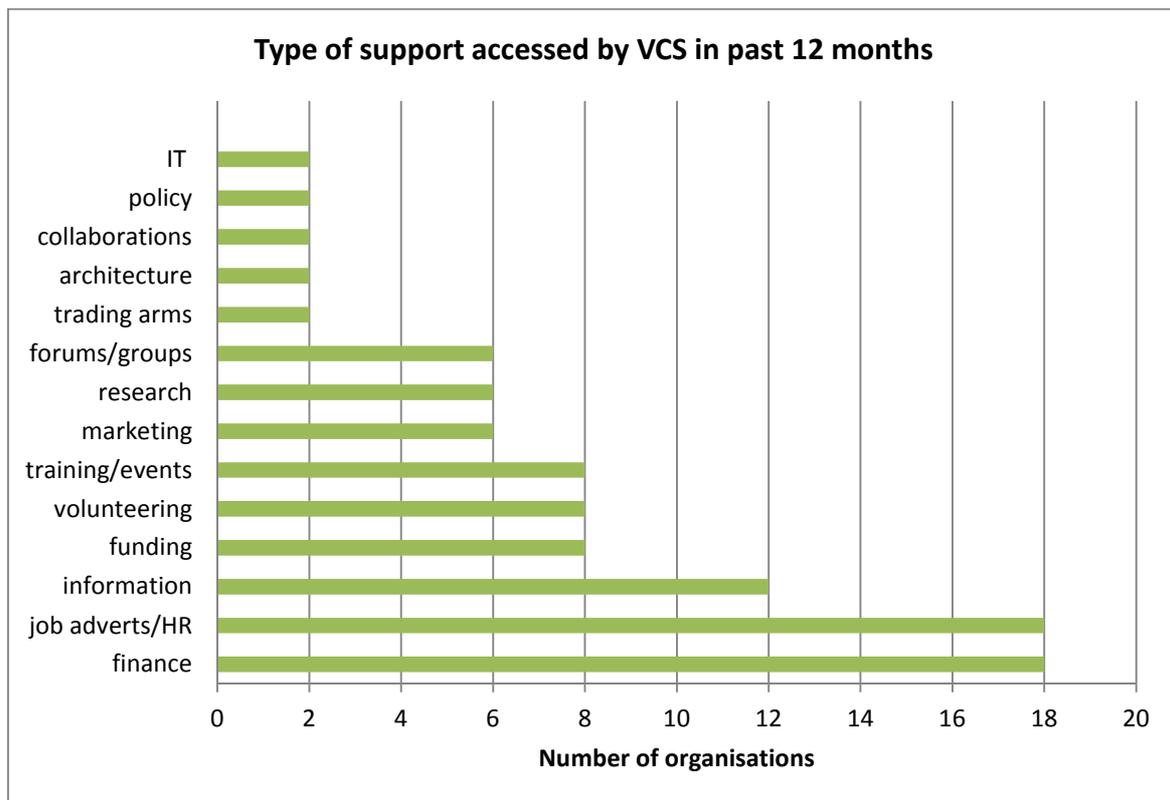
*"Without organisations to lobby and influence, smaller organisations such as ours will never get their voice heard."*

**Support being accessed**

Of the 20 organisations interviewed, 80% (16) had accessed support over the last 12 months, 51 times; this was an average of three times for each organisation. Three organisations had not accessed support over the past 12 months, one of which was very small; the other two were the largest organisations.

The chart below illustrates what type of support was being accessed. Advertising jobs using the VONNE website was the most frequently accessed service, as was Newcastle CVS's Ellison Services that provide financial services to the sector. Using information from e newsletters was also cited frequently.

**Type of support accessed by VCS in past 12 months**

| Type | Number of organisations |
|------|------------------------|
| IT | 2 |
| policy | 2 |
| collaborations | 2 |
| architecture | 2 |
| trading arms | 2 |
| forums/groups | 6 |
| research | 6 |
| marketing | 6 |
| training/events | 8 |
| volunteering | 8 |
| funding | 8 |
| information | 12 |
| job adverts/HR | 18 |
| finance | 18 |

Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

Support was provided in a variety of ways, by e-mail, telephone, face to face, on-line through training and events as well as groups, networks and forums. There was a large amount of content being supplied on line with the brokered support involving at least one face to face meeting.

All support was accessed from infrastructure organisations that were generalist and provided support across the sector with one exception. In this instance support was accessed from North East Women's Network and specifically targeted at women.

**Quality of support provision**

In the overwhelming majority of instances support had met or exceeded expectations (94%)

## Did the support meet your expectations? (%)

| | exceeded | met | fell below | don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Did the support meet your expectations? | 27 | 67 | 2 | 4 |
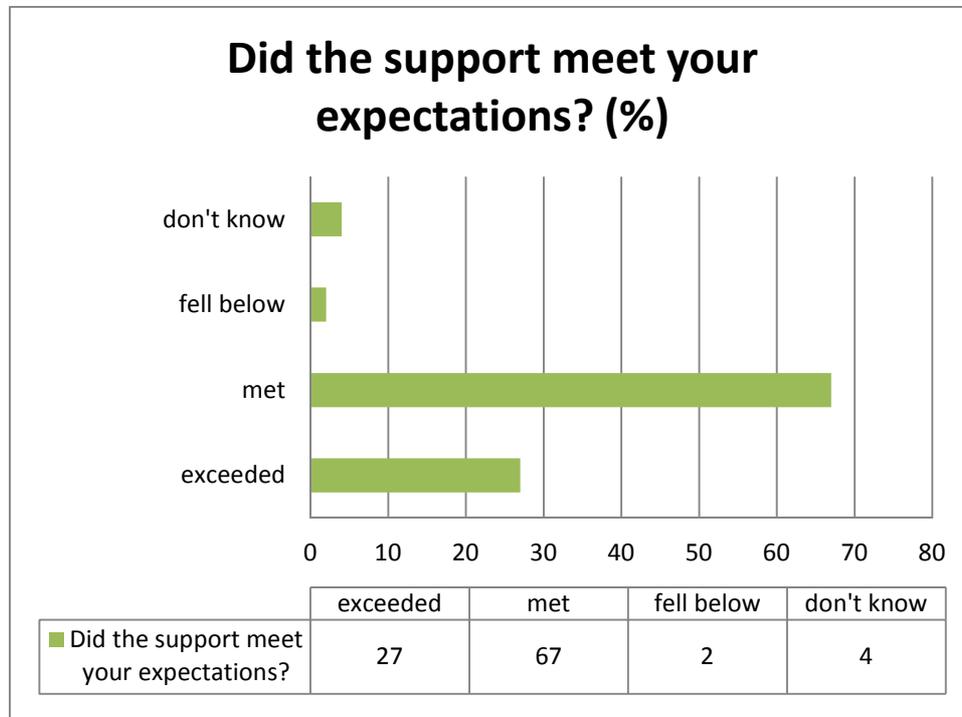
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

Most organisations were very happy with the support they had received. 98% found the organisations very easy to use and 96% would use them again.

The chart below illustrates which organisation support had been accessed from:

**Organisations providing the support**

- Other 13%
- SkillsBridge 15%
- Volunteer Centre 15%
- NewcastleCVS 37%
- VONNE 20%
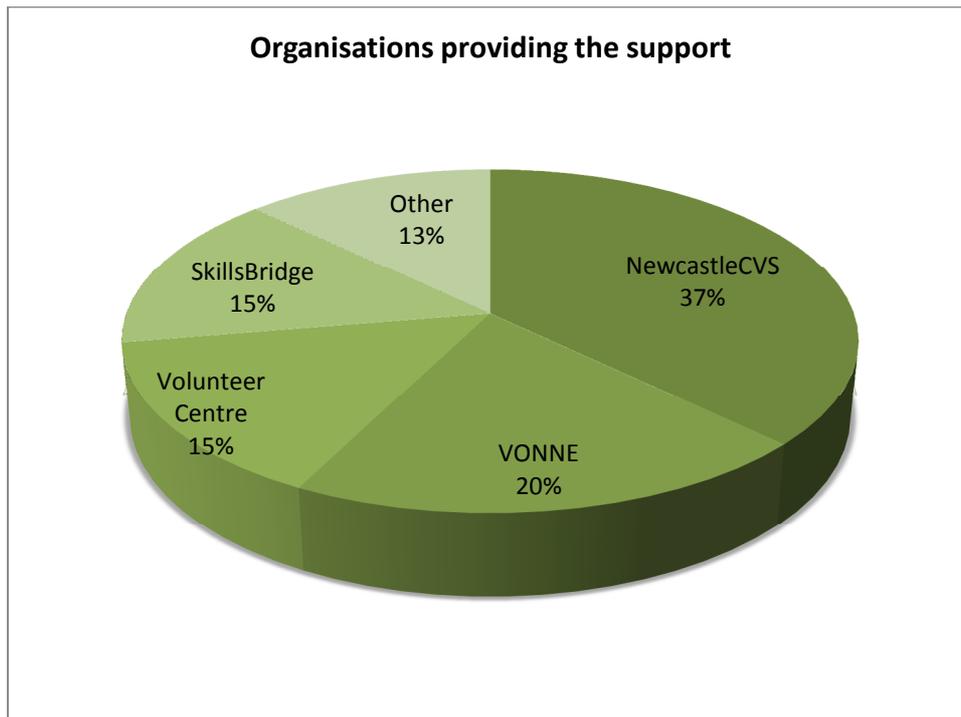
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

It is important to note that the 50% of the charities were chosen from the SkillsBridge database so there is an inherent bias here that is worth bearing in mind.

Newcastle CVS was the most frequently used service, with 37% of accessed services in the survey. Ellison Services were seen as a core service for voluntary and community organisations that were accessing a range of support around payroll, accounting and auditing services. Ellison Services was particularly rated for staff's ability to reassure worried and concerned organisations that there were solutions to their problems. Many organisations mentioned what an excellent service this was and what good value for money.

*"They understood us and were able to sort things out for us really well. They are great! What a relief!"*

Funding support provided by Newcastle CVS was also particularly rated, where staff had gone the extra mile and provided excellent contacts which had led to potential business.

*"Louise was able to introduce me to some excellent contacts. The service was easy to access, helpful timely and responsive."*

Information from e-newsletters was also rated highly as were the forums and networks and advocacy work.

*"Overall Newcastle CVS ensures that the thoughts and views from my organisation were heard at the budget consultation…"*

*"They do great stuff, always relevant, always on time, great facilitation of meetings…"*

One of the most frequently used services was VONNE's website to advertise jobs. This was recognised as a valuable place to advertise jobs and was seen as the place where everyone searched for jobs in the sector.

*"This is generally the only place people will look for the kind of roles we require…"*

*"It's exactly what we look for when we need to advertise a post…"*

The Volunteer Centre was seen as a very valuable and unique resource in the City. Some organisations relied on the Centre to recruit their volunteers and others had successfully recruited trustees from the Centre. Many organisations spoke personally about Karen stating they had developed excellent working relationship with the Centre.

There was also a recognition that resources were stretched within the Centre and that VCS organisations couldn't just rely on this resource to recruit volunteers as there is limited capacity.

*"Good, but there is limited capacity within the organisation. As a result we feel it is a great service, but not one we rely on as a single source of volunteers."*

*"Good support, Karen provided us with lots of information and templates for us to use. Feel very comfortable asking any questions from Karen, irrespective of how silly they may be."*

Organisations were using SkillsBridge to access a wide range of pro bono professional support through their brokerage. Most organisations that had accessed the service were very impressed with the quality of advisor that had been provided and the flexible, efficient and responsive nature of the service.

*"Completely unaware of this support until approached, but the difference it is making is fantastic, working with a professional accountant and transferring skills and knowledge to our finance person."*

*"Very happy with the advice we received and potentially saved us a lot of money."*

Other VCS support that had been accessed once were from Sustainable Enterprise Strategies, Ouseburn Trust, GVOC, NCVO, Business in the Community, North East Women's Network and CITA.

The North East Women's Network was an organisation mentioned twice that was not on the original list of infrastructural organisations. It was felt that the organisation was achieving some remarkable results and punching well above its weight when considering the resources it had. In reference to a particularly good event talking about disabled women and domestic violence, there was this to say.

*"The event was brilliant, really impactful message delivered by a disabled woman – very powerful and irrefutable"*

In a few instances, VCS organisations had not been satisfied with service provision, their experiences are listed below;

- Organisation found that information sometimes "gets buried" within the newsletter and had missed a training opportunity as a result.
- Organisation found it difficult to list the advertisement on the VONNE website
- Organisation thought they would get a free service to develop their website, but realised they would have to have to make some level of payment towards it.
- Organisation felt that support provided was very "top down" and would have liked to hear more about the challenges of asset transfer from community organisations like themselves rather than the "experts".
- Organisation received a free IT health check but didn't feel they had much more clarity after the support and would have had to pay to take any further steps.

## Outcomes, impacts and benefits of support

The charts below provide a picture of the proportion of VCS organisations who felt there had been key outcomes and impacts for their organisation and their service users in accessing the support.
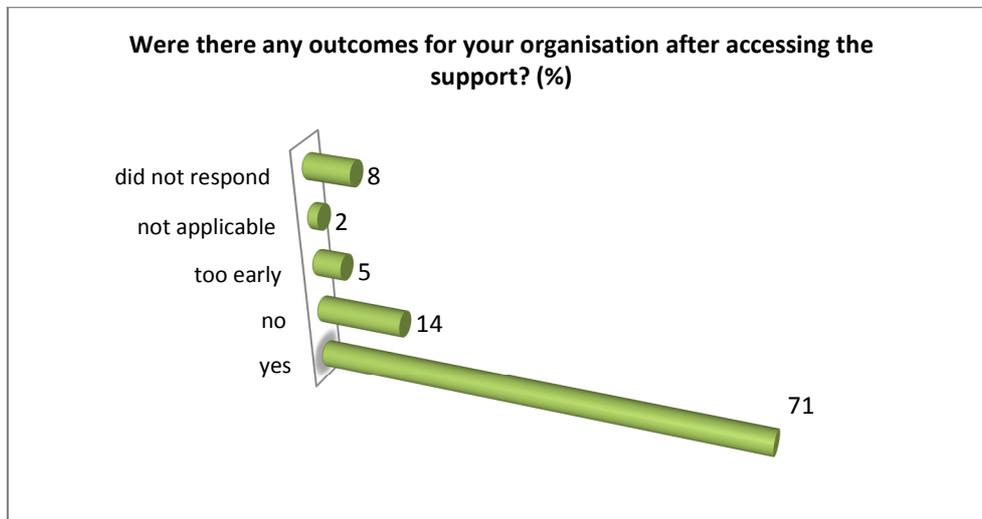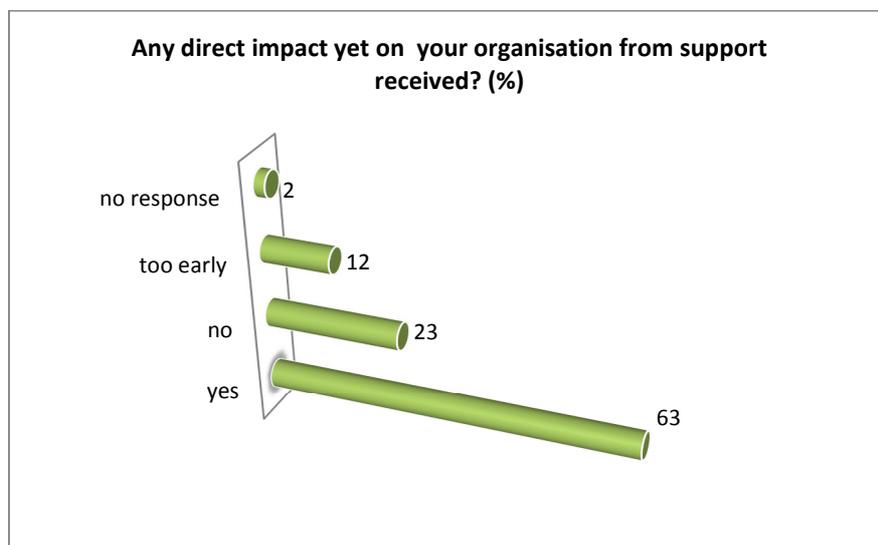
**Were there any outcomes for your organisation after accessing the support? (%)**

- did not respond: 8
- not applicable: 2
- too early: 5
- no: 14
- yes: 71

Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

**Any direct impact yet on your organisation from support received? (%)**

- no response: 2
- too early: 12
- no: 23
- yes: 63

Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

**Any direct impact yet on service users? (%)**

| Response | Value |
|---|---|
| no response | 2 |
| too early | 22 |
| no | 41 |
| yes | 35 |
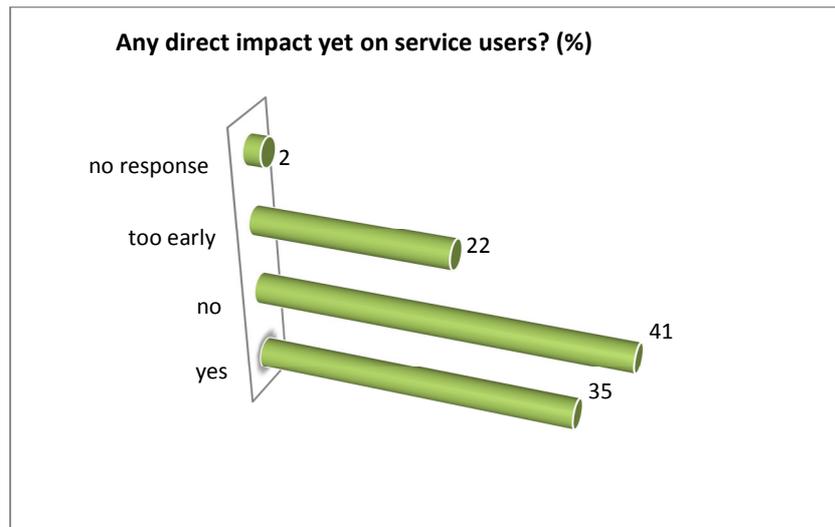
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

## Key outcomes and impacts

In 71% of instances where support had been accessed there had been a positive outcome and in 63% of the instances there had also been a positive impact on the organisation. In 35% of instances, support provision had also led to direct positive outcomes for service users. Sometimes connections between the outcome of the support and its impact on service users were not immediately obvious to the interviewee.

Whilst the questionnaire asked about outcomes and impacts separately, responses to this question tended to talk about both together. Some of the key outcomes and impacts are detailed below. We have highlighted in green the obvious impacts on the organisation.

### Advocacy
- Our views and thoughts were heard on Newcastle City Council's budget consultation.
- We understand better how to get key messages across to the public sector.
- Better informed at policy level.

## Policy/strategic development

- New volunteering policy developed and identified specific volunteering roles required.
- Legally compliant with systems and policies that help us to bid for larger pieces of work.
- Much more able to respond to changes in the organisation.
- The organisation is stronger and more robust as a result of the information.

## Funding and financial systems

- We have got three projects funded.
- £32,000 worth of funding secured.
- Because we were part of the consortium we were able to win some work through Fulfilling Lives.
- Introduced to some important funding contacts.
- Given people more of a sense of ownership they are now helping to identify funding for the centre and encouraging us to apply.
- Put us in touch with funders.
- A list of funders to apply to and a valuable sounding board which has given me additional confidence.
- Increased board confidence in our financial systems.
- We are thinking about costings for our services differently.

## Contracting and trading

- We feel we are tender ready.
- We now understand the asset transfer process.
- We have a CIC established.

## Trustee/Staff/Volunteer recruitment and development

- Position filled by a suitable candidate.
- Successful recruitment of trustees.
- Volunteer development.

## Service development

- Better able to plan, a more effective workspace and we are now able to see more clients.
- As a result we are able to offer a better service to our clients.
- Attracting footfall and customers through the door.
- Better trained staff enable us to provide a much better level of delivery to the young people we work with.
- Able to continue to provide services.
- We have taken on board training and reflecting it in the service user consultation.

## Other areas

- Relevant advice and information.
- Our office is now far more efficient and administration is more streamlined.

## Understanding current and future challenges

### Plans for the future

The overwhelming majority of organisations spoken to had made some clear and specific plans for the future and broadly they fell into two categories;

- Organisations that were looking to survive, maintain and consolidate (35%)
- Organisations with some plans to change or expand. (65%)

### Surviving, maintaining and consolidating

Within this group, there were organisations that were looking to secure enough funding to maintain their current levels of provision or looking at ways in which they could maintain service delivery by reducing costs elsewhere in the business. This was particularly the case for the very small organisations, but also for those that had a specific geographical area to focus on. One interviewee felt that being small enabled them to be fairly responsive to whatever bits of funding became available.

*"No plans to make any great expansions, it is about survival, we are responsive, we can use bits of money to respond to needs as long as they are within our core objectives."*

The drive towards becoming more commercial and business focused had been very frustrating for a small community centre in the east end of the city.

*"It would be great to become independent and sustainable as a community space and not a business!"*

For other organisations, there had already been a period of change and for one very large national provider, a period of rapid growth. They saw the future as a time of consolidation.

One organisation felt the need to focus on diversifying their funding streams so that they were no longer reliant on any particular funder.

### Changing services and expanding

These involved a range of activity including expanding specific user groups, expanding their geographical reach outside of the city, specifically in North Tyneside, taking on and developing a new asset, developing additional services through partnership working and setting up a trading arm.

Targeting new client groups – Some organisations had decided they needed to target specific groups (e.g. disabled, BAME, men, older people, young people. In some instances this was for example a service targeting women that was now looking to offer services to men, for others it was a recognition that though their service provision was for everyone, certain clients groups were not taking up

services.    Plans to do this included applying for funding to secure a new worker, and/or developing new networks, contacts and relationships to encourage referrals.

Increased and additional services – Some organisations were looking to increase their services, others were looking to develop new services, by securing additional funding and working in partnership.

Expanding into wider geographical areas – There were three organisations that had plans to expand services into other parts of the City or wider into North Tyneside through partnership working.

Establishing a trading arm – Two organisations were in the process of establishing trading arms to sell services commercially and plough back the profits into the Charity as their strategy for sustainability.

*"We are becoming more commercial in our outlook, whilst remaining true to our objectives.  We are planning to set up a trading arm and set up new services."*

Testing out alliance contracting approach -  One organisation operating nationally was keen to develop services and partnerships using an approach called alliance contracting, where an alliance of parties deliver a service and there is collective ownership of opportunities and responsibilities associated with the delivery of the project or service.[1]

Internal changes -There were also plans afoot for internal changes, including accreditation such as ISO-9001, employing staff, more work on measuring impact and value, rebranding and undertaking research to understand the issues rather than just the services.

## What support would help you with your plans?

VCS organisations identified a broad spectrum of support that would help them develop their future plans.  These have been grouped into broad categories below;

Professional services – Several organisations identified the need for a range of professional support including the following

- Business planning
- Strategic Planning
- Financial support and planning
- Marketing and Communications
- HR – supervision, recruitment, employment practices
- Legal support
- **How to sell products and services**
- **Market positioning**
- **Confidence in  selling**

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[1] "An Alliance contract is one contract between the owner/financier/commissioner and an alliance of parties who deliver the project or service. Any "gain" or "pain" is linked with good or poor performance overall and not to performance of individual parties.  It is a collaborative environment without the need for new organisational forms.

- Leadership and management training
- **Cost Benefit Analysis**
- **Social Auditing**
- **Building a good evidence base**
- Coaching and Mentoring

The list includes similar support requested in 2012 from charities engaging with Skillsbridge for professional support.[2]  There are quite a few new areas too highlighted in bold, which did not come up in previous research.  These new areas are very indicative of the pressures within the sector to move to becoming more commercially focused.  For example, support around building a good evidence base, social auditing and cost benefit analysis to evidence value for money.   Another is support to help with selling services and lastly support around market positioning.  Many organisations stated they would be looking for support around building a robust business case which they had not felt the need to do before.

Enhancing the skills, knowledge and capacity of the Board of Trustees - This was raised by a few organisations, looking to build and enhance the expertise within their boards.  One area that was mentioned specifically for board training was in helping trustees to build their knowledge around understanding risk and resilience.

Developing contacts, networks and building relationships to develop new client groups - For the organisations that were looking to expand their client base to new targeted groups, support with contacts and access to new networks was being sought, so that these new relationships could be developed.

Peer group mentoring and support - Many of the Chief Executive Officers interviewed, mentioned how useful it was to have peer groups to share experiences and discuss difficult issues. There was an underlying theme of wanting longer term support than perhaps pro bono professional services could offer through coaching and mentoring.  Where organisations were using Peer Groups, they were finding this type of support invaluable.

Volunteer Support - All the organisations with one exception, used volunteers, who formed an integral part of the service. Supervising and co-ordinating volunteers is very resource intensive and a few organisations felt this was what was needed for them to realise their plans.

Policy development and templates - One organisation wanted support with developing policies and access to policy templates.  It was felt that for compliance purposes perhaps this was something that the Local Authority could make available.


**How can the VCS infrastructure support you in your plans?**

There were some organisations that felt they were large enough to have in-house services to develop their plans for the future and VCS infrastructure support was particularly targeted at smaller VCS.  Others felt that they were likely to buy some of the more specialist support from the private sector, but many felt that that the VCS

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[2] SkillsBridge Evaluation 2012, Ideas for change Consulting

infrastructure could support them with many of their requirements.  In particular for the smaller organisations they needed the services to be free or very competitively priced or they would be unable to access them.   There were some needs that were identified by organisations as specific areas where the VCS infrastructure might be able to help and these are listed below.

- Constitutional support
- Funding support  and funding information
- Increased networking and lobbying on behalf of the sector as a whole
- Continue to ensure the sector has a voice
- Pensions advice information sheets and briefing sessions
- Practical training, legislation essentials and safeguarding
- Support in building relationships with the commissioners
- Help with generating capacity for business development
- Signpost us to new client groups
- Raise funds through joint bids
- Help us to win new business
- Group buying services and promotion of buy local

Most of these areas are self-explanatory or refer to more of the existing services, but it is worth reflecting on some of the newer ideas.

Winning new business - There is a set of interrelated activity around helping VCS organisations to establish good relationships by introducing them to the commissioners of services.

Another suggestion was that there was could the CVS focus its energies on helping their members win new business and secure contracts.

One organisation criticised infrastructure organisations for being too focused on Local Authority boundaries and raised the point that when it comes to collaboratively securing new business this is not key.

*"VCS organisations also need to be able to operate the subsidiarity principle and not just operate on local authority boundaries.  For example there are two consortiums, Newcastle and Gateshead, perhaps for some contracts they should operate as one…"*

Another organisation from the cultural sector suggested bids to work on joint projects which might draw in resources from different sectors, e.g. arts and cultural sector or universities which might otherwise be inaccessible.  A current example of this type of activity is an Alzheimer's project which uses film to support dementia sufferers.

Group purchasing for VCS - A practical suggestion was made about considering if infrastructure organisations could use group purchasing to secure better deals for VCS organisations, from a range of common supplies and services that all VCS would require access to.  It was suggested that Ellison services could be used as a useful model for other activity including the group purchasing service.

Pension legislation - Advice on new pension legislation in 2016 was troubling one organisation. VCS organisations will be expected to provide staff with a pension and it was difficult to find any information or briefing on how this was going to work and how organisations could be compliant.

**How can the Local Authority and other public providers help?**

Aligning strategies more closely - One of the larger VCS organisations felt that more could be done to align local authority strategies with their own.

Increase their understanding of economic and social value of local contracting - Many VCS organisations felt that Local Authorities had failed to understand the economic and social value of contracting at a local level with VCS providers. There was a need for local authorities to understand and estimate the additional value that local contracting provides in terms of numbers employed, volunteers supported, multiplier impacts in the local economy, sustainability of VCS organisations, value added in terms of being part of the local neighbourhood, strong local knowledge and referral systems etc. etc. This is more important for small contracts which local VCS organisations are more likely to compete for.

One example provided where the Local Authority had commissioned centrally was Newcastle Futures, commissioned to deliver employment services in Newcastle.

*"Why are they (local authority) delivering this centrally, it is a £4.5 million contract, it would have helped all of us smaller organisations if could have been involved in delivering this locally."*

Procurement and Commissioning - This was by far the most commented on area, prior to procurement and commissioning services, VCS organisations suggested local authorities could provide some procurement support and training, that there should be more opportunities for VCS organisations to engage with commissioners. Local Authorities should spend more time engaging with potential providers to understand better what they currently do.

When commissioning local authorities should be more helpful with suggestions of where to go for advice, identify other related and connected activity, and individuals within the local authority that can be approached.

*"Think that the local authority genuinely has good intentions in wanting to work with the voluntary and community sector but they don't have the mechanisms to deliver on this. They could use procurement in a different way, encouraging local/regional consortium delivery…"*

Co-producing not commissioning - Whilst co-production has been emphasised in several national policy initiatives, it was unclear how the idea could be embraced within the contracting and commissioning framework. If it were to sit outside this process, it was unclear what the decision making process was for this.

*"It would be great if the local authority could re-examine their procurement regulations. It is very difficult to co-produce services if the local authority is going to procure via NEPO instead of working in partnership with us…"*

One organisation that was planning to expand its services into the North and East of the city was keen to co-produce these services with the City Council. The organisation had identified clear opportunities for this.

*"We are keen to co-produce with the local authority as we can bid for contracts which the local authority is prohibited from bidding for…"*

Funding/Financial support - A few organisations were looking for traditional ways of funding and financial support from the local authority. One large organisation commented on the relationship they had with the local authority as a banker which had enabled them to move heavily away from grant dependency towards trading.

Honour pledges and promises and preserve organisational memory - One particular frustration that was expressed was where the local authority makes a commitment to a VCS organisation, but then because of restructuring and staff leaving the commitment is not remembered or honoured. This type of discussion with the local authority can often be onerous and time consuming and is only worthwhile if the decision made is binding. One small organisation that has recently taken over an asset from the Local authority is nervous that one such commitment might not be honoured.

Provide neighbourhood statistics - Accessible statistical neighbourhood statistics that were easy to understand, which looked at current and future community needs was another area that the local authority could provide support with.

Training - One organisation suggested that the local authority could provide training in a number of areas; they acknowledged that some training provision was provided but that often it was not promoted effectively. Some suggested training areas included the pension's legislation and procurement.

Tell us what services they have for us - There was a slight weariness expressed from VCS organisations being asked what they wanted to see from the local authority and a feeling that the local authority should instead, set its stall out and let the VCS know what they had to offer in a more proactive way.

Other public providers - Not many VCS organisations mentioned other public providers in this discussion which was predominantly focused on local authorities, however when they did, the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) and the Universities were mentioned, the former it was felt needed to be more proactive in honouring local compacts and this way of working. Universities were mentioned as potential partners in securing joint funding and undertaking research.

## Conclusions

### Awareness of Support

There is very high awareness of Newcastle CVS (100%), Volunteer Centre (89%) Open Doors (89%), VONNE (84%).  There is also a very high awareness of NCVO (84%) at a national level.

69% of organisations felt that flexibility and responsiveness of the organisation was very important.

58% felt that there would be a big impact on their organisation if VCS infrastructure support was no longer there.

90% of organisations felt that it was very important to have representing, influencing and lobbying support for the VCS sector.

### Support being accessed

80% of organisations interviewed had accessed support over the past 12 months, 51 times. This was an average of three times per organisation.

Support accessed was mainly around finance, job adverts and HR, information, funding.

Support was provided in a variety of ways, e-mail, on-line, telephone, face to face, training and events as well as groups, networks and forums. There was a large amount of content being supplied on-line with brokerage support involving face to face meetings.

For 94% of organisations, support received had met or exceeded expectations.

98% found the support received easy to use and 96% would use it again.

The key organisations providing support were all local, Newcastle CVS (37%), VONNE (20%), Volunteer Centre Newcastle and SkillsBridge (15%)  There were a further 13% that had accessed support from a mixture of local, regional and national organisations.

It was clear that local support and building relationships with members of staff was seen as really important.  In numerous interviews, individual names were mentioned, face to face meetings had taken place and there was a general feeling of being understood.

71% of organisations had identified specific outcomes from the support they had received and 63% had identified key impacts to their organisation.

Tangible outcomes and impacts were identified around advocacy support, having their views heard, developing new policies, unlocking and accessing funding, being supported with financial services, preparing to trade, successful recruitment of trustees, staff and volunteers and improved service development.

**Current and future challenges**

VCS organisations were making clear plans for the future, two categories emerged from the research 35% of organisations were looking to survive, maintain and consolidate, 65% were making plans to change or expand.

Organisations that were looking to change or expand were looking to do one or more of the following, expand their service user groups, expand their geographical reach outside of the city, take on and develop a new asset, develop additional services or set up a trading arm.

To achieve their plans for the future, VCS organisations were accessing a range of professional services including business and strategic planning, financial support, marketing and communications, legal support and leadership and management support. These are similar to the areas identified by SkillsBridge and national organisations in 2012.

The emerging areas of support that organisations were looking for were around selling products and services, confidence in selling, market positioning, building a good evidence base, social auditing and cost benefit analysis. These reflect the changing nature of the sector and national and local policy push away from grants towards contracting and commissioning.

Other areas of support required involved enhancing the knowledge and capacity of the Board of Trustees, developing contacts, networks and building relationships to access new client groups and peer group support.

When asked specifically about how VCS infrastructure could support organisations there were a range of areas listed, including constitutional support, funding support, networking and lobbying, but also support around developing relationships with commissioners, consortium bidding and helping VCS organisations to win new business.

VCS organisations identified key ways in which local authorities could provide support which included increasing their understanding of the economic and social value of local contracting, support with procurement and commissioning, guidance on how to work with them to co-produce services, provide neighbourhood statistics, to provide training on compliance matters.

There was also a plea for the local authority to honour pledges made and take action to maintain the organisational memory to avoid small, resource-poor VCS organisations having to have the same conversations with different people over and over again.

The other public sector body mentioned was the Clinical Commissioning Groups and here it was felt more could be done by them to honour their local compacts and work in greater partnership with the VCS sector.

Many VCS sector organisations had engaged with the universities, around research, volunteering and in some instances to deliver projects. These were ad hoc and one off engagements based on individual relationships rather than a given university strategy.

## Section 2 – Interviews with VCSE support organisations

In the context of this research support services include direct services such as face to face support, online support and training as well as indirect support such as information sharing, intelligence gathering, and representing and influencing on behalf of the sector.

The questionnaire included two main parts,

- What support provision is available to VCSE organisations in Newcastle?
- What is the current climate like and what are the future challenges?

In terms of current climate and future challenges, these questions focused on the environment in which support providers are operating and how this has changed, and also changes and trends in the support they are being asked to provide. Their views were sought on what the future might hold for them and those they support, and what provision they would like to see made available to help them in their work.

# Profile Capture

Key statistics of the 10 organisations interviewed

86 employed
493 volunteers
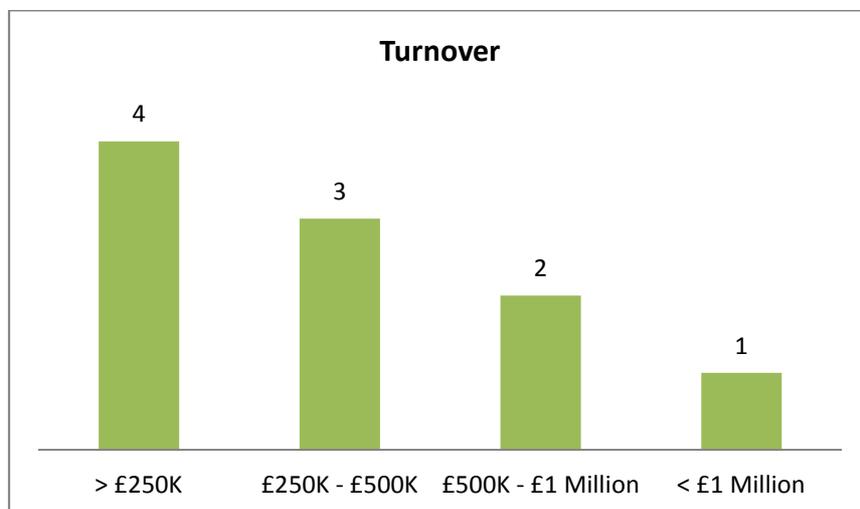


Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

For the purposes of this research the turnover for Volunteer Centre Newcastle has been based on the turnover locally rather than nationally for CSV. Most organisations providing support services fall into the medium-sized category, and are therefore amongst the size of organisation most at risk as funding has tended to become increasingly polarised between the very large organisations at one end and very local organisations at the other.

**Where support providers are delivering services**

■ Newcastle ■ Regional ■ National

10%

40%

50%
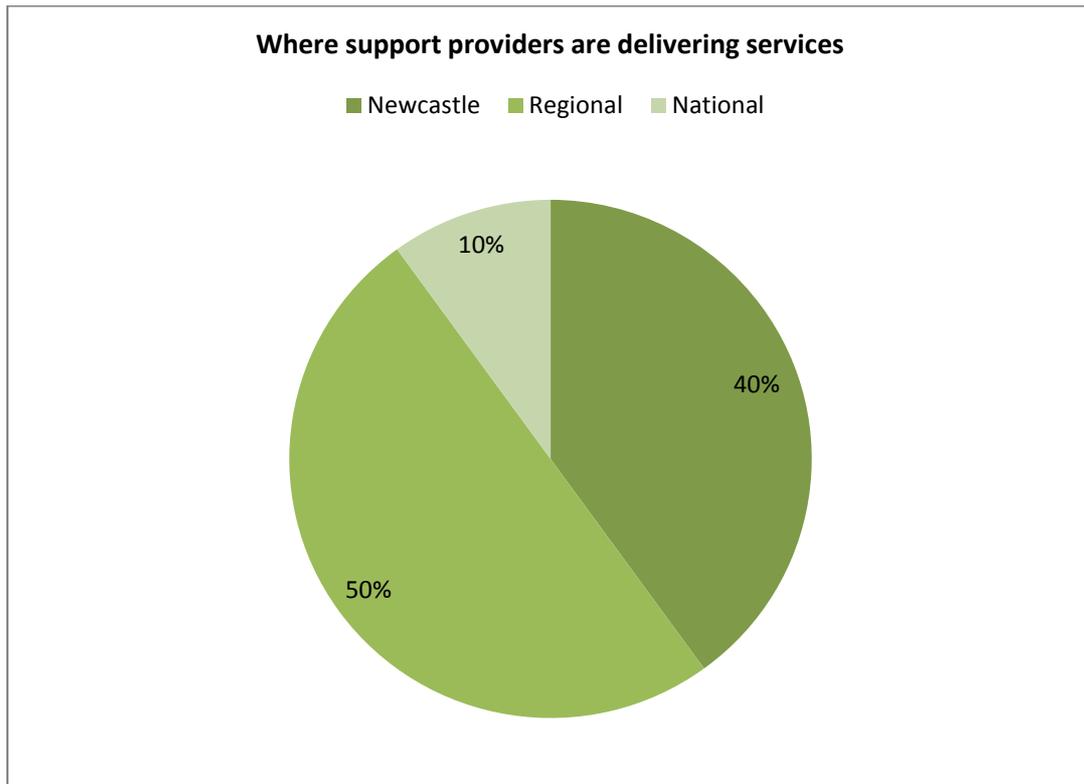
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

Half of the support providers questioned operate across the region and several have taken on pieces of work outside the region as and when this is available. Organisations operating across all of the local authority areas in the North East have a better chance of attracting some public sector funding and are therefore potentially less vulnerable that those relying on public sector funding with a single local authority funder.

One organisation surveyed is national but has a full time project manager operating regionally in the North East.

Half of the organisations surveyed were in receipt of funding from Newcastle City Council in the current year. Two others had been previously funded by the council but were not at present and three organisations had never received council funding.

## Operating Balance

**Surplus** **Deficit** **Breakeven**



40%

40%

20%
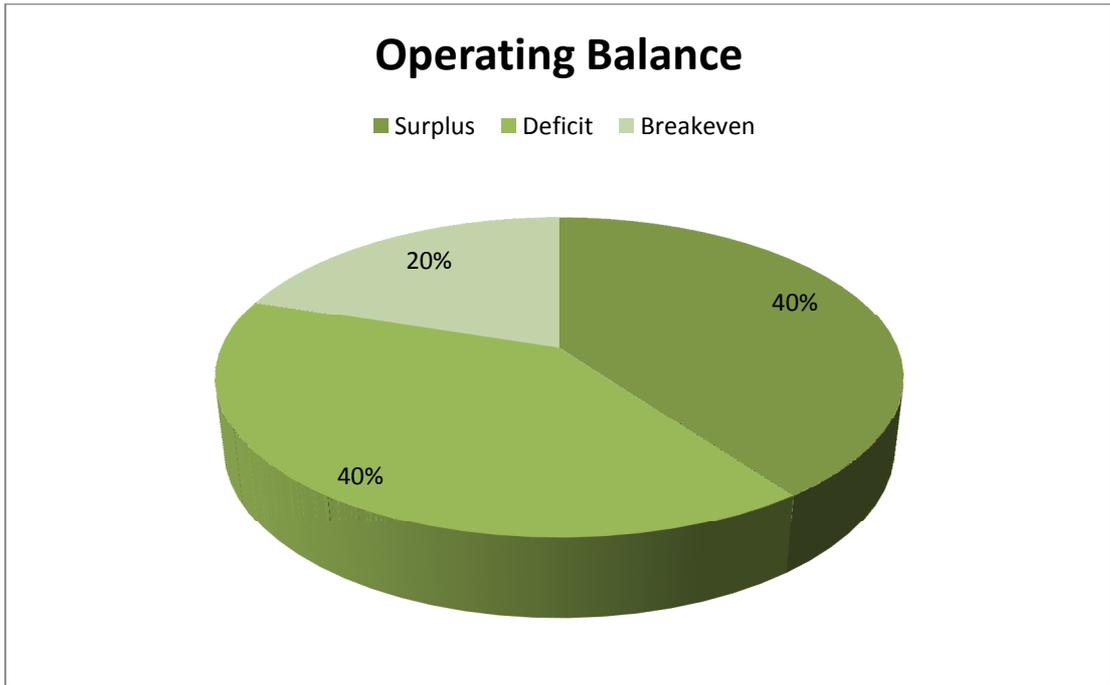
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

Over recent years over half of the support providers questioned had found it increasingly difficult to fund their work. Several had reduced staffing and none could demonstrate a significant increase in funding. Having to put additional time into fundraising was adding to the time pressures on support providers and one organisation questioned expressed the view that some support providers were lobbying disproportionately for funding for their area of work. There may be a risk in some cases of support organisations competing with their service users for funding.

### Please describe the demand for your services over the last 12 months

**Increase** **Decrease** **No change**



50%

50%

0%
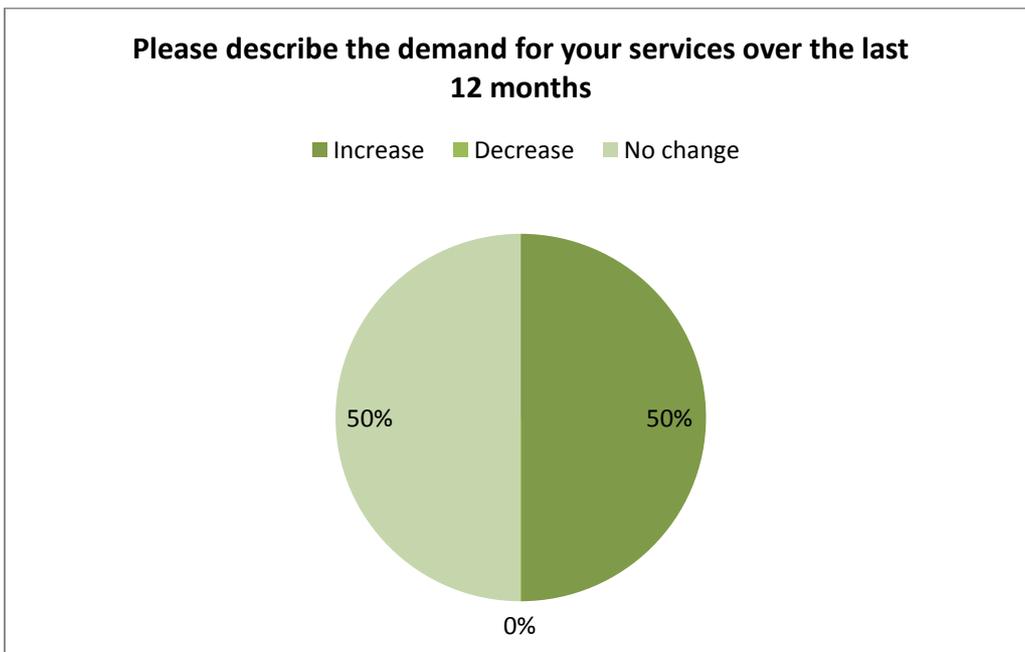
Source: VCS2020 SkillsBridge Questionnaire 2015

None of the organisations interviewed reported a decrease in demand for their services. Around half of the organisations reported no change or no significant change. Amongst those that had seen a rise in demand, two organisations noted a steep increase. This is against a backdrop of no further resources or in one case reducing resources to meet demand.

# What support provision is available to VCSE organisations in Newcastle?

The table below shows support services on offer to VCS organisations in Newcastle at-a-glance.

| | CITA | NEWCASTLE CVS | NCLE TFA | NESEP | OUSEBURN TRUST | SES | SPORTED | VOLUNTEER CENTRE | VONNE | SKILLSBRIDGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strategic input | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| VCS policy development | | ● | | | | | | ● | ● | |
| Volunteer support | | | | | | | | ● | | ● |
| Consultancy | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | |
| Training/workshops | ● | ● | | | | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Mentoring | | | ● | | | | ● | | | |
| Research/info | | ● | | | | | ● | ● | | |
| Advice/guidance | | ● | | | | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Funding | | ● | | | | | | | ● | |
| Forums/networks /groups support | | ● | ● | | | | | | | |
| Representing & influencing/ advocacy | | ● | | | | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Charity set up | | ● | | | | | | | | |
| Consortium support | | ● | | | ● | | | | | |
| Financial services | | ● | | | | | | | | |
| Web design | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| Database | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| One off projects | | ● | | | | | | | | |
| start up support social enterprise | | | | ● | | ● | | | | |
| Social Incubator North | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| Open doors community mapping | | ● | | | ● | ● | | | | |
| Grant scheme | | | | | | | ● | | | |
| Brokerage | | | | | | | | | | ● |
| Area based support | | | | | | | | | | ● |

## Details of services and support provided to other organisations

| | Organisation | Details/ Service description | Delivery method | Target audience | Delivery area | Cost | Funded |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | CITA | 1. Web Design 2. Database – building; buying; managing; training 3. Training – bespoke or package e.g. data security workshops 4. Consultancy – Business development and advice; e-commerce; social media training; marketing | All services delivered face to face. No online resources | Aim to work with organisations that have a social value | North East (and moving to national) | All services paid for at a variable rate | No external funding but are a Big Assist supplier |
| 2. | Newcastle CVS | 1. Representing, influencing policy and acting as a conduit between the sector in Newcastle and other organisations and public sector bodies 2. Support for those wishing to set up a charity – set up, running, organising a group, legal structure, policies and procedures 3. Support for those running groups – policy development, funding advice and support 4. Forums: CHYP IN (organisations working with children and young people) and Wellbeing and Health Open Forum (organisations working in adult services) – understanding sector issues, sharing knowledge, policy, community impact and reflecting back to Council and NHS 5. Training – aim is to improve and support sector in areas such as organisational practice, fundraising as well as specific training in areas such as safeguarding and food safety | 1. Face to face and some report writing 2. – 7. Currently the majority of support is delivered face to face but more is being made available online, supported by the development of a new website. E-bulletin and newsletters Reports and research | 1. Local Authority and other public bodies 2. Anyone wishing to set up a group in or working in Newcastle 3. Groups in or working in Newcastle 4. Tends to comprise medium to larger organisations in respective sectors in or working in Newcastle 5. Tends to comprise small to medium sized | Newcastle upon Tyne (either based in or working in)  Though does provide charged for services e.g. T&W museums outside of Newcastle | 1. N/A 2, 3. Currently free but will be paid for from Apr 2015 4. Free to members 5. Some free, some subsidised, some paid for subject to availability of funding and cost of provision 6,7. Free to members 8. Paid for 9. Commissioned | 1,2,3,4,5,6. Covered in part through contract with the Local Authority, small amount of NHS funding for On the Hoof newsletter; one off grants or time limited funding e.g. Millfield House for Poverty Proofing Project, Newcastle Uni fund for research and promotion; some training is charged for 4,6. Part funded up to Mar 15 from Council's Children |

| No. | Organisation | Services | Delivery | Who for | Area | Cost | Funding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 6. Network Group (larger organisations or those with membership or providing infrastructure support) – meetings and discussions organised on behalf of the sector such as the council's pre-budget meeting.<br>7. VCS Consortium – engaging with members, linking with funders and funding opportunities, and developing new opportunities (NB Consortium is charity and comp ltd by guarantee independent from Newcastle CVS, though currently hosted by Newcastle CVS, SY is director and current chair, Newcastle CVS heavily involved with VOLSAG in development of consortium)<br>8. Financial services – through Ellison Services<br>9. One off opportunities such as:<br>10. Open Doors (in partnership with Ouseburn Trust, SES) to support organisations going through asset transfer<br>11. Byker Community Trust – support for organisations they work with in Byker<br>12. Research – focussed around themes or issues in communities or with the sector | 8. In house with remote access facility. Face to face as required<br>9. Subject to need but largely face2face | groups in or working in Newcastle<br>6. As described opposite<br>7. VCS groups in or working in Newcastle<br>8. Mainly organisations based in Newcastle but potentially can be further afield<br>9. Focus on organisations or work aligned to charitable objectives, benefitting Newcastle | | | & Young People's Workforce Development<br>7. Funded by Changing Lives for 2 years<br>9. Commissioned |
| 3. | Newcastle Tenants and Residents Federation | 1. Volunteer Peer Mentoring – for new chair or secretary and support with:<br>• Meetings<br>• Canvassing<br>• Public event support<br>• Discuss issues<br>• Develop objectives<br>• Create steering group | All services and support delivered face to face | Any tenants or residents groups in Newcastle or those wishing to set up a group | Newcastle | All services free unless tenants are in housing association housing in which case the housing | Newcastle City Council Housing Revenue Account |

| # | Name | Services | Delivery | Target | Area | Cost | Funding |
|---|------|----------|----------|--------|------|------|---------|
| | | • Develop constitution<br>• Elect committee<br>2. Support groups with – information and advice, finance policies e.g. if a community centre; basic skills training in governance and fundraising (training may be bought in from Newcastle College paid for by Unison) | | | | association would have to pay | |
| 4. | NESEP | 1. Provide strategic input to programmes<br>2. Specialist social enterprise support – Start-up support; vision; strategy; governance; legal structure; HR; product development; marketing and tendering<br>3. Social Incubator North (in partnership) – competitive process to access intensive business support to take product or service to market + up to £25,000 loan (no match required) | 1. Face to face with some report writing<br>2. Face to face<br>3. Face to face (with partners) | 1. Local authorities, public bodies, LEPs, Government<br>2. Social enterprises/ entrepreneurs, charities<br>3. Start-up social enterprises | 1&2. North East (or benefitting the North East)<br>3. North East, Yorkshire & Humber | All services are free to access | 1. From core funding<br>2. Big Lottery Basis 2<br>3. Social Incubator |
| 5. | Ouseburn Trust Open Doors | 1. Open Doors – community mapping, community confidence building<br>2. Open Doors Consortium – information and workshops relating to asset transfer | All delivered face to face + telephone advice + newsletter Information is accessible online | Any community building in Newcastle | Newcastle only | Free to access | Newcastle City Council |
| 6. | SES | 1. Business start-up and development<br>2. SME support for social enterprises<br>3. Open Doors Consortium (see above)<br>4. Social Enterprise Development (Locality programme)<br>5. Business support to the most disadvantaged<br>6. Women out of poverty into enterprise | All support delivered face to face | 1. Individuals or groups<br>2. Trading businesses with >250 employees<br>3. Community buildings in | 1. North East<br>2. North East<br>3. Newcastle<br>4. National<br>5. Tyne & Wear<br>6. Tyne & | 1. Free to access<br>2. Free to access<br>3. Free to access<br>4. Support up | 1. ERDF<br>2. ERDF<br>3. Newcastle City Council<br>4. SIB<br>5. YHN, Gentoo, Fiscus |

| # | Name | Services | Delivery | Target | Area | Cost | Funding |
|---|------|----------|----------|--------|------|------|---------|
| | (woopie) | | | Newcastle going through asset transfer<br>4. Individuals<br>5. Individuals<br>6. Individuals | Wear | to £10K<br>5. Free to access<br>6. Free to access | 6. RBS |
| 7. | Sported | 1. Advocating for the sport for development sector<br>2. Mentoring (3-6 months) support for sport development organisations – business planning, fundraising (not with feasibility studies)<br>3. Membership services – funding newsletter, online experts service, Your Sport & Network (Online), Resources and templates, Impact measurement and report tool, bite-size videos. Partnerships with Lockerdome for insurance deals & Utilities Warehouse<br>4. Box-On (Partnership scheme with Box England, national programme with one pilot in each area, M'boro in NE) – Mentoring support plus 2 day Volunteer Training course<br>5. Grant scheme in Durham | 1. Face to face backed by research<br>2. Face to face in NE + emails etc. as applicable<br>3. Email and online<br>4. face to face mentoring plus course in Leeds<br>5. Apply online | 1. Government, funders and relevant public bodies<br>2. Premium members only<br>3. Members<br>4. Boxing clubs working with disadvantaged young people who want to reach more<br>5. Existing and potential new members | 1,2,3. Nationally and at regional level<br>4. National with NE pilot in Middlesbrough<br>5. Co Durham | 1. N/A<br>2,3,4,5. Free to access (membership is free) | 1,2,3. From core funding<br>4. Comic Relief and BT Supporters Club<br>5. County Durham Community Foundation |
| 8. | Volunteer Centre | 1. Support policy review, represent and advocate on behalf of<br>2. Support over 500 groups with volunteer recruitment, training, skill sharing<br>3. Support other support services – mental health teams, training providers | 1,2,3. Face to face<br><br>2,3. Group training<br><br>Monthly bulletin<br><br>Website pages | 1. Public sector bodies and other stakeholders<br><br>2,3. Any group/charity. Social enterprise local regional or national organisation that | City of Newcastle Upon Tyne<br><br>Also accept groups from out of area if they want support to recruit | All services free to access | Newcastle Fund |

| # | Name | Services | Delivery | Beneficiaries | Geography | Cost | Funding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Employee volunteering<br><br>Events Presentation Social media Syndicated publications | wants to advertise or recruit within Newcastle | Newcastle residents | | |
| 9. | VONNE | 1. Policy and representation –<br>a. Health<br>b. Economic Regeneration<br>c. EU funding (partnership with New Skills Consulting)<br>d. Community safety (partnership with Clinks)<br>e. Community energy<br>2. FINE – funding information<br>3. Expertise on the sector<br>4. Research – surviving not Thriving<br>5. Campaigning and promotion – e.g. Northern Rock manifesto<br>Job advertisements | 1. representation on boards, workshops, face-to-face, briefings<br>2. Directories and e-bulletin<br>3. Face-to-face or electronically<br>4. Online<br>5. As required e.g. meetings, letters, emails etc.<br>6. Online | 1. North East VCSE groups, stakeholders, public bodies, Government<br>2. NE VCSE sector<br>3. Cabinet Office, press, funders etc.<br>4,5. Essentially to support NE VCSE groups<br>6. NE VCSE | North East region | 1. Free to access<br>2. Paid for and subsidised<br>3. N/A<br>4,5. Free to access<br>6. Paid for | 1. Respectively: a. Dept. Of Health; b. Millfield House; c. Big Lottery; d. Northern Rock Foundation; e. Northern Power Grid<br>2. Northern Rock Foundation<br>4. Millfield House |
| 10. | SkillsBridge | 1. Pro bono skilled volunteering brokerage in areas such as:<br>• Strategic planning<br>• Business planning<br>• HR<br>• Financial management | All services delivered face-to-face by SkillsBridge. Volunteer Advisors may | VCSE groups operating in the North East and West Yorkshire with a turnover between £100K | North East, West Yorks | All services free to access | 1,2. Services delivered from core funding<br>3. Newcastle City Council, Our Place (Locality) |

- Legal advice
- Marketing and comms
- IT
- Project management
- Impact measurement
- Data handling/ processing/ storage
- Building management
- Architecture

Etc....

2. Workshops - delivered by skilled professionals

3. Area based support in Benwell and Scotswood – Our Place

4. Representing and promoting – advocating for the needs of the groups we work with and for the potential benefits of skills sharing

use electronic, online means etc. to offer support in addition to face-to-face where appropriate

and £1 million, with the exception of funded programmes such as Our Place where we will works with relevant groups regardless of turnover

# Current Climate and Future Challenges

**Have you noticed any changes or trends in the demand for the support you deliver?**

About half of the organisations interviewed have experienced an increase in demand for their services over the last year. None reported a reduction however where support is delivered as part of a contract the organisation in question may not be seeking wider uptake beyond the outputs specified in their funding agreement.

Demand from service users for more funding or sustainable funding was noted by most organisations as the focus of their support delivery. Support requests in this area may take the form of enabling groups to be more enterprising, understand EU funding or improve how they engage with public sector commissioning and procurement. There was also a demand for more generic fundraising support and training.

**Is your organisation adequately resourced to meet the demand on your services?**

When asked if they felt adequately resourced to meet the current level of demand for their services 60% of those questioned said no. 30% of organisations reported a marked decrease in staffing of 50% to 75% which was having a significant effect on their ability to deliver against demand. These reductions had all been linked with cuts in public sector spending. None of the organisations had noted a decrease in demand that led to a reduction in staffing, in fact quite the opposite.

Three of the organisations gave a qualified 'yes'. Qualified answers included reliance on referrals and reduction in the service offering. One organisation suggested their support for groups would be unlikely to continue as it was uneconomical to sustain it.

One of the organisations questioned had changed their entire business model from employing staff to using associates. This enables them to deliver services flexibly and in response to paid for demand. Whilst this service delivery model was working for them due to the nature of their work it is unlikely to be replicable in other organisations where opportunities for staff to be self-employed associates would be impractical.

Demand versus need - For most organisations there is only a very limited opportunity for them to develop paid for services. One reason for this is the difference between ***demand*** and ***need***.

For many frontline VCS organisations, reductions in funding and increase in demand for their services have led to a change in the way they work. It's more common for leaders to be increasingly focused on income generation and/or to have taken on some operational responsibilities to cover for shortages. This has led to a lack of capacity for future planning and addressing organisational development needs.

As a result VCS support providers might perceive the ***need*** for organisational support amongst their members or service users, but this has not led to an increase in ***demand*** as organisations are under increasing pressure and lack the capacity to engage. This places a number of frontline organisations at risk over the medium or longer term as they continue to focus on short term crisis management.

**Do you feel your organisation is in a stable position or are there any risks you have identified to you or the services you deliver?**

Several organisations stated clearly that were not in a stable position and one reported they were facing a 'funding cliff' in the middle of 2015. At least one had set a deficit budget and several either reported gaps in service delivery or were unable to meet all areas of demand at their current funding levels. Two organisations reported their position as stable or relatively stable and one organisation that had moved to a model where all services are paid for reported growth. In the latter case their service delivery area is exclusively IT/Web support rather than traditional infrastructure or broader organisational development service, and so a charging policy was relatively straightforward to implement.

In general, organisations said they felt nervous about the future and uncertain what it might hold. Having survived several years of cuts and 'austerity' in terms of public sector spending, 80% felt the situation was difficult but not hopeless. Whereas 20% of organisations felt very strongly threatened by the current financial and funding climate and were less certain of their survival.

There was a feeling that VCS support services were not well understood by funders across sectors. Charitable funders often neglect this area in favour of frontline services and the few that are open to being approached are either large but highly over-subscribed or very small and local. Research conducted in support of VCS infrastructure e.g. Building Capabilities in the Voluntary Sector: What the evidence tells us, Macmillan & Paine et al, 2014, has not noticeably influenced policy amongst charitable funders nor does recent Cabinet Office research or the sympathetic ear of Office for Civil Society.

Private sector funding is not a viable option for many VCS support organisations as there isn't a 'clear sell'. Private sector grant funding for VCS groups tends to focus on large national or local campaigns e.g. Children in Need, Comic Relief, Percy Hedley or a local hospice, or alternatively to aim their charitable funding at the very small and local groups such as the local Scouts or a nearby youth sport team. Staff and grants administrators in private firms are unfamiliar with the wider voluntary and community sector and therefore do not understand what is meant by VCS infrastructure and why it should be funded.

Public sector funding has long been a mainstay of VCS organisations in the North East and historically in our region there has been a greater reliance by VCS on the public sector than in other areas. Cuts to public spending have therefore proved a greater challenge to VCS organisations in Newcastle than might be the case outside the region.

Whilst smaller VCS organisations have traditionally relied less on public sector funding and larger organisations are moving to engage more with contract delivery[3], medium sized VCS organisations have become more grant reliant and less able or willing to engage with public sector contracting. According to research carried out as part of the Third Sector Trends Study, *"Recent research has reviewed previous*

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[3] In 2014 47.5% of larger TSOs (+ £250K turnover) were delivering or bidding to deliver public services as opposed to 21.1% of medium-sized TSOs (£50K-£250K turnover) according to Third Sector Trends in North East England and Cumbria Headline trends 2008-2014, Tony Chapman and Fred Robinson, 2014)

*attempts significantly to grow the number of TSOs which enter the contract market place. While there is some evidence to indicate that the largest TSOs have been more eager to move into this area of work, medium sized organisations have been less eager to do so, even if capacity building funding was invested in them."* (Tony Chapman and Fred Robinson, Third Sector Trends in North East England and Cumbria Headline trends 2008-2014, 2014)

The level of uncertainty around organisational stability of those questioned reflects a wider uncertainty as to what the future holds in terms of public sector spending and the ability or VCS support providers to attract funding through other means and from other sources.

## What are the main challenges you will face in future?

Funding - Over half of the organisations questioned mentioned funding or income levels directly in their response to this question. For the majority funding from the public sector plays a key role as part of their income. Where organisations rely more on charitable grants, whilst these are not guaranteed in future, the funders in question are seen as being in a stable position and so the onus is on the organisation applying to put together a high quality proposal backed by excellent service delivery.

*"Demand on resources looks set to grow and resources to meet it look set to shrink."*

For organisations such as CITA and Ouseburn Trust that rely on earned income the emphasis is on how to maximise the potential for that to create a surplus that can be used for public benefit.

Reputation and quality - Maintaining reputation and meeting the expectations of funders and stakeholders was key to several organisations as is the need to promote the impact of services delivered and the requirements of the sector for the support on offer. In general it was felt that with further funding available more could be done to support organisations with clearly identified needs. One organisation mentioned how difficult it was to cull services that they would like to offer but could no longer afford to.

For those reliant or hopeful of public sector funding there was an awareness of the threat from large external providers. Although the experience of each of the organisations questioned suggests that there is a clear preference amongst service users for face-to-face support, and that in some cases this was the only viable means of offering support, there is a growing trend for regarding online provision as being a more cost effective option, but little evidence to back up how effective this might be as a replacement to locally delivered services.

A view that was widely echoed is that external providers are only there when the money is there, whereas local support service providers often have a stronger personal connection with service users and a vested interest in supporting them to support communities.

Feedback and representation - One clear risk emerging from the loss of local support service provision is the loss of feedback and representation to funders and public bodies. A number of the organisations represented make time to attend meeting, network and feed back to local authority officers and representatives of other

organisations. In doing so they present the views of their members and services users and this is seen as vital in maintaining strong connections between a Diaspora of front line service deliverers and public bodies, as well as other funders.

*"Front line groups can't easily speak to someone at the Council directly due to services being so stretched and high staff turnover. This threatens their ability to undertake preventative work."*

Grants and commissioning - The question of grants vs. commissioning as a means to fund VCS organisations was raised by several respondents. At a time when public sector funding is being cut and services trimmed back, commissioning may be a tempting route for local authorities to take to ensure continuity of service through contracting VCS organisations to deliver along specific lines rather than grant funding them.

However commissioned services take a long time to prepare and are only effective if there is a truly viable list of potential service delivery organisations, which may not be the case in all circumstances. In practice this model is predicated on several key factors: it relies on the commissioning body having a fully up to date and in depth awareness of need amongst intended service users. This is increasingly challenging as local authorities lose their 'organisational memory' due to loss of senior staff that have a lot of knowledge and experience gained over years of involvement with communities and community groups. It also relies on VCS delivery partners being able to take on enough contracts to cover core costs, otherwise they cannot fund their organisations to deliver. For most medium-sized organisations this model is untenable as they are unable to run a sufficient number of concurrent projects to cover the costs of funding the core. They therefore rely on core grant funding, which many find very difficult to obtain.

Research[4] has highlighted that amongst medium sized VCS organisations income from investments has more than halved between 2010 and 2014. One possible explanation for this is the increasing number of organisations drawing on reserves to supplement income and cover core costs, a situation which is clearly untenable in the longer term.

Whilst the first point is not limited to VCS support providers it is applicable to some and several respondents noted that a strictly adhered to commissioning model may inevitably lead to gaps in service delivery as not everything can be accounted for in a tender document. Alternatively, grant funding an organisation that delivers appropriate services might be a more effective means of supporting some target groups as this maximises the potential for the delivery organisation to create a flexible, responsive and inclusive service model. Surpluses made by charitable organisations can only be used for the intended purpose of the charity and so this may be a less time consuming whilst still cost effective funding model in some cases.

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[4] Chapman & Robinson, Third Sector Trends in North East England and Cumbria Headline trends 2008-2014, 2014, P 18.

**What would you like to see happen?**

Exploring new ways to meet needs - 70% of organisations questioned had identified service delivery options that they would like to implement or test for feasibility if they had sufficient funding to do so. A number of innovative and forward thinking ideas were presented with the emphasis on face-to-face delivery of support, as this was felt to be what works best.

Changing relationships - Some organisations commented on the need for change in attitude of local authorities. It was felt that for some funding e.g. for children's services, local authorities felt a sense of 'entitlement' to use this funding themselves rather than broker that funding to external community based groups. A view was expressed the local authorities often saw themselves as the 'big partner' round the table, which might be an increasingly outdated view and at odds with external policy based on cooperation and co-production.

*"Local authorities aren't able to think 'outside the box' when they're too busy hiding inside it."*

**How do you see the sector in a few years' time and how do you think you will contribute to this?**

Risk of breaking links - In considering the question of the future of the VC sector from the perspective of organisations providing support, many felt that, "The future is not bright", and there would be significant reductions in the number of organisations especially medium-sized organisations. This might equally include infrastructure organisations many of whom fall into this category. It was noted by one respondent that medium sized organisations often form a link between the local authority and the community or smaller community groups and if they go, that link would be broken.

Segmenting the sector - Many large charities are now looking beyond the North East and some barely resemble the traditional model of a charity, focused as they are on being highly enterprising and delivering a portfolio of public health and other contracts.

Smaller charities may be largely unaffected but it is worth noting that only 4.2% of smaller charities are engaged in delivering contacts and only 12% are currently involved in bidding to do so[5]. One organisation felt that smaller groups they support do deliver services that overlap with the healthcare agenda but would have no idea how to get such work funded, and no resources to explore doing so.

*"Support to the sector needs to be segmented. Smaller grass roots organisations need small grants, larger organisations looking to expand nationally need help with supply chains and access to social investment, medium-sized organisations needs capability support in areas like HR."*

Social enterprise support - Several organisations felt there would be an increase in demand for social enterprise support and support for small community groups, but there was a feeling that there may not be capacity to meet these needs and that the

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[5] Chapman & Robinson, Third Sector Trends in North East England and Cumbria Headline trends 2008-2014, 2014, P 18 & P 31.

value of them doing so was not widely recognised or appreciated by funders and public sector partners.

*"Savings on supporting infrastructure may save pennies now, but further down the line could lead to bigger problems and more expenditure."*

Partnerships and mergers - A number of organisation felt there would be an increasing trend towards partnerships and mergers and that there was an increasing need for consortium development to compete effectively with the private sector and with larger external service providers. However, it was felt that the capacity or need of the sector to engage with social investment would be, as now, very limited and applicable to only a small minority of organisations.

In terms of future relationships with the public sector and local authority it was felt that relationships might become strained in the face of potential criticism over cuts and policy, for example there may be an issue around reductions in commissioning levels leading to suppliers becoming unable to offer a living wage, going against the council's aim to encourage employers to do so.

# Conclusion

**Support provision available to organisations in Newcastle**

There is a wide range of support provision available for VCS organisations in Newcastle and much of the support that can be accessed is currently free to the service user, although there is work being undertaken to explore the feasibility of more services becoming paid for.

From local providers this support is often face-to-face in terms of advice and training. In addition 60% of organisations produce regular information bulletins with content aimed at their membership and the wider sector.

Newcastle CVS and VONNE have published research on their websites that can be accessed by the sector to provide evidence or information in support of plans or funding applications.

80% of organisations take a representative role on behalf of their members or their area of support to influence and inform policy and planning on the part of funders and public bodies.

40% of support organisations provide information on funding, however only Newcastle CVS do this directly through a dedicated funding officer.

60% of organisations work in partnership on aspects of their support delivery.

**Current climate and future challenges**

Trends in support requests - Almost every organisation identified funding as the number 1 challenge faced by their service users and requests ranged from basic fundraising support to support around social enterprise, trading and sources of sustainable income.

60% of support providers did not feel adequately resourced to meet need.

30% had suffered a marked decrease in staffing, affecting their ability to deliver support.

VCS support providers have only limited options for offering paid for services as a means for significant income generation.

Organisational stability – There is general uncertainty about the future and this was particularly noted in two organisations. 80% felt the situation was difficult but not yet hopeless.

Main future challenges – Over 50% were uncertain of future funding with an increasing reliance amongst 30% on grant funding. Commissioning was not always viewed positively as it had the potential to remove some of the 'added value' and may not adequately cover core costs, risking the viability of medium sized organisations.

There is a challenge in meeting increased expectations with at times reduced resources.

What would you like to see happen? – 70% had identified new services or delivery areas they would like to explore and develop to meet need.

Some felt the relationship between the local authority and the VC sector needs to change and had concern about future relationships in the face of funding pressures, policy decisions and the loss of 'organisational memory' by the local authority.

How do you see the sector in a few years' time? – Risk of losing the links between local authority and grass roots organisations, as well as large VCS and smaller organisations if medium sized VCS disappears or are reduced in number.

20% reported seeing a marked increase in demand for social enterprise support and a number felt there would be further partnerships, mergers and consortia developed.

# Recommendations

## Section 1

The interviews generated many ideas of what the future of VCS support in the Newcastle City could look like, most of which have been captured in the main body of the text and highlighted again in the conclusion section of this report. The following section focuses on a few areas highlighted in previous sections that could make a real difference to VCS sustainability.

### Improvements to current infrastructure services

Overall VCS organisations were very happy with the support they were currently receiving. There were a few suggestions that were made and potential areas for improvement.

More awareness raising of service provision - Whilst awareness of some local provision is very high, many organisations were unaware of the range of provision available for them to tap into.

Timing and availability of support - Most of support service delivery happens during the day often when staff and volunteers are unavailable. Offering support outside of these hours might be very helpful to smaller organisations.

### Development of future infrastructure services

Peer to Peer Group support - Organisations that were accessing peer to peer support had found this extremely useful and there was an appetite for longer term peer group support. Is there a way in which larger VCS organisations could transfer skills and knowledge and share resources with smaller organisations without it being too onerous?

Winning new business - Many organisations were interested in tendering and becoming tender ready but were felt they needed bespoke advice and support in this area.

Collaborative working - Organisations recognised the increasing need to engage in partnerships to bid for work, but were unclear how to go about doing this.

Commercial skills development - There is an emerging demand for workshops or training events around selling and making a pitch within the VCS sector as well as developing products and services commercially.

Building a strong evidence base - There is a demand for workshops or training events focused on building a strong evidence base for services and the many approaches to this, e.g. social auditing, cost benefit analysis etc.

### How the Local Authority could support VCS organisations in the future

Identify when to co-produce and when to commission services – At present it is unclear how the VCS is best able to engage with the Local Authority around co-producing services. There is a strong appetite to work with the local authority in designing services but not if these services then have to be commissioned. A clear protocol for why, when and how each approach is used would be very helpful.

<u>Pre tendering support and commissioners engaging with the VCS sector</u> - When a decision is made to commission services, it would be very helpful to have some engagement prior to the tender notice going out, with time built in to the process to which doesn't disadvantage the VCS sector from being able to consult, discuss and develop an appropriate submission.

<u>Understanding the economic and social value of VCS sector</u> - Community Co-operative services, economic development and the legal teams within the Local Authorities should work together to develop an approach to placing a social and economic value of the local VCS sector delivering a service.

<u>Providing research and statistics about neighbourhoods</u> – The local authority could support VCS organisations that are looking to develop services in particular areas, with current up to date research and statistics on the area in a responsive manner.

## Section 2

VCS support providers were able to offer a number of insights into the needs of their service users, and this emphasised the importance of good communications between support providers, funders and the local authority to ensure current needs are recognised and provision made.

## Resources

Support providers would benefit from access to funding to help them scope and develop service areas where there is an identified need. Most would benefit from longer term funding arrangements to provide stability for services.

There is scope for discussion around what and when to commission as time and value can be lost through the over use of commissioning. Other factors being equal, recognition of the added value of local service provision would benefit some of the organisations that provide services without direct funding to do so.

Making greater use of local intelligence and the capability of service providers to share valuable information about the sector is an important way to build bridges and improve awareness.

## Support in the future

Access to funding to develop services and allow for innovative approaches to service development and delivery.

There may be scope for new ways to bring public sector and VCSE organisations together for more open discussions to develop a shared vision and bottom-up approach to service design.

Recognition of the segments within the VCSE sector and the varying challenges faced by each would help address emerging issues and safeguard against instability that could lead to the loss of important community links.

New ways to approach and encourage social enterprise as a means of economic and social regeneration might help stabilise the sector through challenging times.

Support around the development and use of partnerships and consortia could serve to attract new funding to hard pressed areas.

# Appendix 1

Front Line VCSE Organisation Sample

| Name | Geography | | | Turnover | | | | | Sector / Activity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | E | W | C | 0 - 10 | 10 - 50 | 50 - 250 | 250 - 1M | 1M+ | |
| Newcastle CAB | | | X | | | | X | | Advice |
| Pendower Good Neighbour | | X | | | | X | | | Advice |
| Jet North | | | X | | | | X | | BME |
| Garden Village Playgroup | | | X | | X | | | | Children |
| Tyneside Cinema | | | | | | | | X | cultural |
| Crossings | | | X | | X | | | | Cultural/BME |
| Disability North | | | X | | | | X | | Disability |
| Better Days | | | X | | X | | | | Disability |
| Northern Learning Trust | | | X | | | | X | | Education |
| RHWE | | X | | | | X | | | Employability |
| Millin Centre | | X | | | | | | | Community |
| NIWE Eating Disorder | | | X | | | X | | | Health |
| Tyneside Women's Health | X | | | | | | X | | Health |
| St. Anthony Of Padua | X | | | | | | | X | Older people |
| Search | | X | | | | X | | | Older people |
| Dementia Care | | | X | | | | | X | Older people |
| Newcastle YMCA | X | | | | | | X | | Young people |
| Kids Kabin | X | | | | | X | | | Young people |
| Grange Park Boys Club | | X | | | X | | | | Young people |
| Byker Community Centre | X | | | | X | | | | Community |

VCS Support Provider Organisations

| Name | Operating Area |
|---|---|
| Sported | National |
| VONNE | Regional |
| CITA | Regional |
| NESEP | Regional |
| SES | Regional |
| SkillsBridge | Regional |
| Volunteer Centre | Newcastle |
| Ouseburn Trust | Newcastle |

| Newcastle Tenant's & Residents Federation | Newcastle |
|---|---|
| Newcastle CVS | Newcastle |

## Appendix 2

Questionnaires

| 1. PROFILE CAPTURE | |
|---|---|
| Organisation name | |
| Contact name | |
| Position | |
| Address | |
| Postcode | |
| Geographical area for delivery of services (Central, East, West – specific wards?) | |
| Telephone | |
| Mobile | |
| website | |
| e-mail | |

| 2. PROFILE CAPTURE | |
|---|---|
| **Organisation structure** | Tick which ones apply<br><br>€  Registered Charity<br>€  CIC<br>€  CIO<br>€  Company limited by guarantee<br>€  Other |
| Registered Charity Number | |
| No of employees (FTE) | |
| No of volunteers | |
| **Organisation financials** | |
| Turnover of last financial year | |
| Please provide end date for your financial year | |
| Level of surplus/deficit | |
| Have there been any significant changes in income in recent years, please describe | |
| Please provide details of funding sources in the last financial year | |

**Organisational services**

*Why was your organisation set up? What is its core mission?*

*What type of services does your organisation provide?*

Please tick the one that best describes the demand for your services last year

- € Increase in demand
- € Decrease in demand
- € Demand stayed the same

If experiencing increase or decrease, please state an approximate percentage

Please tick the one that best describes the capacity of your services last year (the resources you have available to deliver your services)

- € Increase in capacity
- € Decrease in capacity
- € Capacity stayed the same

If experiencing increase or decrease, please state an approximate percentage

Is the service delivered, locally, regionally, nationally?

Describe your organisations client groups if specialist: *Tick all that apply*

| | |
|---|---|
| € Male | € BME Individuals |
| € Female | € Children (under 12) |
| € Disabled | € Young People (13 – 17) |
| € Socially Excluded | € Adults (18 – 64) |
| € No Qualifications | € Older People (65+) |
| € Mental Health Conditions | € Special Education Needs |
| € Lone Parents | € Young Carers |
| € Other Health Conditions | € Refugee/Asylum Seekers |
| € Ex-Offenders | € LGBT |
| € Other groups/organisations | € All |

Additional comments:

| |
|---|
| |

## 3. AWARENESS OF SUPPORT PROVISION IN NEWCASTLE

In this section we're interested in finding out which organisations you know you can access as a charity for support? By support we mean: supporting and developing you in setting up and running your charity, networking, representing and influencing, providing resources and information or helping you to overcome specific challenges.

3.1 Below is a list of organisations that do provide the type of support described above, are you aware of them and do you know what they do?

| Organisation name | Heard of? (Y/N) | Member of?(Y/N) | Aware of services they offer (tick if aware) |
|---|---|---|---|
| NCVO | | | Online advice and support through: KnowHow Non Profit Study Zone Funding Central How To guides<br><br>Training and events<br><br>Trusted supplier list<br><br>Paid for bespoke support (member discount)<br><br>For members: Quick guides<br><br>(Also consultancy and research – info useful for some orgs as part of strategy development or bid writing) |
| Newcastle CVS | | | Supporting and Developing<br> € Setting up and running a group<br> € Funding sustainability<br> € Helpline<br> € Training and facilitation<br> € Events/Briefing sessions<br> € Financial services (payroll, accountancy etc.)<br> € Information sheets<br> € Newsletter/other resources<br>Networking and Involving<br> € Shared interest networks and forums |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Representing and Influencing<br>   € Promoting advocating lobbying for the VCS sector<br>   € Initiating and supporting consultation<br>Tackling poverty and inequality<br>Resources and links<br>Research into key social issues and the VC sector |
| SkillsBridge | | | Brokerage - Working with charities to identify and understand issues and challenges they face and then brokering in professional pro bono advisors to support them in developing appropriate solutions<br><br>Workshops on a range of pertinent topics (e.g. RTI, Data Protection etc.)<br><br>Community Action planning with VCS in Benwell and Scotswood |
| Volunteer Centre | | | Advice and assistance on developing or encouraging volunteering<br><br>Online information and advice<br><br>Support to find volunteers through the Do-It website |
| VONNE | | | Online information and research<br>E-bulletin<br>Advertising jobs<br>Taking part in consultations<br>Groups and events |
| Cranfield Trust | | | Pro bono management consultancy projects<br>Online HR advice and information |
| Business in the Community | | | Business Connector support<br>Any other service or support? Please list |
| BECON | | | Voice Project<br>Other? |
| Ouseburn Trust | | | Open Doors<br>Other? |
| CITA | | | Advice<br>Training<br>Resources<br>Website<br>Database<br>IT Support |
| SES | | | Advice and guidance<br>Consultancy<br>Training |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Workspace |
| NESEP | | | Information<br>Signposting<br>Showcasing<br>Connecting to people, organisations or partnerships |
| Tenants Federation | | | Support for Tenants and Residents Associations including information and policy development. |
| Other: | | | |

| 3.2 Thinking about the support providers you are aware of, how important is the flexibility and responsiveness of the service to you. | €   Very important<br>€   Quite important<br>€   Not important<br>Any examples where a service has not been responsive to your needs? |
|---|---|
| 3.3 If the support you used was no longer available, what impact do you think this would have on your organisation? (E.g. closed down, reduce the services, lose the staff) | €   Big impact<br>€   Small impact<br>€   No impact<br>Please explain your response |
| 3.4 How important do you think it is to have support services such as representing, influencing and lobbying for the sector? | €   Very important<br>€   Quite important<br>€   Not important<br><br>Please explain your response |

| 4.  SUPPORT BEING ACCESSED |
|---|
| In this section we would like to explore where you get your support from. |
| *Interviewer note: It might be helpful at this point to discuss what is meant by support. This could include direct support around a key issue or challenge, which might be delivered in a number of ways. It might be access to information through online or printed research or through e-newsletters or bulletins. It might be through workshops or training. It might be through networks, groups or forums. (If support has been informally provided through a personal contact or peer please list this in the additional comments.)* |
| 4.1.1 Have you required support in the last 12 months? Yes/No |

| 4.1.2 If yes to 4.1.1 Did you receive that support from an external organisation? Yes/No (If Yes go to 4.3) |
|---|

| 4.2 If you haven't accessed any support services in the last 12 months, why not? (Tick all that apply and add details in Comments section) |
|---|
|    €  Not needed?<br>   €  Support needed not available or not to the standard required?<br>   €  Not aware of support on offer?<br>   €  Not for free or affordable?<br>   €  Not suited to needs? (Prompt: why not?)<br>   €  Poor previous experience?<br>   €  Prefer using own network of contacts?<br>   €  Prefer paid for contracted support? (Prompt: why?) |

| Additional Comments: |
|---|
| |

| 4.3 When unsure of where to go for support, is there a particular individual or organisation you pick the phone up to, that you use to point you in the right direction? | Yes/no<br><br>If yes – who? |
|---|---|

| Support organisation Name | |
|---|---|
| (If applicable) Are you a member? | |
| Local/Regional/National? | |
| Local contact or office | |
| Part of your community of interest? (Prompt: BME, healthcare, disability, youth work etc.) | |
| What support did you access? | |
| What reasons did you identify that led you to access support? What was the need? | |
| Was the support free or paid for? (Note: member or other subsidy?) | |
| In what was this support accessed or provided? (Interviewer note: NOT the area in which support was delivered this is |   €  Online information (e.g. for bid writing)<br>  €  Online advice and support<br>  €  E-newsletter or bulletin<br>  €  Printed report or information sheet |

| | |
|---|---|
| about the delivery method) | € Information or support provided by email or telephone<br>€ Networking opportunity, group or forum<br>€ Campaigning, lobbying, advocating<br>€ Advertising jobs<br>€ Facilitation of away days<br>€ Through a partnership, group or forum<br>€ Face to face support<br>€ Brokered support involving a 3rd party<br>€ Workshop or training event<br>€ Seminar<br>€ Representation (through consultation or thematic<br>€ Other (member €) services? (please list) |
| How do you feel about the way the support was provided? | |
| (If applicable) Did the provider carry out a diagnostic analysis with you as part of your support? | |
| What led you to choose this provider? | |
| Did the support meet your expectations? | € Exceeded expectations<br>€ Met expectations<br>€ Fell below expectations<br>Please explain: |
| What were the key outcomes of receiving this support? | |
| Can you identify any impact from this on your organisation? (Prompt: is this quantifiable e.g. new income, savings, efficiencies made etc?) | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Has there been any impact to your service users? | |
| Did you find the support provider easy to engage with and would you use them again? | |
| Where there areas in which you needed support that were unavailable? | |
| Any other feedback on this support? | |

Additional Comments: Can you think of any support you have received from other organisations outside the VCS sector e.g. (Local Authority, Partnership, Working Group, Board)

**5. UNDERSTANDING CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES**

In this section we'd like to understand more about your current needs and your anticipated needs over the next year.

*Interviewer note: this section is designed to be semi structured and the questions more open. Where further questions arise add these as notes in the Additional Comments*

5.1 How do you see your organisation developing over the next few years?
(Interviewer note: Any plans to change, set up or close services?)

5.2 What sort of help do you think you might need?

5.3 What could VCS support services offer to help you?

5.4 What could the local authority and other public bodies do to help you?

5.5 Any other comments?

For office use only

| Interviewer: | |
| --- | --- |
| Date: | |
| Additional comments: | |

Note – although wording at the front of the questionnaire states we would not anonymise their response, I as interviewer assured them that they would be anonymised as I realised that responses would be more guarded without this assurance.

# VCS 2020 – Understanding current support to VCS

**Introductory comments and what we are doing…**

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, SkillsBridge and Newcastle CVS are undertaking some research to find out more about the type of support that charities and social enterprises in Newcastle are accessing.  Our findings will help to inform the local authority about what sort of support is needed by VCSE organisations working in Newcastle now and in future.

**Why you have been selected…**

According to our records you are an organisation delivering support services to VCSE organisations in Newcastle.

**Confidentiality and the use of the information…**

The information we gather in this interview will be used solely for the purposes outlined above.  It will not be anonymised unless you tell us you would like us to. We will include you in the participating organisations and we would like to quote you within the context of the report and well as name your organisation. We feel this approach will make our research more meaningful.  We will be producing a report for Newcastle Council outlining our thoughts on what future support might look like for the voluntary sector.

**Why this research and your participation is important…**

As a charity ourselves, we know the significant contribution charities are making every day to local residents in Newcastle and this is with ever decreasing resources and ever increasing demand.  We know that creating a sustainable VCS sector for 2020 is only possible if you have access to appropriate and timely support when you need it and this piece of work helps us to understand what that might look like.

Some facts and figures [6] (*Note to interviewer – use if you think this would be useful, don't have to quote everything but handy to have*)

Newcastle is home to 1000 registered charities and at least 3,000 small community based organisations. According to a recent survey of 145 voluntary organisations  by VONNE,

> ➔ 53% had seen a decrease in funding
> ➔ 23% had lost staff
> ➔ 71% had  experienced an increase in demand for services
> ➔ 62% were using their reserves
> ➔ 44% expected or were  considering closing a service

---

[6] Key facts about the voluntary and community sector in Newcastle 2014

## 1. CONTACT DETAILS

| | |
|---|---|
| Organisation name | |
| Contact name | |
| Position | |
| Address | |
| Postcode | |
| Operational area for delivery | |
| Telephone | |
| Mobile | |
| website | |
| e-mail | |

## 2. PROFILE CAPTURE

| **Organisation structure** | Tick which ones apply<br><br>€ Registered Charity<br>€ CIC<br>€ CIO<br>€ Company limited by guarantee<br>€ Other |
|---|---|
| Registered Charity Number | |
| No of employees (FTE) | |
| No of volunteers | |
| **Organisation financials** | |
| Turnover of last financial year | € > £250K<br>€ £250K - £500K<br>€ £500K - £1 million<br>€ < £1 million |
| Please provide end date for your financial year | |
| Level of surplus/deficit | |
| Have there been any significant changes in income in recent years, please describe | |
| Do you now or have you in the past received funding from Newcastle City Council? (Prompt for what? Other LA funding?) | |

## 3. SERVICES AND SUPPORT

*Why was your organisation set up? What is its core mission?*

|  |
| --- |
| *Are you aware of any organisations that provide similar support or services?* |

| Details of services and support provided to other organisations (use additional sheets as required) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Service/ support name/description (including representation) | Details | Method (e.g. face to face, bulletin, report, online etc.) | Target audience (SE's, charities, by size of org, type, who they support etc.) | Delivery area (include ward areas if applicable | Cost (Subsidised or Free?) | Funder (For this service if applicable) |
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Do you work in partnership to deliver any of your services? (Prompt: if 'yes', how did this come about? What are the advantages and disadvantages? Will this continue? If 'no' is this something that could be considered in future?)

## 4. CURRENT CLIMATE AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Have you noticed any changes or trends in the demand for the support you deliver? (Prompt: thoughts on why, factors affecting this, what are organisations supported saying? What are their issues now and have these changed?)

Do you feel you are adequately resourced to meet the demand you have for your service? (Prompt: if 'no', what do you need, what would be ideal?)

Do you feel your organisation is in a stable position or are there any risks you've identified to you or the services you deliver? (Prompt for details)

What do you think are the main challenges you will face in future?

What would you like to see happen? (Prompt: what services would you like to develop? Areas to explore further? Plans you would like to get off the ground?)

How do you see the sector in five years' time and how do you think you would contribute to this?

| Interviewer: | | Date: | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Additional comments: | | | |