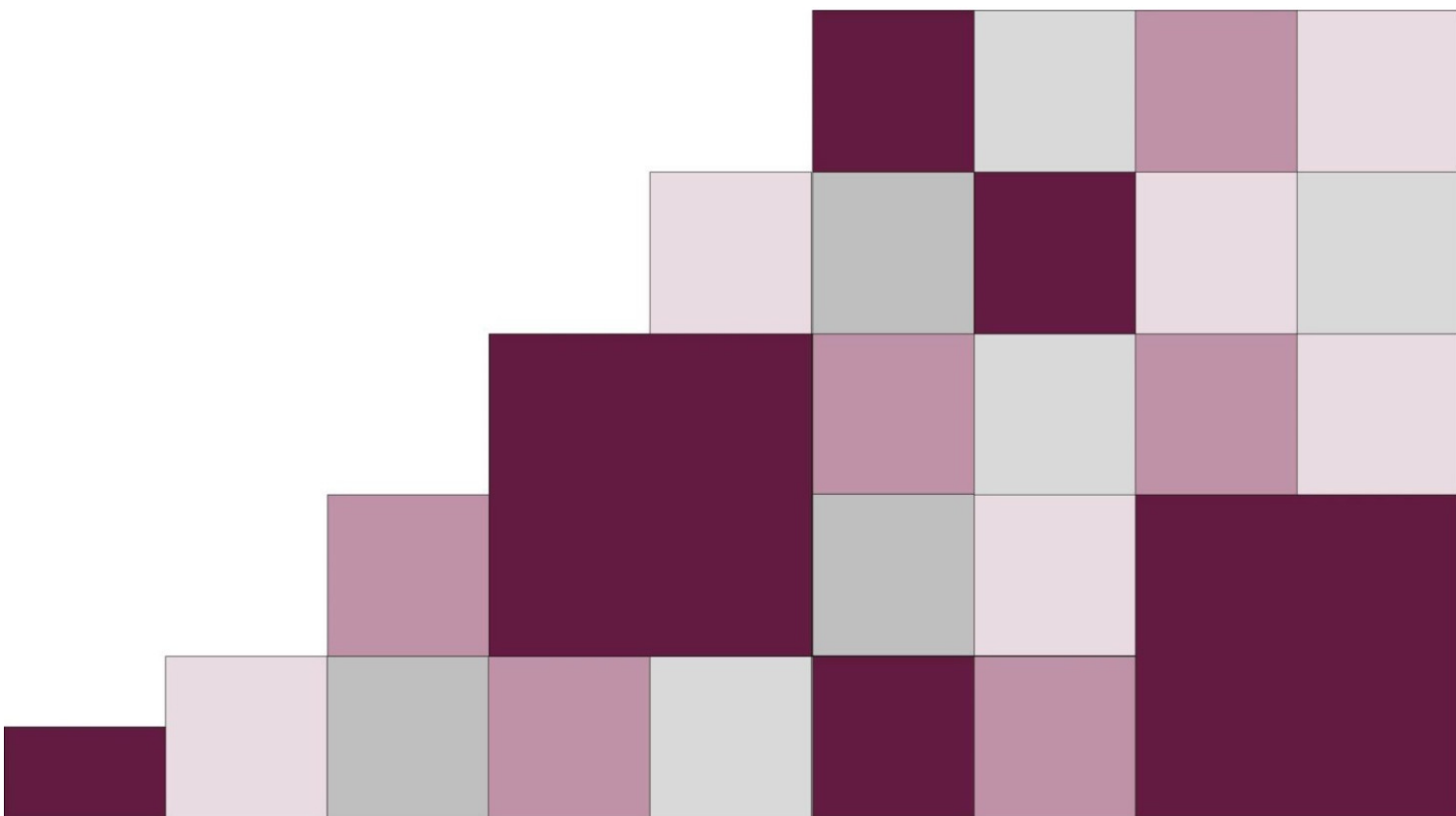


Nottinghamshire State of the Voluntary Sector 2015

*A summary report on social
and economic impact*

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**

Centre for
Regional Economic
and Social Research



Nottinghamshire State of the Voluntary Sector 2015

Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research
Sheffield Hallam University

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Acknowledgements

This research has been commissioned by Nottinghamshire County Council and undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University.

In completing the report we are particularly grateful to members of the Nottinghamshire Voluntary Sector Liaison Group for their support in developing and administering the survey and their help in arranging and facilitating the qualitative elements of the project.

We are also grateful to the many employees and volunteers from across the voluntary sector who took the time to complete a questionnaire or participate in an interview or focus group. We would also like to thank the voluntary sector commissioners who participated in the qualitative research.

Definitions

This report is about the 'state of the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire'. At various times the voluntary sector has been known as the 'voluntary and community sector' or the 'third voluntary sector' whilst the current government talks a lot about 'civil society'. In this report, when we talk about the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire, we mean **voluntary organisations**, **community groups**, the **community work of faith groups**, and those **social enterprises** and **community interest companies** where there is a wider accountability to the public via a board of trustees or membership and all profits will be reinvested in their social purpose.

Foreword

This report has been commissioned by Nottinghamshire County Council to provide, for the first time, a baseline which will support the development and delivery of a joint programme of work with the voluntary and community sector and other partners across the County.

The Community Empowerment and Resilience Programme aims to help build capacity in local communities which will resolve local issues and meet local needs alongside recognising the need to delay or prevent costly intervention from public services. This programme will be delivered in partnership through collaborative working by enabling communities to be more empowered and resilient through the support of a strong and effective community and voluntary sector.

The report provides a wealth of information which shows that Nottinghamshire is home to a large and diverse community and voluntary sector which occupies an important strategic position between policy development, service provision and everyday life. Nottinghamshire is facing an era of unprecedented financial challenges for public services and, by necessity, the way in which budget reductions, rising costs and increased demand for services are tackled requires transformational change.

This report offers a snapshot of the community and voluntary sector in 2015 as a period of increasing change continues. The aim of commissioning this study is to generate wider debate that will help shape a stronger future for the voluntary and community sector in Nottinghamshire. The messages for consideration include the need for the voluntary sector, collectively, to set a clear direction for the future through collaboration to help influence public services and to play a role in the design and delivery of services. The areas for consideration coming out of this report provide a significant opportunity to cement relationships based on mutual trust and respect and to target resources and build community capacity in order to help communities to help themselves.



Cllr Alan Rhodes
Leader Nottinghamshire County
Council



Catherine Burn



Sarah Collis



John O'Brien

Nottinghamshire Together

"This report shows that voluntary activities within communities, often through small organisations, can help create the most change in individual's lives and contribute significantly to improved health and wellbeing. The connection to localities and the importance of prevention is brought out in this report and I am keen to harness the strength of this local intelligence which shows how this level of trust can attract volunteers and local resources"



Cllr Joyce Bosnjak
Deputy Leader & Chair of Health & Well Being
Board

"The messages coming from this report gives all partners a unique opportunity to enable the public and voluntary sectors to collaborate as equals and pursue an interdependent approach to respond to the needs of our communities in Nottinghamshire"



Cllr Glynn Gilfoyle
Chair of Community Safety Committee

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the main findings of research aimed at improving the understanding of the social and economic impact of the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire. The research was commissioned by Nottinghamshire County Council and undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University.

The key objective of the research was to provide a comprehensive overview of the sector in Nottinghamshire in 2015 and a baseline position for the Council to use to help inform their work as they seek to transform service delivery.

The research involved a large postal survey of organisations supporting the people and communities of Nottinghamshire. A web-based survey was also designed and a link to the electronic survey sent out along with the postal questionnaires. This enabled organisations to complete the survey online if they preferred. At least partial responses were received from 200 of the 1263 organisations that were sent a survey questionnaire (154 postal and 46 online): this represents an **overall response rate of 16 per cent**. The web-based survey was also distributed by Nottinghamshire County Council and their partners, reaching organisations not included in the original sample. A further 41 responses were collected via this method, meaning a total of **241 responses were collected overall** during May-July 2015, suggesting a higher overall response rate of about 18 per cent.

When reading the report it is important to acknowledge two key points. First, the results reported are based on the survey responses received. Therefore it is possible that if a different sample of organisations had taken part in the survey different results may have emerged. It is estimated that the results reported are within +/- six percentage points of the true value.

Secondly, in a number of instances the report presents 'grossed up' estimates for all organisations within the area; for example estimates are provided of income, staffing and volunteers. These have been created using the estimated average for micro, small, medium and large organisations within Nottinghamshire who took part in the survey. The averages are then multiplied by the estimated number of organisations within these size bandings within the area. These have then been summed to provide aggregate area-level results.

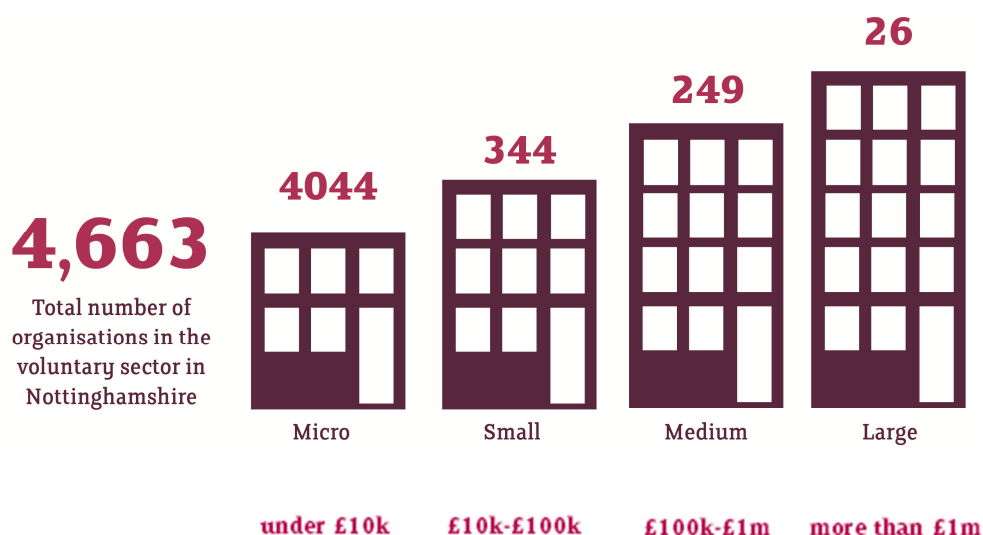
To provide a further depth of understanding in relation to trends emerging from the State of the Sector Survey, **four focus groups and 18 stakeholder interviews** were conducted. The focus groups were held midway through the survey administration and conducted at large events aimed at local front-line voluntary and community organisations. The telephone interviews were undertaken with key VCS stakeholders across Nottinghamshire in June-August 2015.

In this summary report we answer 15 key questions about the sector and its role across Nottinghamshire.

Q1. How many organisations are there?

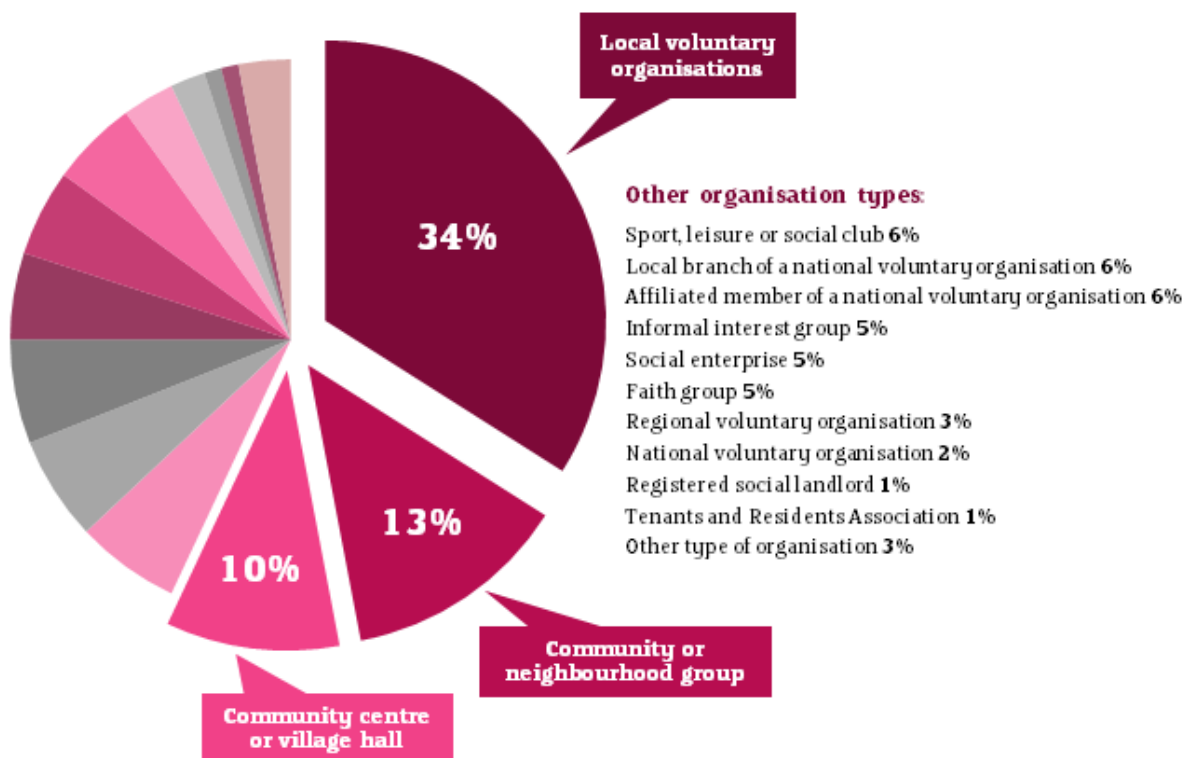
There are a wide range and a large number of organisations operating in Nottinghamshire who are involved in many areas of activity. As such the voluntary sector in the county occupies an important strategic position between policy development, service provision and everyday life

There are an estimated **4,663 organisations** working in the voluntary sector and the vast majority of organisations are micro or small (94 per cent with an income of less than £100,000).



Q2. What types of organisations are there?

Over one-third of organisations surveyed were local voluntary organisations.



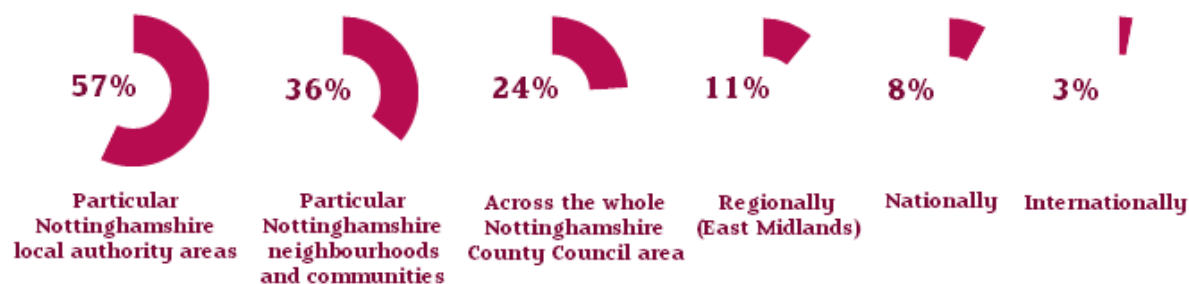
Q3. What does the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire do?

The areas with the greatest proportion of organisations working in them are: health and well-being; education, training and research; sport and leisure; and community development.



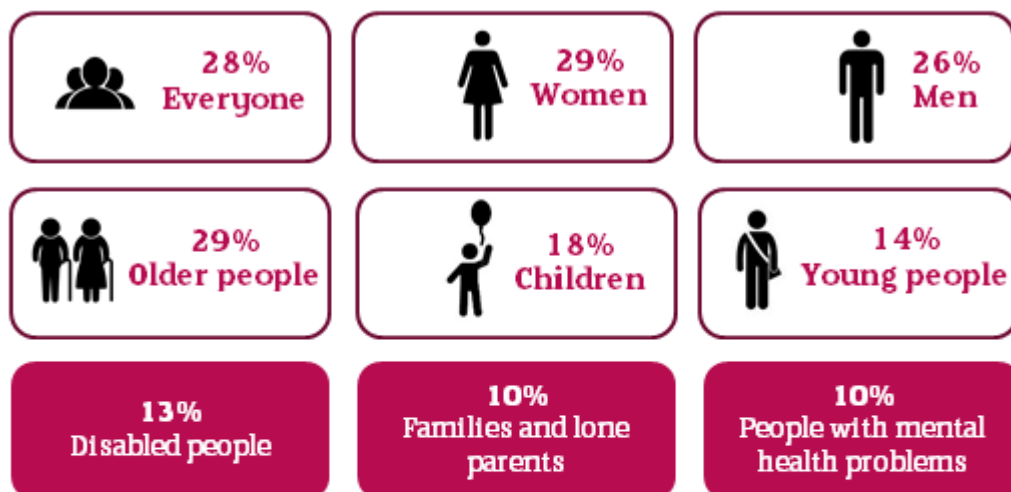
Q4. Where do organisations work?

The voluntary sector works at a range of different geographical levels: both across and beyond Nottinghamshire; the local authority area, and specific communities and neighbourhoods within it, are the main focus for a majority of organisations.



Q5. Who benefits from their work?

The client groups served by the largest proportion of organisations can be broadly characterised as being demographic: gender - women (29 per cent) and men (26 per cent) - and age - older people (29 per cent), children (18 per cent) and young people (14 per cent). Over a quarter of organisations surveyed identified 'everyone' as their main clients, users or beneficiaries.



Client groups served by less than 10% of organisations:

Carers 7%	Homeless people 3%
People with learning disabilities 7%	Offenders, ex-offenders, and their families 2%
Unemployed people 5%	Victims of crime and their families 1%
Faith communities 5%	Refugees and people seeking asylum 1%
Tenants and residents 4%	Looked after children 1%
Black and Minority Ethnic Communities 3%	Other client groups 1%
People with substance misuse/addiction problems 3%	

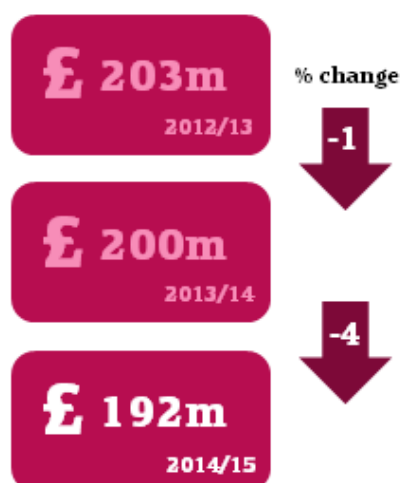
It is estimated that the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire made:

4.5 million interventions *with clients, users or beneficiaries in the past year*

Q6. How much is the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire worth?

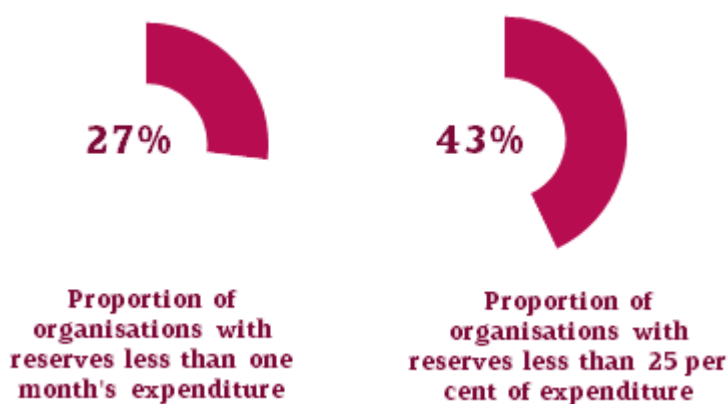
The sector in Nottinghamshire is an important economic player, contributing significantly to Gross Value Added (the value of goods and services produced). But patterns in the amount of money the sector receives, the way organisations are spending their money and the size of their financial reserves suggest the sustainability of many organisations is under threat.

Total income in 2014/15 is estimated to be £192m, a reduction of four per cent compared to 2013/14:



Q7. How sustainable is the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire?

A large proportion of organisations have very little money to fall back on if their funding decreases: just over one quarter of organisations surveyed said they have reserves totalling less than one month of expenditure, and just over two-fifths have insufficient reserves to cover more than three months expenditure.



Q8. How many people work in the voluntary sector?

The voluntary sector is a significant employer. In 2014/15 there was an estimated:

4,800 FTE paid staff employed by the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire

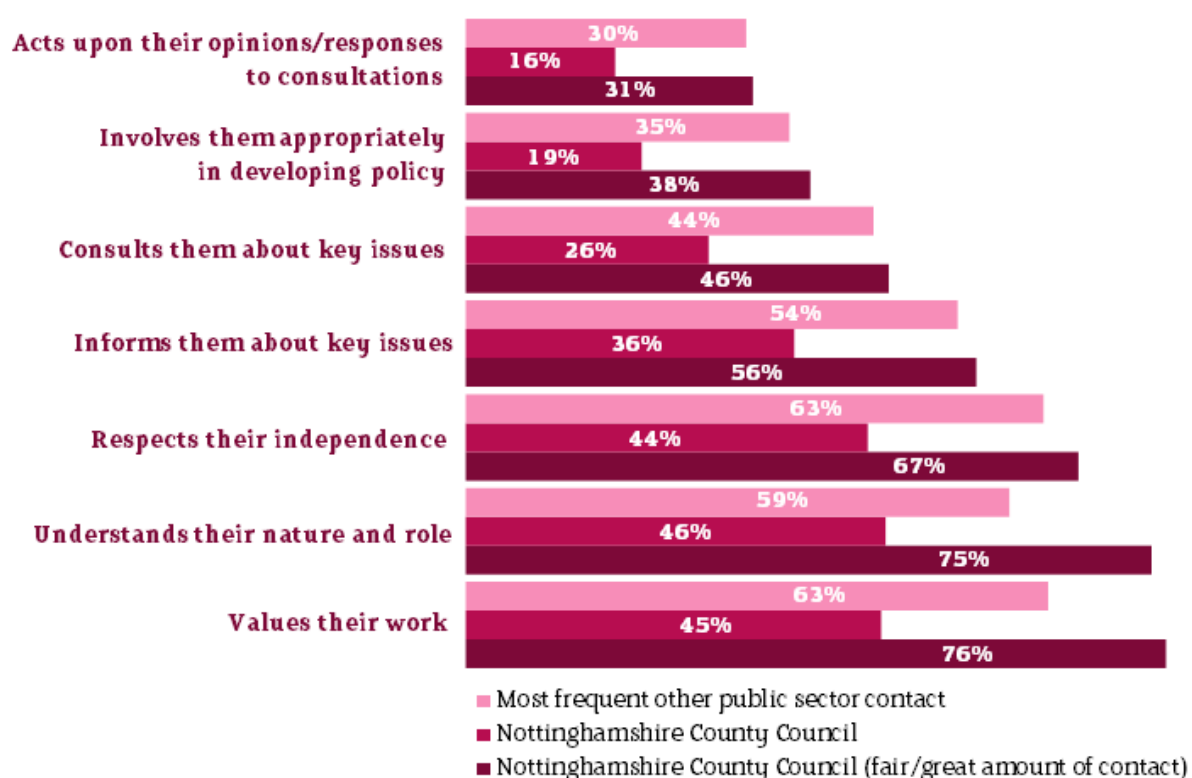
In addition the sector was supported by:



Q9. How good are relationships with public sector bodies?

There is a mixed picture in Nottinghamshire regarding relationships between the voluntary sector and public sector bodies.

While 76 per cent of organisations surveyed, who have a great or fair amount of contact with Nottinghamshire County Council, said they valued their work, only one-third said they act upon their opinions/consultations.



Summary of focus groups and interview findings: Relationships with the public sector

Voluntary organisations reported a 'mixed picture' in terms of their relationships with local sector bodies. Some stakeholders and focus group participants felt they had good relationships with their District Council, County Council and/or local Clinical Commissioning Groups, whereas others found all or some of these groups were difficult to build relationships and/or work with. Participants attributed this variability in relationships down to factors such as:

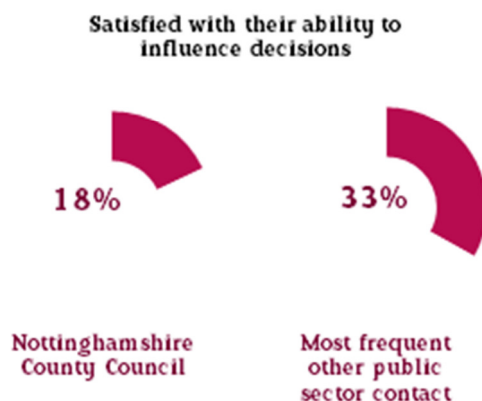
- reduction in public sector spending
- rapidly changing public service delivery landscape
- lack of communication
- personalities of individuals.

These above factors are further compounded by the changing nature of the relationship between the voluntary sector and the state both nationally and locally, as formal support for voluntary organisations, for example through grants, has reduced, while the move towards them contracting to deliver public services has continued apace. Both sectors appear to be grappling to manage the change in dynamic caused by this shift in the policy and funding landscape. Moreover it appears this shift has resulted in scepticism concerning policies and eroded trust between the sector and the state, in turn impacting on relationships. On a positive note, even in the restricted funding environment local public sector bodies have continued to run grant aid programmes although the size and number have diminished from previous years. This was recognised as an important 'lifeline' for some groups.

Q10. To what extent do voluntary organisations feel able to influence public sector bodies?

The ability of voluntary sector organisations to influence public sector bodies appears to vary depending on service delivery area, geography and personality of commissioners.

Almost one-fifth (18 per cent) of organisations surveyed said they were satisfied with their ability to influence Nottinghamshire County Council decisions of relevance to their organisation, while 33 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied with their ability to influence key decisions of their most frequent other public sector contact. The picture in Nottinghamshire is more positive than at the national level. Nationally only 16 per cent were satisfied with their ability to influence local public sector bodies.



Summary of focus groups and interview findings: Influencing public sector organisations

Again voluntary organisations report a 'mixed picture' in terms of their ability to influence local public sector bodies and again this appears to fluctuate depending on the service delivery area, geography and experience/knowledge of commissioners. Positively, voluntary organisations who report success in terms of influencing commissioners find they do so when:

- they approach commissioners with 'solutions' which are focused on addressing priority areas for the different bodies
- are perceived as experts with an understanding of local knowledge and access to hard to reach groups
- there is an existence of 'trust' based upon experience or knowledge of working with voluntary sector to deliver services.

Conversely in some areas voluntary organisations either struggled to establish relationships and communication/relationships or felt interactions were 'top-down' with limited opportunity to feed into priorities and decision making. These experiences do not appear unique from a review of the literature. Here it is found that elements of the whole commissioning cycle can 'get lost' as commissioners grapple with balancing limited funding against local priorities. Moreover prime contractor and sub-contracting arrangements are starting to become more prevalent and by their very nature limit the sector's influence due to strict priorities and complex arrangements. Whilst central government are pushing for the withdrawal of the state from public service delivery in favour of marketization, studies highlight the importance of commissioners staying involved in the design and oversight of these markets. In effect by acting as 'market stewards' commissioners can ensure diversity of providers and the diversity of voices articulating the needs and influencing service design.

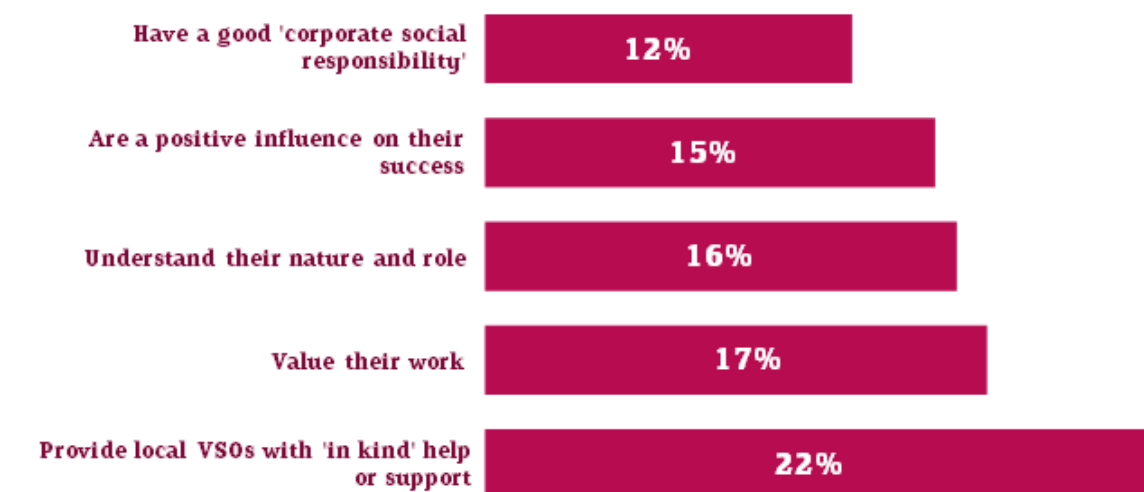
Q11. How well does the voluntary sector work with commercial businesses?

Relationships between the voluntary sector and private sector are at an embryonic state within Nottinghamshire. Engagement with commercial businesses is relatively low. Only...

...11 per cent of organisations surveyed said they have a 'fair' amount of direct dealings with commercial businesses in Nottinghamshire

Just one organisation said they have a great amount of dealings.

Only 17 per cent of organisations surveyed agreed that commercial businesses value their work and 16 per cent agreed that they understood the nature and role of their organisations. However, there is a feeling that this engagement needs to develop.



Summary of focus groups and interview findings: Relationships with the commercial sector

Relationships between the voluntary sector and private sector are at an embryonic state within Nottinghamshire. Some District Councils and private sector boards are running events to encourage relationships between the sector to aid local regeneration, while charitable trusts are running mentoring schemes in which members of the business community act as critical friends in helping voluntary organisations to develop their business skills. Although some voluntary organisations reported never having had contact with any local commercial businesses, others reported receiving donations in the form of money, equipment or materials needed for service delivery (e.g. 7-seater minibus and accompanying insurance, materials to refurbish grounds, food) and/or 'manpower' in the form of volunteers. A handful of voluntary organisations have established relationships with very large commercial businesses in the area – like B&Q, Experian, Laing O'Rourke, and Aeon. Here, these relationships started through contact with the businesses' volunteering schemes run as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes. In these examples it appears that the relationships have in effect grown over time. Where initially, they might have started with the donation of volunteer time, equipment and materials, they matured into relationships where the 'in-kind benefit' received was the private sector sharing its business skills and knowledge around areas such as pricing, trading strategies, branding and marketing. Perceptions from stakeholders are that to make these relationships work both sectors needed to be aware of the benefit, which are not necessarily always financially-driven.

Q12. How well does the voluntary sector work together?

There are elements of collaboration between voluntary organisations in and across Nottinghamshire, however barriers exist to collaboration.

84 per cent of organisations surveyed said they have some direct dealings with other voluntary and community organisations and...

...50 per cent said they have a 'great' or 'fair' amount of direct dealings with other voluntary and community organisations in Nottinghamshire

Summary of focus groups and interview findings: Working with other voluntary and community organisations

There was general agreement across our discussions with key stakeholders that there are elements of collaboration between voluntary organisations in and across Nottinghamshire. Largely, stakeholders interviewed and focus group participants felt that the continued marketization of public services and corresponding programme of public austerity has resulted in the emergence of number of key barriers to voluntary organisations working together:

Specifically that it has:

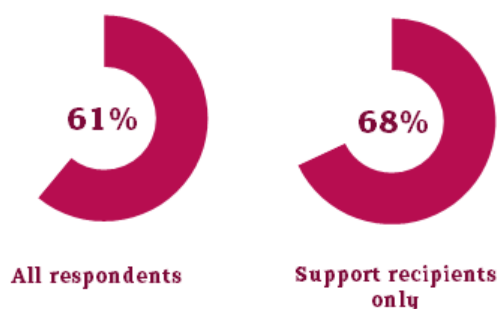
- limited capacity (both external and internal) to engage in collaborations
- contributed to the creations of cultures of silo-working, enhanced competitiveness and mistrust which hamper collaborative efforts
- tendency to favour informal versus formal collaborative arrangements.

Stakeholders felt this could be overcome by organisations having trust in their own organisation's ability as well as other partner organisations, having a clear business model, ensuring the right skills mix on governance boards and staying true to their mission. Two commissioners highlighted that both sectors are prioritising building the contractual elements and forgetting about the relational elements like building a shared purpose. This is particularly salient as this type of relationship-building is time consuming in a rapidly changing landscape.

Q13. How satisfied are organisations with infrastructure support?

There is high satisfaction with the support provided by infrastructure organisations but also concern that this support is being eroded.

Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of support recipients said they were satisfied with the support they received from local support and development organisations across Nottinghamshire:



Summary of focus groups and interview findings: Relationships with infrastructure organisations

Similar to the survey findings voluntary organisations reported satisfaction with their interactions with local infrastructure organisations. Here organisations reported accessing a variety of support services such as volunteering, partnership working, training and development, communications, income generation, financial management and governance. These organisations expressed that the services they accessed had helped them to be successful. Due to the changing landscape in terms of the role and funding of the voluntary sector infrastructure, some key agencies (NAVO) and programmes (CA Plus HR support services) have been withdrawn which has been cited as loss by a number of voluntary organisations. Largely perceptions were that infrastructure organisations have an important role to play in the development of the sector.

Q14. Where should future capacity and capability-building support be targeted?

Summary of focus groups and interview findings: Targeting future capacity and capability-building support

The key areas highlighted to target future capacity and capability-building support were:

- different facets of collaboration or consortia development, such as getting smaller organisations involved in commissioning and the delivery of services, building effective inter-organisational relationships (between both voluntary and public sectors), supporting smaller organisations to get involved in service delivery and developing the skills in the sector to build and maintain SPVs
- ability to demonstrate impact/social outcomes,
- accessing space to be innovative,
- continuing support of the voluntary sector infrastructure.

Q15. What are the key challenges facing the voluntary sector in Nottinghamshire?

Applying for grants and bidding for contracts still remains a difficult task across the sector.

Summary of focus groups and interview findings: The challenge of applying for grants and bidding for contracts

- generally interviewees and focus group participants report that front-line organisations lack most significantly the time and to a lesser extent the internal skills and knowledge, to apply for funding and bid for tenders
- the reduction in public spending over the past few years has resulted in an increase demand for services and limited opportunities to win funding. Many voluntary organisations report being consumed with managing the day-to-day and lacking the space to either respond or think strategically about their funding strategies
- this largely appears to be affecting the smaller organisations although some larger organisations are struggling to maintain funding
- there are some examples of the sector pulling together consortia through which smaller organisations will be capable of bidding for and winning contracts to deliver services.

Along with funding, there were a number of other key challenges facing the sector which emerged from the research.

Summary of focus groups and interview findings: Key challenges facing the sector

Lack of funding, volunteering, communication and VCS infrastructure were reported as the key challenges facing the sector in the future.

- the key challenge emerging from the qualitative work is lack of funding as it impacts on a number of different areas such as organisation capacity, sustainability, collaboration and culture change
- while some of these areas are challenges to the sector, in some cases these are also perceived as possible opportunities in terms of future development. For example surviving previous rounds of cuts to public sector spending was highlighted as demonstrating the toughness and resilience of the sector
- and while spending has been reduced, there are also areas of opportunity emerging for the sector to take on an increasing role in public service delivery through consortia
- arguably, formal collaborations bring their own challenges but there are opportunities to be grasped, as highlighted by the Social Prescribing Pilot in Bassetlaw, two Big Lottery programmes consortia led by Nottingham CVS and the D2N2 Social Inclusion Programme which start this year
- diminishing financial support for capacity building activities and a recent failed merger of three CVSs threatens the sustainability and impact of infrastructure support in Nottinghamshire. Positively some representatives from infrastructure organisations perceive the changing infrastructure landscape as an opportunity to provide a more targeted and lean infrastructure in Nottinghamshire, streamlining service delivery by reducing duplication.

Summary & Conclusions

The aim of this study was to generate a wider debate that will help shape a stronger future for the voluntary and community sector in Nottinghamshire. The final report provides the detail behind the summary and it is recommended that you also read the full study.

The final two chapters of the full report are the Conclusions and a section entitled Strengths, Weaknesses and Areas for Consideration – It is recommended that these are used by all voluntary and community sector stakeholders as a focus for future collaborative working.

The Conclusions

- There are a wide range and a large number of organisations operating in Nottinghamshire who are involved in many areas of activity. As such the voluntary sector in the county occupies an important strategic position between policy development, service provision and everyday life.
- The sector in Nottinghamshire is an important economic player, contributing significantly to GVA. But patterns in the amount of money the sector receives, the way organisations are spending their money, and the size of their financial reserves suggest the sustainability of many organisations is under threat.
- The voluntary sector is a significant employer.
- There is a mixed picture in Nottinghamshire regarding relationships between the voluntary sector and public sector bodies.
- The ability of voluntary sector organisations to influence public sector bodies appears to vary depending on service delivery area, geography and personality of commissioners.
- Relationships between the voluntary sector and private sector are at an embryonic state within Nottinghamshire.
- There are elements of collaboration between voluntary organisations in and across Nottinghamshire however barriers exist to collaboration.
- There is high satisfaction with the support provided by infrastructure organisations but also concern that this support is being eroded.
- Applying for grants and bidding for contracts still remains a difficult task for the sector.
- Lack of funding, volunteering, communication and VCS infrastructure were reported as the key challenges facing the sector in the future.

Contact details

A copy of the full report which also contains the Strengths, Weaknesses and Areas for Consideration can be obtained by contacting Nottinghamshire County Council, Community & Voluntary Sector Team by email cvs.team@nottscc.gov.uk or by telephoning 0115 9772041