



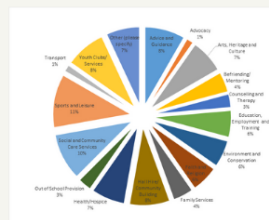
## Community and Voluntary Sector Headlines

Findings from Warrington's 20/21 Community and Voluntary Sector - Recovery and Impact Survey. Providing a comprehensive picture of how the sector responded to the Covid 19 crisis, it's current state, the road to recovery and future expectations.

### SIZE

1045 Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

836 Organisations delivering activities < £10K  
202 Delivering services with an income of £10k to £1 million  
276 Registered Charities based in Warrington



### SCOPE

Diverse provision across all service areas. Highest across sports, leisure and community activity. 29% stated secondary purpose of providing information and advice.

2,157,941 beneficiary interventions.

26% of organisations supported more people from previously under-represented groups.

### TOTAL INCOME

Total income of the sector 20/21 £46.8million

Nearly a third (27%) of respondents have reported an increase in short-term income accessed to support their response to Covid.

52% reported no surplus of funds due to increased demand.



### RESERVES

75% of organisations have less than 1 years reserves.

43% concerned about loss of income & increased demand during 2022

21% not confident they will be operating beyond 2023



### VOLUNTEERS

37,982 people volunteered at least once during the year.

Volunteers gave 113,946 hours per week, valued at £56,289 million (based on National Living Wage £9.50)

70% are involved in delivering services.

63% of organisations are seeking to involve more volunteers in the future.

51% of organisations see a decline in formal volunteering



### EMPLOYEES

963 FT equivalent employed across the sector.

28% furloughed during Covid pandemic.

16% concerned about future staff retention and absence

The survey highlights the impact of the pandemic has been uneven and unpredictable. Many organisations now run fewer services or have lost volunteers whilst others have expanded and accessed additional funds. On a positive note, the sector has been able to innovate and rise to the challenge demonstrating the ability to adapt, scale and pivot services.



## 2021 Review of Warrington's Voluntary and Community Sector

The voluntary and community sector, or third sector in Warrington is incredibly diverse and covers everything from volunteer-led groups, faith organisations, uniformed services and mutual aid groups to social enterprises, local and national charities and everything in between.

For the purpose of this survey, the term Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), has been used in preference to the term 'Third Sector', which is also commonly used across Warrington.

### The Approach

From March 2020 and throughout the Pandemic, WVA carried out a number of surveys to gather real-time data to understand the ongoing impact on Warrington's VCS. This included topics on:

- Recovery & Restart
- Funding & Finance
- Capacity & Response
- Food and Community Engagement
- Volunteer Impact

*These surveys culminated in responses from 131 community groups and 72 from individual volunteers. This has provided additional evidence to support data and estimates within this report.*

Recovery and Impact was the final survey carried out by WVA to explore in more detail the impact that Covid-19 has had on Warrington's VCS, encouraging respondents to describe their respective organisations, service delivery, workforce, volunteers and impact on their work and communities. The results from the Recovery and Impact survey highlight the current state of the sector and the road to recovery and future expectations.

Recovery and Impact was a comprehensive web-based survey undertaken during August and September 2021. A total of 72 fully completed surveys were returned. The survey comprised of 43 questions designed to capture accurate and representative data about the current state of the VCS. To ensure the data was representative of the full breadth and geography of the sector, during September WVA targeted underrepresented groups and locations. The only area omitted from the survey due to non-engagement is organisations based in Stretton and Walton and charities whose primary purpose is the welfare of animals. However, these are accounted for within data sourced via the Charity Commission.

As well as taking data and qualitative comments from WVA surveys, other sources were also used to access wider data, to provide comparisons and ensure data collated was representative of the population of Warrington. The sample size, although smaller than the state of the sector survey carried out in 2017 is comparable to those undertaken across other areas of the country and via NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations).

## Sources used to supplement survey data:

- Register of Charities in England and Wales.
- Ratio of charities to non-charities provided in the National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises undertaken by Ipsos MORI for the Cabinet Office in 2010.
- Research by NCVO and the University of Southampton which found that on average there are 3.66 BTR organisations per 1,000 population.
- Elements of the questionnaire were based on Sheffield Hallam University research undertaken in 2017.
- NCVO study using real-time data the largest national research project of its kind, 'Respond, Recover, Reset'.

## Retrospective: Warrington 2015-2017

A comprehensive survey carried out by WVA with the support of an associate researcher identified that in 2017 the estimated annual turn-over of the community and voluntary sector operating and delivering services in Warrington was estimated at **£37,850,000** per annum. There was an estimated **15,850** volunteers who participated in regular volunteering activity each week, contributing an estimated **172,000** hours of their own time per week. The economic impact of this equates to approx. **£60m per annum**.

It's expected post pandemic data will highlight a real shift change in the increase of informal volunteering opportunities and volunteer demographics.

## National Impact

### NCVO – National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Nearly 700 organisations from across the UK responded to the NCVO study 'Respond, Recover, Reset'. This is the largest real time research project of its kind, a partnership between Nottingham Trent University, NCVO and Sheffield Hallam University.

This ongoing survey is looking at how things are working now that restrictions have been lifted and the impact this is having on organisations, staff, volunteers, services and finances. This national data highlights how charities are adapting and embedding new ways of working or alternatively struggling to manage, and how the changing landscape of the pandemic is affecting the health of the sector. Their research shows that the impact of the pandemic has been "uneven and unpredictable" on voluntary organisations and warns of projected declines in funding from all income sources in the next financial year.

Results from NCVO show that 2 in 5 (39%) charities and community groups are now reporting a deteriorating financial situation. With over half (56%) of organisations expecting demand for services to surge over the coming months as the impact of local lockdowns and rising unemployment filters down to communities. Many organisations are being forced to adapt the way they operate if they are to continue to meet the needs of those they support into the future.

## Local Impact

Data collated by WVA indicates that findings in Warrington very much align with NCVO

Local data indicates that the vast majority of VCS organisations fear Covid will continue to disrupt their plans in the year ahead. We have identified that a number of organisations now deliver fewer services and activities than pre-pandemic, although this is in contrast to others that have expanded and accessed additional funds to deliver new services and run covid safe activities. Others have indicated losing income from trade, rental or membership fees or have suffered through loss of volunteer, especially long serving volunteers.

On a positive note, we have numerous examples of organisations using creativity and ingenuity to innovate in response to the challenges that the pandemic brought. Organisations continually demonstrate their ability to adapt, scale and pivot services, by moving online, increasing diversity and establishing new services to meet demand.

## Size, Number and Sub-Sector of Warrington's VCS

Estimating the number of organisations is a major challenge, as so many are not formally constituted, so do not appear on formal central records and are considered as below the radar (BTR)

In estimating the total number of organisations in Warrington, we used the national Register of Charities in England and Wales. In 2020, there were **276 registered charities** based and delivering services in Warrington. Although, there are a further 156 regional and national charities registered to deliver in Warrington, they haven't been calculated as part of the findings, as they are not located in the borough.

It is estimated that there are 3.66 below-the-radar (BTR) organisations per 1,000 population (Mohan et al. 2010), which indicates that there are approximately 769 BTR organisations in Warrington. This method of calculation is used by Sheffield Hallam University and other infrastructure organisations.

This gives us a **total figure of 1045 VCS organisations** which is consistent with the WVA community database, WVA membership and local knowledge.

When reading this report, it is important to acknowledge two key points. First, the results reported are largely based on the responses received. It is possible that if a different sample of organisations had participated in the surveys different results might have been obtained.

Due to the time of the Recovery and Impact survey being carried out, it was evident that that not all groups were up and running due to the Covid-19 challenges.

We used the NCVO Almanac (2020) categories to calculate the size of the organisations. Classifications were based on the following criteria:

- ▶ Micro – less than £10,000 per annum
- ▶ Small – less than £100,000 per annum
- ▶ Medium – less than £1 million per annum
- ▶ Large – over £1 million per annum

Our analysis taken from the WVA data set, the Charity Commission and Companies House indicates that a total of **836 organisations are classified as micro**. This represents the majority of organisations and reflects the trend in the 2020 NCVO Almanac. A total of **120 organisations were classified as small**, a further **82 organisations were classified as medium**, and **7 were classified as large**. (Although a CIC based in Warrington, Catalyst Choices has not been accounted for in any data related to this report).

This data indicating size and income has enabled us to make calculated estimates when analysing the survey results.

**Over 50% of the respondents are a Charity/CIO registered with the Charity Commission, with only 19% identifying as either a constituted or non-constituted group.** This highlights, that the sample survey is not fully representative of volunteer-led micro-organisations and the full breadth of Warrington's VCS. Therefore, these figures do not include the large amount of unregistered community groups and mutual aid groups who contribute to improving society on a daily basis and who have been especially active in the response to Covid.

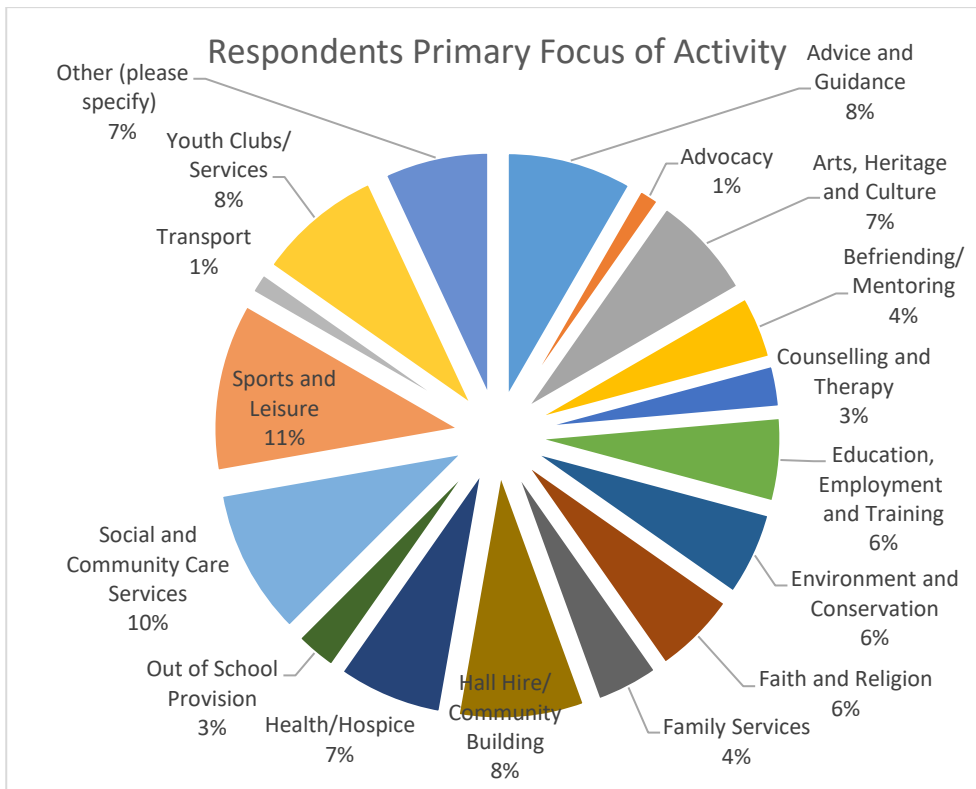
Just 2% of the survey respondents were newly formed in response to Covid. Data, from earlier surveys provided WVA with information that **12 new mutual aid groups** formed in response to the pandemic.

As afore mentioned the survey respondents represented all areas of the borough, other than Stretton and Walton

**25% stated they were delivering services across all of Warrington**

**14% were based in the Town Centre**

**18% based within the Central Wards of Warrington**



The survey had good representation from across all sectors. When asked what their sole primary purpose, there was a slightly higher percentage for sports and leisure and social and community services. When asked about **secondary purpose 29% of groups identified as providing information and advice.**

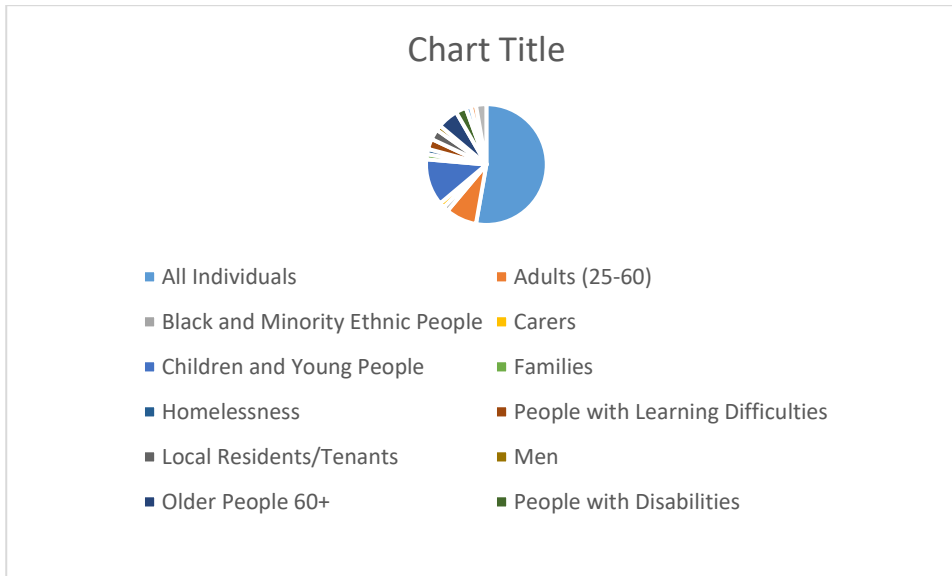
We would like to say a huge **THANK YOU** to all the volunteers that have signed up with us and have been supporting Warrington through the COVID-19 crisis.  
Cheers to the Volunteers!

#heartwva #volunteers #thankyou #warrington See less





## Who benefits from the services and activities carried out by the sector?



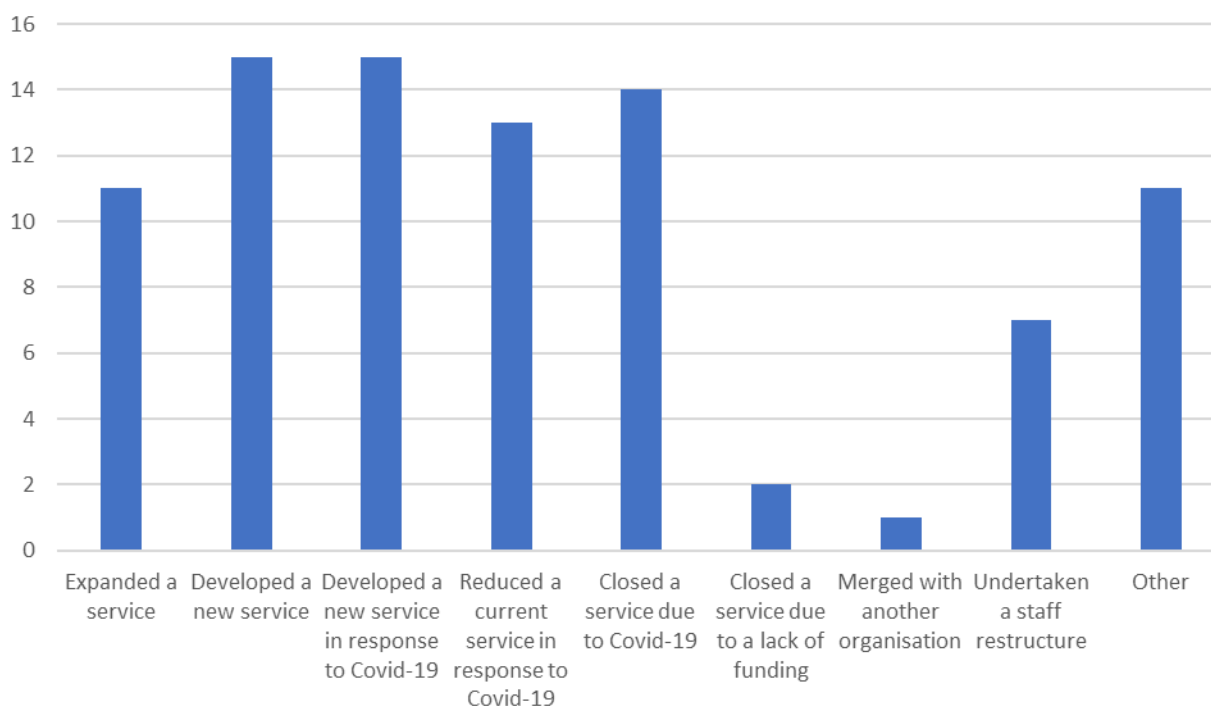
The survey highlighted that **61% of respondents stated they are open to all residents**. However, organisations providing support for asylum seekers, people with drug and alcohol issues and LGBTQ support did not engage in the survey.

64% of respondents are already or are actively working towards engaging with under-represented and diverse communities.

An estimated 77 organisations closed their doors completely, not engaging via social media etc. These will be predominantly micro groups that closed. The reason stated for this was no members due to shielding, no venue to operate from, limited digital skills and lack of volunteers.

Using the survey respondents' data as a representation of the overall 1045 VCS organisations and taking into account the numbers of micro, small, medium and large organisations we can confidently estimate that **2,157,911 people accessed VCS services** over the most recent 12-month period. Highlighting, the significant role the sector has to play in addressing health inequalities and supporting the residents of Warrington.

## Have there been any major changes to your organisation or the delivery of your services over the last 12 months?



Many VCS organisations have commented on the need to change the way they operate as a result of the pandemic. The highest proportion of respondents **57% stated that they had developed new services** either in response to Covid or otherwise. A further **21% of respondents also expanded a current service** or activity. Comments within 'other' outlines a number of partnership projects which developed during the year, with **32% of respondents working in partnership** with other organisation during the past 12 months. The data suggest that this is predominately the medium to large VCS organisations working with the public sector, health, housing or national providers.

The sector has innovatively and creatively tried to fill the gap created by social distancing through a variety of digital approaches including online helplines and remote support groups as well as accessing grants for PPE and to resource changes to service delivery.

The survey overwhelmingly highlights that while the pandemic has put the sector under immense pressure, individual organisations' experiences vary widely – not all VCS organisations have been able to respond positively, with almost **50% of respondents reducing their range of services since March 2020**.



## Workforce

It has not been fully possible to extrapolate the data to ascertain the actual number of people employed within the voluntary sector from the sample set, however a good estimate is **963 FTE employees**. This data is consistent with NCVO findings, which report a 20% increase over 6 years. In 2015 Warrington's VCS reported 796 FTE employees

From the respondents with employees **28% reported that they furloughed staff** during the pandemic.

Of the respondents with employees, **32% expect staffing levels to increase**. The survey results didn't indicate the reason for this increase, potentially it relates to an expected increase in demand on services as the pandemic ends. Although inconsistent with other findings within this report, this increase does correlate with national data.

Interestingly, a significant number were concerned over future service delivery due to employee absence, although reasons are not highlighted, it can be assumed that the health and wellbeing of staff is a growing concern for the sector, as well as short term funding making recruitment more difficult.

## Volunteers

Although volunteering seems like a simple concept, there are numerous definitions. The Warrington Compact sets out the definition as:

*'Volunteering is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.'*

This definition is a broad one, and would include not only formal volunteering through clubs or organisations, but also informal volunteering, often carried out on a more individual basis.

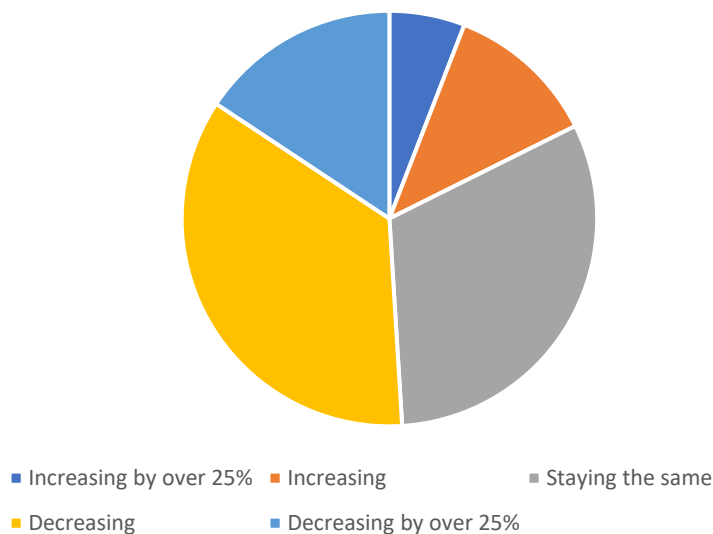
The initial outbreak of the pandemic witnessed an overwhelming response from individuals and communities to support those most vulnerable. By early April 2020, 1000s of individuals signed up to give their time and started undertaking tasks such as collecting prescriptions and food provisions, driving patients to appointments, or making regular phone calls to isolated members of the community. Alongside this, a number of mutual aid volunteer-led groups were formed at a street level across the borough, as friends, families and neighbours came together to 'leave no one behind'.

**According to NCVO** levels of formal volunteering remained largely unchanged between 2015 and 2019, but fell dramatically during the pandemic. More than a quarter of the population were regularly involved in informal ways of volunteering and about half did so at least once in 2020/21.

Utilising the Recovery and Impact survey data, WVA volunteer impact data and the National Civil Society Almanac we can estimate that approximately **37,982 people across Warrington were involved in volunteering** activity more than once during the year. This provides us with an estimate that volunteers gave **113,946 hours per week**, which is **valued at £56,289 million** (based on National Living Wage £9.50).

The survey also highlighted that:

- 63% of organisations are seeking to involve more volunteers in the future.
- 51% of organisations expect to see a decline in formal volunteering



When looking at formal and regular volunteering the data highlights that 73% of Warrington’s VCS use word of mouth to recruit volunteers, this is followed closely by support from WVA and service users becoming volunteers. Moreover, 31% suggested that it can be difficult to recruit volunteers with the necessary skills and qualities.

Looking at the breakdown of formal volunteer roles reveals that:

- 70 % are involved in delivering services
- 11% fundraising
- 19% are in administration, coordination and leadership roles, including trustees, directors and management committee.

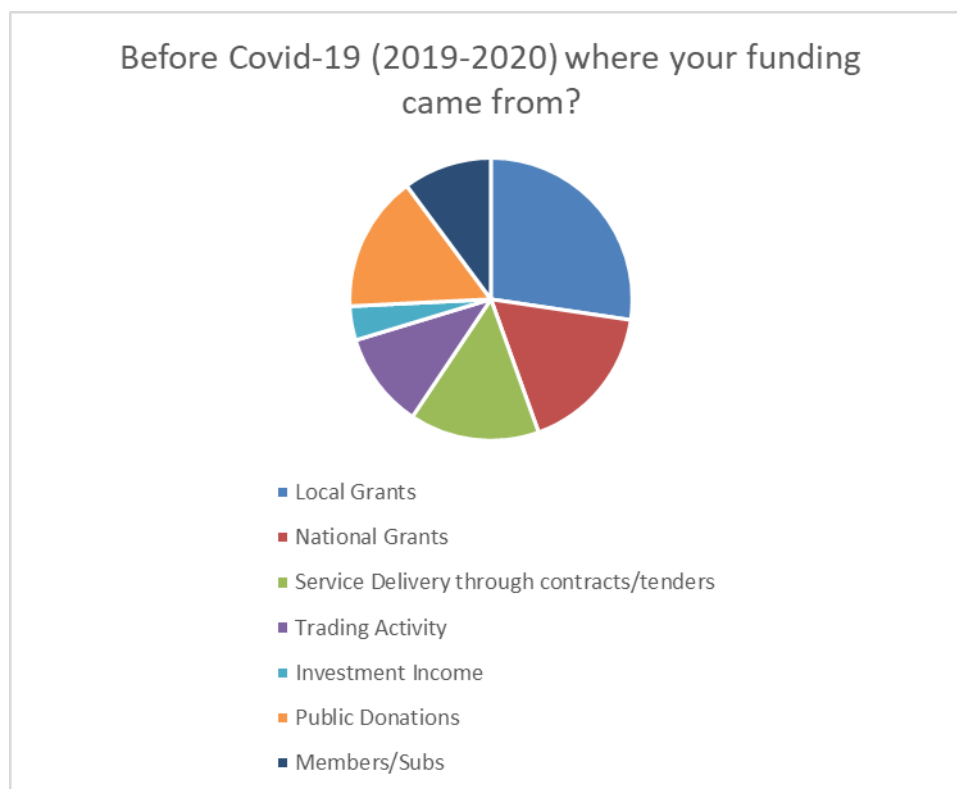
Information from the Charities Commission highlights that the number of Trustees operating solely in Warrington is 1,382.

The survey highlighted **38% of respondents are seeking to recruit new Trustees or Management Committee members**, the sample survey data highlights financial expertise is most in need.

Evidence both locally and nationally highlights that although numbers of formal volunteers decreased, a significant increase in individuals seeking to get involved in informal ad-hoc volunteering. Volunteers providing a helping hand for neighbours and in the community significantly increased in response to the pandemic.

## Funding and Finance

The survey and research data provides a calculated estimate that **VCS income is £46,765,693 million.**

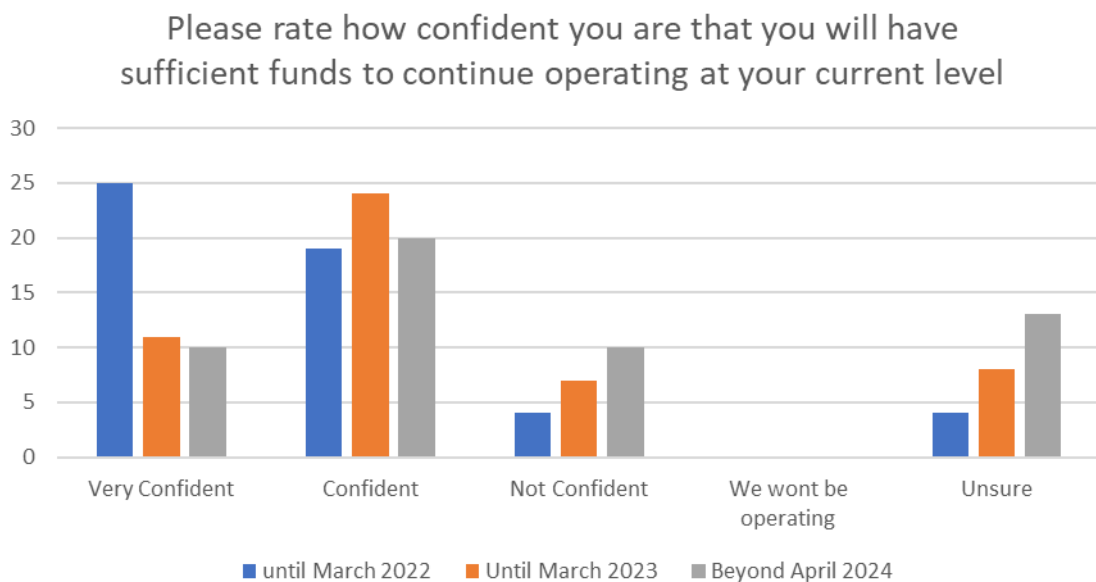


Pre-Covid, Warrington's VCS accessed funds through a number of ways from national grant funding and contracts to membership subs and income generation. **Just over 60% accessed local grants pre-Covid.** What this survey doesn't highlight is detailed information on actual funders. The data also suggests medium to large size organisations are accessing funds from various sources, whilst small and micro-organisations are solely reliant on subs. A number of smaller VCS organisations noted accessing Covid related funds to adapt or continue their activities.

The survey respondents were asked to project changes to their future income streams compared with the period before the pandemic. **27% of respondents reported an increase in total income since the previous year. In contrast, a further 29% said income had dropped.** One third of respondents expect finances to stay the same, but stated this doesn't compensate for increased demand and inflation costs.

Overall grant income is expected to slightly decline, although further declines were commented on in relation to service delivery contracts, with an expectation of public funding cuts, increased demand and inflationary costs.

The survey and local intelligence, highlights that while many organisations have been able to build up reserves pre-covid, approximately half of the organisations are using them to cover day to day costs, this is worrying not just for the groups involved, but for the lives and communities that they serve.



As per national figures organisations have suggested that they expect income from trading activity to drop by more than 15% next year. No survey respondents reported on closing their service, which is more positive than national findings. As afore mentioned, the extent of this impact varies a lot depending on the size and type of organisation. The survey results indicate that organisations are concerned that their income will still be impacted in the short-term due capacity to manage demand, staffing levels, volunteer retention, funding, inability to trade and further adaptation, meaning that many organisations will still be vulnerable and struggle to cope in the next financial year.

## Conclusions

The data and evidence in this report clearly demonstrates that the VCS makes a significant contribution to the borough of Warrington. As part of their day-to-day work VCS organisations are addressing inequalities and helping to improve the health and wellbeing of local people, whilst helping to reduce the strain on the public purse in the longer term.

The data highlights that the impact on Warrington's VCS is similar to that across the country in terms of being uneven. However, it does appear to be slightly more optimistic in Warrington when looking at financial sustainability and the ability to react quickly to create new opportunities to address local need. Many organisations have adapted their way of working, they have innovated and notably risen to the challenge, demonstrating the sector's ability to be flexible, to coordinate and galvanise community assets, and to scale and pivot services on a limited budget. This has been an unprecedented period, one in which we need to learn from and continue such innovative practice as well as encouraging equal partnerships, promoting diversity and to continue enabling the people of Warrington to take ownership of their community.

The report highlights some significant concerns associated to volunteer recruitment and volunteer retention for formal and regular volunteering. Utilising traditional methods of recruitment such as word of mouth is good but not the most effective way of attracting new people along with a broad range of skills. A high proportion of VCS organisations purported concerns of their volunteers leaving, in particular older volunteers, for health reasons or merely to spend more time with family and take time out for themselves.

This report also highlights that despite opportunities for the future, the sector moves forward with trepidation. The report evidences VCS organisations using charity reserves to deliver services, increased concern over anticipated future funding cuts, competition for grants and fewer opportunities to income generate. All this alongside an increased demand for services and inflationary increases. This will inevitably reduce the sectors' ability to bear risk, to respond to demand and adapt to further change and eventually have a significant effect on local people and communities.

## Recommendations

- **Further Research**

To Undertake a wider more comprehensive survey in 2022. This will help to fully understand the medium and long-term impact of the pandemic on the VCS. This research should be undertaken through a formal academic partner, working on a wider footprint across Cheshire and Merseyside, with the remit to be able to drill down into each respective place.

- **Build on Partnerships**

Partnership working is a strength of the VCS and this was even more evident during the pandemic. The past 18 months have highlighted the many ways that the VCS, local authority, NHS and health providers can work effectively together and develop innovative solutions at speed. This isn't the time to revert back to being risk adverse, to working in silo's and engaging with the VCS as an afterthought. Now is the time to draw on the knowledge and expertise of the sector to help address inequalities and ensure that the VCS is an equal partner of future collaborations and are fully involved in the co-design of services from the onset.

- **Intelligent Commissioning**

The VCS needs support to rebuild reserves, diversify income streams, and increase fundraising capacity. Over the past 18 months we have seen the benefits of a flexible and agile approach taken by grant makers (local and national) and commissioners. Many funders removed restrictions on spending and enabled variations to contact delivery and adaptations of services allowing funding to be channelled to where it was needed. This meant that the VCS could target resources appropriately and respond to rapidly changing needs within communities. This open dialogue needs to continue to initiate solutions to provide the best outcomes for residents and communities, not what comes in at the best price.

- **Support to Build Resilient Communities**

Additional support is required for micro-organisations to help them build back their activities to increase participation and membership, enabling people to access support as well as building on the community resilience witnessed through the pandemic.

- **Quality Assurance and Training**

Almost one third of VCS organisations reported on their secondary purpose being the provision of providing information and advice, the survey didn't provide a detailed analysis, which would have highlighted the type and quality of information and advice provided. Although this advice will predominantly be centred around respective services it's important that organisations have access to up-to-date information, access to training to provide quality advice, to understand safeguarding and liabilities and have knowledge of effective referral pathways if required.



- **Wellbeing in the Workplace**

It's clear from the pandemic that we really need to support and retain our paid and voluntary VCS workforce. Staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to respond to a soaring demand for services, often against a backdrop of uncertain funding. Workforce wellbeing and sustainability have been highlighted as a concern, we need to look at opportunities to share good practice, training and leadership systems. The VCS needs support and resources to prioritise wellbeing in the workplace for both staff and volunteers if it is to continue meeting current demand effectively. This could be achieved through a shared pool of resources across the VCS and public sector.

- **Vision for Volunteering**

Maintaining volunteer engagement may prove to be a challenge for the sector, with a recorded decrease in the number of volunteers engaging in traditional opportunities and older volunteers getting less involved. We need to harness the civic-mindedness and social responsibility of individuals to help others. As per the rest of the UK, residents of Warrington overwhelmingly responded to the crisis, it just happened, with minimal paperwork or bureaucracy, volunteering needs to be accessible. We need to learn from this flexible approach but still maintain quality standards and safeguarding protocols. A new approach is required to recruit and retain new volunteers who are more likely wanting to volunteer less hours, want more flexibility and have less responsibility. We need to take advantage and harness this new movement of informal volunteers. However, this needs resourcing through infrastructure and within individual organisations, this could be managed through IT systems, volunteer recruitment training and through a shared approach to publicise and volunteering more widely. Recruiting new volunteers with the enthusiasm and skills required to ensure the sustainability of the sector and a future vision for volunteering across Warrington. There are also opportunities for the VCS, NHS and the local authority to work together to enhance this offer through a shared pool of volunteers, 'volunteers for the borough'.

- **Good Governance**

To continue to make an impact for their beneficiaries into the future, and retain legitimacy among the communities they serve, Trustees and Committee members need to be smart, agile and creative. A diverse board can bolster an organisations resilience and give it the best chance of fulfilling its purposes into the future. Additional support and training is required to engage, diversify recruit and retain people with the skills and attributes to take on the leadership of individual organistaions.

- **Value the VCS**

In order to recover from the impacts of Covid, the work of the sector needs to be more widely promoted and valued by the public sector, education, health, the private sector and by local people. It's often commented on that the VCS doesn't promote itself well enough, the fact is the sector is just too busy getting on with it. We all need to recognise the important contribution the VCS makes towards addressing the social determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age and the key role the sector has if we are going to achieve sustainable health equity and build back fairer.