



SUFFOLK
Community
Foundation

STATE OF THE SECTOR REPORT ON THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY, FAITH AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR IN SUFFOLK

March, 2026

1. About Us

Community Action Suffolk (CAS) is the 'go to' support organisation for Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations in Suffolk. We exist to ensure the sector is supported, safe and sustainable through the four functions of local infrastructure – Leadership & Advocacy, Partnerships & Collaboration, Capacity Building, and Voluntary & Community Action. We provide (or signpost) whatever is needed behind the scenes to enable this, so the sector can concentrate on doing what it does best – making Suffolk an incredible place in which to live and work.

We work closely with partners from the statutory sector, including [Suffolk County Council](#), [Borough and District Councils](#), [Town and Parish Councils](#), [Health](#) and [Police](#). We help our partners communicate and work more effectively with VCFSE sector organisations, communities, and volunteers in Suffolk. All these parties play a vital part in improving the lives of people in Suffolk. This is recognised by many statutory partners, as working with such diverse community groups can be difficult for large statutory organisations. Community Action Suffolk is positioned to support our partners and open communication channels.

Suffolk Community Foundation was established in 2005, is a registered charity and part of a national family of 47 community foundations across the UK. We work closely with key stakeholders to increase understanding of need and raise essential funds to support local charities and community groups.

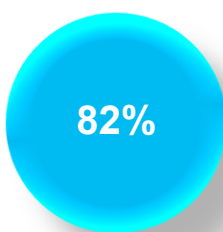
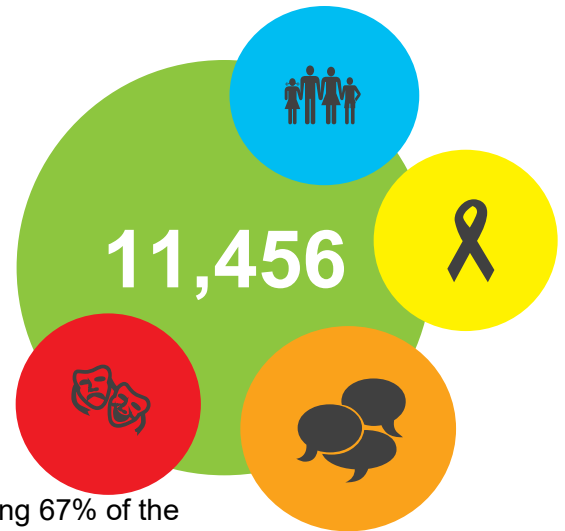
We provide grants to help charities and community organisations who are supporting local people facing disadvantage, to improve their lives. We do this by working with individuals, families, businesses, professional advisors, and charitable trusts, helping them to fund local groups that are tackling the issues they care about most.

2. An Overview of the Data

NAVCA (the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) have estimated that in England there could be 335,000 unregistered voluntary and community groups, in addition to 132,000 registered charities and 30,000 social enterprises.

If these figures are converted to percentages, it means that 27% of the voluntary sector is made up of registered charities, 6% is made up of social enterprises, so the remaining 67% of the sector is made up of unregistered (under the radar voluntary groups).

Looking at Suffolk in particular, using these percentages when there are 2,935 Registered Charities in Suffolk and 683 CICs plus 66 Registered Societies (749 social enterprises), this would indicate a very rough approximation of 7,772 under the radar groups in communities across the county. Therefore, there are an estimated 11,456 VCFSE organisations in Suffolk.



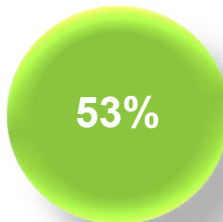
Organisation Size

82% of registered charities in Suffolk are small or micro sized with an income of less than £50,000



Economic Value

The estimated economic impact of volunteering in Suffolk for volunteers within registered charities alone is £87,550,168



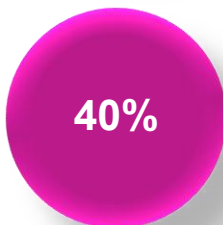
Staff

53% of responding VCFSE organisations based in Suffolk had paid staff



Volunteers

There were 43,514 volunteers supporting registered charities in Suffolk, this does not include the volunteers that support other organisation types



Finances

40% of charities registered in Suffolk reported a level of expenditure greater than income on their last annual return to the Charity Commission



Trustees

There are 15,725 Trustees of Charities registered with the Charity Commission within Suffolk

3. Methodology

This is our second annual survey of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector, combining the responses of voices from the sector across Suffolk about their organisations and how they are faring with the current economic, social and political climate, alongside the accessible data that is available publicly.

Community Action Suffolk (CAS) and the Suffolk Community Foundation (SCF) circulated a survey to the VCFSE Sector during December 2025 and February 2026. The survey received 366 responses from 358 VCFSE organisations that work across Suffolk. Of these 280 completed the full questionnaire. For clarification, this report has, for the quantitative and qualitative analysis, merged those responses that were received twice from the same organisation, providing a sample of 358 organisations.

The response rate for this survey has seen an increase on that received last year. This year's response rate was felt to be reliable, and representative of the sector and a typical rate compared to that expected according to the combined experience and knowledge of CAS and SCF.

Supplementary data was accessed using the Charity Commission for England and Wales, and the equivalent registers in Scotland and Northern Ireland register and for national comparisons, references are made to the NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac 2024. Other public data about the sector was accessed using Companies House Community Interest Company (CIC) registrations, HMRC Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC) registrations, FCA Mutuals Public Register and Diocesan and other faith records sourced through desk top research.

4. Profile

How big is the 'Sector'?

The below charts represent information gathered about all the registered charities in England and Wales. Information is updated daily.

How many charities



■	Main charities	171,151
■	Linked charities	13,837
Total		184,988

People



921,324 Trustee(s)

6,590,253
Volunteer(s)

Source: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/sector-data/sector-overview>
Accessed 11/02/2026

Ascertaining the size of the voluntary sector is difficult as there is no one source of this information. For the purposes of this report, the variety of voluntary sector organisations will be listed, however, the most robust database to use for comparisons is that of the Charity Commission, so, much of the comparison will be conducted using the data provided from registered charities, which are generally the largest number of organisation type within the voluntary sector at present. The Charity Commission lists 3,089 registered charities that have specified Suffolk in their area of operation. 70 of these have not been allocated to a parliamentary constituency because they have not given a postcode on their charity commission registration, but whether they are in Suffolk has been ascertained manually from the rest of their addresses. Of these 2458 Charities are both registered and specify that they work in Suffolk.

[Find that Charity](#) combines data from a number of different [data sources](#) published by official regulators of organisations. The site lists:

- 2935 Registered Charities in Suffolk that are active.
- 683 active Community Interest Companies (CICs) in Suffolk.
- 66 active Registered Societies in Suffolk (excluding residents' societies).
- 125 active Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs).

There are 598 faith organisations throughout the county that also work for the benefit of the community, these numbers are taken from desktop research of their various websites. It should be noted that some of these are also registered charities. These include:

- 443 Church of England Churches registered with the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, plus those registered with the Diocese of Norwich that are within the Suffolk boundary.
- 56 Baptist Churches
- 53 Methodist Churches
- 24 United Reformed Churches
- 34 Catholic Churches
- 10 Congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses
- 3 Plymouth Brethren
- 3 Mormon Churches
- 7 Muslim Mosques
- 1 Hindu Samaj
- 2 Sikh Gurdwaras
- 1 Buddhist Centre

Some of the registered charities will also have trading arms that generate surpluses to support the charity. These trading arm organisations will be registered with Companies House, though it is a little trickier to count those as they do not have their own category within Companies House. They are most likely to be registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee or Shares, but there are a lot of commercial businesses also registered as this. Therefore, finding reliable methods of counting these trading arms and subsidiaries is a work in progress for future reports.

The most recent NCVO Almanac 2024 points out similar observations, in that, recent years have seen the rise of 'hybrid' organisations that share the characteristics of more than one sector. For example, social enterprises (businesses with social objectives that reinvest the money they make back into their business or the local community) can have multiple registrations including:

- community interest companies
- limited liability companies
- charities.

A charity may also have a trading arm registered as a social enterprise.¹

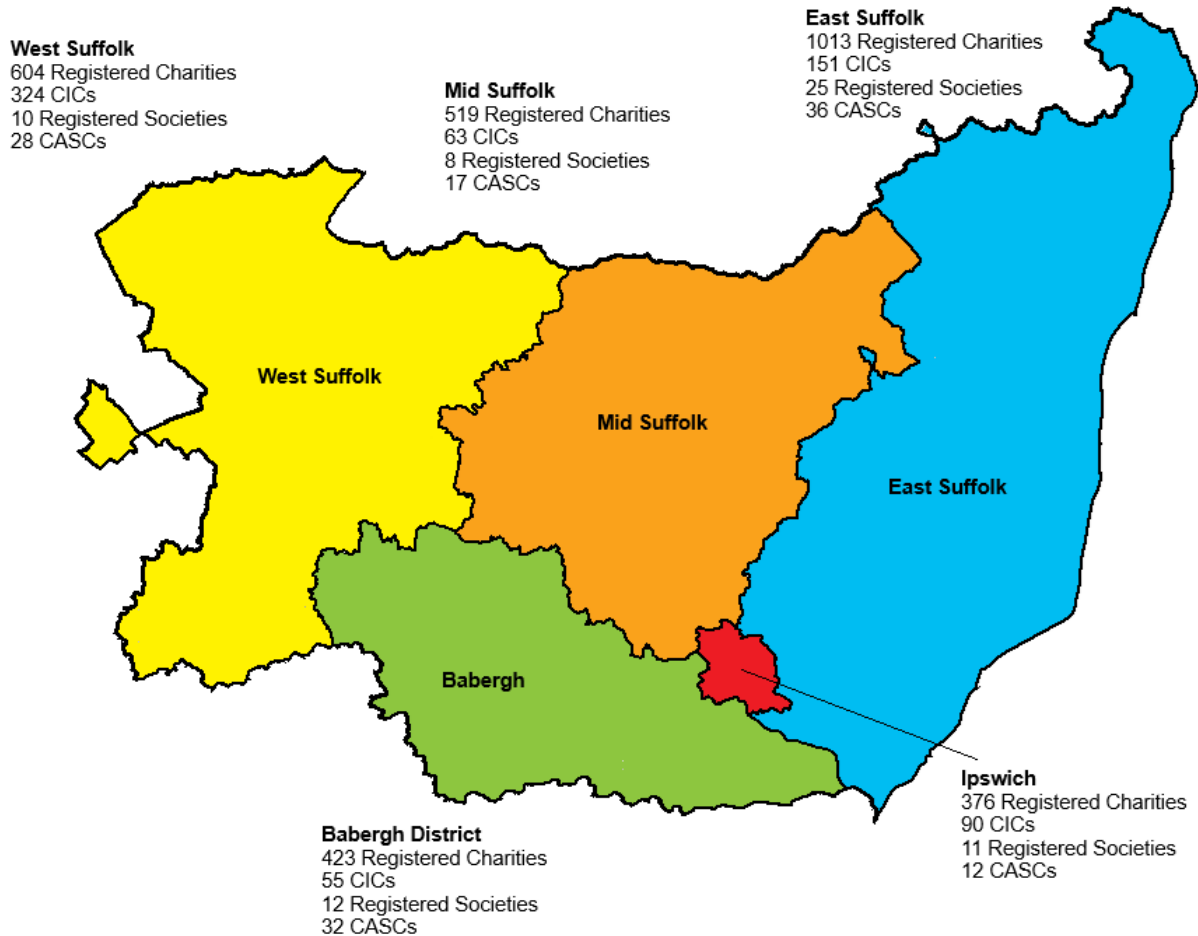
NAVCA in its [Unseen but essential: what is the voluntary sector microbiome?](https://www.navca.org.uk/news/unseen-but-essential-what-is-the-voluntary-sector-microbiome)² in 2025 stated that the voluntary sector microbiome is the small-scale voluntary organisations delivering community activities such as hobby groups, local gardening clubs [and] coffee mornings – and there are lots of them. In partnership with the University of Exeter, [they] have estimated that in England there could be 335,000 unregistered voluntary and community groups, in addition to 132,000 registered charities and 30,000 social enterprises. If we convert these figures to percentages, it means that 27% of the voluntary sector is made up of registered charities and 6% social enterprises, so the remaining 67% of the sector is made up of unregistered (under the radar voluntary groups).

If we pro-rata this down to look at an estimation for Suffolk using these percentages, we can estimate that there are approximately 7,772 below the radar groups that are unregistered across the county, and an approximate total of 11,456 VCFSE Groups and organisations across Suffolk.

¹ <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2024/profile/>

² <https://www.navca.org.uk/news/unseen-but-essential-what-is-the-voluntary-sector-microbiome>

Where are all these organisations?



Only the registered organisations have been shown above, no attempt has been made to breakdown the distribution by district of the 'under the radar' groups.

Organisation size

In their sector overview, the Charity Commission groups charities by their size, using income bands in their sector overview section. By grouping charities in this way, they say, we can get an overview of how resources are distributed within the sector and achieve better comparisons.

Charities by income band - 04 March 2026

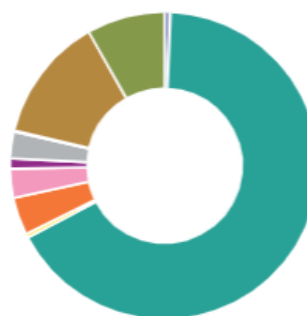
This page groups charities by their size, using income bands. By grouping charities in this way we can get an overview of how resources are distributed within the sector and achieve better comparisons.

[Tell us what you think about this service.](#)

Charities



Gross income



Income Band	Charities	Total gross income	Total expenditure
£0 to £5k	52,027	£58,963,963	£165,743,405
£5k to £10k	16,793	£123,953,373	£154,959,301
£10k to £25k	27,022	£448,752,206	£529,935,994
£25k to £50k	16,922	£608,336,999	£655,962,278
£50k to £100k	15,575	£1,120,715,137	£1,168,931,120
£100k to £250k	18,578	£2,978,700,297	£3,001,292,226
£250k to £500k	9,104	£3,210,860,503	£3,211,067,251
£500k to £1m	5,898	£4,190,917,260	£4,093,110,258
£1m to £5m	6,327	£13,909,884,684	£13,768,845,844
£5m to £10m	1,219	£8,647,168,870	£8,468,459,283
Over £10m	1,696	£70,516,403,476	£70,557,229,249
Total	171,161	£105,814,656,768	£105,775,536,209

[Charities by income band](#) – accessed 04 March 2026

Registered Charities in England and Wales

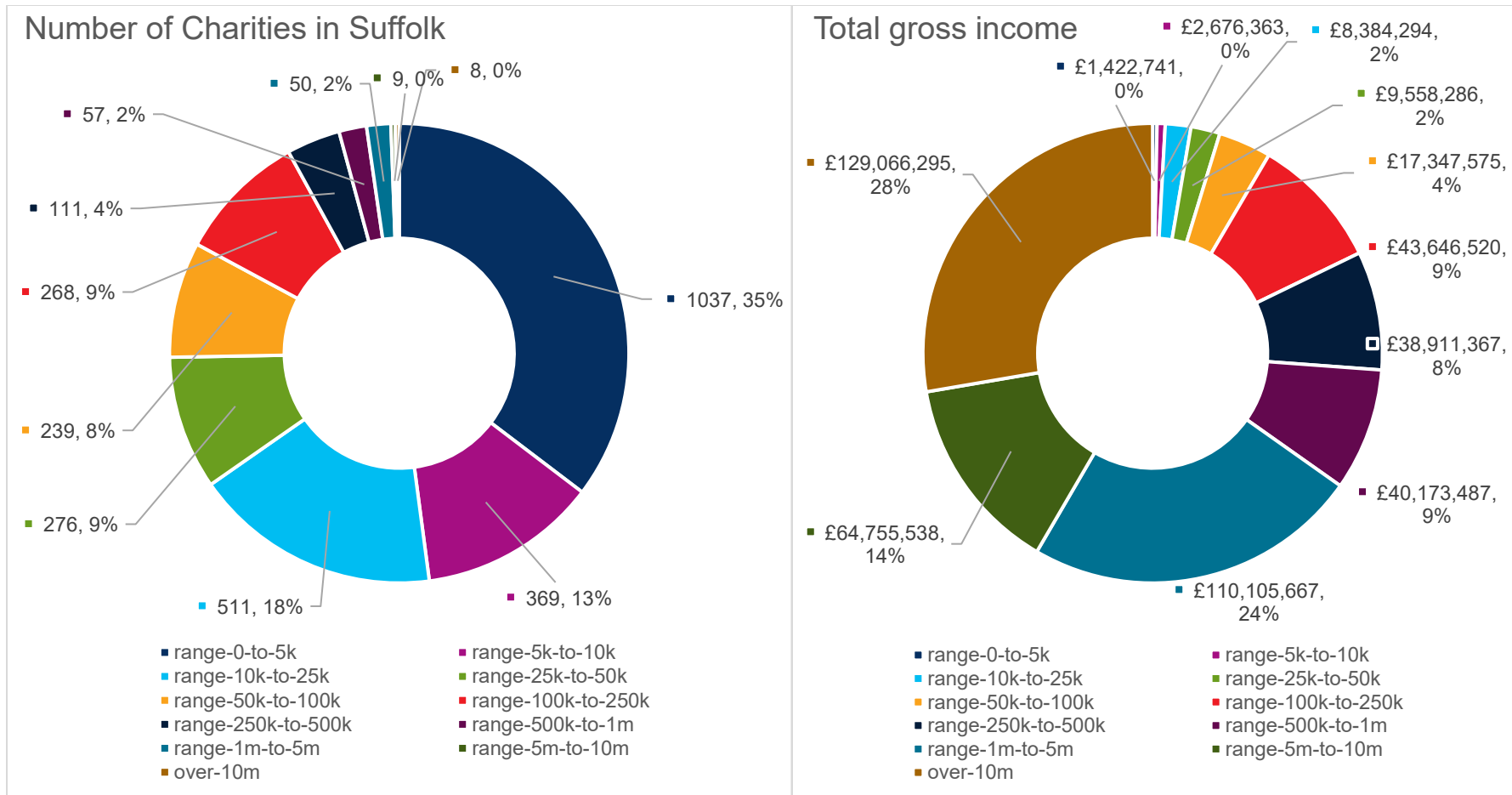
Income band	Number of Charities	Total gross income	Total gross expenditure	% of Charities	Trustees	Employees	Volunteers
range-0-to-5k	52052	£59,043,877	£162,559,489	30.42%	208849	93	635
range-5k-to-10k	16799	£124,002,373	£153,270,632	9.82%	77846	0	0
range-10k-to-25k	26973	£447,833,120	£528,435,717	15.76%	135796	0	0
range-25k-to-50k	16929	£608,549,967	£662,463,430	9.89%	93099	0	0
range-50k-to-100k	15577	£1,120,542,554	£1,169,325,727	9.10%	89278	0	0
range-100k-to-250k	18572	£2,977,698,317	£2,999,010,146	10.85%	124739	0	0
range-250k-to-500k	9097	£3,206,928,345	£3,209,120,436	5.32%	67965	0	0
range-500k-to-1m	5903	£4,192,409,138	£4,094,787,007	3.45%	44047	70859	529716
range-1m-to-5m	6316	£13,892,159,393	£13,753,669,744	3.69%	49193	278868	931166
range-5m-to-10m	1219	£8,648,780,253	£8,474,076,966	0.71%	10936	123572	383356
over-10m	1697	£70,473,994,009	£70,497,047,980	0.99%	19487	756660	2164622
	171,134	£105,751,941,346	£105,703,767,274	100.00%	921,235	1,230,052	4,009,495

Source : <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/sector-data/charities-by-income-band> Accessed 18/02/2026

Registered Charities in Suffolk							
Income band	Number of Charities	Total gross income	Total gross expenditure	% of Charities	Trustees	Employees	Volunteers
range-0-to-5k	1037	£1,422,741	£2,169,085	35.33%	4313	0	732
range-5k-to-10k	369	£2,676,363	£2,837,409	12.57%	1846	0	949
range-10k-to-25k	511	£8,384,294	£9,542,506	17.41%	2718	0	5517
range-25k-to-50k	276	£9,558,286	£9,836,247	9.40%	1695	0	4581
range-50k-to-100k	239	£17,347,575	£16,831,534	8.14%	1464	0	5430
range-100k-to-250k	268	£43,646,520	£43,975,075	9.13%	1839	0	8437
range-250k-to-500k	111	£38,911,367	£35,114,968	3.78%	889	0	6145
range-500k-to-1m	57	£40,173,487	£37,663,929	1.94%	387	942	3549
range-1m-to-5m	50	£110,105,667	£108,319,866	1.70%	399	2412	3759
range-5m-to-10m	9	£64,755,538	£63,330,820	0.31%	72	1040	1654
over-10m	8	£129,066,295	£125,836,415	0.27%	103	2438	2761
	2935	£466,048,133	£455,457,854	100.00%	15,725	6,832	43,514

Source : <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/sector-data/charities-by-income-band> Exported 18/02/2026

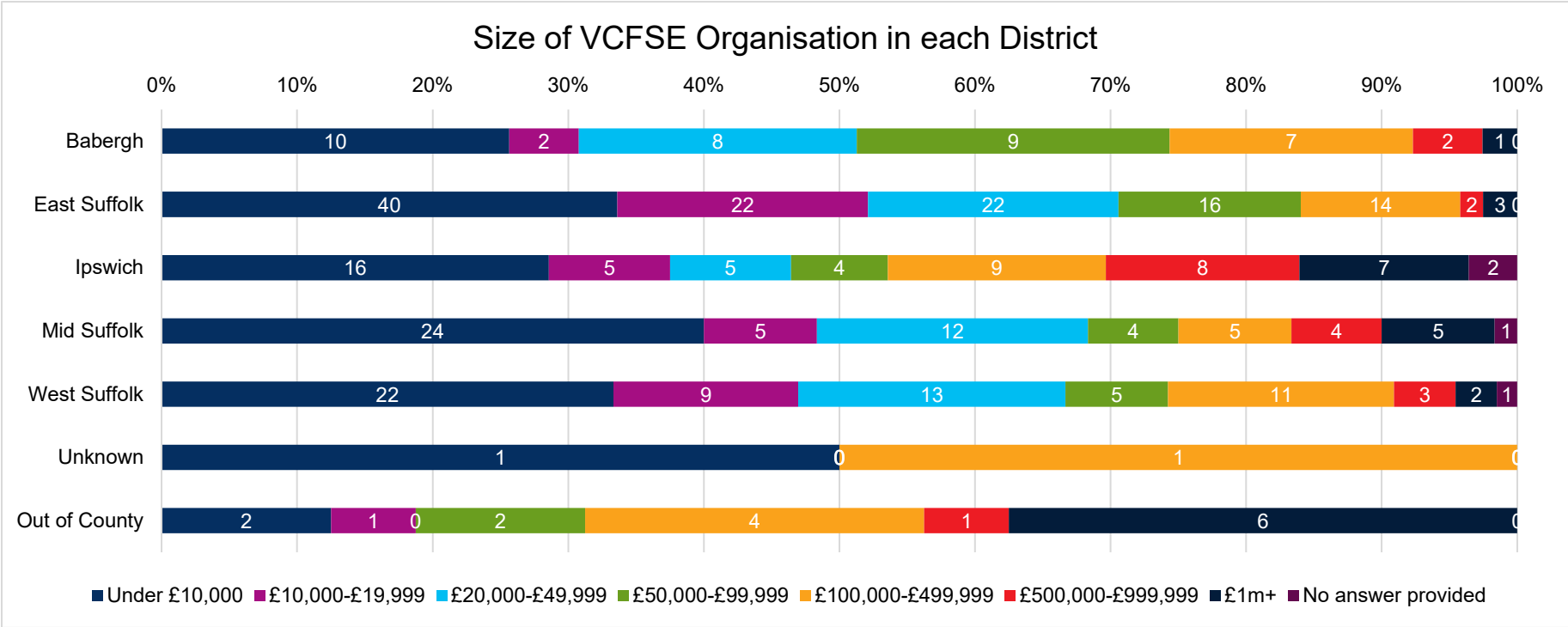
Comparing the national Charity Commission figures to those extracted for Suffolk charities alone, the picture can be seen as being broadly similar, with the sector in Suffolk reflecting the same patterns in terms of the percentage of charities in each income band.



As can be seen the majority of charities in Suffolk have an income of below £50,000 (2193), however, they only account for £22,041,684 of the total gross income of Suffolk charities, which is approximately 4.7%, therefore approximately 95% of Suffolk Charity income goes into the 75% charities that are above the £50,000 income band, and 88% of Suffolk Charity income goes into the 2.28% of Suffolk charities in the £1m+ income band.



When looking at the survey respondents, it might be useful to have a breakdown of the number and size of organisations that responded by administrative district.



NCVO in its last Civil Society Almanac (2024)³ stated that trends often vary according to organisation size. So, the Almanac categorises organisations into six different income bands:

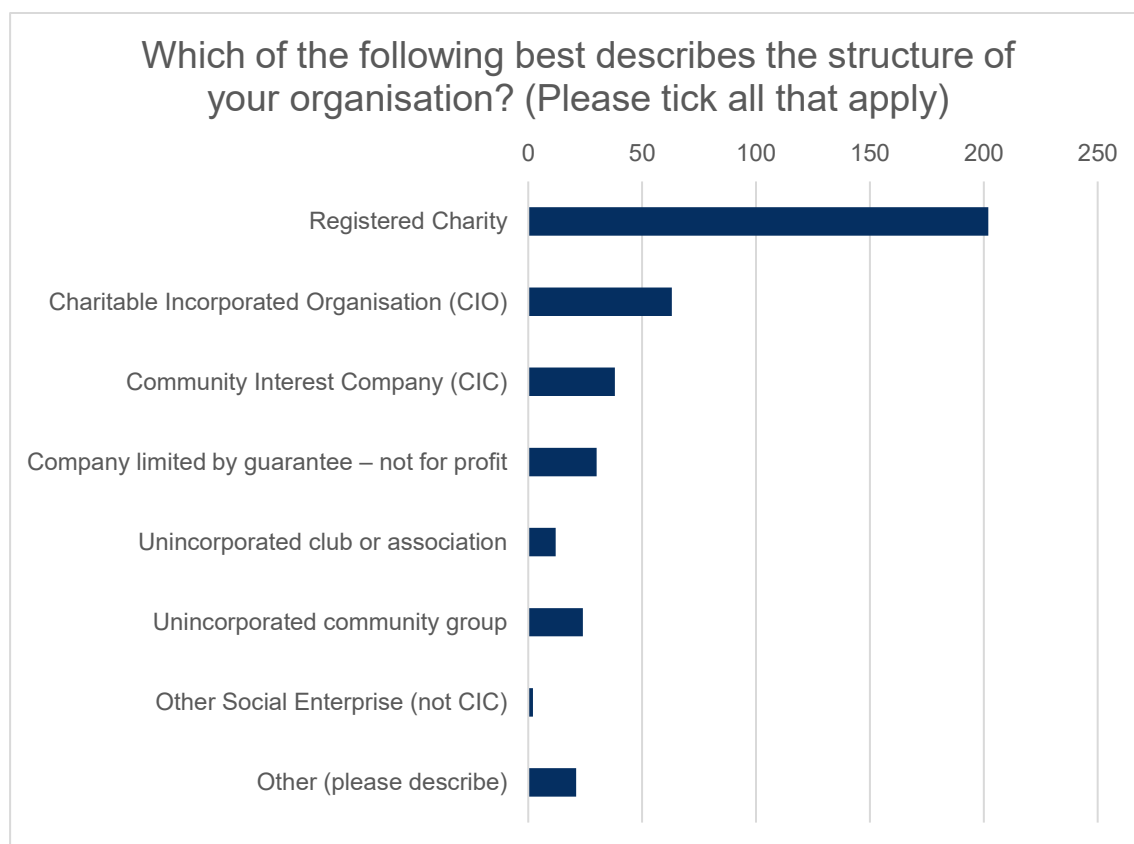
- Micro (less than £10,000)
- Medium (£100,000 to £1m)
- Major (£10m to £100m)
- Small (£10,000 to £100,000)
- Large (£1m to £10m)
- Super-major (more than £100m)

³ <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2024/profile/how-many-voluntary-organisations-are-there/>

Income band	Number of Charities in Suffolk
Micro (less than £10,000)	1406
Small (£10,000 to £100,000)	1026
Medium (£100,000 to £1m)	436
Large (£1m to £10m)	59
Major (£10m to £100m)	8
Super-major (more than £100m)	0

Organisation Structure

In the State of the Sector Survey that was undertaken with the VCFSE Sector in Suffolk, the question of which of the following Organisational Structures best describes the structure of your organisation was posed and respondents could tick all that applied. The following responses were received:



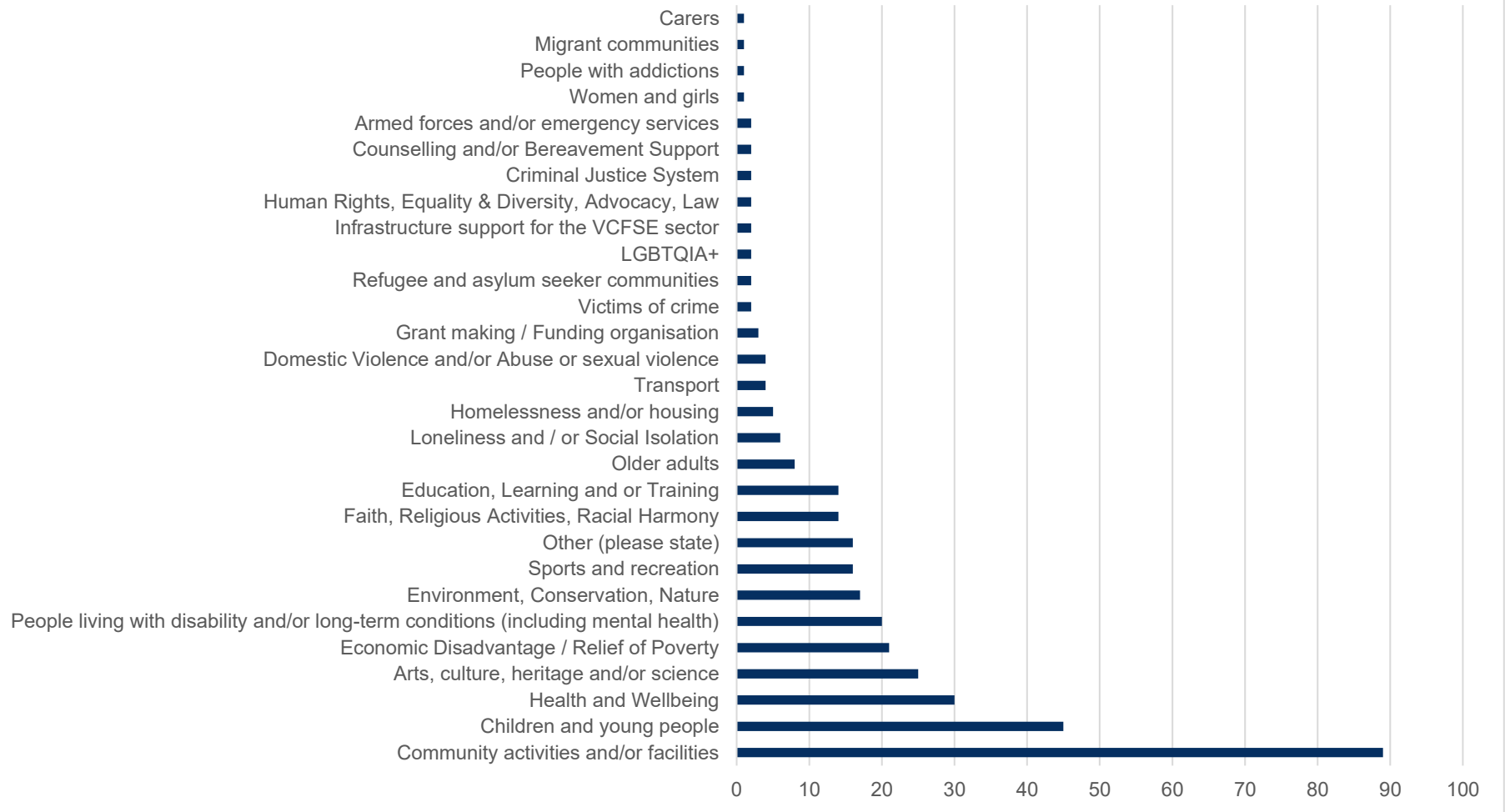
Organisations can be registered under more than one structure, (for example, a registered charity can also be registered with Companies House as a Company Limited by Guarantee). As can be seen in the chart, most respondents were registered charities.

Though there is not one overall database for the Sector, local surveys and desk top research can be combined to give an approximate overall picture of how the Sector is made up and the respondents to the survey seems to be broadly representational of the registered sector as a whole in Suffolk.

Activities

Respondents were then asked what their primary activity was that they undertook as a VCFSE group or organisation. Responses were as follows:

Which of the following best describes your organisation's primary activity, or the community your organisation primarily supports? (Select one)

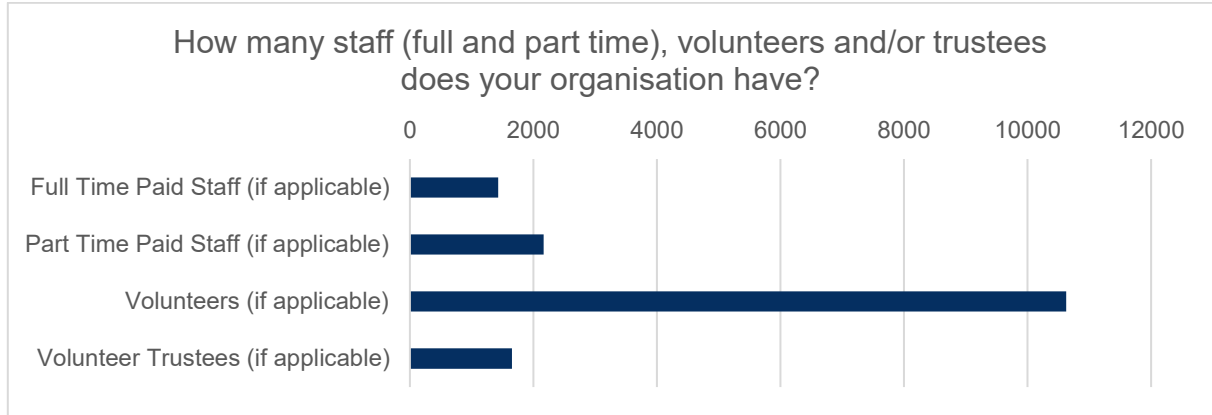


Response	Number of Responses	Percentage
Community activities and/or facilities	89	25%
Children and young people	45	13%
Health and Wellbeing	30	8%
Arts, culture, heritage and/or science	25	7%
Economic Disadvantage / Relief of Poverty	21	6%
People living with disability and/or long-term conditions (including mental health)	20	6%
Environment, Conservation, Nature	17	5%
Sports and recreation	16	4%
Other (please state)	16	4%
Faith, Religious Activities, Racial Harmony	14	4%
Education, Learning and or Training	14	4%
Older adults	8	2%
Loneliness and / or Social Isolation	6	2%
Homelessness and/or housing	5	1%
Transport	4	1%
Domestic Violence and/or Abuse or sexual violence	4	1%
Grant making / Funding organisation	3	1%
Victims of crime	2	1%
Refugee and asylum seeker communities	2	1%
LGBTQIA+	2	1%
Infrastructure support for the VCFSE sector	2	1%
Human Rights, Equality & Diversity, Advocacy, Law	2	1%
Criminal Justice System	2	1%
Counselling and/or Bereavement Support	2	1%
Armed forces and/or emergency services	2	1%
Women and girls	1	0%
People with addictions	1	0%
Migrant communities	1	0%
Carers	1	0%
	357	100%

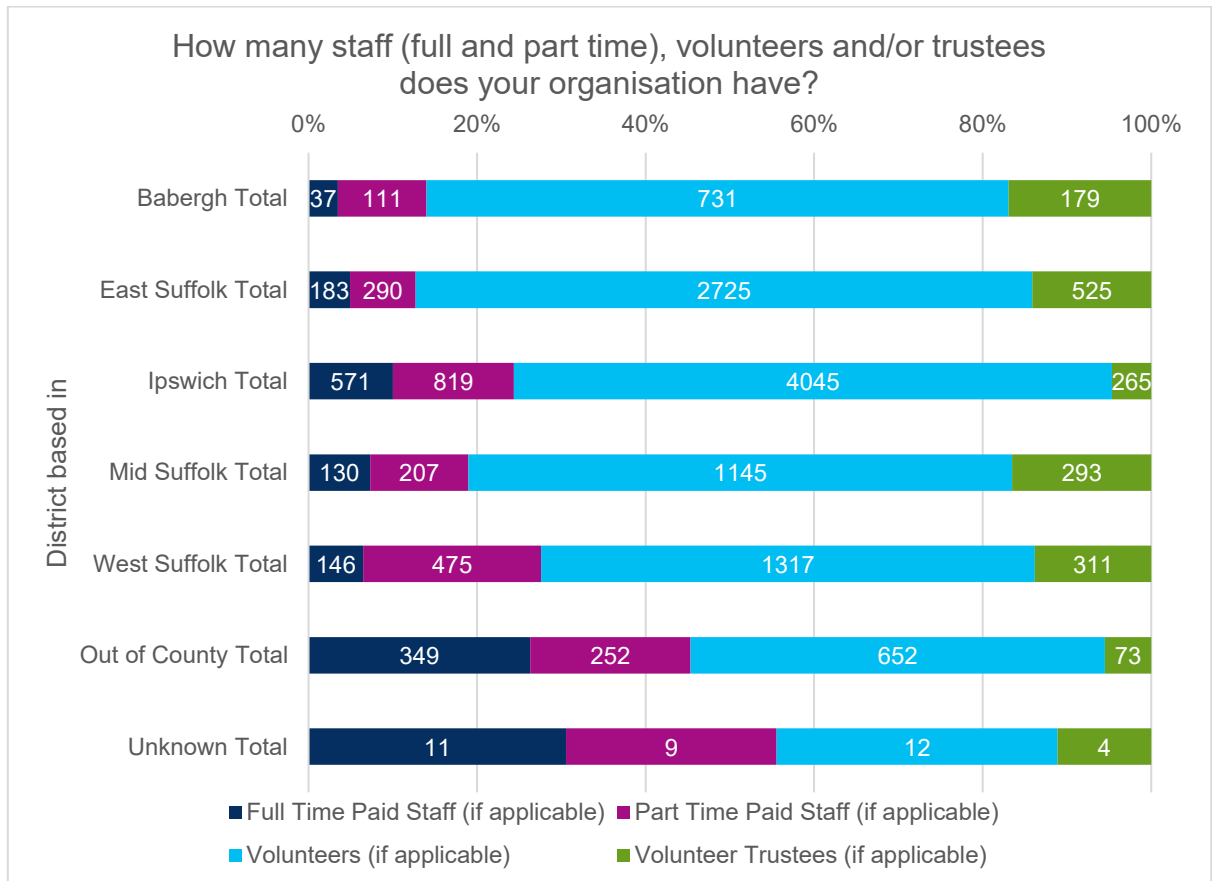
It should be noted that many of those indicating “Other” went on to say they did a lot or all of the activities in the list. As can be seen from the previous chart and the above table, the majority of responding organisations primary activities were around Community activities and/or facilities and Children and young people. It is also worth noting that many organisations that stated a primary activity also provide a range of services and activities across a range of themes as well.

5. Workforce

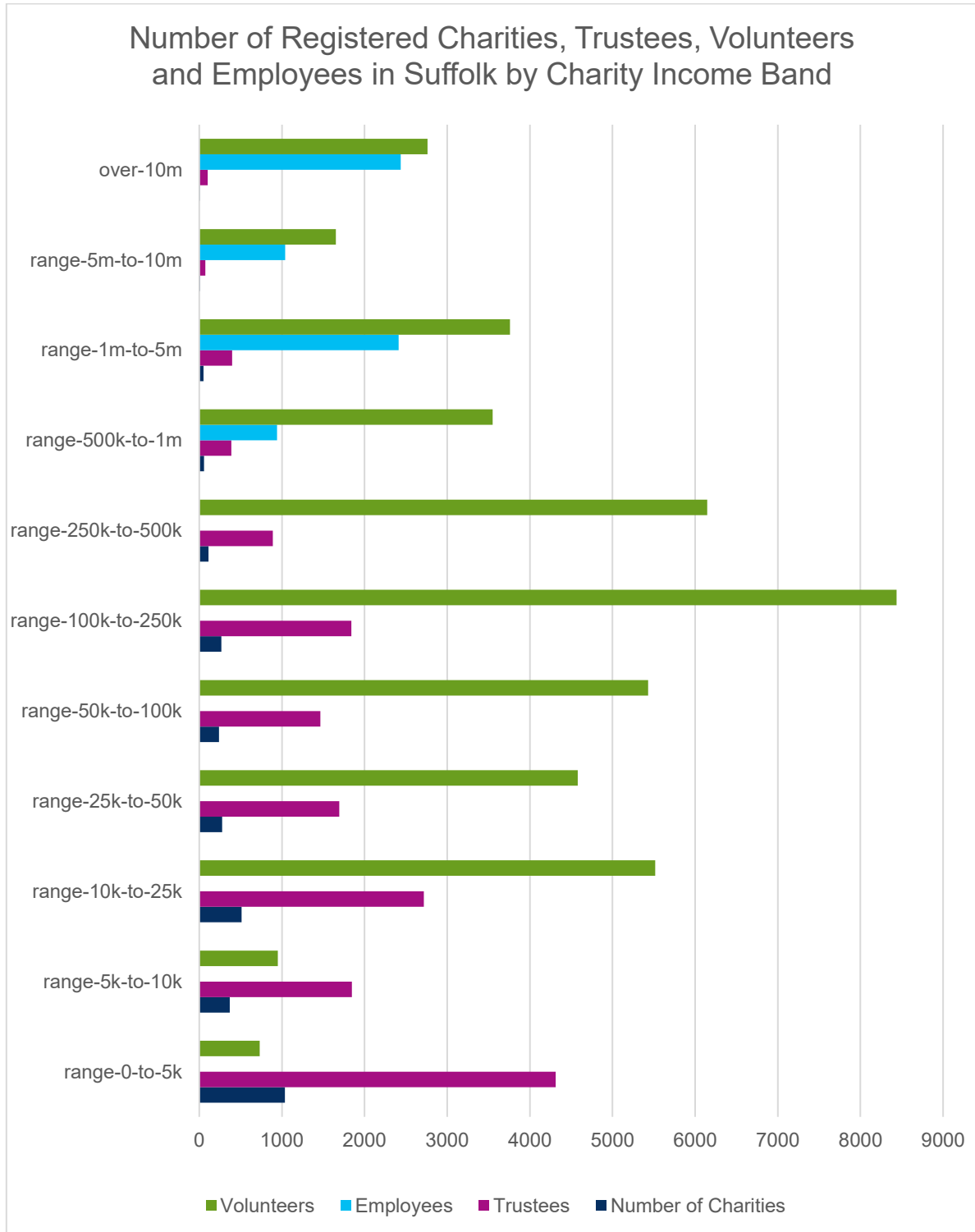
Survey participants were asked about the numbers of staff, volunteers and trustees they had involved with their organisation.



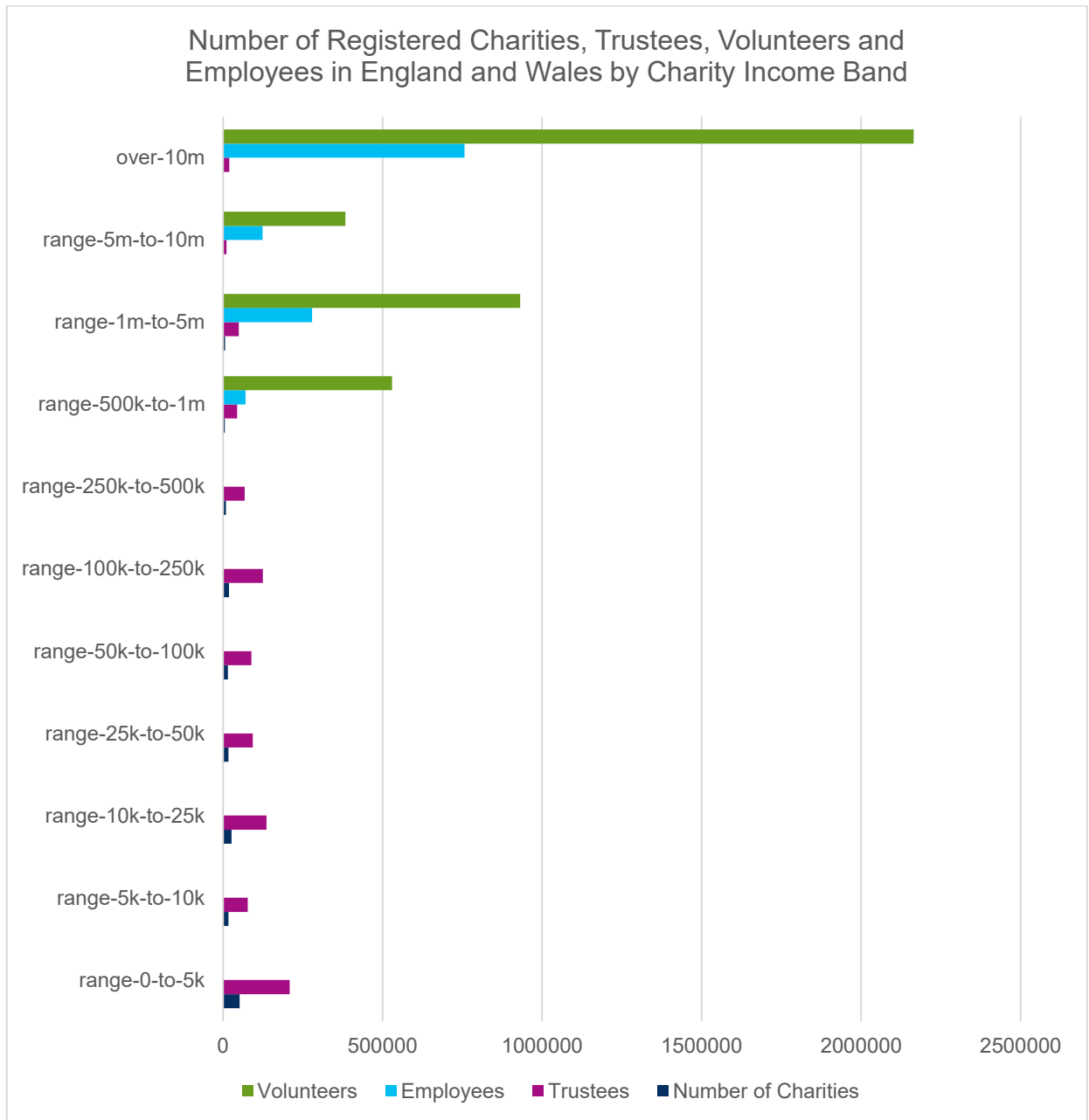
An analysis of how many staff, volunteers and trustees' organisations who responded to the survey had by district was then undertaken.



A breakdown of the number of registered charities, trustees, volunteers and employees in Suffolk based charities by charity income band (from the Charity Commission) has been displayed below.

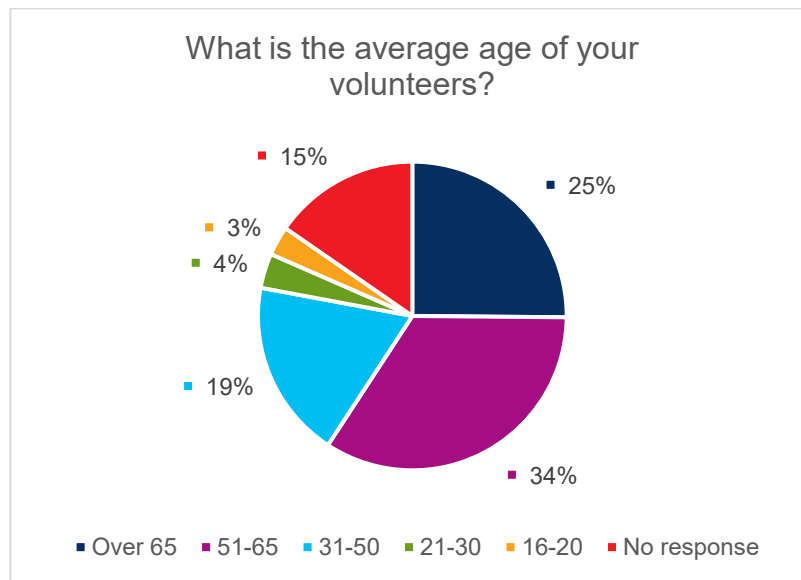


A national comparison below with the number of registered charities, trustees, volunteers and employees recorded for registered charities across England and Wales according to the Charity Commission.



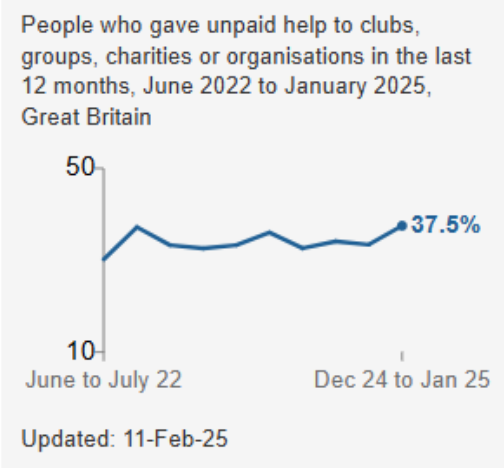
It can clearly be seen from the above chart that the charity commission only requires reporting on employee and volunteer numbers for charities with a recorded income of over £500,000, and reporting of these numbers for organisations with a lower income is in itself voluntary.

Survey respondents were asked about their volunteers, and what the average age of their volunteers was. It is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of volunteers are over the age of 51 (59%).



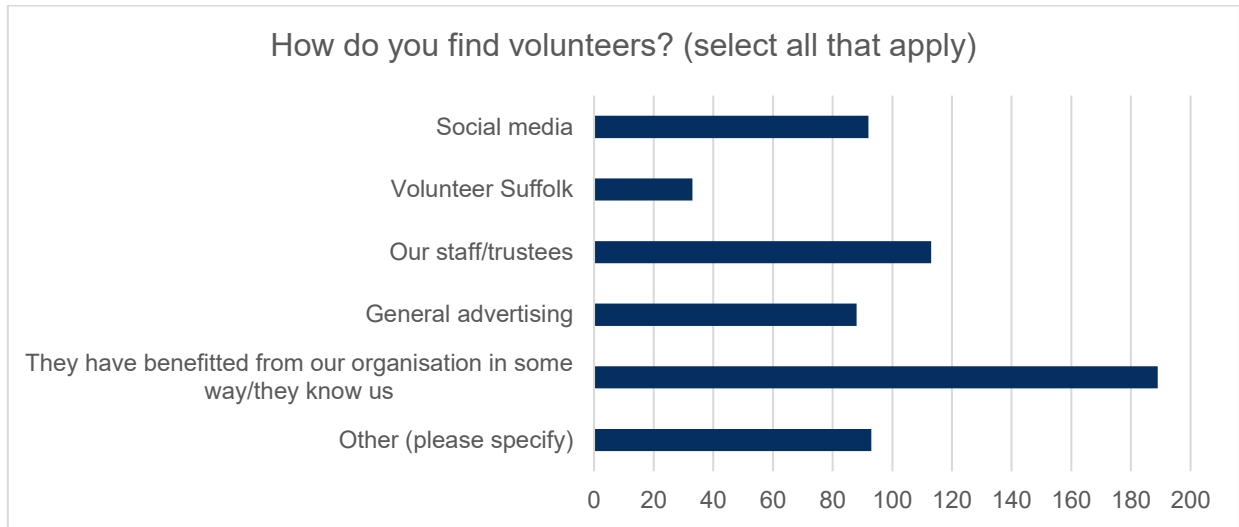
This is reflected nationally in the Community Life Survey, reported in Civil Society in December 2025, where “older people remain [the] age group most likely to volunteer. Conducted annually by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the survey is based on a nationally representative sample of adults in England. Respondents aged 65 to 74 remained the age group most likely to volunteer, with 23% of those in this demographic participating in formal volunteering at least once a month. Those aged 75 and over were the age group second most likely to engage in regular formal volunteering, with 20% of those aged 75 and over doing so. Click [here](#) to read more of the Civil Society article.

According to the ONS UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard, “Roughly 1 in 3 adults in Great Britain said that they had volunteered in the last 12 months. Of adults in Great Britain, 37.5% reported that they gave unpaid help to clubs, groups, charities or organisations in the previous 12 months, when asked in December 2024 to January 2025. This shows no short-term change (36.0% in November 2023). Long-term change is not assessed because data for these comparisons are not available. Source: [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics](#)”



Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/ukmeasuresofnationalwellbeing/dashboard>

We were interested to see how groups found their volunteers.



Direct engagement can be seen to be the most successful source of finding volunteers. Analysis of free-text responses of those that selected the “Other” category, shows that organisations recruit volunteers through a wide range of informal and community-based approaches. The dominant method is through personal and social networks, with word of mouth being cited far more frequently than any other route. Many organisations rely on church and faith communities, reflecting the strong role of local faith networks in volunteer mobilisation across rural and semi-rural areas.

A significant proportion of recruitment happens through local community channels, including village networks, known residents, and local awareness. Printed and community publications, such as parish magazines, village newsletters and physical noticeboards, also remain a central method, especially for smaller or village-based organisations.

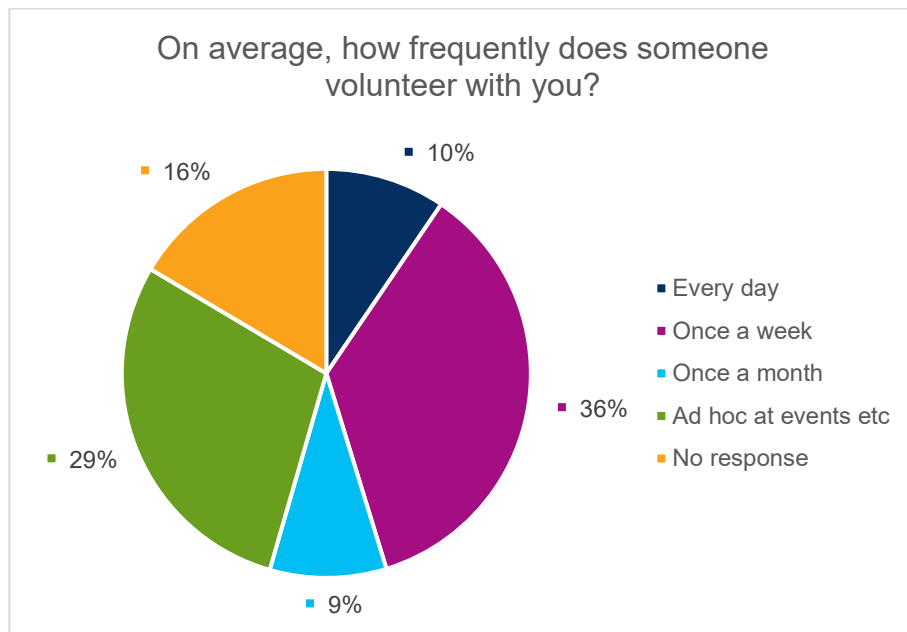
Face-to-face engagement continues to be important: public events, community markets, conversations, club talks, leaflet drops, and recruitment drives, all contributing to improving visibility and attracting new volunteers. Organisations also benefit from partnerships and referrals, including other voluntary sector bodies, job centres, networking groups, and structured placement programmes.

Digital methods mentioned were mainly organisational websites and partner websites, playing a supporting role, but seem to be used less frequently than local, more personal, and community-based approaches. A number of organisations also develop volunteers through internal routes, such as parents, service users, young people, and individuals motivated by lived experience.

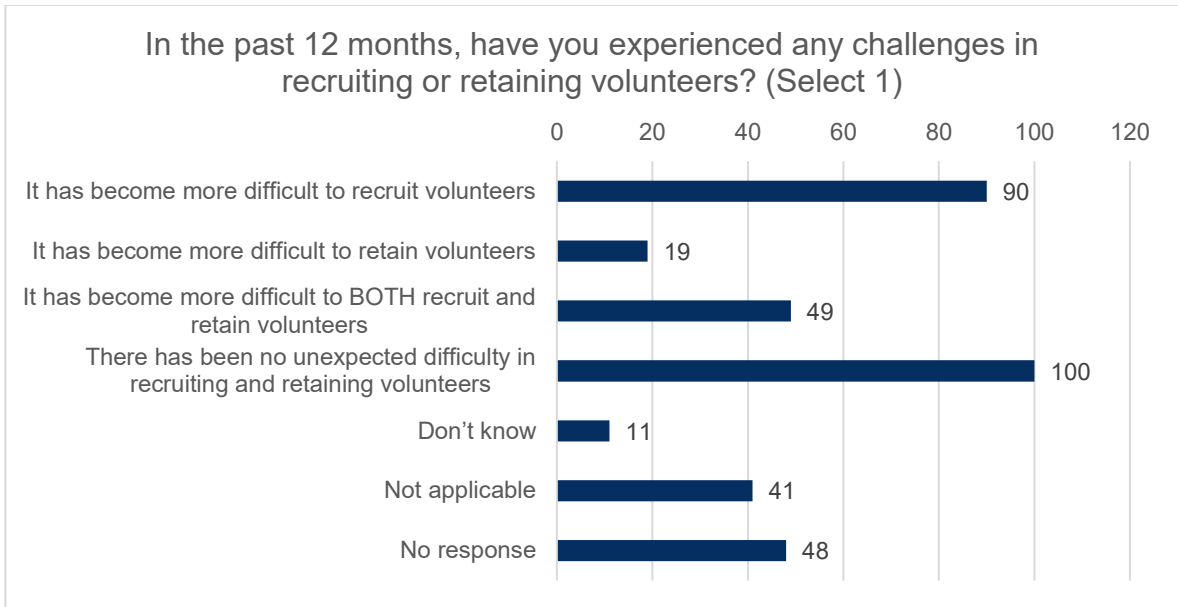
With regards to digital methods, [Volunteer Suffolk](#) is Suffolk’s very own volunteering platform, which was included as one of the main options given in this question, with 33 of respondents indicating they advertise their volunteering opportunities on there. There is no single definitive count of volunteer searching websites in the UK, but there are over a dozen major national platforms, plus hundreds of local, specialized, and council-run portals. Key national platforms include Do IT, Reach Volunteering (for skills), CharityJob, and Vinspired (for young people). Major national portals include Do IT (which probably has the largest database), and the relatively new entrant to the scene being GoVo which is through the RVS and backed by the People’s Postcode Lottery. Others include Volunteering Matters, NHS Volunteering, and NCVO. Reach Volunteering and Step on Board focus on trustee and skill-based roles whereas Vinspired targets 14–30 year olds. Many local councils and Volunteer Centres run their own local boards and larger and medium sized charities like the National Trust or Oxfam often list roles directly on their own websites as well as using volunteering platforms.

Finally, a small number reported no active recruitment, either because volunteers approach them proactively or because they do not use volunteers.

The frequency of volunteering was the next area to be queried, as can be seen in the chart below, the majority of volunteers (36%) reported by responding organisations, volunteer on a once-a-week basis, with people volunteering on an ad hoc basis (29%) being the next most popular option.

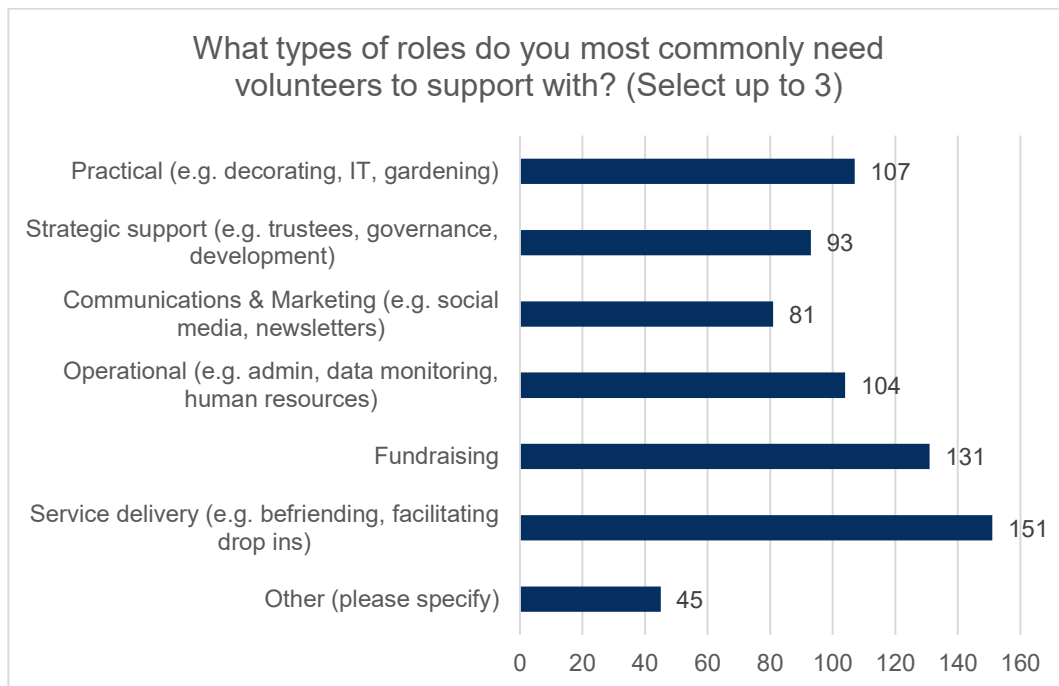


Groups were asked whether they had experienced any challenges with recruiting or retaining volunteers in the past 12 months.



44% of responding organisations indicated that in the past 12 months they have experienced challenges with recruiting, retaining or both recruiting and retaining volunteers, whereas only 28% said they had experienced no difficulties in this.

When asked about the types of roles volunteers were most commonly needed for, the majority of organisations indicated that service delivery roles were the most required (with volunteers providing services such as befriending, facilitating drop-ins, etc).

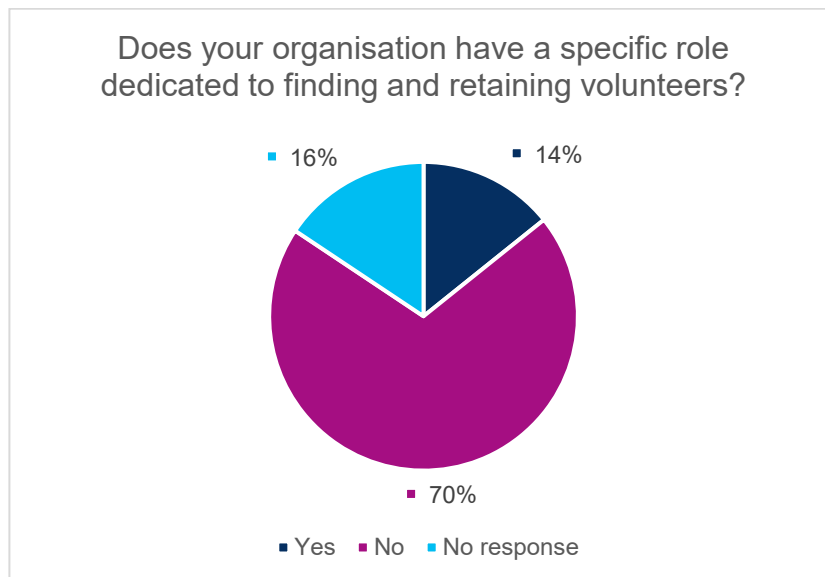


In the Other option, many different volunteering roles were also listed in the following themed areas, including:

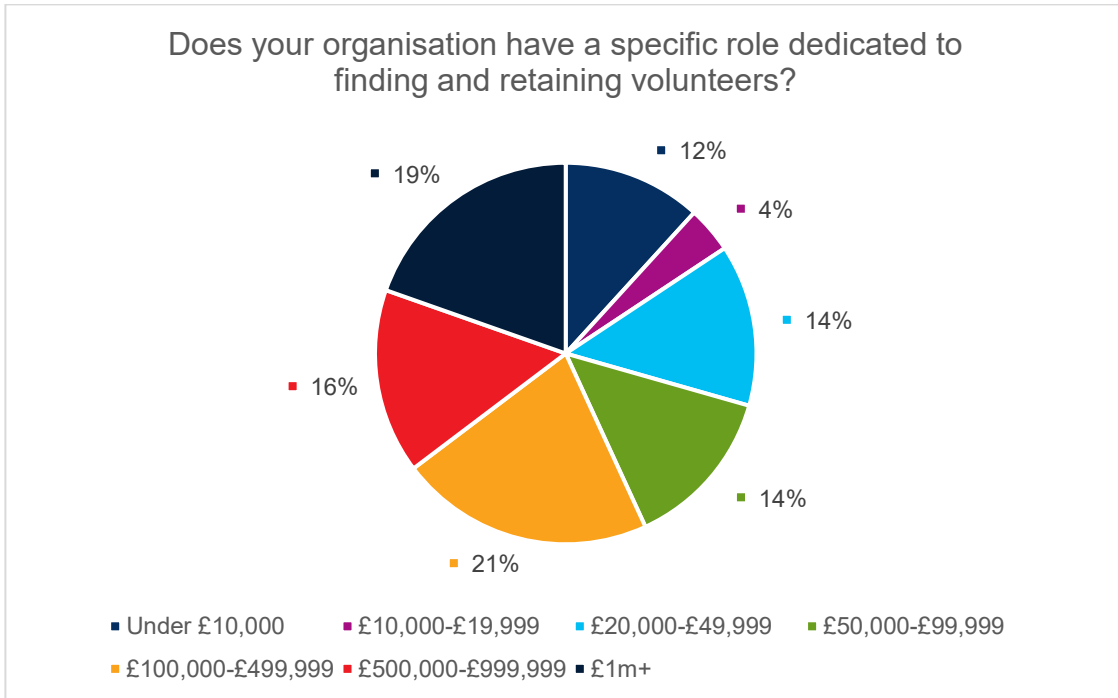
Other Volunteer Roles

Theme	Roles Included
Governance & Leadership	Trustees; Section leaders; Supervising / technical training
Administration & Operational Support	Receptionists; Day-to-day management; Digital admin; Administration support; Running/managing projects; Event operations; General event support/stewarding
Event & Fundraising Support	Event management; Event organisation and stewarding; Helpers for monthly fundraising events; Setting up and running weekly events; Setting up and serving at pop-up shops; Support during larger events
Transport & Driving	Transport support; Driving people to hospital appointments; Volunteer delivery drivers
Retail & Customer-Facing	Retail; Community café; Pop-up shop roles (serving, setting up)
Technical & Creative Roles	Technical expertise (sound, lighting); Radio presenters
Outdoors, Environment & Practical Tasks	Gardening; Weeding, scything, processing seeds; Environment-focused volunteering (food growing, land care); Supporting children's outdoor activities
Youth & Community Programme Support	Coaching football; Summer Reading Challenge volunteer support; Learners classed as volunteers
Museum & Heritage	Running the museum; Stewarding

Organisations were asked if they have a specific role within them, dedicated to finding and retaining volunteers. Only 14% of responding organisations had such a role.



Those organisations who indicated they did have a dedicated role to recruit and retain volunteers, were then broken down into organisational income bands. There was an expectation that it would most likely be the larger income organisations that invested in such a dedicated role, however, as can be seen from responses below, the picture is actually quite evenly spread across the income bands above £20,000.

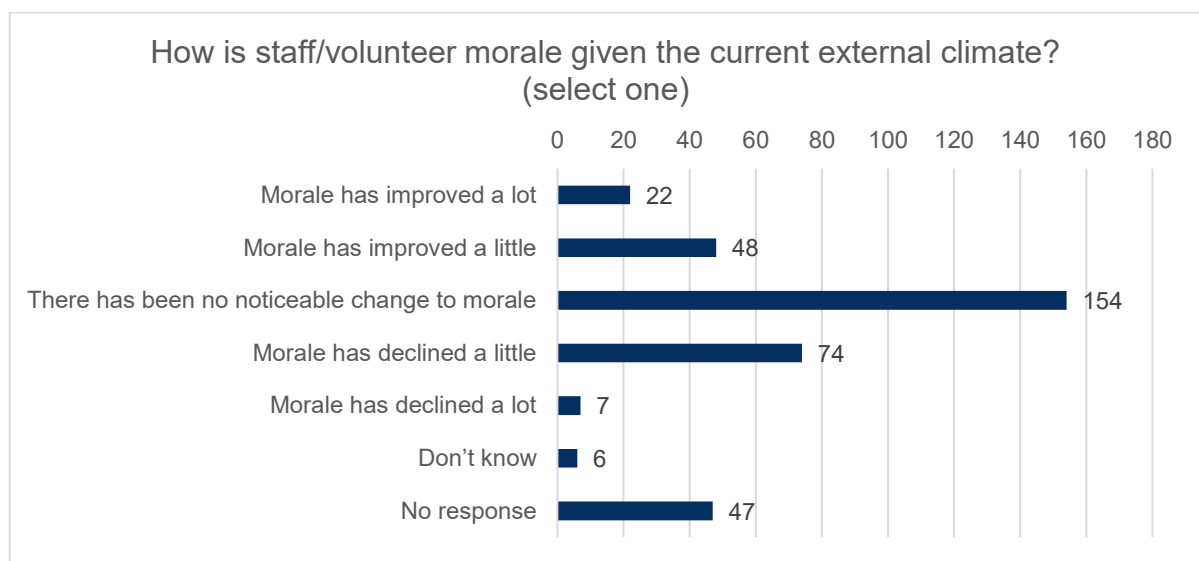


In the Government publication [Estimating the economic and social value of volunteering](#), where London Economics estimated “**the average economic impact per volunteer in England in 2021/22 to be £2,012... This was the sum of the average replacement cost per volunteer (£1,339) and the wellbeing benefit per volunteer (£673).**”

If we use this calculation, then we can make a very rough estimation of the average economic impact of volunteering in Suffolk for volunteers within registered charities, providing an economic impact of £87,550,168. This is likely to be an underestimation, as it only accounts for the volunteer numbers that have been recorded with the Charity Commission, and not through all of the other volunteering avenues with the county.

Think tank [PBE \(previously known as Pro Bono Economics\)](#), refers to the difficulty in estimating the economic value of volunteering and the voluntary sector as a whole, pointing out that “**civil society organisations boost people’s educational outcomes, skills, physical and mental health, and financial resilience, among other things. Participation in volunteering provides opportunities to develop skills and gain experience, which can help people into work and supports higher levels of productivity for those already in work. As a result, individuals are better able to participate in the labour market, pay taxes and reduce their reliance on public services, all of which increase labour supply, reduce fiscal pressures and contribute to wider economic growth.**”

Survey respondents were asked how their staff and/or volunteers morale was, given the current external climate. The chart below depicts the responses. The majority of respondents (43%) felt there had been no noticeable change to morale. 20% of respondents leant towards an improvement in morale, whereas 23% felt there had been a little or a lot of decline in morale.

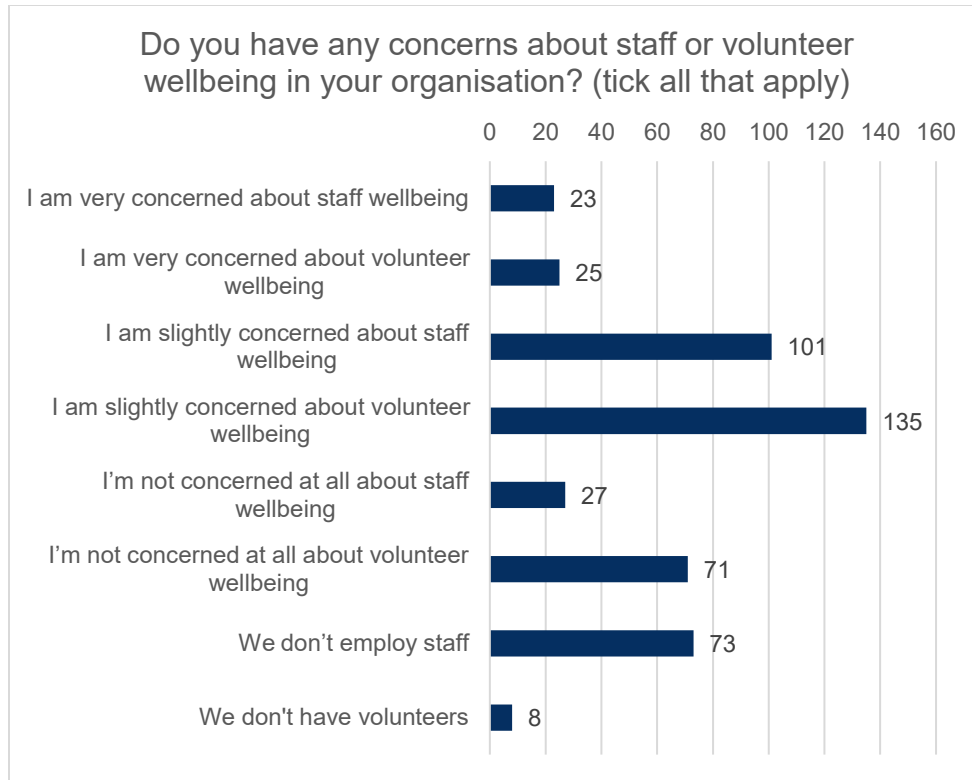


Organisations were then asked whether, when considering their organisation’s current circumstance regarding expenditure, income, and the volume and complexity of need, they had witnessed any instances of staff or volunteer burnout in the last 12 months?

As can be seen below, 37% of respondents to this question have witnessed staff or volunteer burnout.

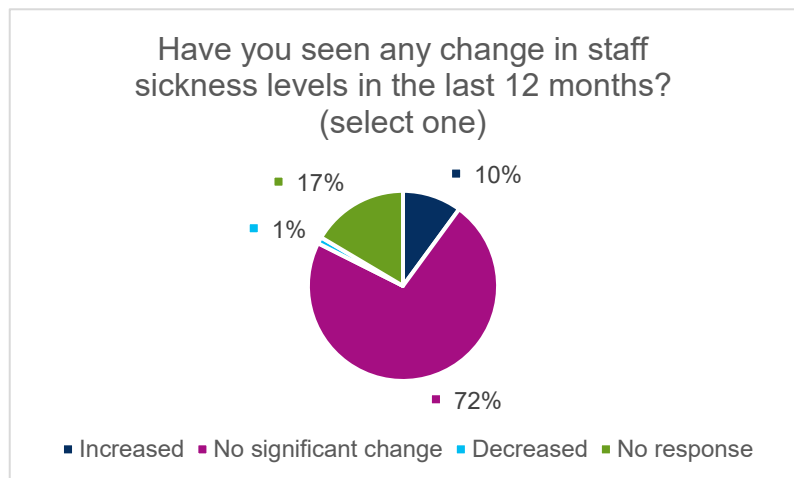


The health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers within any workforce is extremely important. Rosterfy in their publication [UK Volunteer Management Survey 2025: Investing in Impact](#) state that “**Burnout is no longer a silent issue - 29% of volunteer managers’ report experiencing burnout, with another 28% citing unrealistic expectations of their time. These aren’t isolated struggles; they’re systemic signals of a sector under strain.**” They go on to suggest that the sector should “**Act now - To sustain the heart of volunteer-powered missions, we must:** • Invest in professional development for volunteer managers • Prioritise mental health and well-being support • Set realistic goals and workloads • Foster a culture that values boundaries and balance. **Burnout is a red flag the volunteering sector can’t afford to ignore. Passion fuels volunteerism and it needs structure, support and sustainability to survive.**”



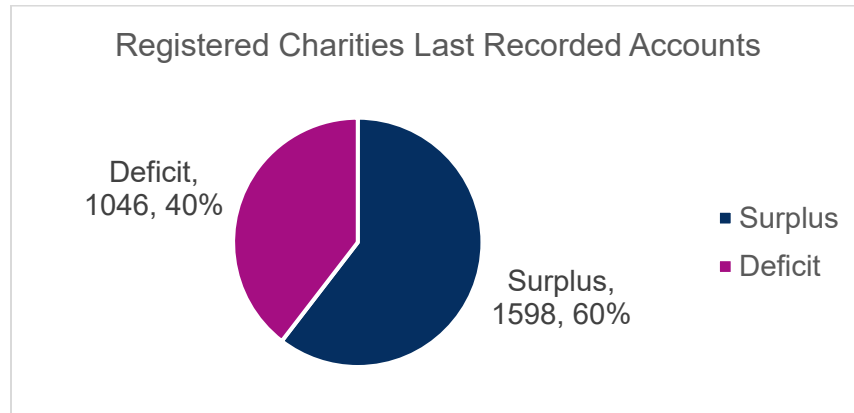
When asked whether they had any concerns about staff and volunteer wellbeing in their organisations, a combined 61% of responding organisations confirmed that they were either slightly or very concerned about the wellbeing of their staff and/or volunteers. The very fact that organisations are recognising these concerns is hopefully a movement in the right direction towards addressing those concerns to improve the wellbeing of both staff and volunteers across the VCFSE sector in Suffolk.

The concerns about wellbeing of staff don't seem to have been translated into staff sickness levels though, according to respondents, as the majority (72%) indicated that there have been no significant changes in the level of staff sickness in the past 12 months.



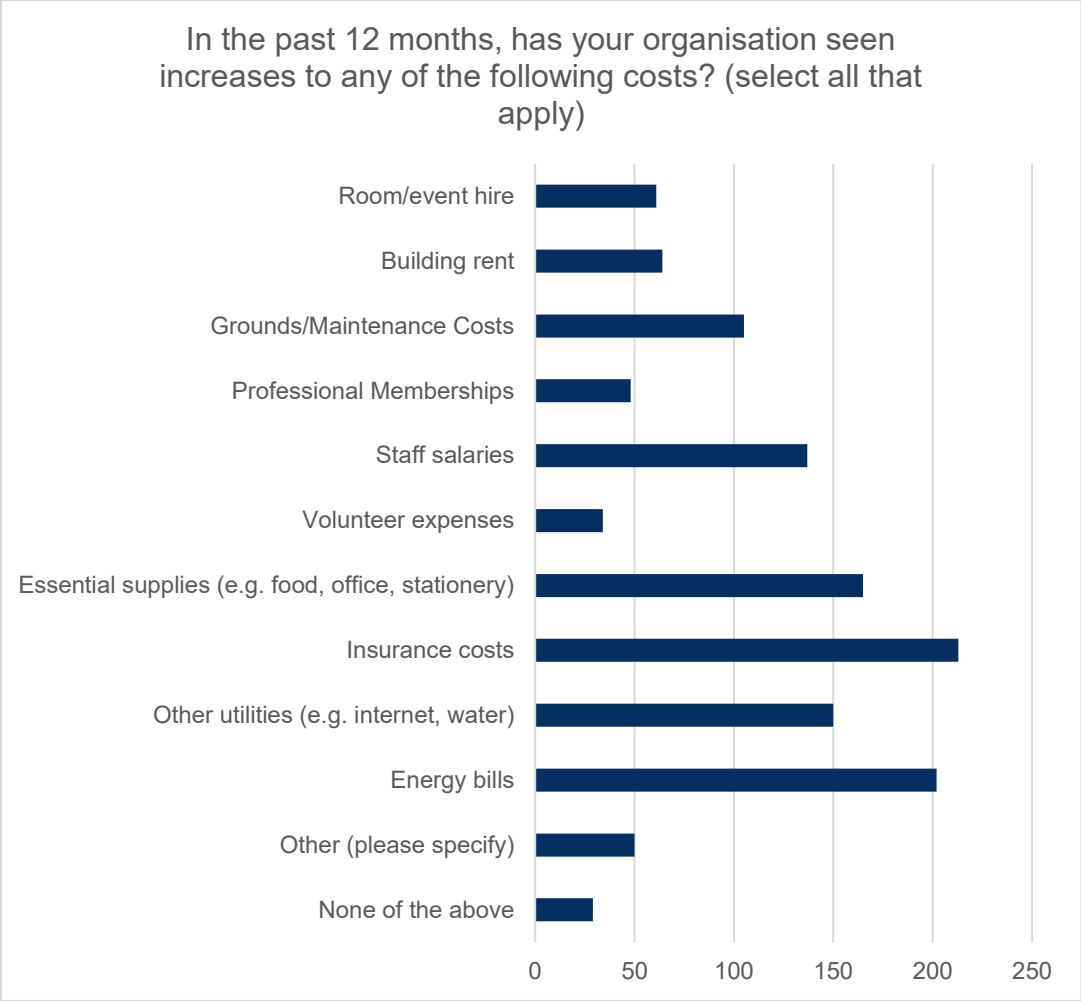
6. Finances

According to the Charity Commission, looking at the last recorded income and expenditure levels of the 2935 registered charities within Suffolk, 40% recorded that they spent more than they brought in in terms of income.



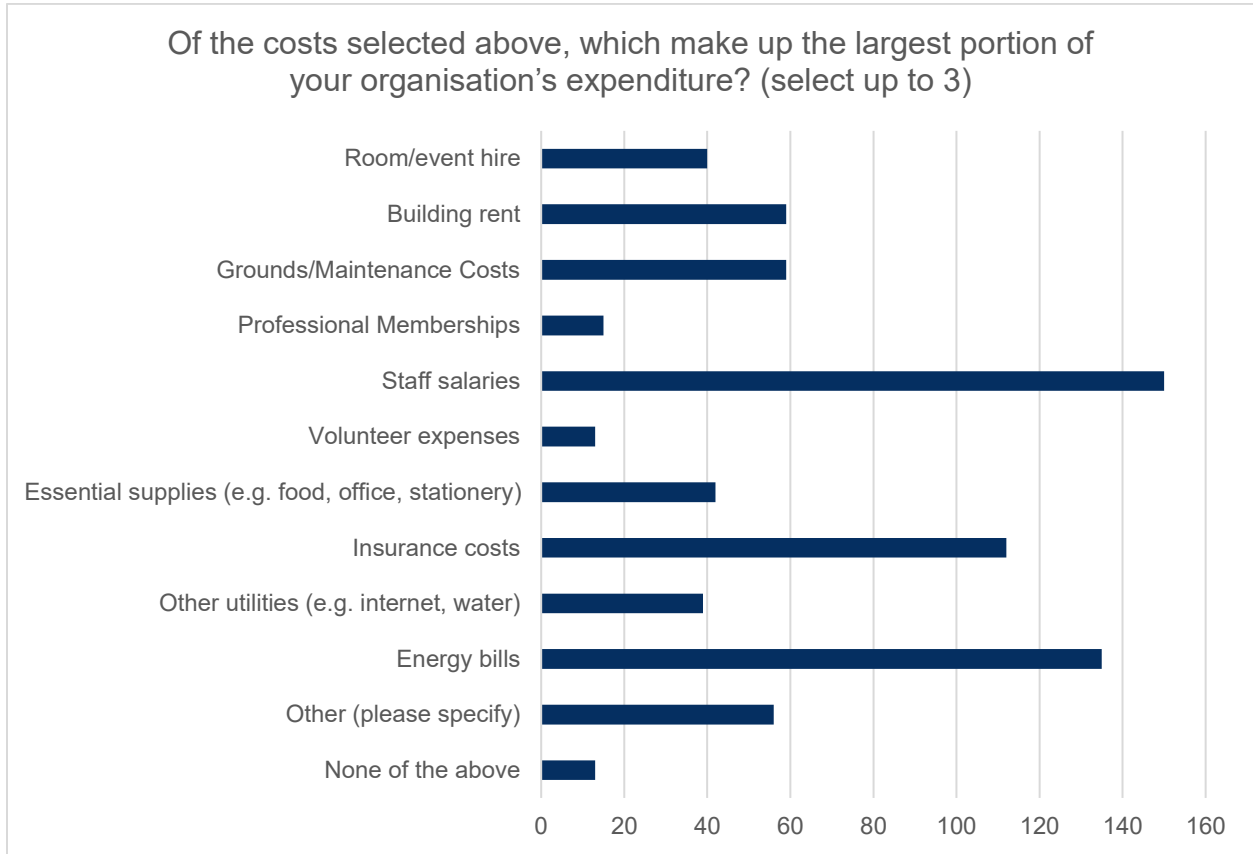
Survey participants were asked whether in the past 12 months their organisations had seen increases to a list of specific costs.

In the general public, according to the [High cost of living: Impact on households Research Briefing](#), people are still reporting higher cost of living. In November 2025, [61% of adults in Great Britain reported an increase in their cost of living](#) compared with the previous month. Of those whose cost of living increased, 95% said it was because food shopping had increased in price, while 68% said it was because gas and electricity bills had increased in price. This pattern appears to be reflected in the responses from participating organisations too, as can be seen below.



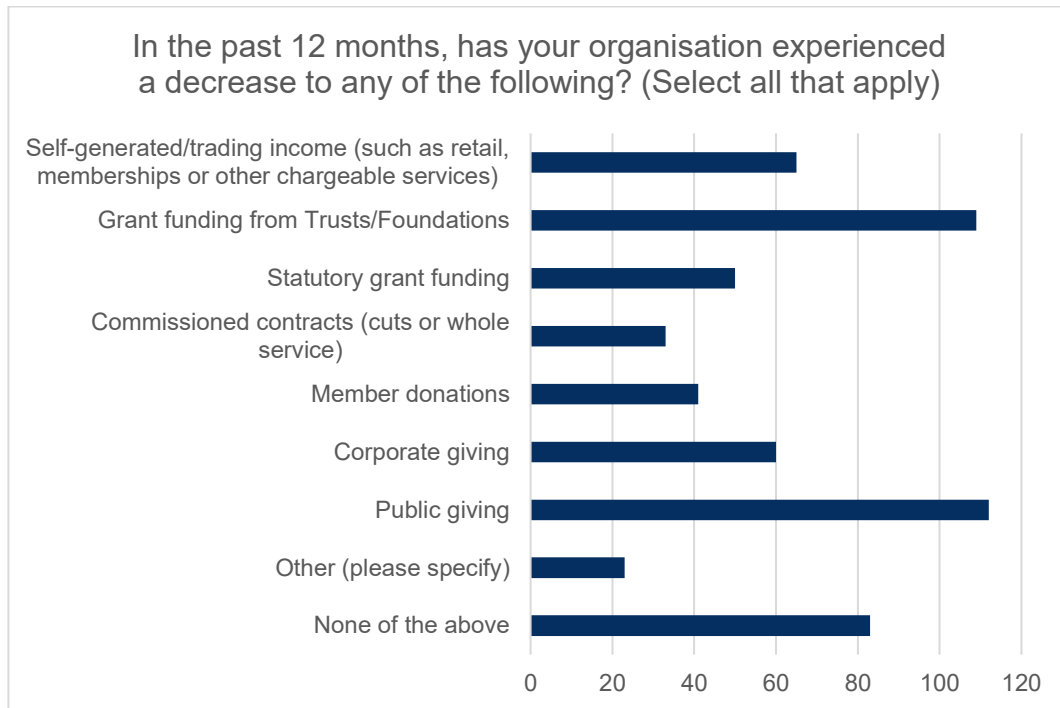
As can be seen the majority of organisations indicated that they had seen increases in their organisation’s insurance costs, energy bills and essential supplies (such as food, office and stationery equipment).

When asked which of these risen costs organisations had seen the largest proportion of their expenditure going towards, the vast majority were staff salaries, energy bills and insurance costs as can be seen below, the three of which outstripped all of the other possible options provided.

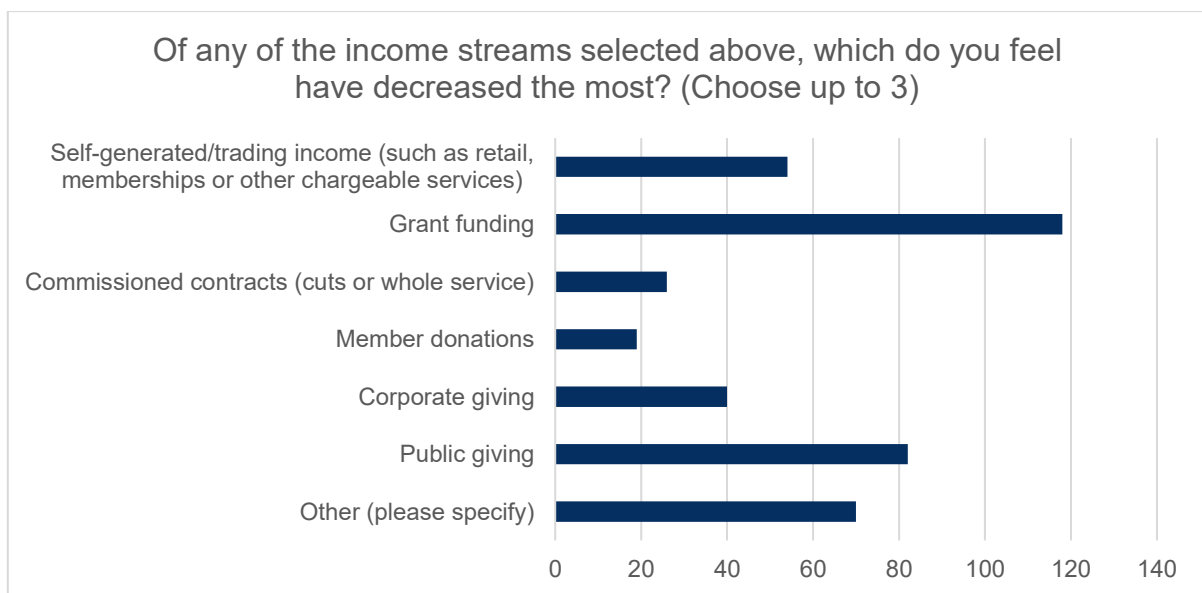


Groups were then asked whether, in the past 12 months they had experienced a decrease from any of a given list of income sources including: Public giving; Corporate giving; Member donations; Commissioned contracts (cuts or whole service); Statutory grant funding; Grant funding from Trusts/Foundation; Self-generated/trading income (such as retail, memberships or other chargeable services) along with the ability for respondents to list and specify Other sources, or to select None of the above.

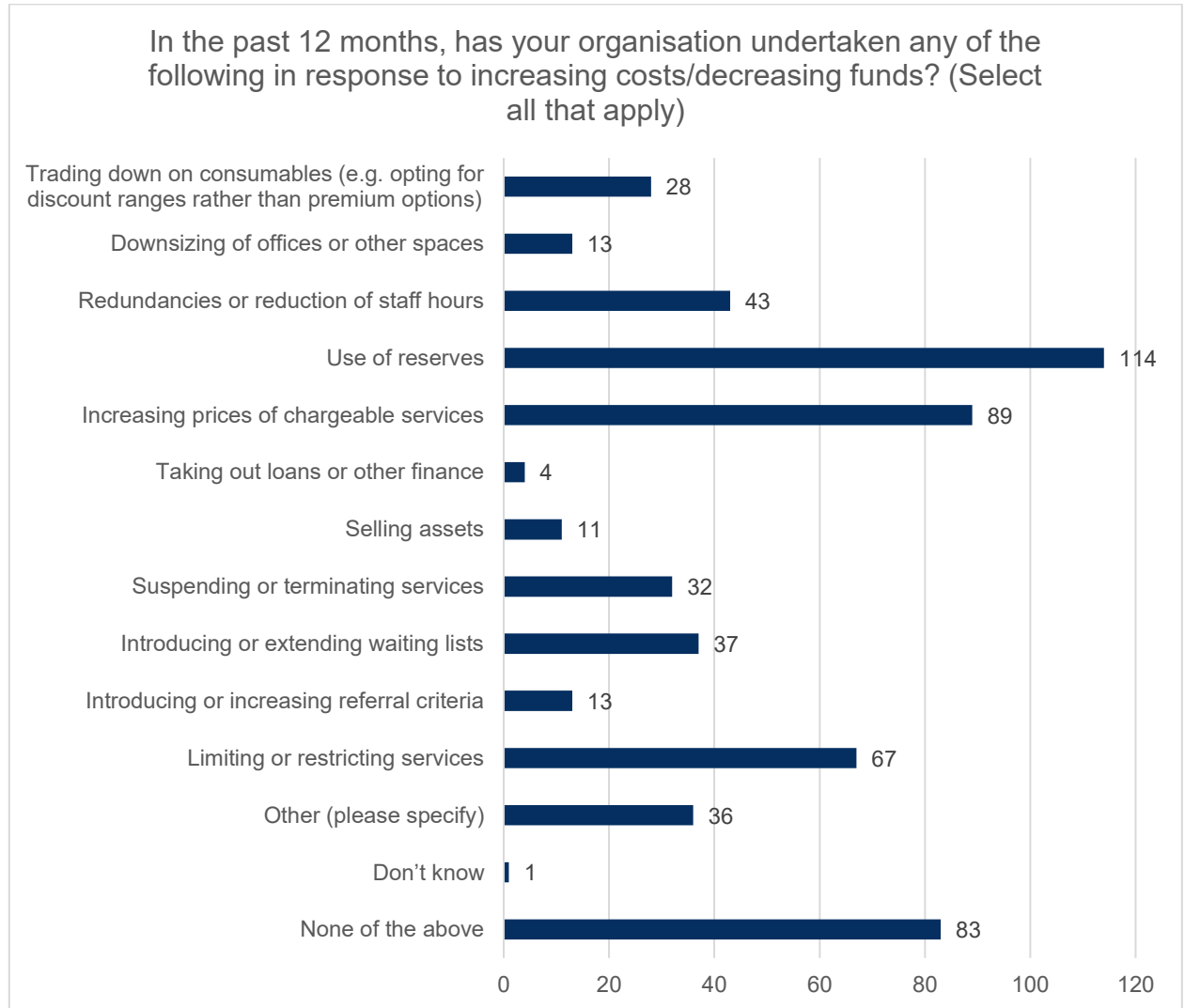
As can be seen below, the biggest decreases that were reported by respondents were reductions from Grant Funding from Trusts and Foundations and Public Giving, both of which were roughly equal in the number of times selected.



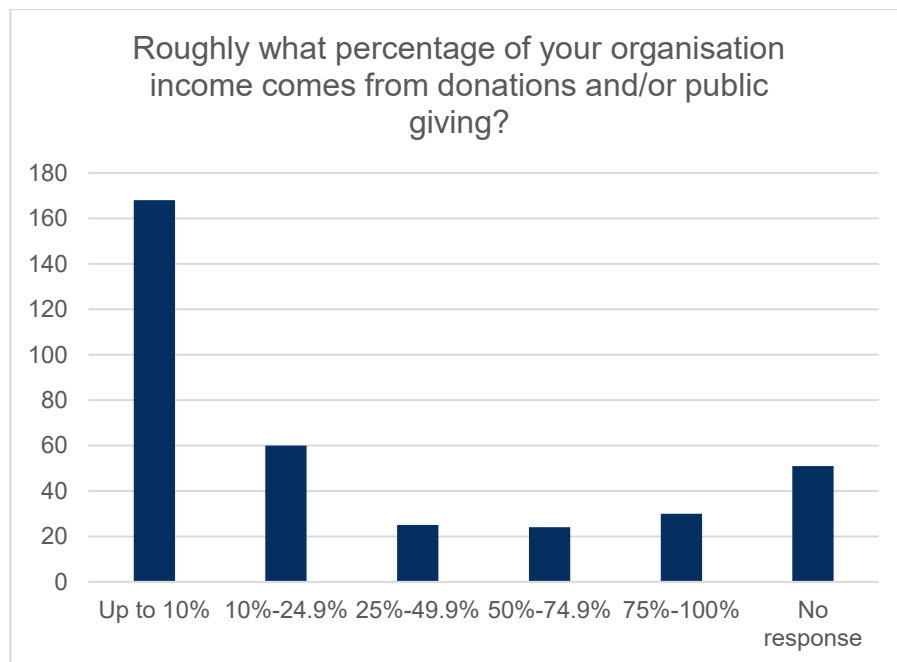
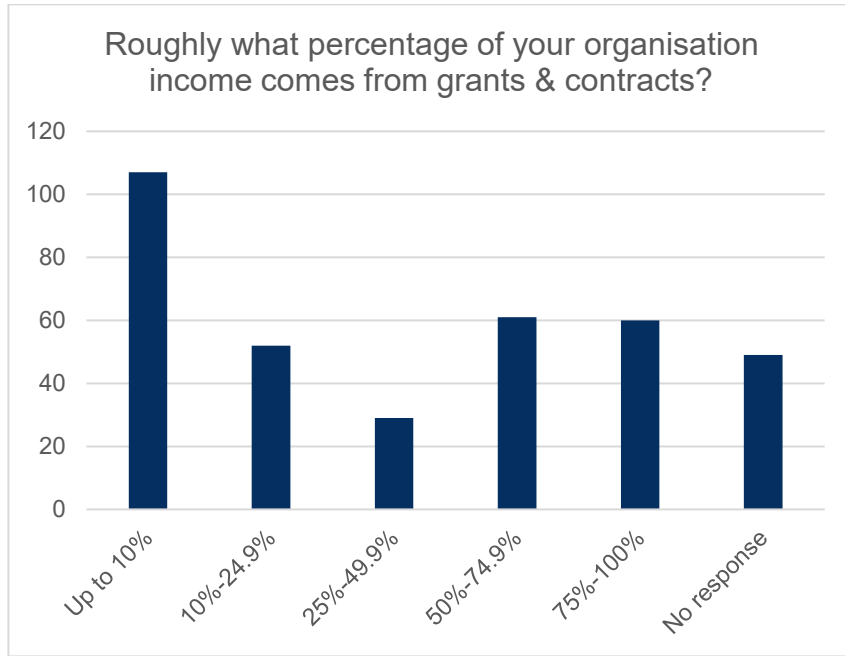
Respondents were then asked to highlight the income stream that they felt had decreased the most, as can be seen below, by far, the majority felt that this was Grant Funding.



Organisations were asked whether, in the past 12 months, their organisation had undertaken any of the following in response to increasing costs or decreasing funds. As can be seen from below, almost a third (32%) of responding organisations had made use of reserves. This was followed by a quarter of respondents (25%) indicating that their response had been to increase prices of chargeable services.



Responding organisations were asked about their income and the proportions of their incomes which came from different sources, such as grants and contracts, and donations and/or public giving. As can be seen below, the answers were varied from respondents, with what looks like the majority of organisations getting some income from either or both sources.



Summary of Income Sources

Respondents were asked if they had any other income, and if so, were asked to name them below along with what percentage of your total income each provides. The following is an overview of all the Other types of income mentioned by respondents.

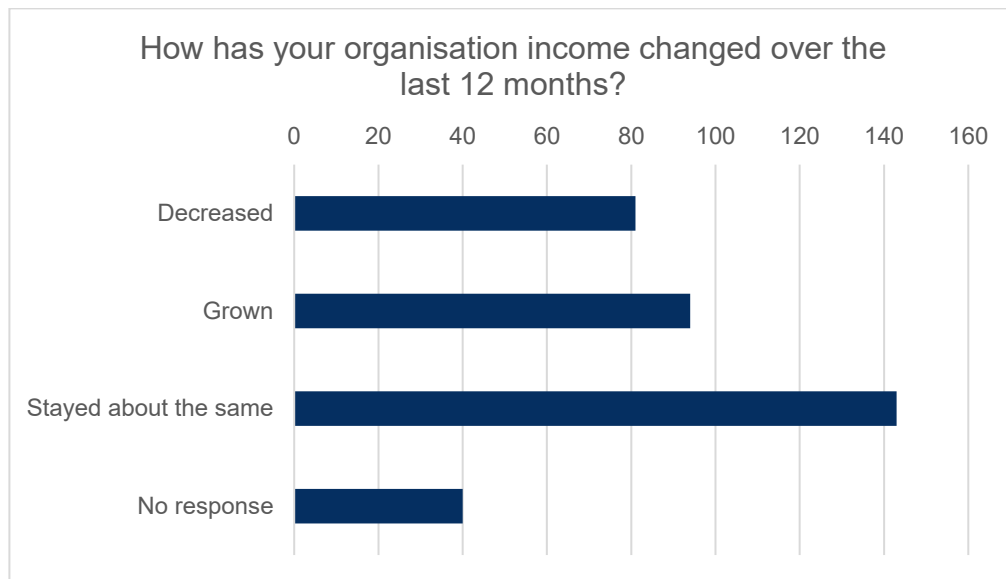
Top 5 Most Common Other Income Streams

1. Hire of spaces and facilities
2. Membership fees, session charges, or participant payments
3. Sales and trading income
4. Fundraising activities
5. Grants, contracts, or local authority funding

Many organisations also topped these up with:

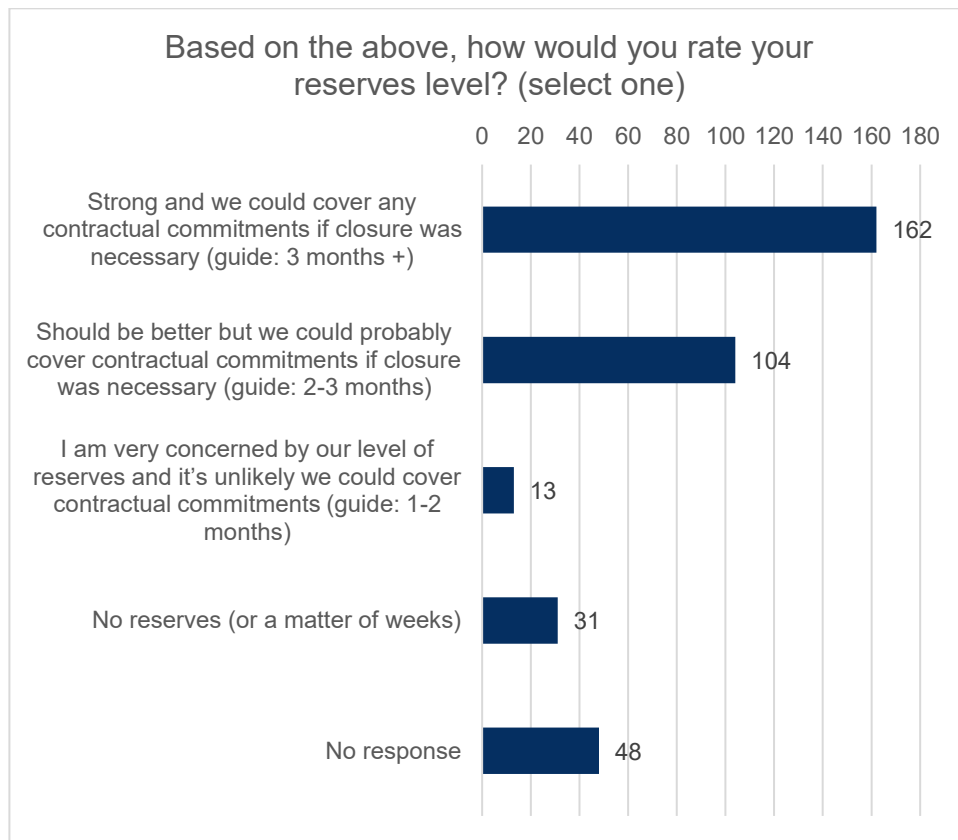
- Interest/investment income
- Donations/legacies
- Retail or café income

Groups were asked how their income had changed over the past 12 months.



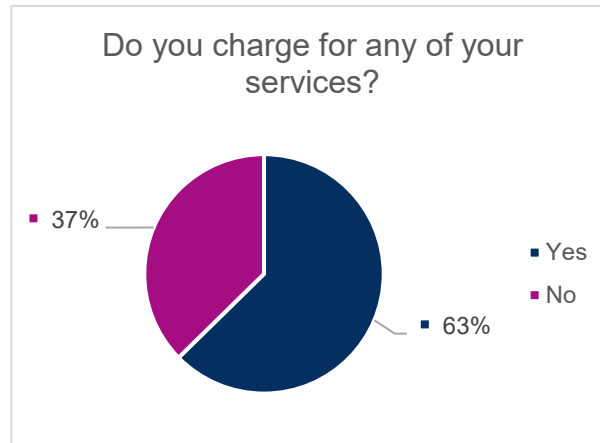
As can be seen from the above chart, the majority of respondents indicated that their income had stayed about the same.

Responding organisations were then given a choice of 4 ratings to choose from, to select where they felt their organisations sat in regard to their current level of reserves ability to cover costs. The four ratings were: Strong and we could cover any contractual commitments if closure was necessary (guide: 3 months +); Should be better but we could probably cover contractual commitments if closure was necessary (guide: 2-3 months); I am very concerned by our level of reserves and it's unlikely we could cover contractual commitments (guide: 1-2 months); and No reserves (or a matter of weeks).



As can be seen from the above chart, 45% of organisations indicated they felt they were in a strong position and could cover any contractual commitments if closure was necessary. 29% of responding organisations said that they were in a position that should be better, but that they could probably cover contractual commitments if closure was necessary. 4% said that they were very concerned by their level of reserves and thought it unlikely they could cover contractual commitments, and 9% of organisations said that they had no reserves and could only survive a matter of weeks.

Groups were asked if they charge for their services. As can be seen below, the majority (67%) indicated that they do.



Those that didn't charge for their services were asked the reason. Their responses were as follows:

1. To remain inclusive and avoid excluding people

Many organisations indicated that they serve people experiencing one or more of the following:

- Poverty, deprivation, or financial insecurity
- Homelessness, domestic abuse, or substance misuse
- Lone-income, low-income, or chaotic family situations
- Disability, neurodivergence, or complex needs
- Crisis situations or emergency support

And felt that charging would create a barrier, discourage engagement, or stop people from seeking help.

2. Their ethos or mission is to remain free

- Many said they were charities with founding principles of being free at point of access.
- Some belong to networks (e.g. Repair Café, Places of Welcome) that prohibit charging.
- Others are volunteer-run, donation-based, or funded through grants rather than fees.
- Some organisations see their work as a “gift to the community.”

- To remain inclusive and avoid excluding people
- Their ethos or mission is to remain free
- Legal, regulatory or funding restrictions
- Their users cannot pay
- Practical or operational barriers
- Mission specific reasons
- Community expectations and past experience
- They only charge nominal or optional amounts
- They don't offer services that can be charged for
- Future considerations

3. Legal, regulatory or funding restrictions

- Some receive supermarket surplus food and are not allowed to charge for it.
- Some said Government messaging such as “free childcare” makes charging for consumables impossible.
- Grant funding agreements require services to remain free.

4. Their users cannot pay

- Beneficiaries often have no disposable income, rely on benefits, or are in severe hardship.
- Charging would prevent families from accessing essentials such as food, clothing, safe spaces or youth activities.

5. Practical or operational barriers

- Charging would require:
 - staff or volunteers to handle payments
 - additional administration, security, or infrastructure
 - means-testing, which is impractical or inappropriate
- For some (e.g. 24/7 food pantries, open public spaces), charging is physically impossible.

6. Mission-specific reasons

- Museums and community events aim to remain freely accessible to encourage attendance.
- Environmental groups want inclusion so that climate action isn't income-dependent.
- Organisations supporting wildlife note that charging would stop the public seeking help.
- Faith-based groups view support as part of their charitable or spiritual mission.

7. Community expectations and past experience

- Previous attempts to charge resulted in:
 - poor attendance
 - community resentment
 - reduced engagement
- Donations work better than fees in many settings.

8. They only charge nominal or optional amounts

- Where charges exist, they are:
 - symbolic (e.g. £1 booking fee)
 - voluntary donations
 - small contributions toward food bags or mileage expenses. People still receive the service even if they cannot pay.

9. They don't offer services that can be charged for

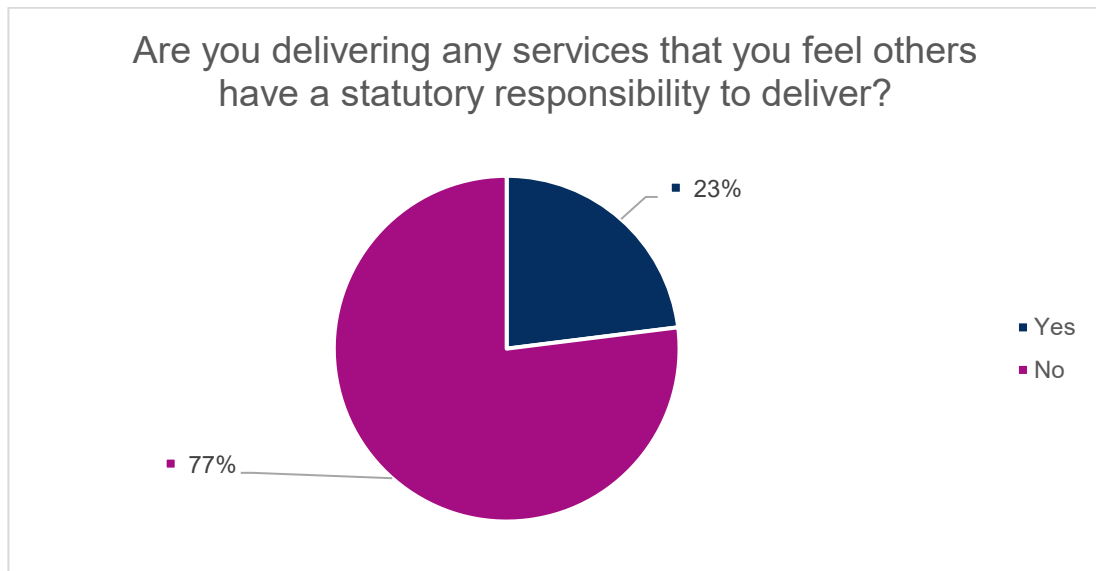
Some organisations said they:

- are grant-making bodies
- offer open spaces or community assets
- provide support rather than deliver a chargeable service
- have not historically charged and see no benefit in changing

10. Future considerations

- A small number said that they are exploring charging for some activities (e.g. training) but not core services. Others are waiting for infrastructure (such as a database system) before considering it.

Statutory Service Provision



When asked whether they were delivering any services that that they felt others have a statutory responsibility to deliver, and if yes, does this, and if so how, impact your ability to fulfil your organisation's objectives/mission. Responses have been summarised below.

- **Many organisations are delivering work that fills statutory gaps (23%)** - A large proportion of respondents say they are providing services that should sit with statutory bodies (local authorities, NHS, education, social care, mental health services, or government). Examples include:
 - Mental health support, counselling, befriending, crisis prevention
 - Family support, mentoring, safeguarding-related work
 - Housing advice, benefits, employment and wellbeing support
 - Youth work where other services have disappeared

- Environmental and climate-related work that councils/government “should” lead
- Public health, nutrition, and practical education
- Poverty relief, food provision, and referral triage
- Dementia support and early-stage intervention
- Recycling schemes and community transport gaps

Some say they exist entirely because statutory provision is failing.

- **Impact on organisations: time, capacity pressure, and mission stretch** - Many reported that taking on statutory responsibilities significantly affected their ability to meet core objectives:
 - Time, volunteers, and staff are stretched thin
 - High-need cases make workloads complex and resource-intensive
 - Long waiting lists in statutory systems push more demand to VCS organisations
 - Some organisations feel forced into “crisis work” rather than proactive or mission-led activity
 - Risk, safeguarding burdens, and emotional labour increase without funding or infrastructure
 - Mission drift occurs when funders say “this should be statutory” and refuse to resource it

A few noted *no direct negative impact*, but this is rare and usually because it aligns with their mission - though they still take on unmet need.

- **Examples of where respondents felt statutory systems are failing** - Respondents highlighted:
 - Overloaded mental health services (12–18 month waits)
 - Lack of early help, pastoral and family support from statutory teams
 - Rural transport gaps
 - Poor supported housing provision
 - Slow or inadequate dementia diagnosis and post-diagnosis support
 - Insufficient school capacity for SEND, safeguarding or enrichment
 - Basic welfare (food, income support) not meeting people’s needs
 - Climate emergency response lacking urgency or leadership
- **Emotional and ethical tensions** - Several organisations described:
 - Feeling unable to turn people away when they know the statutory sector is not meeting needs
 - Volunteers absorbing high-risk or high-complexity situations
 - Unequal partnership working with statutory agencies who use community services as “overflow capacity”
 - Frustration that work essential for public wellbeing depends on short-term, insecure funding
- **Some organisations are formally commissioned** - A minority note that although they deliver statutory responsibilities, they are commissioned to do so and therefore see it as part of their role.

- **A few said it did not impact them**

Some organisations say:

- “It doesn’t impact us”
- “It is our mission”
- “There is no government alternative”

But these responses were in the minority.

Overall, most organisations responding to this question felt they were picking up unmet statutory responsibilities, often because statutory services are overstretched, under-resourced, or absent. This places significant pressure on voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations, particularly in terms of time, capacity, risk, emotional burden and financial sustainability. Many feel they are preventing people from reaching crisis point, but without the funding or infrastructure that statutory services would normally have. A small number see this work as aligned with their mission or are formally commissioned, but overall, the dominant theme that came out was that substitution rather than supplementation was being undertaken, which it seems is increasingly unsustainable.

Groups were asked, considering their current organisational needs, what type of funding would support their organisation the most. As can be seen below, by far the most support could be provided to organisations through the provision of core funding, which came out at almost double all of the other options.

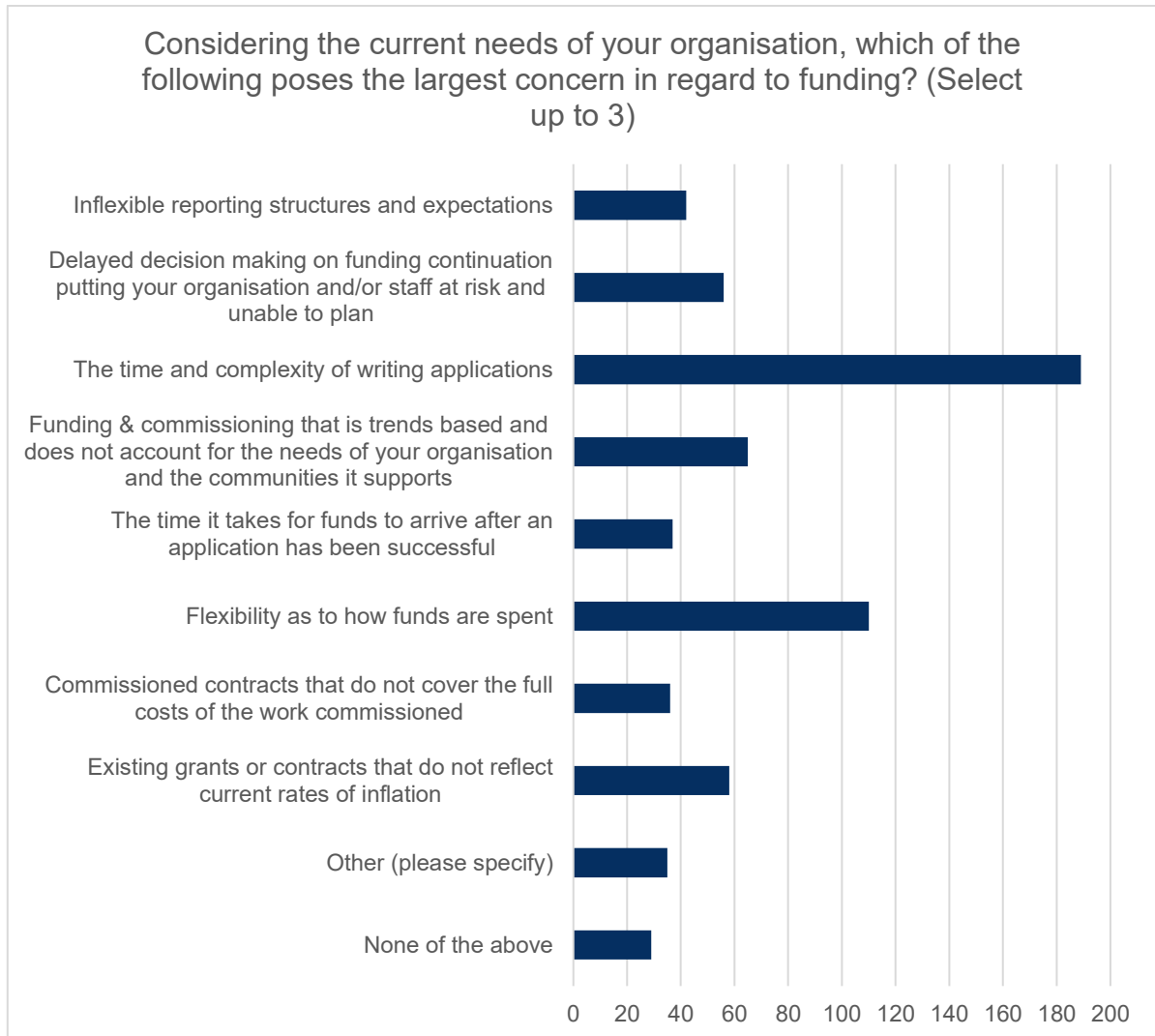


In the other option, the following areas of funding were put forward:

- Funding for Buildings & Running Costs
- Funding for Staffing & Volunteer Support
- General or Unrestricted Funding
- Funding for Marketing & Outreach
- Funding for Specific Appeals

Responding participants were then asked, considering the current needs of their organisation, which of the following list poses the largest concern in regard to funding (and participants could select up to three options). The options were: Inflexible reporting structures and expectations; Delayed decision making on funding continuation putting your organisation and/or staff at risk and unable to plan; The time and complexity of writing applications; Funding & commissioning that is trends based and does not account for the needs of your organisation and the communities it supports; The time it takes for funds to arrive after an application has been successful; Flexibility as to how funds are spent; Commissioned contracts that do not cover the full costs of the work commissioned; Existing grants or contracts that do not reflect current rates of inflation; Other (please specify); or None of the above.

As can be seen in the responses below, the two that jump out are the time and complexity of writing applications and the flexibility as to how funds are spent being of largest concern.



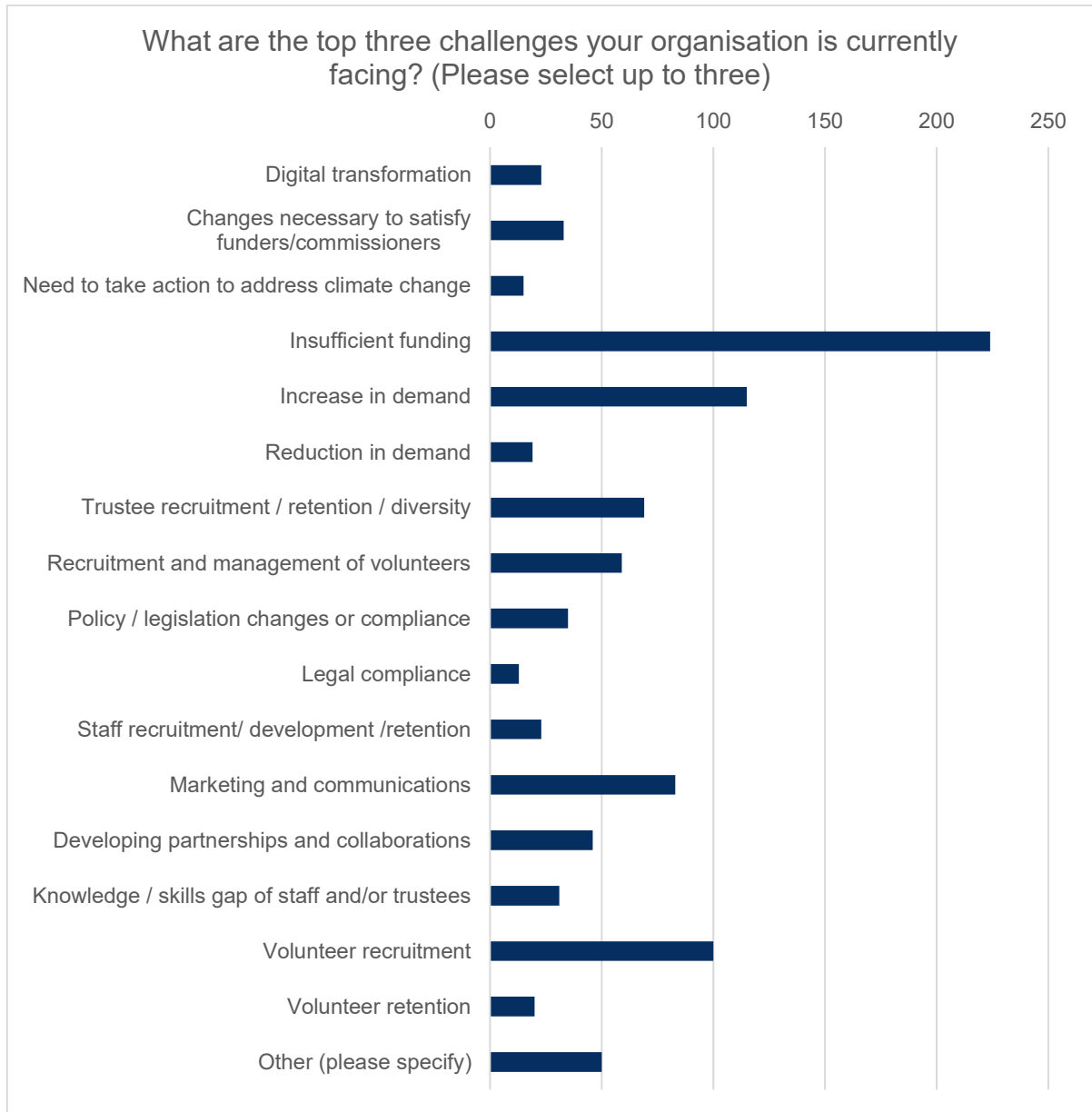
In the Other responses, the following themes were raised as the largest concerns in regard to funding:

- Limited eligibility for many funds; criteria often exclude needs such as salaries or specific organisation types.
- Grants tend to be small, short term, or only partial, with low allowances for overheads.
- High competition and oversubscription, made worse by the cost of living crisis.
- Decreased availability of funding and reduced support from councils and donors.
- Long decision times and time-consuming research, with limited internal grant seeking knowledge or capacity.

- Budgeting difficulties due to irregular support (e.g. council supplied resources) and rising operational costs.
- Reserves misunderstood as surplus, limiting eligibility even when earmarked for maintenance.
- Practical barriers such as short building leases affecting grant access.
- Local government reorganisation creating uncertainty in future funding.
- Difficulty securing funds for essential repairs, equipment, or regular external income.
- Need for more volunteers to support fundraising efforts.

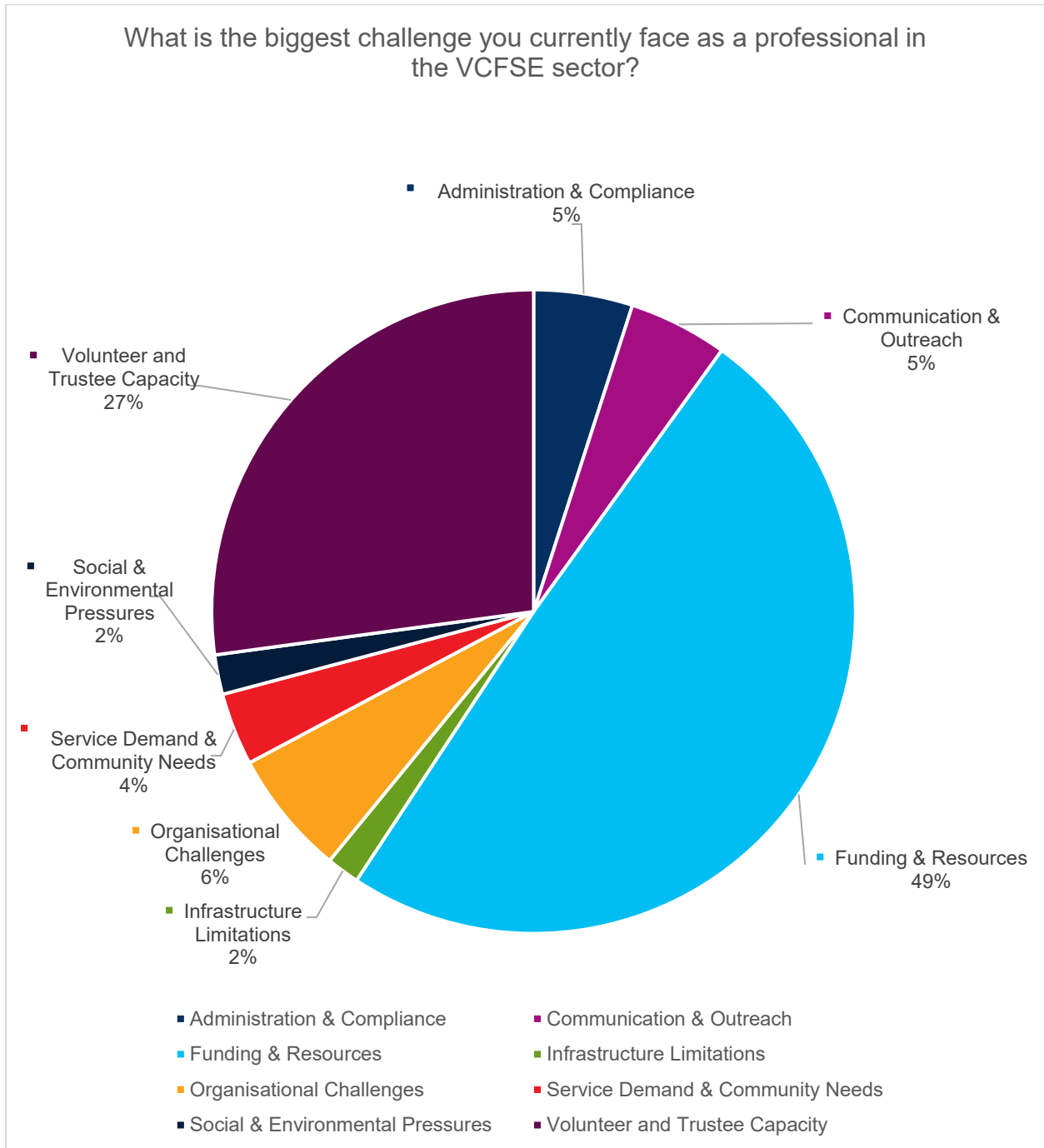
7. Challenges and Support Needs

Survey participants were asked about their top three challenges that they were currently facing. The top three responses were Insufficient Funding, Increase in Demand and Volunteer Recruitment



Organisations were then asked what they felt was the biggest challenge they currently faced as a professional in the VCFSE sector.

The use of the word “professional” in this question seemed to throw a few respondents, who simply replied that they were not professional, they were volunteers, so one thing to take back and consider for the next annual survey is the use of language to ensure it is more inclusive for the whole of the sector. The biggest challenges were then put into broad themes to aid the analysis.

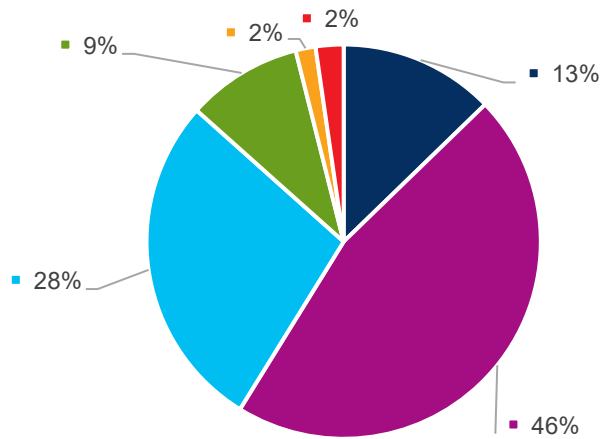


A list of the themes and the challenges included within each is below, however, as can be seen from the pie chart above, clearly the biggest concern faced as professionals within the VCFSE sector is that of Funding and Resources, with 49% of respondents highlighting these.

- **Administration & Compliance**
Growing admin burden, regulation and compliance pressures, IT changes, and bureaucratic obstacles.
- **Communication & Outreach**
Low public awareness, weak engagement, collaboration gaps, and challenges in reaching or informing residents.
- **Funding & Resources**
Insufficient funding, rising costs, limited food supply, low wages, and pressure on resources/facilities.
- **Infrastructure Limitations**
Inadequate buildings, compliance demands on premises, and lack of suitable community or event spaces.
- **Organisational Challenges**
Modernisation needs, leadership gaps, staffing issues, strategic uncertainty, and governance strain.
- **Service Demand & Community Needs**
Increasing need for support (health, poverty, food, advice), aging clients, and diverse community issues.
- **Social & Environmental Pressures**
Antisocial behaviour, social pessimism, political climate changes, and resistance within wider systems.
- **Volunteer and Trustee Capacity**
Limited volunteers, overstretch, fatigue, and difficulty engaging or recruiting people.

Respondents were asked how, in the past 12 months, they would describe the demand for their organisation's services compared to the year before.

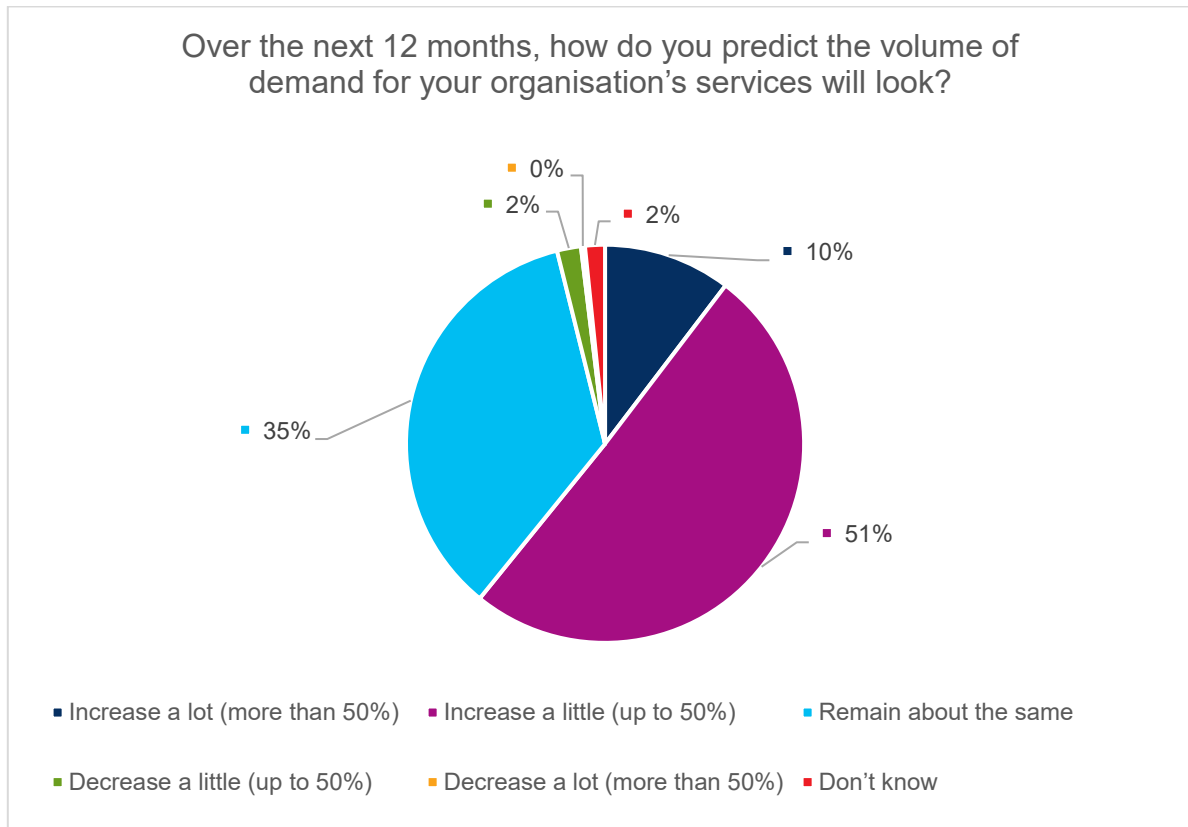
In the past 12 months, how would you describe the demand for your organisation's services, compared to the year before?



- Increased a lot (more than 50%)
- Increased a little (up to 50%)
- Remained about the same
- Decreased a little (up to 50%)
- Decreased a lot (more than 50%)
- Don't know

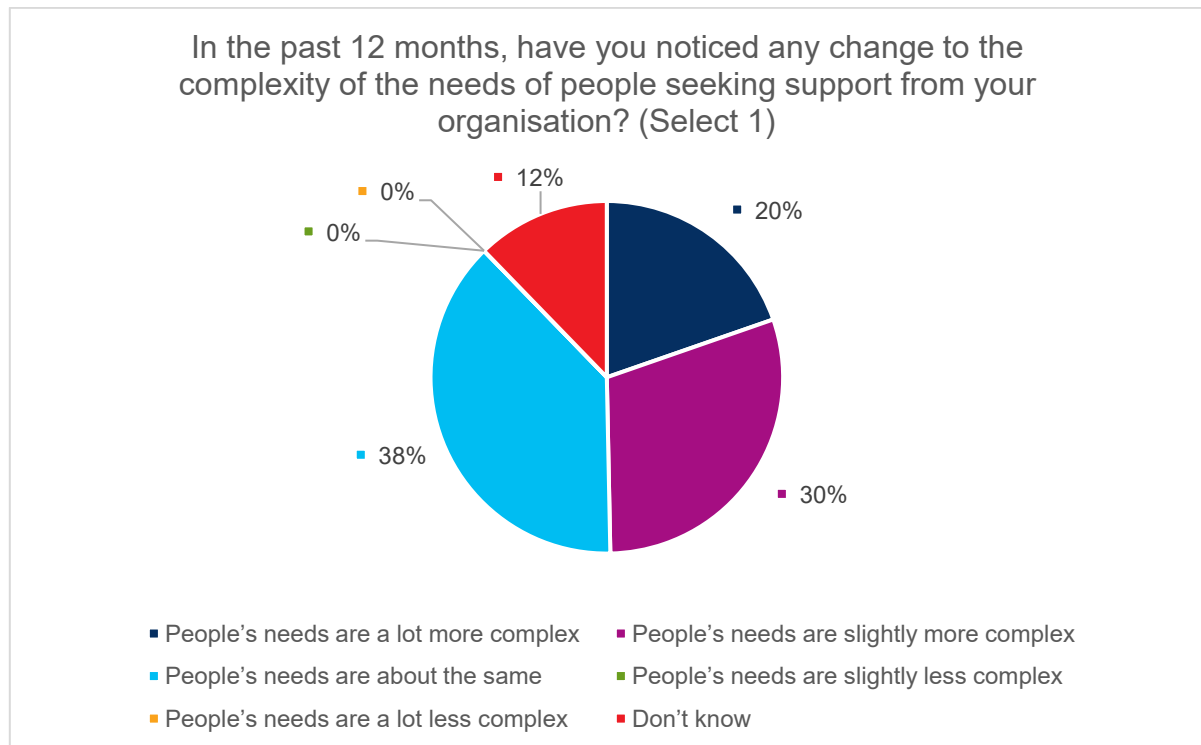
59% of respondents indicated that they felt the levels of demand had increase a little (46%) or had increased a lot (13%) during the past year compared to the level of service demand in the previous year.

Respondents were then asked to look forwards and think about the next 12 months. They were asked to predict how the volume of demand for their organisation's services will look in 12 months' time.



A combined 61% of respondents felt that demand for their services would increase a little (51%) or a lot (10%) in the forthcoming year.

Groups were asked whether they had noticed any difference in the complexity of the needs of people seeking support from the services that they provided. As can be seen below, 20% of respondents felt that people’s needs have become a lot more complex over the past 12 month period, and a further 30% of respondents said they felt people’s needs are slightly more complex now than they were 12 months ago. 38% of respondents felt that the complexity of people’s needs had remained relatively stable over the past 12 month period.



Responding organisations were asked whether they had undertaken any of a list of actions to meet volume or demand or complexity of need. Respondents could select any from the list that applied to them. The list of options included:

- Purchased new goods and services (e.g. specialist equipment or software)
- Used consultants and/or organisations with specialist expertise
- Undertaken training and/or qualifications for staff and/or volunteers
- Formed new partnerships with other organisations
- Recruited additional staff on a permanent basis
- Recruited additional staff on a fixed term basis
- Recruited additional volunteers
- Removed services to concentrate resource on another service
- Adapted existing services (e.g. moved to virtual delivery)
- Expanded or grown existing services
- Introduced new services

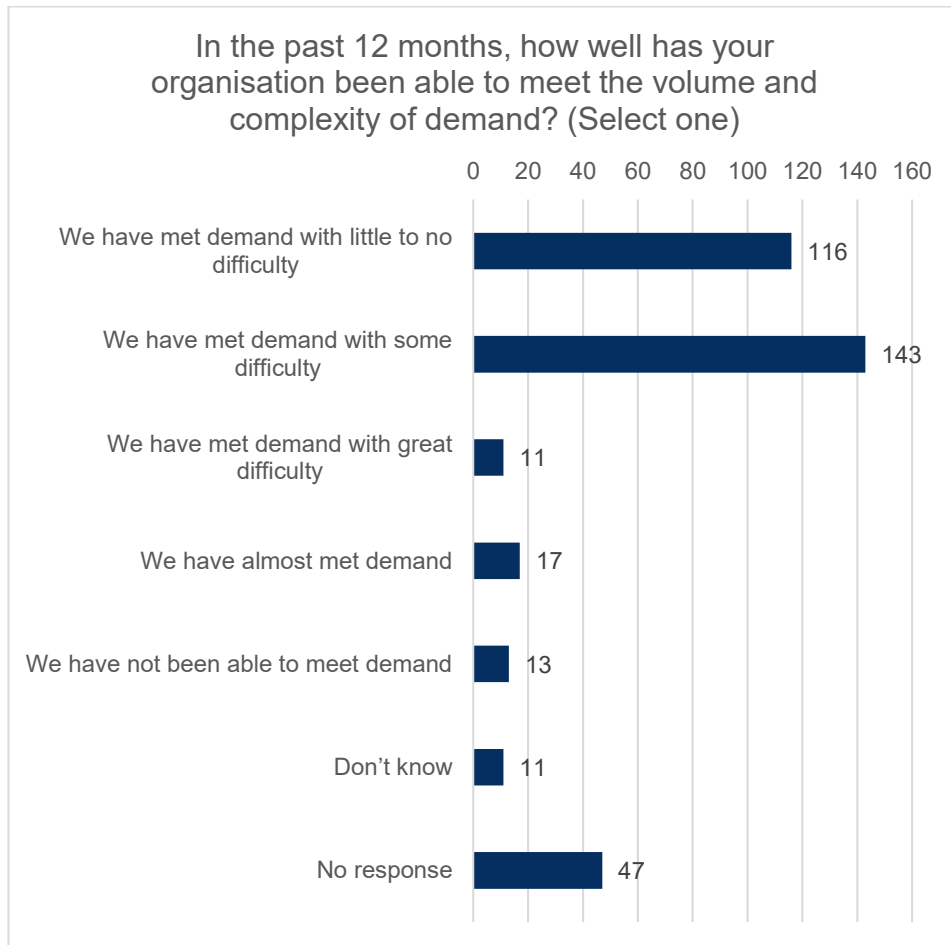
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know
- None of the above



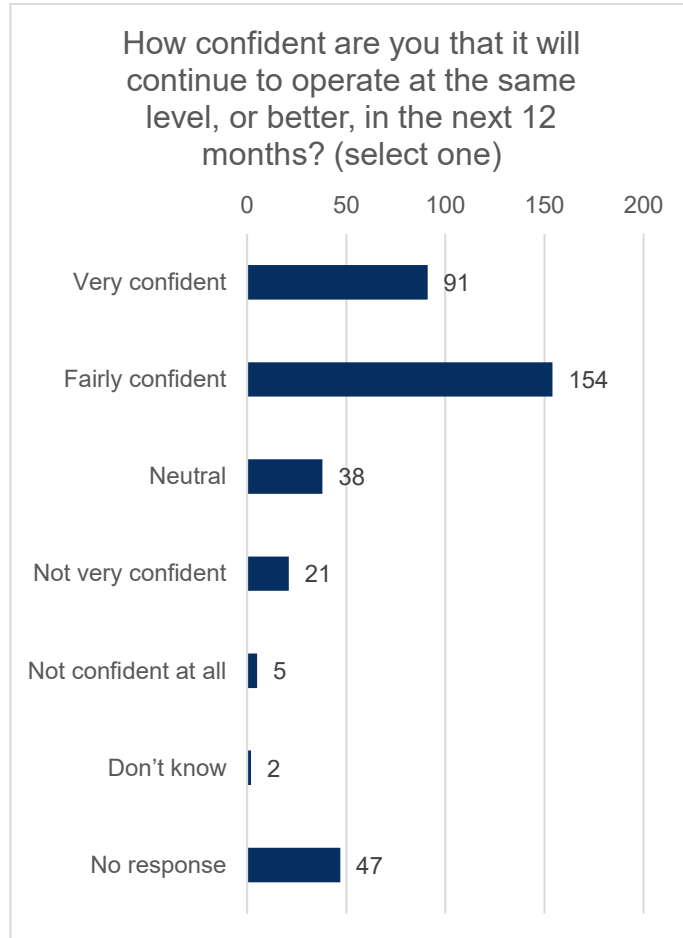
As can be seen from the responses in the chart above, the top three actions undertaken across responding organisations have been the recruitment of additional volunteers, the expansion of existing services and the introduction of new services.

A supplementary question to this was asked of respondents as to how, in the past 12 months, they felt their organisations had been able to meet the volume and complexity of demand. As can be seen on the following chart, 32% of respondents met the volume and complexity of demand with little or no difficulty, whilst a further 40% of organisations were able to meet the volume and complexity of demand with some difficulty. 3% have met

demand with great difficulty and a further 5% almost managed to meet demand. 4% of responding organisation however were unable to meet the volume and complexity of demand during the past 12 months.



Groups were asked how confident that were that their organisation will continue to operate at the same level or better in the next 12 months. 68% of survey respondents said that they felt very (25%) or fairly (43%) confident that they would be able to continue to operate at the same level or better in the forthcoming year.

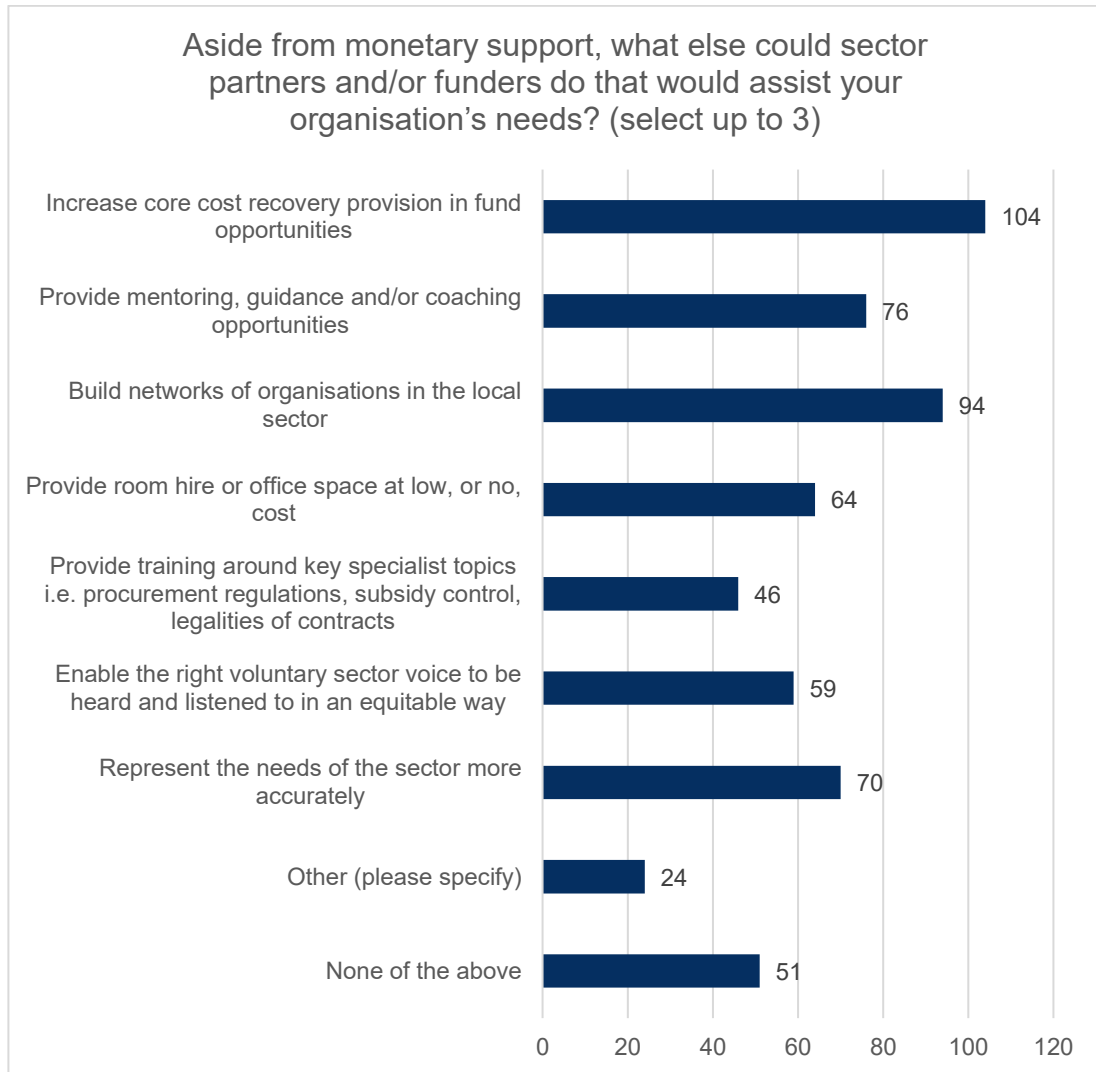


More information on demand, complexity and the challenges

When given the space to expand on their answers, respondents indicated that demand is rising across almost all services, with people presenting with increasingly complex and overlapping needs. Many organisations are filling gaps left by statutory services, often supporting individuals for longer and beyond their original remit. Capacity is strained due to funding instability, workforce shortages, and reliance on a small number of overstretched volunteers.

Buildings, transport, rurality and infrastructure challenges were given as factors limiting the ability to meet growing need. Without sustainable funding and more volunteers, many groups were indicating that they risked being unable to keep pace with demand.

Responding organisations were asked, aside from monetary support, what else sector partners and /or funders could do that would assist their organisation's needs. As can be seen from the following chart of responses, the majority of respondents (29%) said that increased provision for core cost recovery in fund opportunities would be of assistance. This was closely followed by 26% of respondents who said that it would be of assistance to them to build networks of organisations in the local sector. The third most requested assistance organisations felt would be helpful was the provision of mentoring, guidance and/or coaching opportunities, with 21% selecting this.

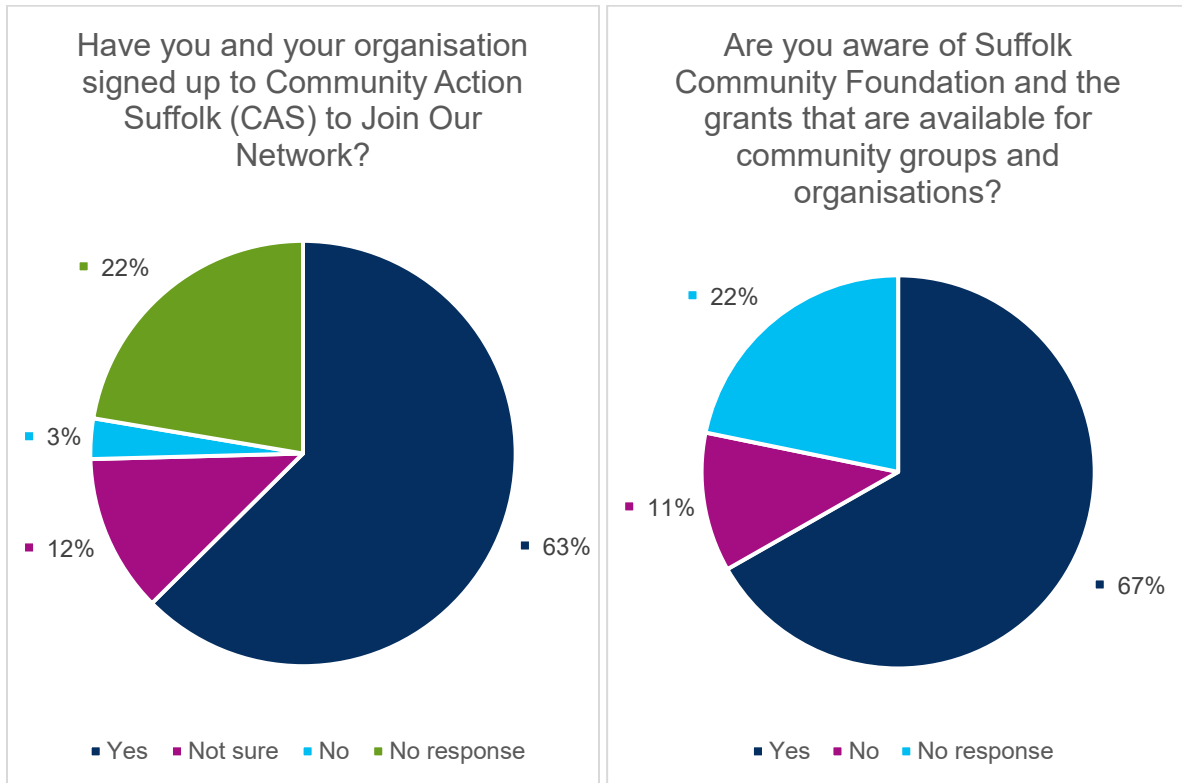


In the Other option, the respondents that selected this gave various responses, including:

- Greater government support and recognition of essential, at-risk voluntary work.
- Wider access to core funding, storage, insurance deals, and publicity.
- More training plus legal, HR, marketing, and improvement support.

- Help recruiting volunteers, trustees, and support for new groups.
- Rebuild local conversations to plan food, water and energy resilience.
- Access to someone to talk to during challenges.

8. CAS (Community Action Suffolk) and Suffolk Community Foundation Support



9. Impact of the VCFSE Sector Voice – You Said – We Did

Last year saw the first of what is now our annual State of the VCFSE Sector in Suffolk Report. One of the recommendations put forward in the last report was to ease the process of applying for funding. Suffolk Community Foundation took this recommendation forward and in October 2025 announced a ***“streamlined grant application process. Most applications can now be submitted via our General Application Form, including for the Suffolk Giving Fund, which should save organisations applying to multiple funds. We hope this change will make it easier and more time efficient for many applicants.”***

Other big funders have also implemented more flexible funding after listening to grant recipients views. The Henry Smith Foundation that tackles social and economic exclusion [unveiled its Elevate Your Impact 2025-30 strategy, which involves offering “longer-term, core funding” to the organisations it funds](#), whilst Small charity funder the [Fore announced it would raise the ceiling on grants it offered by 50% from autumn 2025 in response to small charities’ rising costs](#).

It was reported in [Civil Society Magazine in January 2026](#) that ***“an increase in the proportion of long-term grants being handed out to charities has been revealed in new research. The percentage of organisations which stated that grantmakers made a long-term investment in their work increased by at least eight percentage points from 2022 to 40% in 2025, according to the latest Third Sector Trends report.”***

Suffolk Community Foundation has also signed up for the eight IVAR grantmaking principles which are:

1. Don't waste time
2. Ask relevant questions
3. Accept risk
4. Act with urgency
5. Be open
6. Enable flexibility
7. Communicate with purpose
8. Be proportionate.

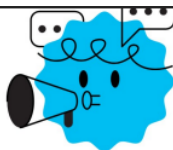
[Click here to read more about their eight open and trusting grant-making commitments.](#)

Suffolk County Council have involved Community Action Suffolk in a commissioning subgroup, heard sector concerns from last year's State of the Sector research, and are working through these continuing into 2026.

A further recommendation from the previous report was around Staff and volunteer wellbeing support and encourage sharing best practice, what works, and how to support staff and volunteers to reduce risk of burnout, sickness and poor wellbeing.

During this year we held a Voluntary Sector Leaders Wellbeing Event for leaders across the sector with plans to repeat in 2026. The details were as follows:

CALLING ALL
SUFFOLK
VOLUNTARY
SECTOR LEADERS...



WELLBEING EVENT

5 NOVEMBER 2025

09:00 AM - 04:00 PM

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL SCHOOL

Holbrook, Ipswich, IP9 2RT

09:00 AM	Arrive & Welcome
09:30 AM	Part 1 - Leadership Wellbeing Exchange (Suffolk Mind)
10:30 AM	Part 2 - Resilient Leadership: Awareness to Action (Suffolk Mind)
11:40 AM	Break
12:00 PM	Part 3 - Sharpening Focus for Calmer Leadership (Suffolk Mind)
1:15 PM	Lunch
2:00 PM	Chair Yoga (ActivLives)
2:30 PM	Putting the Oxygen Mask on First - Practical support techniques (Mad-HR)
3:00 PM	Sponsor case study/refreshments & reflections (Close 4pm)

A BIT MORE DETAIL...



09:30 AM	Leadership Wellbeing Exchange (Suffolk Mind) We'll start the day with an energising peer-led session where leaders share practical wellbeing strategies and explore burnout prevention in a safe, supportive space. Leave with a renewed sense of collective commitment to healthier, more sustainable leadership.
10:30 AM	Resilient Leadership - Awareness to Action (Suffolk Mind) Build deeper self-awareness and practical tools for mental wellbeing. Learn to audit emotional needs, spot early signs of stress, and distinguish between healthy stretch and harmful strain. Leave with a personal plan to boost your own work-life balance.
12:00 PM	Sharpening Focus for Calmer Leadership (Suffolk Mind) Discover why focus is vital for performance and wellbeing. Explore three simple tools to enhance attention and free up mental capacity. This session connects focus to calmness, equipping leaders with strategies to feel more present, composed, and effective.
2:00 PM	Chair Yoga (ActivLives) Let's face it, as Voluntary Sector Leaders, some days are 'chair days' - those days in too many meetings where hours slip past with just a little movement. This session will be a post-lunch accessible wake up, with jokes, to managers to lead and give us some useful techniques to stretch out from the comfort of our chairs.
2:30 PM	Putting the Oxygen Mask on First: Practical Support for CEOs (MAD - HR) The pressure of balancing multiple priorities, making tough decisions, and carrying the emotional weight of those choices often leaves leaders with little space for themselves. MAD-HR will give us 3 practical, actionable strategies to manage pressure, build resilience, and protect their own capacity.

In the State of the Voluntary Sector 2025, leaders from across all corners of the sector told us that staff and volunteer wellbeing and burnout had become very real concerns.

But as leaders, we often shoulder responsibility for looking after others and forget to take time for ourselves - yet we all know we should...

The overall aim of this event is to take some time out for us, to share practical tools & tips with each other, and create a safe space within our network to support one another.

This event is exclusively for Voluntary Sector Leaders (Chief Executive or equivalent), so if you would like to join us, please email belinda.couldridge@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk to **book your place by 5pm on Monday 27th October** (When booking, please let us know of any Accessibility or Dietary requirements)

We hope to see you there

Event partners:



Suffolk Volunteering Strategy 2025-2028 was launched and can be found [here](#) and a new Next Generation Volunteer post has been created and has now commenced within Community Action Suffolk which will provide additional capacity to drive forward our ambitions to inspire the next generation of volunteers and ensure a diverse range of volunteering opportunities.

10. Recommendations

1. Following the success of the VCFSE Leaders Wellbeing Event, it is proposed that another Chief Executive Wellbeing Day be organised for 2026.

[Merrifield Consultants](#) undertook research into Burnout in the charity sector and came up with ways to address the issue, which could perhaps be used to improve the situation for the VCFSE Sector in Suffolk.

“How can we prevent burnout?”

From our research, we looked to find ways burnout can be prevented, and what operational and strategic solutions can be implemented.

These solutions include:

- *Training on stress management and resilience*
- *Clear boundaries between work and personal lives*

- *Open communication and supportive leadership*
- *Flexible working hours and remote work*
- *Workload management*

As our research shows, burnout is a pressing issue within the charity sector. With the increasing pressure of high demands, long hours, and limited resources, employees' wellbeing suffers. The detrimental effects of burnout affect operational efficiency and impact their vulnerable communities. This emphasises the urgent need for more effective burnout prevention strategies, such as enhanced support systems, clear communication, and flexible working hours. By addressing both the external and internal factors contributing to burnout, charities can foster a healthier work environment, ultimately improving both employee well-being and organisational performance. It is crucial for leaders to recognise the signs of burnout and implement tailored strategies that take on their employees' feedback to better support their teams, ensuring a sustainable and impactful future for the sector."

2. To increase understanding of funding bodies on good practice reserve policies and encourage understanding that reserves being interpreted as a surplus, and thus limiting eligibility should not be assumed. There have been updates to Charity Commission guidance on reserves this year and training/expectations should be updated to reflect its principles.
3. To encourage funding bodies to increase provision for full core cost recovery in fund opportunities.
4. To encourage, develop and build networks of organisations in the local VCFSE sector, along with developing these networks to also be a source of mentoring, guidance and/or coaching opportunities.
5. To share the 'asks' identified in this report with grant makers and commissioners to help influence policy and practice in commissioning and procurement.
6. To share and promote the support that both SCF and CAS can provide to groups and organisations with regards to start ups and bid development.
7. To investigate with statutory bodies, the development of notifications updates and collaboration opportunities that could be shared when bid/tender opportunities are circulated to ensure that the sector has view of the opportunities available.
8. To advocate for commissioning authorities to stop or reduce the use of arrears payment terms, which can cause VCFSE organisations severe cashflow pressures.

11. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Groups that gave up their valuable time to complete and submit their responses to this survey.