

### REPORT PROFILE

Voluntary Action Swindon first carried out a survey in 2020 to measure the impact on the voluntary and community sector following lockdown. A year on and (hopefully) coming out of lockdown we have carried out another survey. The findings are reported here.

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### DATE OF REPORT

June 2021



One year on from our last Coronavirus Impact Report, Voluntary Action Swindon (VAS) wanted to continue to monitor the impact on voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations locally and to look at if and how they have adapted service delivery. VAS targeted those organisations that are known to us and charities registered with the Charity Commission.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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As the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) in Swindon, we have seen the impact on COVID-19 on VCS organisations and seen how they have adapted and changed delivery to meet local demands during the pandemic. We have seen organisations adopt safe COVID-19 behaviours and commit to finding new ways of remaining available and responsive to those in need. Sometimes that has meant adapting delivery models away from venue-based, face to face delivery to on-line or outreach, or creating new innovative ways of providing services to meet both the existing and new needs of the local community. All at a time when staff and volunteers were also facing an uncertain future.

It has been, and continues to be, a hugely challenging period. We are all aware of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the NHS and our social care system, but this report also highlights the impact on VCS organisations in Swindon. It highlights the adaptability, responsiveness and resourcefulness of VCS organisations being willing to provide and respond quickly to meet demand during this difficult time.

Following the announcement of the first lockdown in March 2020 Wiltshire Community Foundation (WCF) launched the Wiltshire and Swindon Coronavirus Appeal to support VCS organisations through the pandemic. Swindon received £399,954 from this funding to enable the VCS to respond to emergency, to adapt delivery of their services and to ensure sustainability. To read WCF's full Covid Response Report [here](#).

Whilst this funding and other funding streams have helped. There is still a shortfall, particularly of core funding.

VAS wanted to understand the impact that Covid has had on delivery in Swindon one year on. These are our key findings.

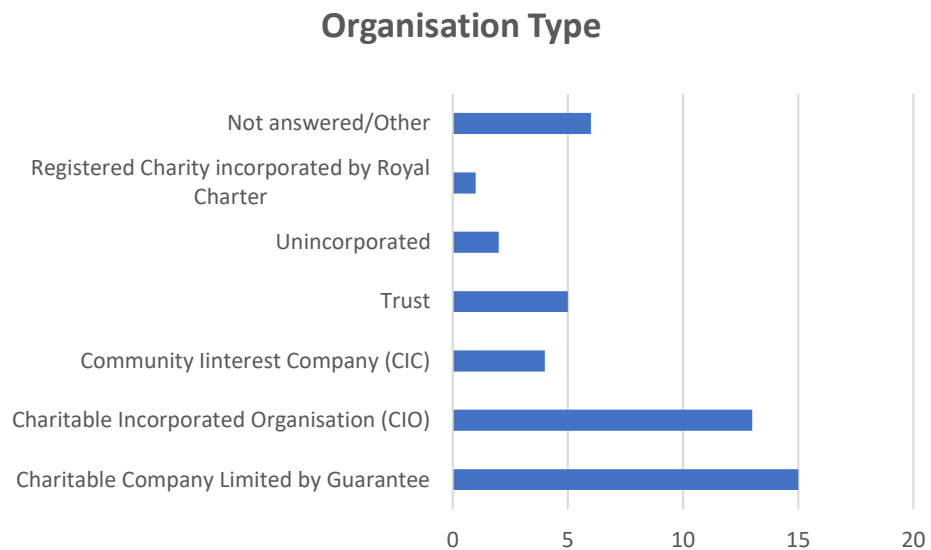
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## KEY FINDINGS

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49 responses were returned. 46 responses were returned via the survey with a further 3 commented via email.

### Organisation Type



### Staff & Volunteers

#### Paid Staff

- Those responding had a range of 0 – 230 paid employees.
- 74% had less than 25 paid employees.
- 52% had less than 5 paid employees.

#### Furlough

- 30% have had to furlough staff, some are on flexible furlough, some have had to reduce staff hours.
  - 9 organisations have 1 or 2 staff furloughed.
  - The largest employer with 230 still have 25% of employees furloughed.

#### Redundancies

- 4 organisations have had to make redundancies (ranging to the equivalent of 1 – 3 employees). There has also been some natural wastage with 4 people leaving of their own accord.
  - 1 organisation reported that more staff will be made redundant in August if no sustainable further funding is found.
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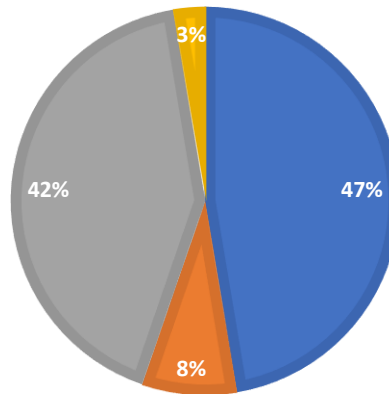
## Volunteers



Organisations reported having a range of 0 – 200 volunteers, equating to over 1000 volunteers across the 49 organisations!  
5 organisations have not been able to use volunteers at all during this time due to restrictions.

### IMPACT ON VOLUNTEER NUMBERS

■ Decrease ■ Increase ■ Same ■ Don't know



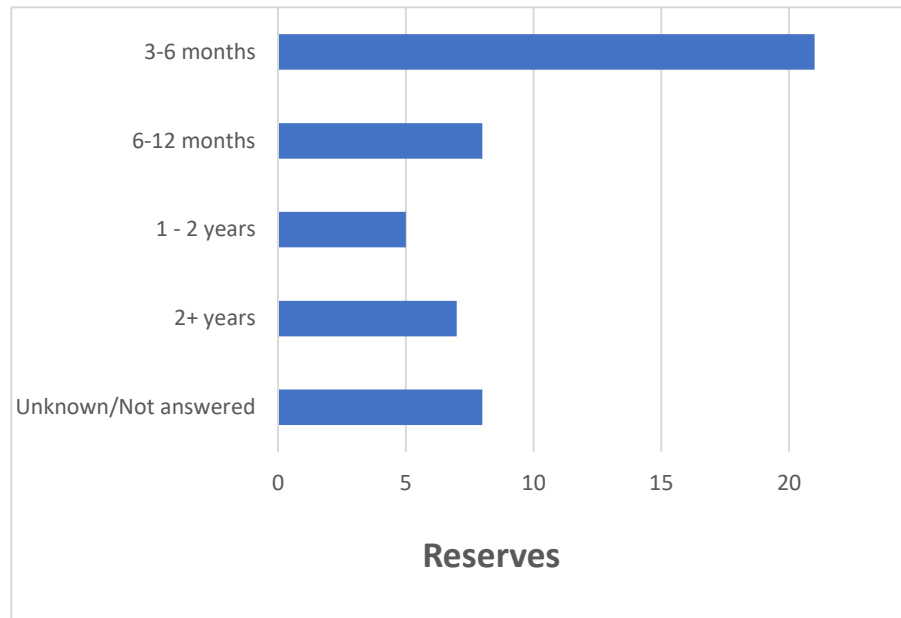
- 8% of organisations have seen an **increase** in volunteers.
- 47% of have seen a **decrease** in volunteer numbers. Some of these may have diverted to support the Live Well Hub in Swindon Borough Council with food distribution and supporting those that were shielding. These volunteers may return when they are able.
- 42% remained the same.

## **Finance**

- Turnover of survey respondents ranged from £1,500 - £20 million+.
- 33 organisations (67%) have seen a decrease in income.
- 5 of the 49 organisations do not have a reserves policy, one of these is a new organisation.
- 41% of organisations only have 3 – 6 months of reserves.
- A further 17% have 6 – 12 months with 25% having 1 -2 years reserves.

It has been well documented that the voluntary sector rose to the challenge of COVID-19 and adapted, was resourceful and responsive to the changing demands. They stepped up to deliver food and medical

provisions during this period. Many volunteers came forward to support – some leaving their current volunteering position to help the statutory sector. During this period organisations have still had to continue their on-going fight for sustainable funding.



### Impact on Delivery

We received a response from 82% of the participants of this survey.

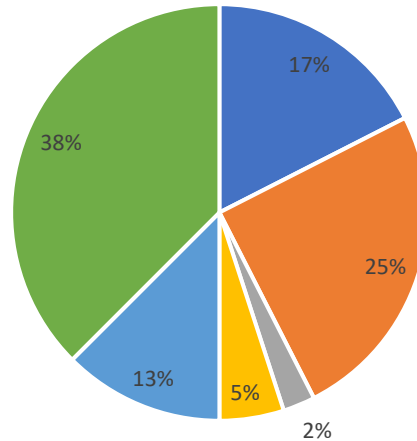
- 13 reported an **increase** of between 3% - 50% of normal service delivery.
- 18 reported a **decrease** in service delivery of between 5% - 80% of their normal service delivery.
- 5 organisations remain closed, with one organisation anticipating returning to 80% delivery soon.
- 4 organisations had seen no change in service delivery.

### Direct Service Delivery

- 75% were able to adapt to continue to provide direct service to their users.
- Some have continued with face to face, where possible, following Government guidelines. Although not all service users continued to attend.
- The majority adapted their delivery via mail, e-mail, telephone or virtually.

In terms of the challenges in service delivery:

## Challenges



- Increased demand
- Restrictions resulting in reduced service
- Having to close
- Complexity of issues
- Digital poverty
- Lack of funding/struggle to find funding

- The biggest challenge reported by 38% of those completing the survey is the struggle to find funding whilst still continuing to meet the increased, or different, demands on service.
- 25% cited the restrictions due to the pandemic with,
- 13% being unable to reach their clients due to digital poverty.
- 5% reported challenges relating to the complexity of issues presenting.

## Funders

Many organisations reported that they had received financial support from Government grants available during Covid. Other funding sources have come from:

- National Lottery
- Tesco
- Arts Council
- Zurich Community Trust
- Wiltshire Community Foundation
- Children in Need
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation

- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- TSB Bank
- Individual donations

**87% CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR FUNDING**

“We continue to look for funding on an annual basis”

“Funding opportunities continually sought and reviewed for existing projects”

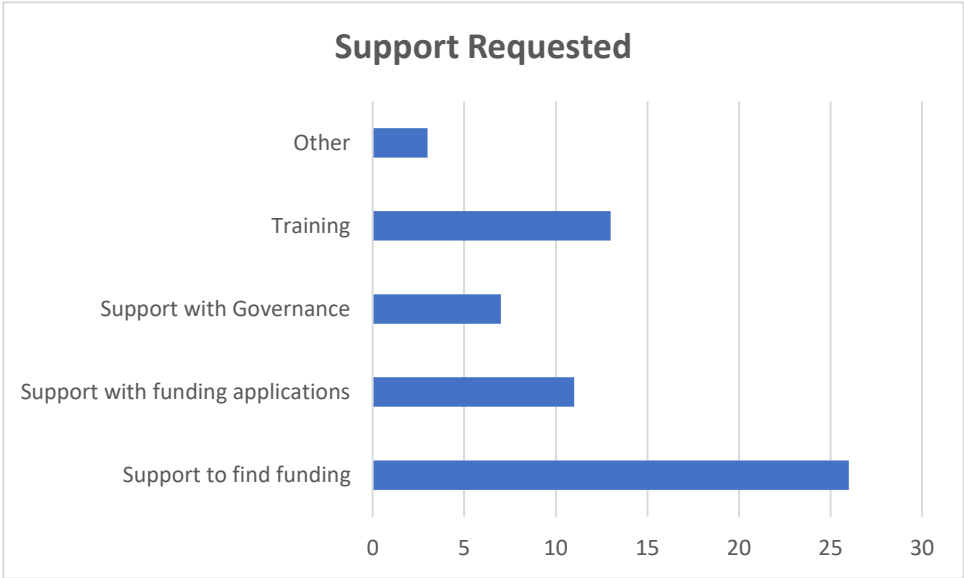
“We need extra funding to survive”

“We apply mostly for core funding”

“We’re always having to seek grant funding”

“We intend to approach relevant partnerships that refer to our organisation on a daily basis to see if contracts can be discussed”

**Support Requested from Voluntary Action**



- The majority of those that answered this question (26) requested support with funding, with 11 needing additional support with funding applications.
- 7 were looking for support with governance.
- A further 13 requested further training.
- Of the 3 ‘other’, 2 were looking for new trustees, and 1 was looking for volunteers.

## HOW WE RESPONDED

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During the 2019/2020 financial year VAS responded to 105 requests for help to either source funding opportunities or help with bid writing. We also responded to over 100 other requests for help and advice on other matters.

In specific response to the COVID-19 surveys we:

- Offered support to search for funding and making organisations aware of the services we offer – starting with the organisations with the least reserves.
- Used our grant search software and set up a database of those organisation currently looking for funding. This enables us to mail out regular reports of funding opportunities.
- Offered signposting support and facilitated introduction to funders.
- Established a Voluntary Sector COVID-19 Recovery Group as a way of supporting the voluntary sector (this was set up following the first lock-down) and joining things up with the statutory responses.
- Set up a specific COVID-19 resource section on our website to provide signposting to information and support available and share examples of COVID-19 risk mitigation.
- Increased out weekly VAS-ID newsletter to twice weekly during the peak COVID response period.
- Launched a new Swindon Trustee Network to enable organisations to link up and improve their governance and support the recruitment of trustees. The first meeting included an update from the Swindon Borough Council Director of Public Health on COVID-19, the second network session will provide governance support for Safeguarding.
- Linked up with Swindon Volunteer Centre for help looking for volunteers and trustees.

In addition, we:

- Set up 'VAS Live' monthly networking sessions to support the sector. Which includes a section on funding available and introductions to funders as well as speakers on other topics.
- Established the Swindon Food Alliance
- Re-launched the Swindon Equality Coalition.

**THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR TIME IN RESPONDING TO THESE SURVEYS**

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