



# VCSE Resilience Survey

## Key Findings - York

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# Introduction



Key findings from the third Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Resilience Survey; a joint online survey circulated across Yorkshire and Humberside to gather up-to-date information on how the pandemic is impacting the VCSE sector.

York CVS joined with other VCSE infrastructure support partners across Yorkshire and Humberside to produce and circulate this shared survey which was co-ordinated by Voluntary Action Leeds and Community First Yorkshire. The data was analysed by the Mobilising Volunteers Effectively (MoVE) project: a partnership between the Universities of Sheffield, Hull and Leeds.

Fieldwork took place in May 2021. The report focuses on the responses from VCSE sector organisations who are operating in York and consists of responses from 40 organisations (not all responded to all questions).

The key findings are indicative of the impact the pandemic is having on the sector but they are not definitive.

# Past surveys



Partners across Yorkshire and Humberside, including York CVS and Community First Yorkshire issued two earlier surveys in April 2020 and October 2020 to gain information about how the pandemic was impacting the VCSE sector.

The results of these surveys have been shared and discussed with stakeholders, funders and strategic partners across Yorkshire, the Humber and nationally. Reference to data from these surveys is used throughout this document. You can view the summary reports for York on our [website](#).

# Key findings



- **Significant decrease in earned income – 87% of organisations reported a decrease in earned income. 1 in 3 organisations [28%] have seen their earned income decrease by between 76% - 100%.**
- **Increased demand for services with fewer staff and volunteers - 64% of organisations reported that demand for their services has increased, with 39% reporting that they now employ fewer paid staff and 44% reporting a decrease in volunteers.**
- **Depleting reserves – 33% of organisations have used their reserves and of those organisations who have used their reserves, 23% have used between 76% - 100%.**

# Key findings



- **Digital exclusion – 21% of organisations reported finding digital exclusion an issue for their staff. This is in comparison to 22% of organisations who reported that ‘technological barriers’ were an issue for their volunteers, and 64% reporting that digital exclusion was an issue for their service users.**
- **Positive outcomes - moving services online has resulted in the development of new skills, rethink service delivery and restructure and revise their strategy and planning.**

# About the respondents



The organisations who responded to the survey are reflective of the wider VCSE sector in York. The main service delivery areas are indicative of the wider VCSE sector in the city, as are the size of organisations, based on their annual turnover:

- 20% of organisations had an annual turnover of less than £10k
- 35% had an annual turnover of between £11k to £100k
- 23% had an annual turnover of between £101k to £500k
- 15% had an turnover of between £501k to £1m
- 8% had an annual turnover of between £1m+ to £5m.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of respondents based on their organisational type and table 2 provides an overview of the service type.

# About the respondents:



**Table 1. Organisational Type**

Organisational Type	April 2020	October 2020	May 2021
Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)	22%	18%	33%
Community Interest Company (CIC)	5%	14%	8%
Company limited by Guarantee	9%	29%	13%
Company limited by Share	0%	0%	0%
A Mutual	1%	0%	0%
Registered Charity	56%	47%	50%
Group or unincorporated association	6%	4%	8%
Organisation Type Not Known	4%	0%	0%
Other Organisation Type	1%	6%	3%

% does may not total 100 due to rounding and some organisations identifying as more than one organisational type, for example a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

# About the respondents



**Table 2. Service type**

<b>Service type</b>	<b>May 2020</b>
Disability, Social Activities and Befriending	25%
Social & Community Care, Mental Health and Volunteering	20%
Children & Young People, Education & Training and Health	33%
Community & Village Hall and Sports & Leisure	8%
Arts, Culture & Heritage and Community Development	3%
Other classification	13%

% does may not total 100 due to rounding and some organisations identifying as delivering more than one service type.

# Financial sustainability



## Overview

Although there has been some improvement in the expected financial sustainability within the VCSE sector in York over the past 12 months, the full extent of the impact the pandemic has had on the sector is unknown. We are now starting to see closures of York based charities with two closing in recent weeks.

Table 3 shows the levels of risk with regards to the future financial sustainability of the organisations who responded to the survey. A direct comparison has been made with the results of the past VCSE Resilience Surveys.

# Financial sustainability

## Overview



**Table 3. Financial Sustainability**

Levels of risk for future financial sustainability – organisations were asked: ‘Thinking ahead how many months do you expect you can continue to be financially sustainable?’	April 2020	October 2020	May 2021
High risk - financially sustainable for only 1-3 months	15%	10%	5%
Medium risk - financially sustainable for only 6 months	25%	33%	19%
Lower risk - financially sustainable for 12 months	23%	29%	41%
Lowest risk - financially sustainable indefinitely	15%	14%	35%

% does may not total 100 due to rounding and n/a / don't know answers provided.

# Financial sustainability

## Income generation



Of those organisations that generated earned income in pre-COVID times, 87% reported a decrease in income with 28% of organisations seeing their earned income decrease by between 76% - 100%. Only 3% reported that their earned income has increased since the pandemic.

Organisations stated lack of trading, lockdowns, restrictions, public sector cuts, no new funding, less donations and increased operational costs as reasons for their loss of income.

Table 4 provides a more detail relating to the different levels of reduction in earned income experienced by organisations.

**Table 4. Reduction in Earned Income**

Reduction:	May 2021
Increased	3%
The same	10%
Decreased by 0 - 25%	21%
Decreased by 26% - 50%	14%
Decreased by 51% - 75%	14%
Decreased by 76% - 100%	28%
Not sure	10%

% does may not total 100 due to rounding.

# Financial sustainability

## Use of reserves

33% of organisations have used their reserves with 13% indicating that they might have to use their reserves by the end of 2021. Of those that have used reserves, the following table [Table 5] provides a breakdown of approximately how much of their reserves they have used:



**Table 5. Use of Reserves**

Percentage used:	May 2021
<10%	30%
11% to 25%	15%
26% to 50%	15%
51% to 75%	8%
76% to 100%	23%
Don't know	8%

% does may not total 100 due to rounding.

# Relationship with funders



When asked if funders had offered flexibility for those organisations that receive grant/contract income, 52% said funders had offered 'some flexibility', and 48% said that 'All funders had been flexible'.

When referring to the flexibility of the funders, organisations reported that funders had offered flexibility with regards to: extending timelines for delivery/activities, providing additional/advanced funding, varying service towards COVID-19 response and varying service delivery and activities from plans.

# Impact on staff and volunteers

## Staff



Compared with pre-COVID, 39% of organisations reported that they now employ fewer Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, 58% employ the same number of FTE staff, and 3% reported employing more FTE staff since pre-COVID.

When the data was gathered 76% of organisations did not have any FTE staff on \*Furlough. A quarter of organisations [24%] had FTE staff on furlough. Of those organisations who had staff on furlough, 86% said they did not envisage making any of their furloughed staff redundant, 14% said they were unsure.

\*[Government job retention scheme](#)

# Impact on staff and volunteers

## Volunteers



44% of organisations indicated a decrease in volunteers, 36% reported the same amount of volunteers and 19% reported seeing an increase in volunteers.

Organisations reported the reasons for the loss of volunteers was due to a reduction in their services, shielding, technological barriers, and Government restrictions.

45% of organisations said they were *'not confident at all'* that their previous volunteers would return. 18% said that they were *'confident'* that their previous volunteers would return.

A positive with regards to volunteering is that 22% of organisations reported gaining volunteers due to their COVID-19 response and 39% have retained the same volunteers they had pre-COVID.

# Demand on services



64% of organisations reported seeing a demand for their services, 21% said that demand had stayed the same and 15% reported seeing a decrease in demand for their services.

When asked if their organisation had had to close/put on hold all or part of their services, 33% had stopped some services, 28% had stopped in lock-down but were re-opening, and 38% reported that no services had been stopped.

# Positive outcomes



Organisations were asked *'What are the positives for your organisation/your service users to emerge from COVID-19?'* The majority of responses focused on moving services online which has resulted in new skills, service development and the positive aspects of remote working. Organisations also commented on how the pandemic had forced them to re-focus on their core activities, restructure and revise their strategy and planning, and enabled them to rethink how they deliver their services. A sample of the responses can be viewed below:

*'There has been much more regular communication between staff and Charity Trustees.'*

*'We have become far more flexible, far more used to using IT, far more engaged in business change.'*

*'Some older members have engaged for first time with online meetings and enjoyed them.'*

# Positive outcomes



*'We've learnt that we can work from home. We are flexible and can do things in different ways. We are more connected to our members than we were before. We've been able to do pieces of work with people far away without any cost issues.'*

*'Mutual aid is a powerful resource.'*

*'We have managed to focus on what we do, and do it even better. Our delivery and performance has increased as has our ability to communicate and line manage.'*

*'We are a stronger team with more flexibility in our working practice, which we wouldn't have explored if we hadn't been forced to by the lock down. On the other hand, we are really looking forward to being able to get together physically again!'*

# Recommendations



The VCSE Sector in York is still facing a potential crisis at a time when the sector is needed more than ever due to pressures on the health and social care sectors. Loss of income, staff and volunteers coupled with an increase in demand is continuing to challenge an already oversubscribed and overwhelmed VCSE sector. Concerted action is required to reduce risks for the sector, and the wider implications this will have on York and its citizens.

York CVS will continue to support our members and we will discuss the findings of the survey with partners and the VCSE sector to agree a range of actions to ensure the sustainability of York's VCSE sector.

# Recommendations

York CVS will:



- Share the learning from this survey and continue to co-ordinate the collation of intelligence about sector resilience;
- Bring together the VCSE and partners to agree what can be done together to ensure the VCSE remains sustainable in years to come;
- Encourage and support collaboration and partnership working across VCSE sector organisations (and other sectors) for the ultimate benefit of vulnerable citizens;
- Provide practical support to organisations facing challenges to give them the capacity they need to plan for sustainability with an emphasis on reaching out to groups farthest from accessing help;

# Recommendations

York CVS will:



- Continue to provide training, workshops and information on issues raised by the VCSE sector in York;
- Support the re-establishment of face-to-face services - a critical part of the VCSE sector offer;
- Continue to support the VCSE sector in York by expanding online resources and services;
- Support VCSE organisations with the recruitment and management of volunteers both during and post COVID-19;
- Further engage with existing lobbying efforts at national level and make this work visible to VCSE sector organisations.