



CVSF Members Survey 2012 Summary Report

As part of CVSF's on-going drive to enhance and improve services, as well as to gather evidence on its outputs and outcomes, staff periodically conduct a members' survey.

Between March and April 2012, CVSF members took part in an online survey about their experience of being part of the Community and Voluntary sector in Brighton and Hove and about CVSF services.

The survey asked questions about;

- The nature of the organisation responding to the survey
- Members experience of CVSF services
- Representation and influencing
- Empowerment as a group or organisation
- Improving CVSF services

88 groups/organisations took part in the survey, which represents almost a third of CVSF's 300+ members.

Headline Results

- ❖ 41% of groups who completed the survey have no paid staff and a further 24% have between 1-5 paid staff
- ❖ 45% of groups who completed the survey have an income of under £25,000
- ❖ Top 10 most useful services in order:
 1. Members directory (84%)
 2. Events/Conferences (83%)
 3. Networks (82%)
 4. Website (76%)
 5. Dialogue (74%)
 6. Briefings (73%)
 7. Elected reps (68.5%)
 8. E-list (65%)
 9. Position statement (64%)
 10. Signposting & enquiry service (55%)

- ❖ Top 3 least useful services:
 1. Twitter (24% useful, 47% have not used it/don't know)
 2. RRR grants (26% useful, 58% not used it/don't know)
 3. Postal mailing (33% useful, 36% not used it/don't know)
- ❖ To be a member of CVSF means having access to networks and information, having a sense of belonging, being part of a strategic voice, being supported and represented and being respected and recognised for the work we do.
- ❖ Groups want most support around collaboration within the sector, funding/fundraising and measuring impact
- ❖ CVSF is seen as an excellent source of information about local and national policies & strategies and services & activities delivered by the sector, but we could improve on information about commissioning and service contracts.
- ❖ 77% of CVSF members agreed that their organisation better understands local policies and strategies by taking part CVSF Networks
- ❖ 74% of respondents agreed that CVSF Networks help their group to get its voice heard
- ❖ CVSF Networks are highly valued as places where knowledge and information can be shared with 77% of people agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement
- ❖ CVSF has an excellent reputation for helping groups/organisations understand how they can collaborate within the sector, and a good reputation for helping people understand how to share resources. Helping groups to innovate and generate new ideas could be improved, though was still seen as quite good.
- ❖ 82% of groups taking part in the survey thought that CVSector representation in Brighton and Hove is effective and of high quality.
- ❖ Over two thirds of groups think they have the opportunity to influence policies and plans and develop the skills they need to get involved
- ❖ Half the groups surveyed think they have the chance to engage in decision making
- ❖ Top 3 BHCC commissions members would like CVSF to focus on are:
 1. Neighbourhood Governance (54% placed this in their top 3)
 2. Clinical Commissioning Group engagement review (54% placed this in their top 3)
 3. Specialist services for vulnerable young people (48% placed this in their top 3)
- ❖ Around 60% of groups and organisations say they have the resources they need to empower volunteers and service users, but around 25% say they do not
- ❖ A third of respondents identified paid staff or increased staff capacity as a much needed resource, especially for volunteer co-ordinator posts
- ❖ 42% suggested increased and sustainable funding is needed to be able to offer a service that empowers service users and volunteers
- ❖ 70% of groups that took part in the survey suggest it has been possible to put the skills, knowledge and experience gained through CVSF activities to practical use in developing their group/organisation or its services

Report analysis

In the main responses were positive and suggested CVSF is a highly valued organisation with well-used services that are wanted and needed by its members.

CVSF Services

CVSF is seen as an excellent source of information about local and national policies and strategies, and services and activities delivered by the sector; but provision of information about commissioning and service contracts was not as positive and met with a higher proportion of neutral responses. This may be owing to the number of smaller groups in the CVSF membership that do not regard commissioning as relevant to their group's agenda or understanding. More targeted work could be done around commissioning and service contracts to ensure the right information is reaching the right groups and organisations, and that where information is important for smaller groups to understand, it is presented in an easily digestible and accessible way.

There were mixed views about whether CVSF staff and elected reps champion the views of smaller groups with around a third giving a neutral response, another a third agreeing and almost a third strongly agreeing with this statement.

Only half the groups and organisations surveyed think that they have the chance to engage in decision making, with many giving neutral responses, which suggests CVSF could further promote the representative work done on behalf of the sector and encourage more people to represent their communities or become involved in opportunities for influencing decision-making in the city. Perhaps more regular reminders should be sent to CVSF members detailing how to contact reps and join networks, and information about opportunities to influence and get involved.

Services for review include the use of Twitter and postal mailings, which were considered the least useful by CVSF members. In light of funding challenges and the need to stretch staff time further, these services should be looked at and could be reduced, redeveloped or dropped in favour of putting time and energy into more popular services.

Members' needs

Although increased sustainable funding is nearly always identified as a need for the Community and Voluntary Sector, it is worth noting that in this survey it is particularly identified in relation to empowering and involving volunteers. There were numerous comments about not being able to secure core funding for volunteer co-ordinators, which is having a serious effect on the services being offered, reducing capacity and thus effectiveness.

In addition, there were comments from small, volunteer-led groups where volunteers also have day jobs or caring responsibilities and do not have the capacity to "jump through hoops" required by commissioners for relatively small amounts of funding.

The equalities impact of this is clear; smaller, volunteer-led groups that do not have a paid member of staff to write funding bids or co-ordinate volunteers are at a distinct disadvantage in offering services to their members and service users; many of whom represent the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the city.

CVSF members want most support around collaboration within the sector, funding/fundraising and measuring impact.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The responses to this survey are extremely positive about CVSF's work, and about community groups and voluntary organisations' experiences of being a member of CVSF and using our services. Feedback on the networks and partnerships we are fostering appear to suggest they are growing and developing well and are considered highly by the sector. Our events programme also continues to be a firm favourite in meeting the needs of our member organisations. Likewise, CVSF representation continues to be regarded as effective and of high quality.

As always however, there is room for improvement and this survey has identified a number of areas where our services could be looked at and improved, or the scope of what we currently do could be either widened or reduced.

CVSF staff commit to undertaking the following next steps in response to this survey:

- Incorporating the findings from this survey into our work plan for this year
- Prioritise development of services which members identify as most important, deprioritising services considered less useful to members
- Producing a short document which details what you said and asked for and what we have done as a result, by March 2013
- Comparing and contrasting this year's results with previous surveys and making this available to our member organisations
- Continuing to undertake this survey to ensure our members have an opportunity to influence the development of CVSF's services and work

Thank you!

A massive THANK YOU to all our member organisations who took the time to answer our survey. Your thoughts and reflections are invaluable in both ensuring that we are meeting the needs of our members and becoming as member-led as we can be, as well as providing us with invaluable information for our funding bids to ensure that we can continue to be here for a little bit longer!

Getting in touch

If reading this has inspired you with more ideas or if you have any feedback at all about CVSF's services please do not hesitate to get in touch with the CVSF office on 01273 810230 or by emailing info@cvsectorforum.org.uk We would love to hear from you!