



CVSF Members Survey 2013

Summary report

As part of CVSF's on-going drive to enhance and improve its services, as well as to gather evidence on its outcomes and impact, CVSF staff periodically conduct an annual members' survey. Between March and April 2013, CVSF members were invited to take part in an online survey about CVSF's services.

The survey asked questions about:

- The nature of the group or organisation responding to the survey
- Members experience of CVSF's services
- Representation and influencing
- Empowering residents and service users
- Improving CVSF's services

62 groups/organisations took part in the survey, which represents 18% of CVSF's 350 members.

Headline Results

About CVSF members

- Q1: 30% of groups who completed the survey have no paid staff and a further 27% have between 1-5 paid staff
- Q2: 28% of members answering the survey have 21-50 volunteers working with their group or organisation
- Q3: 41% of groups who completed the survey have an income of under £25,000
- Q4: Top 10 most useful CVSF services in order that members found useful or very useful were:
1. Networks (89%)
 2. Dialogue (77%)
 3. Briefings (76%)
 4. Events (74%)
 5. Website (71%)
 6. CVSF discussion list (71%)
 7. Directory (66%)
 8. Voice and influence of elected reps (60%)
 9. Signposting & enquiry service (60%)

10. Position statements (53%)

Members' experience of CVSF services

Q5: Top 3 least useful services:

1. Monthly drop-ins (11% find them useful, 18% have not heard of them and 40% have not used them)
2. Postal mailings (39% find them useful, 3% have not heard of them and 27% have not used them)
3. AGM (42% found it useful, 2% had not heard about it and 26% did not attend)

Q6: For those completing the survey, to be a member of CVSF means being connected to a wider movement of Community and Voluntary Sector organisations, having access to information and support, having a stronger voice and good representation that is heard on a citywide level, and having opportunities to collaborate, share resources and network with other organisations.

Q7: For those completing the survey it was felt important to have support around:

85% with collaboration

73% with fundraising

66% with measuring impact

65% with good governance

56% with social media

Q8: CVSF is seen as an excellent source of information about local and national policies & strategies, services & activities delivered by the sector, and funding/grants.

However, information about commissioning and service contracts is seen as being less available.

Q9: 81% of groups/organisations agreed that their organisation better understands local policies and strategies by taking part in CVSF Networks, whilst 82% say networks help their organisation share knowledge and information with peers.

73% of respondents agreed that CVSF networks help their group to get its voice heard

Q10: CVSF has an excellent reputation for helping groups/organisations understand how they can collaborate within the sector with 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. 60% suggest CVSF helps groups understand how to share resources. 74% agree CVSF helps groups to understand how to innovate and generate new ideas and 73% understand how to contribute towards meeting priorities in the sector as a result of their involvement with CVSF.

Representation and influencing

Q11: 80% of groups/organisations agree that CVSF staff and elected reps champion the views of smaller groups and organisations that do not have the capacity to attend meetings. 80% agree that relationships between the sectors are constructive. 85% of groups taking part in the survey thought that Community and Voluntary Sector representation in Brighton and Hove is effective and of high quality. 82% agree that CVSF effectively represents the community and voluntary sector and has influence.

Q12: 71% of groups/organisations think they have the opportunity to influence policies and plans via CVSF and 62% believe they have the chance to engage in decision making. 65% think CVSF helps them develop the skills they need to get involved.

Q13: The Top 5 campaigns members would like CVSF to focus on are:

1. Monitoring the impact of welfare reform to inform local policy (56% placed this in their top 3)
2. Influencing BHCC budget setting for 14/15 (55% placed this in their top 3)
3. Improving partnership working with health (eg NHS and Public Health) (49% placed this in their top 3)
4. Informing local policy around social value (commissioners are now required to consider social value alongside economic) (45% placed this in their top 3)
5. Influencing changes to Adult Social Care services (35% placed this in their top 3)

Empowering residents and service users

Q14: 75% of groups/organisations say they have the resources they need to empower volunteers and 78% say they can empower service users. These figures are up on last year by around 15% with far less people saying they lack these resources.

Q14a: 50% of comments made about resources needed to empower service users and volunteers were about the need for more funding, especially for supporting volunteers and 27% of comments were related to needing more staff and volunteer time.

Q15: 71% of groups/organisations 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 or organisation and/or their services.

Report analysis

Overall, CVSF is seen as an excellent source of information and support by many. However, within responses to the member's survey there were comments about CVSF's over reliance on the written word to share information with members.

One member summed up the feeling of over reliance on the written word by saying:

"Like a TV with too many channel options, you end up switching the damned thing off and missing the one documentary of the year you needed to view!"

Suggestions of alternative ways of sharing knowledge and information with members included more engaging methods like outreach, events, networks, meetings. Members suggested placing more resource into ways that develop dialogue between staff and member organisation and which help them to learn about and understand key policy areas and campaigns that are going to affect them. As resources will be limited, staff would also benefit from being smarter and more joined-up in the way information is shared to avoid e-mail fatigue. For example written

information could be packaged up into more clearly defined themes, with highlights on only those that are genuinely cross-cutting and of high importance.

CVSF needs to have on-going discussions with its members about citywide strategic priorities and the rationale behind these priorities, so that the rationale behind CVSF's priorities and focus for its work is clearly understood by CVSF members. This might be a more effective approach to ensuring members are involved in prioritising CVSF's work.

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, although 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 high number of smaller groups in the CVSF membership that do not regard commissioning as relevant to their group's agenda or understanding. More work could be done around commissioning and service contracts to ensure the right information is targeted at and reaches 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.

Views have shifted since last year about whether CVSF staff and elected reps champion the views of smaller groups with 80% agreeing that we do, compared with 60% last year. This may be the result of work undertaken by CVSF to develop a small groups network, and to raise the profile of small groups. The network has recently created a small groups position statement which has helped with this.

Also improved since last year are the number of groups and organisations who believe they have a chance to engage in decision making, with almost two thirds of groups agreeing with this compared with half at the same time last year. This could be owing to improved feedback and communication from reps over the past year and the work of the CVSF networks which are connecting members to important agendas and decision-makers on a more regular basis.

Services for further consideration include the use of monthly drop-ins (now surgeries), which were considered less useful by CVSF members. However as the service is relatively new, and has to date only been accessed by a small proportion of members and non-members, it may be that a large proportion of those answering the survey was unaware of the service or not aware of its purpose. The surgeries may benefit from improved promotion and development.

Members' needs

An emerging need for CVSF members is support around the use of social media. The local Community and Voluntary Sector may benefit from developing its understanding and use of social media tools, and training and development in this area could be prioritised. CVSF members also

identified the need for support for collaboration within the sector, fundraising, measuring impact and good governance.

Although the need for more sustainable funding is often identified as a need for the Community and Voluntary Sector, it is worth noting that in this year, as well as last year's survey, it is particularly identified in relation to empowering and involving volunteers. There were numerous comments about funders failing to understand or recognise the time and skills needed to support volunteers. 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 could be 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.

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.

The results suggest that members value much of the information CVSF disseminates (though perhaps not the volume of it!) as well as our networking opportunities and events. Likewise, CVSF representation continues to be regarded as effective and of high quality.

For our members, being part of CVSF means having a greater sense of a connection to and a belonging to a wider movement that has influence in the city.

There is, however, room for improvement and this survey has identified some 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 plans for the new infrastructure organisation
- 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 2014
- 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 big THANK YOU to all our member organisations who took the time to answer our survey and provide us with your thoughts on how we are doing, and some pearls of wisdom on how we can improve. Your thoughts and reflections are helpful 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 while 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!