

Members Survey 2014: Summary Report

As part of our on-going drive to develop and improve our services, and to gather evidence on the impact of our work, we run an annual members' survey to find out what our members think of us.

Between April and May 2014, our members were invited to take part in an online survey. Our survey asked questions about:

- The nature of the groups and organisations responding to our survey
- Members' experience of our advice and support services
- Members' experience of our representation and influencing work
- Members' experience of our volunteering services
- Members' views on how we can further develop and improve our services

In total, 112 groups and organisations took part in the survey. 85 (76%) of these identified as being a member of ours. This represents 22% of our current membership of 380.

It is worth noting that on average the response rate to the questions in the survey was 87. This means on average 25 of those responding felt unable to answer the questions. This could be because the survey was sent to members of the Volunteer Centre who may be less familiar with all the services that we offer, or because we advertised the survey through our newsletter we reached a number of people for which the questions were not applicable too.

Either way, it does highlight the potential need to develop our communications and marketing messages to ensure that information about our services is clear, accessible and available to all our stakeholders.

Report Summary

Headline results

About our members

- 1 26% of groups and organisations who completed our survey have no paid staff and a further 26% have between 1-5 paid staff
- 2 23% of those who completed our survey have 6-10 volunteers working in their group or organisation

- 3 38% of groups and organisations who completed our survey have an annual income of under £35,000

Experiences of our services

- 4 The Top 10 most useful services in the order that our members found useful or very useful were our:

1. Networks (75%)
2. E-Newsletter (71%)
3. Policy briefings (68%)
4. Events and meetings (66%)
5. Position statements (66%)
6. Main email list (64%)
7. Website (64%)
8. Members' directory (64%)
9. Voice and influence of elected reps (63%)
10. Other email lists (59%)

- 5 The Top 4 least useful services were our:

1. Postal mailings (28%)
2. Other email lists (17%)
3. Social networking sites eg Facebook and Twitter (17%)
4. Monthly drop-ins (15%)

And our Top 4 least used services were our:

1. Monthly drop-ins (66%)
2. Consultancy Service (59%)
3. Volunteer Centre services (59%)
4. Postal mailings (46%)

- 6 For those who completed our survey, we are seen to be a good source of information about services and activities delivered by the community, local and national policies and strategies, and other sources of funding eg grants
- 7 80% of groups and organisations who completed our survey felt that they better understand how they can collaborate within the community and voluntary sector as a result of taking part in our networks. 70% also said that our networks contribute towards meeting priorities within the city
- 8 71% of groups and organisations who completed our survey felt that it was possible to put the skills, knowledge and experience gained through our activities to practical use in developing their own group or organisation
- 9 For those who completed our survey, it was very important to have support and advice on:
1. Collaboration within the sector (86%)
 2. Good practice around working with volunteers (82%)

- 3. Good governance (77%)
 - 4. Funding and fundraising (75%)
 - 5. Measuring and evidencing impact (72%)
- 10 For those who completed our survey being a member of ours meant that they felt part of the wider community and voluntary sector, they felt connected and involved in local decision-making processes, they had access to information and support, they had stronger representation and a voice in the city, and they had the opportunity to make stronger and more meaningful networks

Representation and influencing

- 11 85% of groups and organisations who completed our survey felt that we effectively represent the community and voluntary sector and have influence. 82% felt that representation of the community and voluntary sector is effective and of high quality. 77% also felt that relationships in Brighton and Hove between the sectors (community and voluntary, public, and private) are constructive. And, 69% felt that our staff and elected representatives champion the views of smaller groups and organisations that do not have the capacity to attend meetings
- 12 79% of groups and organisations who completed the survey felt that we provide the opportunity to share knowledge and information with their peers. 72% felt that they better understood local policies and strategies as a result of their involvement with us. 71% also felt we help them to develop partnerships within the community and voluntary sector
- 13 81% of groups and organisations who completed our survey felt our networks, events and conferences help them to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to get involved. 68% felt that they help groups and organisations to influence local policies and plans. 64% felt they have the opportunity to engage in decision-making around service delivery as a result of attending our networks, events and conferences

Volunteering

- 14 46% of groups and organisations who completed the survey used the volunteer centre's services for advertising their volunteering opportunities
- 15 62% of groups and organisations who completed the survey felt that email was the most useful way of communicating information about volunteering with them
- 16 55% of groups and organisations who took part in the survey felt they would benefit from more training and support on legal aspects of volunteering. 45% also felt that would benefit from support and advice on how to monitor and evaluate volunteer programmes

Report Analysis

There appears to be a significant proportion of those who completed our survey who are unaware of the breadth of services that we offer and some who are not clear on our purpose as an organisation. This could be due to the impact of our recent merger, which has resulted in substantial changes to our services and to our service offer and perhaps confusion about what we do. Or it could be due to a proportion of those who completed the survey being new to our organisation or too busy to be as involved as they would like to be and therefore being less aware of all we have to offer them.

Either way, this year we have had slightly lower survey results than in previous years. It suggests that we have more to do to reach out to our current membership to explain clearly what our purpose is and how members can benefit from all the services that we offer. We are currently developing our new Membership Strategy, and Communications and Marketing Strategy which should help with this. The survey results provide a useful baseline from which we can measure our achievements as we integrate our services and service offer further, and reach out to current and new members to ensure that they have a full understanding of how our services benefit their group or organisation, and ultimately their service users and community.

Our Networks, E-Newsletter and Policy briefings remain our members' three most valued services. Although overall there is a generally high level of satisfaction with all the services that we offer. Being a member of ours means, for our members, being part of a wider community and voluntary sector movement, having access to information on current trends, policies and strategies, and funding information. Our members also felt that we support them to collaborate and grow their skills and knowledge. We are seen as an excellent source of information about services and activities delivered by the community and voluntary sector, and information about local and national policies and strategies.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Responses to our survey were extremely positive about our work, our services and the benefits of being a member organisation. We are overwhelmingly seen to be a reliable and trustworthy organisation which successfully represents the community and voluntary sector in Brighton and Hove and is a trusted source of information and knowledge. We are also increasingly becoming highly valued for the advice and support we offer to our members and to the wider community and voluntary sector. For our members, being part of our organisation means having a greater sense of a connection to and a belonging to a wider movement that is well supported and has influence in the city.

There is, however, room for improvement and the survey has identified some areas where our services and work could be developed and improved. These include:

- Clearer communication on what we offer and what we do for both our current members and potential new members. Our developing Communications and Marketing Strategy should help with this
- More promotion and targeting of information about commissioning and service contracts. Our new commissioning network and a new section in our e-newsletter should help with this
- More promotion of our consultancy service, volunteer centre services and work with businesses. Our developing Communications and Marketing Strategy should help with this
- Consideration as to how we can help groups and organisations to share resources, innovate and generate new ideas better. This is identified already within our Business plan, and is an ambition of some of our services already, but we could consider further how we could help groups and organisations to achieve this
- More promotion of the work we do to champion the views of smaller groups and organisations and the impact of this work
- More promotion of the benefits for attendees of attending our networks and conferences. Our new conference framework is already focusing on this, but we will consider if there is more we could do
- Ensure that in future years a wider spread of individuals complete our annual survey and in particular individuals who have used our volunteer services
- More promotion of the channels used to promote volunteering. Our developing Communications and Marketing Strategy should help with this
- We will undertake an additional evaluation of our volunteer services to ensure we have accurately captured feedback on these services for the 2013-2014 period

Thank you!

A big THANK YOU to all the groups and organisations who took the time to complete our survey and to 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 our services, or just want to find out more, get in touch with us by emailing info@bhcommunityworks.org.uk or calling 01273 234023.