

Brighton & Hove Community & Voluntary Sector



Building Bridges: Bringing about change
Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum
Impact Report
2008-2013

April 2013

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Introduction

This Report

The Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) has operated in Brighton and Hove for over 15 years. During this time we've built up a mass of expertise in supporting the local Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS), and in ensuring their views, voices and experiences, and that of their communities, is heard within citywide decision-making and planning.

The support we've provided to Brighton and Hove's CVS has evolved and developed over the years in response to the changing needs of the sector and shifts in local and national policy and decision-making, as well as in our funding sources. As needs and funding have changed, so our work and the impact that we have strived to attain has changed, and as a result CVSF as an organisation has grown and evolved greatly over the years.

Since 2008, CVSF has undergone particular growth and expanded in its reach and influence undertaking a wider range of projects and programmes for the benefit of the local sector, and embedding further our systems and processes for enabling sector involvement in citywide decision-making. In 2011, we undertook a significant internal restructure of our staff team, and our services and activities to ensure our continued strength and ability to respond to a changing environment. This was accompanied by changes to our work plans and a renewed strategic plan for 2011-2014.

This report provides a summary of the impact of our work between 2008 and 2013 and the strides we have taken to achieve our aims and objectives, and the intended outcomes that we work towards.

Evidencing our Impact

The evidence of our impact is largely drawn from member and stakeholder surveys¹ undertaken in 2008 (n=60), 2010 (n=22²), 2012 (n=88) and 2013 (n=62), case studies (n=55), and feedback we have received from our members and stakeholders over this time. As well as from surveys of our elected reps undertaken in 2010 (n=34) and 2011/2012 (n=23). Between 2008 and 2013 CVSF's membership varied with the total number of members being (approximately), 500 in 2008, 550 in 2010, 300 in 2012³, and 350 in 2013. The total number of elected reps also varied from 59 in 2010 to 34 in 2011/2012.

CVS support organisations like CVSF find it challenging to demonstrate the impact that they have and the real difference that we make. We know that our interventions can and have changed things for the better or at least prevented things from getting worse, and we know that some interventions still require energy and involvement to bear results. It is

¹ The samples of the surveys are intended to be relatively small, as this evidence is supplemented by feedback from members, evaluations of activities, and case studies undertaken all of which provide additional qualitative information about CVSF's impact.

² The sample for 2010 was particularly small as CVSF had undertaken a wide range of engagement work with its members and already received a lot of feedback as part of developing a new Strategic Plan.

³ The drop in membership numbers between 2010 and 2012, was a result of a membership renewal process undertaken in 2011, which, along with the introduction of membership fees for the first time, resulted in a lower number of groups and organisations signing up to be CVSF members.

complicated to try to isolate and validate all the impacts and accumulative impacts that result from our work but we hope this report provides a flavour of some of them.

In 2011, CVSF undertook some work with NAVCA (National Association of Voluntary and Community Action) to develop CVSF's approach to measuring our impact. The results of the work, suggested that we needed to improve in a number of areas. This included: being clearer about the purpose and use of our annual members' survey and using the survey to gather information on the nature of our impact and generating 'stories' about this; using our annual members' survey to measure out outcomes for our core functions eg organisational development, health of the sector, partnership, which would allow us to benchmark against other organisations/areas; use the NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) 'Outcome Star' to measure the impact of our representation with new reps; make better use of national data sources eg National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises; and improve our case study template to better tease out our impact.

CVSF has made significant progress towards implementing the changes suggested by NAVCA and will continue to do so in future years. The re-writes and re-focus of our surveys and our case studies is evident throughout this report and the richer evidence about our impact that we are not collecting. This report also makes use of a range of local and national surveys to help us in evidencing our impact.

The Future

In 2013, CVSF will be undergoing further changes. We are a key partner in the Transforming Local Infrastructure Project, which is seeking to merge a number of support services currently provided by different organisations. This will result in further changes to our work, and to the whole organisation. Now is a good time, then, to be looking back over the last few years and taking note of the impact we've had and the outcomes we've achieved.

Thank you

We are immensely proud of the work we've undertaken in the city and the support that we've given to the local CVS and to our member organisations. Our impact as an organisation is numerous and wide, but as a member-led organisation is also attributable to our members, and the efforts and energies of the volunteers and workers who get involved in our services and activities; without their collective participation our impact would be considerably less. We would also like to acknowledge our funders and partners who have worked with us over the years; their support has been invaluable and much appreciated.

Our Aims and Objectives

Our current strategic plan, 2011-14, envisages a diverse and inclusive society in which people can make a positive difference in their communities. CVSF's mission in this is to achieve a sustainable and vibrant CVS in Brighton and Hove. We have the following aims and objectives, and intended outcomes to ensure we achieve our mission:

Aim	Objective	Outcome
Help CVSF members to evolve and create change	Act as a knowledge broker to exchange information and knowledge between communities, organisations and sectors	Local CVS organisations are more resilient, better informed and prepared to lead and respond to change in policy at national, regional and local levels
	Develop partnerships between CVS organisations and support collaborative partnerships	More organisations take part in partnerships or consortia to address particular needs and respond to opportunities
	Develop partnerships between sectors	There are more effective working arrangements of mutual benefit between sectors
Develop the CVS's voice and influence	Engage communities, particularly small and excluded groups, to support their active participation in CVSF and local action	Diverse groups are engaged in CVSF activities
	Develop the sector's role in commissioning and service delivery	CVS organisations are involved in commissioning, influencing needs assessments and service design, providing services and monitoring delivery
	Represent the CVS in the city and maximise its influence	Statutory and private sectors are more able to access and engage with the communities supported by CVSF members The CVS influences policy on issues of importance to the sector
	Develop CVSF's leadership role to act as both an advocate for the sector and lead the sector as it responds to change	CVSF is recognised by stakeholders as successfully leading debates around policy and priorities
Ensure CVSF's sustainability to support members and deliver its mission	Develop an enterprising approach to service delivery and income generation	CVSF's income is diversified by providing research, training and consultancy CVSF has the right skills and competencies to adapt and change to new ways of working and new services
	Share our learning with CVSF members	CVSF members benefit from our learning

Our Impact

Providing Information and Increasing Knowledge

CVSF is a knowledge broker. We ensure that knowledge, information and ideas, are circulated and exchanged between local communities, CVS organisations, and between and across different sectors in the city.

To achieve this, we run a number of services which enable us to circulate information through a variety of channels to a range of audiences:

- Our targeted e-lists which support the exchange and circulation of information
- Our packed full of information e-newsletter (Dialogue)
- Our website, which contains a range of information and resources
- Our Social Media platforms: Twitter and Facebook
- Our Member Directories, and themed directories
- Our Easy to read and sector-specific briefings on key areas and issues of interest
- Our Postal Mailings which provide access to essential information
- And, our very knowledgeable staff team!

Our information services have a large reach

- Our website has approximately **1,350 unique visitors** a month
- Our online directory is viewed by approximately **95 visitors** a month
- Our online resources have attracted **11,000 visitors** since it was set up 2/3 years ago
- Our events calendar has been viewed by over **15,000 visitors** in the last 2 years
- **195 people 'Like'** our facebook page
- We have **788 twitter** followers
- **1,174 people** are signed up to receive our fortnightly e-newsletter Dialogue (on average a fifth of recipients open the newsletter each fortnight. Anecdotally we are also aware that some recipients will forward our newsletter on to other staff, volunteers and trustees in their group or organisation)
- We circulate **4,000 copies** of our CVSF directory every 2 years
- **25 Briefings** have been viewed on our website by **3,000 visitors**, paper copies have also been sent to all member organisations
- Our e-lists have over **2,000 email addresses** associated with them

The **information services** that we offer are valued by our members, and the wider CVS. Comments about our information:

"I receive more information than I could possible locate myself. It helps me to stay up to date with what is happening city and country wide."

"I'd like to say a massive THANKYOU to the CVSF simply for being there when I need information. The mailing list in particular is invaluable to me."

"CVSF proves to be an invaluable source of information, and consequently supports competence and confidence in service delivery and participation within the sector."

Our **e-newsletter, Dialogue**, is very well received with 77% (n=62) (in 2013) of members saying they value it compared with 74% (n=88) in 2012, 88% (n=22) in 2010, and 51% (n=60) in 2008. Comments about our e-newsletter:

“Proves very useful in easily and efficiently keeping abreast of issues concerning our organisation and the broader sector. Using the newsletter has become a more frequent activity over time. We plan to have all trustees sign up to receive this electronically, and to regularly raise relevant issues and items of interest at trustees meetings.”

“It’s really useful for key dates for meetings, a great reminder of useful info and the news from the council is also really helpful. Funding information is useful as it shows me things I haven’t seen. I look forward to Dialogue and read it and use the links. It also puts me in contact with other agencies that I have never heard of.”

Our **Easy to read briefings** are also very well received with 76% (n=62) (in 2013) of members saying they value them compared with 73% (n=88) in 2012. Comments about our briefings:

“These have been really useful and have influenced my work particularly: Grants vs. Contracts and Intelligent Commissioning.”

“Using these has been a more recent activity and we are sure they will be helpful for future service and organisational development.”

Our **CVSF discussion list** is also highly valued with 71% (n=62) (in 2013) of members saying it is useful compared with 65% (n=88) in 2012, 70% (n=22) in 2013 and 59% (n=60) in 2008. Comments about our e-lists:

“I use them regularly and have taken part in conversations with other colleagues in the sector which has helped shape my thinking and strategic approach. It allows the sector to reflect and see what shared space and commonality we have which helps me feel supported in my work and less isolated and helps me to develop the centre’s work.”

“Through the CVSF we have found out about training, funding and people have come to volunteer through their advertising.”

“The discussion list is the most useful communication tool for the sector”.

“The CVSF lists in particular are great ways to offer and receive support and information and I believe they are managed extremely well.”

In addition our members, and the wider CVS, greatly appreciate the **knowledge of the CVSF staff team** and their willingness to share this and answer their queries. In 2013, 60% (n=62) of our members found our signposting and enquiry service to be useful compared with 55% (n=88) in 2012. Comments about our staff team:

“I have been given useful information and background to ethical financial investment by CVSF staff, which has been useful and helpful to my organisation.”

“Leaders in Front Line Organisations can often feel isolated – to know you can ask an informal question makes you feel that there is support. The trusted, friendly service and the

breadth of expertise of staff and the network means that there will be a helpful response to move things forward.”

“If I need to know a strategic approach I know who to speak to. I’ll ask CVSF or do a bit more research on their website and I might phone CVSF to see who to speak to. It’s always a respectful interaction between CVSF and us.”

“Thank you [CVSF] so much for your time yesterday, it was really appreciated. I certainly felt far more confident when I left about things than when I entered the room with you. It was really helpful just to sound things out!”

“I found CVSF to be really supportive for what I do, I’ve had a hard time but CVSF has supported and helped me through it, and as a result I feel really positive.”

“CVSF is a great organisation! It helps bring identity to the voluntary sector and if you need help you know it’s there to offer advice, support and guidance.”

CVSF informs its members, and the wider CVS, about a wide range of issues, policy developments and service changes. This includes news about local and national policies and programmes, consultations, and opportunities to influence decision-making. Our members consistently say that they view **CVSF as an excellent source of information** on: current trends, policy and strategy, funding sources, commissioning and structural changes. In 2013, 87% (n=62) of our members said that CVSF is an excellent source of information about local and national policies, strategies and initiatives affecting the sector compared with 89% (n=88) in 2012, 82% (n=22) in 2011, and 72% (n=60) in 2008.

CVSF also provides information about what is happening within the local CVS and examples of good practice and resources which help our members, and the wider CVS, to grow and develop and improve their own service delivery. Our members also consistently say that **CVSF helps them to know more about what is happening in the CVS**. In 2013, 90% (n=62) of our members said that CVSF helps them to feel informed about services and activities delivered by the sector compared with 89% (n=88) in 2012, 82% (n=22) in 2011, and 68% (n=60) in 2008.

A key part of what CVSF does is sift through large quantities of complex information and make it simple, relevant and accessible to the CVS and the variety of volunteers and workers that make up the sector. After accessing our easy-read briefings and attending our meetings our members, and the wider sector, are able to confidently engage in discussions around policy agendas and service planning. CVSF gives the CVS the background information, knowledge, and language needed to engage in discussions around policy and service change. In 2013, 81% (n=62) of our members said that their organisation better understands local policies and strategies by taking part in CVSF Networks, compared with 77% (n=88) in 2012. Comment about this:

“One of the most valuable things [CVSF does] is the distilling and distributing of policy, initiatives and developments”

As a result of all this work we know that our local CVS organisations are better informed and therefore more resilient and more prepared to lead and respond to change in policy at national, regional and local levels, and better placed to develop their own organisations and services.

Supporting Sector Partnerships

CVSF supports its members, and the wider sector, to meet, to share information, ideas and innovations, to learn together, to develop partnerships and to collaborate to achieve a range of goals.

To achieve this, we run a number of services which enable us to strengthen relationships within the sector and build partnerships and collaborations:

- Our Member Directories, and themed directories
- Our targeted e-lists
- Our range of events: workshops, meetings, consultations, conferences which bring the sector together to build relationships
- Our range of Networks, which aid closer collaboration and discussion to develop
- Support and advice to those coming together to collaborate

Our Networks and Events Programme has a large reach:

- In 2012-13 we organised and co-ordinated **51 events and network meetings** which were attended by over **1,000 participants**
- In 2011-12 we organised and co-ordinated **64 events and network meetings** which were attended by over **1,200 participants**
- In 2010-11 we organised and co-ordinated **33 events and network meetings** which were attended by over **1,500 participants**

The **networks and events** that we offer are valued by our members, and the wider CVS. Comments about our Networks:

“Feel fortunate that we have one [a Network] for Children and Young People and Families as it is a held space for the sector to come together around sector specific issues. Essential for more insight and updates on local developments.”

“When you arrive somewhere new the network provides an excellent context for a bigger feel of what’s going on. I have gained excellent individual contacts to other agencies and I am now aware of so many other organisations.”

“Although much of what is discussed is not directly relevant to my organisation, seeing what other organisations are going through gives us ideas and allows us to learn about the wider sector and how to deal with possible problems. The networks and discussion lists are also excellent resources for making and maintaining contacts.”

“Having come to the meeting with no expectations, I am very glad to have learnt such a wealth of knowledge.”

Our **Networks** are increasingly valued by our members. In 2013, 89% (n=62) of our members said they find CVSF Networks useful compared with 82% (n=88) in 2012, 77% (n=22) in 2010,

and 45% (n=60) in 2008. Our **Events** are also very well received with 74% (n=62) (in 2013) of our members saying they find them useful compared with 83% (n=88) in 2012, 71% (n=22) in 2010 and 59% (n=60) in 2008.

Our network meetings focus on ways the sector can work together to fill gaps in or improve current service delivery and activities; so ensuring that all client groups and communities have access to support and services which meet their needs, and activities that they can get involved in. There is always a **learning element to our networks**, whereby individuals attending a network meeting will take back what they have learnt to their organisation or group and put it in to practice. In this way our networks help to foster organisational learning and over time more resilient groups, organisations and services.

In 2013, 82% (n=62) of our members said that CVSF networks help them to share knowledge and information with their peers, compared with 77% (n=88) in 2012. 74% (n=62) also said, in 2013, that CVSF networks help groups to understand how to innovate and generate new ideas. In 2013, 79% (n=62) of members felt that it is possible to put the skills, knowledge and experience gained through CVSF activities to practical use in developing their own organisations and services in comparison to 70% (n=88) in 2012.

Our e-lists, members' directory and networks all provide our members with the opportunity to discuss areas for **potential partnership working and greater collaboration**. With the right opportunities and environment, it is anticipated that these networks will form even greater partnerships and possibly consortiums through which they can undertake joint bidding for funding and service delivery. We are starting to see the fruition of some of the long standing relationships created by our networks into greater partnerships and conglomerates. In 2013, 92% (n=62) of members said that CVSF helps them to understand how they can collaborate within the sector; 60% (n=62) said that CVSF helps them to understand how to share resources, and 73% (n=62) understand how to contribute towards meeting priorities in the sector.

Our directories and networks help to facilitate collaboration. Comments about this include:

"It [CVSF Directory] is the most used thing in our room. Each of our play workers keeps a copy in their trolleys and we have copies in the reception downstairs. It is so useful for finding services if a request is unusual as you can refer and give the right web address."

"[CVSF Directory] Has helped identify other organisations with which we may share service users and plan to set up referral arrangements; identify possible volunteer and trustee recruitment sources; consider the published aims of other organisations in looking at joint working; consider possible fundraising partnerships."

"The [CVSF] services also enabled me to introduce myself and my new role to the sector. As a result of this there were immediately several meetings set up with potential new partners and opportunities for funding."

"It [CVSF network] brings me into touch with the wide range of organisations and groups that exist across the city; it provides opportunities for information, networking and support and enables us to see potential for joint working and projects."

“CVSF are the only source of letting everyone in the city know what the different groups are doing. Without this facility, every group would be working in isolation.”

“I think that the networks are essential to retaining links and maintaining good practice across the sector.”

“Meetings have been useful opportunities to network, raise the profile of our service; find support and advice from other members; identify joint working opportunities; and importantly to be able to present our views on the sector and the issues and needs which concern emerging groups.”

As a result of CVSF’s work to network the sector, bring it together, build relationships across CVS organisations and encourage partnerships and collaborations, more organisations are better placed to take advantage of opportunities to take part in partnerships or consortia to address particular needs and respond to opportunities. For example in recent years this has included the Youth Collective, an Advocacy Providers Partnership, Complex Needs Programme, etc. In 2013, 85% (n=62) of our members said they think it is important to have support around collaboration within the sector.

Fostering Cross-Sector Relationships

A significant part of the work which CVSF undertakes is to build bridges and foster relationships between and across the different sectors within Brighton and Hove. Often this requires laying and maintaining the foundations for good working arrangements within the city, supporting information to be shared, and providing opportunities for representatives from different sectors to meet, discuss ideas and innovate, and develop a shared sense of objectives and goals.

To achieve this, we use a number of our existing mechanisms to circulate information and enable relationship building:

- Our targeted e-lists which support the exchange and circulation of information
- Our packed full of information e-newsletter (Dialogue)
- Our Social Media platforms: Twitter and Facebook
- Our Member Directories, and themed directories
- Our Networks and Events Programme which provides the space and opportunities to build relationships
- Our Elected Representatives and staff which attend key citywide meetings to build relationships

As well as offering occasions to discuss and highlight possible collaborations within our membership, our Networks and Events Programme offers multiple opportunities for our members and the wider sector, to meet with representatives from public sector authorities such as commissioners, heads of service areas, and practitioners. These cross-sector meetings provide **opportunities to build relationships**, share information, knowledge, experience and expertise, undertake joint problem solving and hold solution focused discussions, often as a precursor to more **in depth cross-sector partnership working and collaborations**.

Many of our networks have forged close **connections with key decision-makers** in the city. For example, elected councilors regularly attend our Children and Young People Network and the former Cabinet Member for Housing regularly attended our Housing Network meetings for all, or some of the agenda. Likewise representatives from NHS Sussex have attended the Health and Wellbeing Network. As our networks meet regularly there is space and a mechanism for network members and representatives from public authorities to regularly make contact, to connect and to build better and productive relationships as a result.

Indeed, in 2013, 73% (n=62), and in 2012, 74% (n=88), of members felt that CVSF networks help their group to get its voice heard. And in 2013, 62% (n=62) of members said that CVSF networks give them a chance to engage in decision-making around service delivery in comparison to 56% (n=88) in 2012. Comments about our networks and events:

“Events are important places to get a feel for the sector and network with the wider partners cross sectorally. They are also opportunities to make your organisation more visible at key events.”

“Very friendly, good, inclusive event: Really open discussion - no closed minds or preconceptions: Sharing each other’s knowledge/ideas in workshop: Good discussions, Good food, Good atmosphere: lively contributors: Really good ideas from everyone, it was very interesting: in depth discussion: diverse informed opinions from participants all working to a good objective:”

“[CVSF networks] Encourages space for services to meet up and encourages dialogue.”

“It [CVSF networks] is also an important point where public sector partners can have a conversation with the sector so that the city receives the best cross-sector strategy and support.”

“For me the event emphasises again the necessity of the CVSF in terms of bringing various organisations together and sharing views.”

“Being a regular attender at network meetings has raised the profile of my organisation amongst colleagues in the voluntary sector and with commissioners.”

CVSF has supported the development of various partnership structures and citywide programmes which has resulted in **strong relationships existing between the sectors** and an increased awareness of our collective strengths. The connections and relationships formed through our work, means that there is a greater shared understanding of where people and communities are coming from, the challenges that they face, and the assets that they have. This collective sense of ‘life in the city’ and the positive relationships that develop from cross-sector interactions, are critical to ensuring that when times are tight and crises are faced, collectively the city and its diverse communities can overcome them.

As a result of CVSF’s work there are more effective working arrangements of mutual benefit between the sectors in Brighton and Hove than ever before. In 2013, 80% (n=62) of our members felt that relationships between the sectors are constructive compared with 70% (n=88) in 2012. These good relationships are the result of the work that CVSF plays in the

city to bring the different sector's together to talk, to build relationships and to plan for and deliver local services.

Involving all Groups

CVSF engages and empowers all communities, particularly small and excluded communities, and supports them to actively participate in CVSF. CVSF is a membership organisation for community and voluntary groups, charities and not-for-profit organisations which work in Brighton and Hove and for the benefit of the city's communities. Any group or organisation which has charitable aims or follows a social purpose and is active in Brighton and Hove can become a member of CVSF. We offer our members the opportunity to be involved in a collective movement that promotes social change and social justice.

To achieve this, we run a number of services which create opportunities to be involved in our work, particularly for small and excluded groups:

- Our Membership Service, which offers clear benefits for member organisations
- Our Small Groups' Network and associated support to small groups
- Our Equality Network and associated support to equality groups

CVSF currently has 355 members and 22 projects within its membership. In 2012 we renewed our membership offer to the CVS to make it clearer what the benefits of being a member of CVSF was. A key benefit of being a member is the feelings of belonging and being part of a collective sector which it generates for our members. Comments about this include:

"It is a positive association [with CVSF] that makes me (and my group) feel connected to other grass roots initiatives and also feel supported and part of the 'real' fabric of the city. Reduces isolation and provides a great network of services, events and opportunities. It means a lot!"

"Feeling stronger despite the small size of our organisation."

"To feel part of something bigger – a family of similar organisations which can support each other."

"To be recognized as part of the city of Brighton and Hove and to be part of the community of other community and voluntary sector organisations feels a lot less lonely. It's useful to have a central place where all groups can meet and keep in regular communication and contact."

"I believe it is important to participate as a member in order to ensure that the sector is seen as strong and important; being an active member is about giving the sector credibility."

"It's nice to feel part of the big colourful patchwork!"

"A sense of being linked to something bigger, being part of a community of like-minded organisations."

In 2013, 80% (n=62) of members felt that CVSF staff and elected reps champion the views of smaller groups and organisations that do not have the capacity to attend meetings

compared with 60% (n=88) in 2012. A survey of elected reps in 2012 highlighted that, 78% (n=23) of reps feel that CVSF elected representation provide a voice for under-represented groups in comparison to 32% (n=34) in 2010. For the first time in 2011, CVSF members elected 8 reps to be their voice around equality groups. We also began to support an equality network, which whilst less successful due to the complex nature of the issues that it has been discussing, it has enabled CVSF to evolve its approach to supporting equality groups in its membership and ensuring they are involved in and have opportunities to be active in our work.

CVSF has **215 small groups** in its membership and our small groups' e-list currently has 236 emails on it. We support a small groups' network to meet regularly. In total, 126 of the 165 who have attended a small groups' network meeting did so as a volunteer. The number of people who attended a network meeting who believed that CVSF takes small groups issues seriously, increased from 78% to 87%, and those who felt better connected to other small groups rose from 57% to 73% in 2012. In 2013, 84% of small groups were feeling better informed as a result of attending network meetings, and 80% felt that CVSF takes small groups issues seriously. A survey of elected reps in 2012 highlighted that, 78% (n=23) of reps feel that CVSF elected representation provide a voice for small community groups in comparison to 56% (n=34) in 2010.

Just **under two thirds of our membership** have identified themselves as working primarily with the following communities: Black and Minority Ethnic, Carers, Disability, Faith based, Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual, Learning Disability, Men, Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Single Parents, Transgender, Travelers, Women. As part of our 2012 and 2013 members' survey we asked those responding if the main purpose of their group was to work with a particular community. The highest responses were from those working with: Children, Young People, Older People, Disabilities, those with Mental Health needs, those on a low income, the homeless, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender individuals, and Black and Minority Ethnic communities. This provides a good indication of the average spread of equality groups that get involved in and are active in CVSF's work, and represents a large number of equality groups and communities that are socially excluded in Brighton and Hove.

In 2013, we undertook an assessment of the number of representatives from **equality groups** who attended and participated in our Networks and Events Programme in 2012. The analysis showed that 56% of all attendees at our meetings, events and networks were from identifiable equality groups. 43% of all attendees were representing a characteristic which is protected under the 2010 Equality Act.

As a result of our work to clarify CVSF membership, develop our offer, and offer something in particular to small groups and equality groups we have a diverse range of groups engaged in CVSF activities. These groups in turn feel that through membership with the CVSF they have a higher profile in the city and they are more likely to be listened to.

Developing the Sector's role and Representing/Leading the Sector

CVSF is working to develop the sector's role in public sector commissioning and service delivery. We are supporting the sector to be involved in emerging Council, NHS and Police programmes to improve and develop their commissioning practices and to redesign their services following unprecedented cuts to public sector spending. CVSF also supports the

representation of the local CVS to ensure the sectors views, experience and expertise feeds into key citywide debates around policy, practice and priorities, and to ensure that our members, and the wider sector, has maximum influence in the city.

To achieve this, we use a number of our existing mechanisms, and support a system of elected representation for the CVS:

- Our targeted e-lists which support the exchange and circulation of information
- Our packed full of information e-newsletter (Dialogue)
- Our Social Media platforms: Twitter and Facebook
- Our Member Directories, and themed directories
- Our Easy to read and sector-specific briefings on key areas and issues of interest
- Our Postal Mailings which provide access to essential information
- Our Networks and Events Programme which provides the space and opportunities for sector debate, and the development of sector views and collective voice
- Our Reps Council which brings together all Elected Representatives and provides a space for debate, and the development of influencing plans
- Our Elected Representatives and staff which attend key citywide meetings to ensure the sectors views and voice is heard

CVSF has worked hard to **increase understanding and appreciation of the role of the sector** in the city. We regularly champion the sector's value, its strengths, expertise and benefits at key citywide meetings and with key citywide decision-makers, and to residents in the city. We have pioneered and supported ways of working which seek to ensure the sector is heard, considered and understood. The results of this are regularly seen in the levels of continued investment in the local CVS. For example, unlike many areas of the country Brighton and Hove City Council has continued to protect grants to the CVS, despite cuts in other areas of spending. This is due to the role that CVSF has played in the city to promote the sector, its benefits. Both the Council and local NHS structures are also actively developing and using a new Prospectus Model as a means of continuing to invest in the CVS.

Many of the projects that we have been involved in has resulted in **new opportunities for the sector, an increased role for the sector, increased funding for the sector**, and ultimately better planning for and delivery of services and activities for local communities in Brighton and Hove. In recent years we have led and supported our members, and the wider sector, to **develop a role in and around the following strategic agendas:**

- Commissioning
- Prospectus
- Co-production
- Community Assets
- Social Value
- Social Impact Measurement
- Open Data
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments
- Stronger Families, Stronger Communities
- CCG's Engagement Structures
- City Engagement Partnership

- City Engagement Framework
- Neighbourhood Governance
- Safeguarding Children
- Council Annual Budget Setting Processes
- Equality
- Social Inclusion
- Localism and Community Rights
- Big Society

In recent years we have led and supported our members, and the wider sector, in **influencing the following policies and services:**

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Financial and Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Council Tax reduction scheme
- Community Mental health services
- Police Crime Plan
- Lewes Road Transport Project
- Welfare Reform
- Youth Services
- Child Poverty
- Sustainable Community Strategy

Comments about this include:

“CVSF supports the strategic decision making process in the city, helping ensure that the role of the sector as key providers of health and social care services is recognised and supported.”

“I just want to say how grateful I am for all the support and encouragement CHIBAH and I myself have had over the years, and without this support, Starlings would not have achieved its aim. Being involved in CVSF gave Co-operative Housing a platform, and put me on it, so I could learn the skills to take the dream forward. Without my being a rep to the LSP, Co-operative Housing would never have got on to the city agenda, and without being endorsed by CVSF, the city wouldn't have listened.”

“As part of CVSF we are part of the city wide voice. When you are located within one area this is vital to ensure that the neighbourhood perspective is heard. CVSF is our vehicle. Its channels allow for sector agreed views to be heard at the highest level and that ability to negotiate together is essential.”

As a result of our work our members feel that the **relationships between the sectors in Brighton and Hove are constructive** and comparatively more advanced than in other areas. In 2013, 80% (n=62) of members thought that relationships between the sectors in Brighton and Hove are constructive compared with 70% (n=88) in 2012.

The National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises highlights that the proportion of CVS organisations in Brighton and Hove who consider that local statutory bodies value the work of their organisation increased from 36% in 2008 to 43% in 2010. The survey also showed that the proportion of CVS organisations who consider that local statutory bodies

understand the nature and role of their organisation increased from 30% in 2008 to 36% in 2010. These results suggest that **CVSF is successful in developing understanding and appreciation of the role and value of CVS organisations in the city.**

CVSF currently supports **33 elected representatives** who represent the sector around key themes: equality (including: disability, older people, carers, BME & cultural minorities, LGBT, Gender, Faith), environment, health & wellbeing, housing, enterprise & learning, communities, children & young people and small groups. We know that our representation support and activity is excellent. In 2013, 85% (n=62) of members thought that CVSF representation is effective and of high quality compared with 82% (n=88) in 2012, 65% (n=22) in 2010, and 63% (n=60) in 2008.

Our Rep's Council has been referred to as a 'powerhouse' of local activists, experts and community leaders. Comments include:

"You look around and realise that this is the very best of the sector, acting together and debating policy. It's a bit intimidating it's so powerful!"

From our members' surveys we know that our members feel that CVSF successfully influences issues of importance to the sector, and leads the sector well in doing this. In 2013, 82% (n=62) said that CVSF effectively represents their views and has influence compared with 79% (n=88) in 2012, 65% (n=22) in 2010 and 64% (n=60) in 2008. Additionally, in 2013, 71% (n=62) felt that they have the opportunity to influence policies and plans via CVSF compared with 70% (n=88) in 2012, 76% (n=22) in 2010 and 59% (n=60) in 2008.

The National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises highlights that the proportion of CVS organisations in Brighton and Hove who consider that local statutory bodies inform them on issues which affect or are of interest to the sector increased from 21% in 2008 to 30% in 2010, and the proportion of CVS organisations who consider that local statutory bodies consult them on issues which affect or are of interest to the sector increased from 21% in 2008 to 27% in 2010. These results suggest that **CVSF is successful in ensuring that CVS organisations can influence issues of interest to the sector.**

As a result of CVSF activity CVS organisations are involved in commissioning, influencing needs assessments and service design and delivery, and are increasingly providing services themselves. The local CVS is successful in influencing a range of policies, issues and services for the benefit of the city's communities and looks to CVSF to lead them and support them in achieving this. We consistently see examples of CVS influence over policy and service decisions, and our numerous case studies support this.

Developing Ourselves

To ensure that CVSF can continue to operate despite the wide ranging changes in government policy and funding, we need to develop an enterprising approach to service delivery and income generation.

We have also been developing the services we can offer to the CVS to strengthen our role and purpose in the city. With this in mind we led a partnership of local infrastructure

providers to successfully bid for funding from the Transforming Local Infrastructure fund in 2012. The money is being used to merge a number of support services currently provided by different organisations into one single organisation. It has recently been decided that CVSF will act as the vehicle for this new organisation, although with a significant reorganisation and rebrand. The services of this new organisation will include some of CVSF's services, plus the volunteer centre, linking with businesses, and services providing training, mentoring, consultancy, and 121 support for groups. The development of the training service has already begun, and this has already started to bring some additional income in to CVSF.

In recent years CVSF has started to charge membership fees for those organisations who can afford to pay a little. This has brought in an additional £5,000 per year. CVSF has also developed a sliding scale of charges for undertaking our work, which commissioners and public sector decision-makers can then purchase from us.

Whilst we still have some way to go, CVSF's income is increasingly becoming diversified and our offer to the sector and potential funders is being adapted and changed to ensure new ways of working and new services which are fit for purpose and resilient.

CVSF has also developed closer working relationships with other Council for Voluntary Services in East and West Sussex as part of its work to influence countywide Police Crime Commissioner arrangements, and has been developing closer working relationships with NAVCA (National Association of Voluntary and Community Action) and NCVO (National Council of Voluntary Organisations). From April 2013 onwards, CVSF will be working with Sussex Community Foundation (SCF) to jointly deliver a Community Health Fund. Closer working relationships are also being developed with other infrastructure support organisations in the city such as Trust for Developing Communities, Black Minority Ethnic Community Partnership, Federation of Disabled People, The Resource Centre, Community Base and the South East Wellbeing Consortium.

From April 2013, CVSF will also be working to support the development of Healthwatch Brighton and Hove as the city's new independent health and social care watchdog.

Citywide Outcomes

CVSF contributes towards achieving citywide outcomes around **Strengthening Communities and Involving People**. The City Tracker Survey highlighted that 93% of service users were satisfied with the city's local charities and community groups. This was the third highest level of satisfaction out of all the services offered in the city. This suggests that the CVS is delivering effective and high quality services to local residents; and receiving the right support it needs to do this through CVSF.

The City Tracker also identified that 76% of **people feel a strong sense of belonging to their local area**, whilst 90% agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well together within the local area. Strengthening communities, encouraging involvement, and creating a sense of belonging is a key part of the CVS. These results suggest that the CVS is both resilient and vibrant; and being well supported by CVSF to achieve these outcomes.

The National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises highlights that the proportion of CVS organisations in Brighton and Hove who think that they have been **successful in meeting their main objectives** increased from 87% in 2008 to 94% in 2010. This would suggest that local CVS organisations are getting what they need to achieve their objectives, and the support they are provided with by CVSF is helping them to achieve their objectives. Indeed the proportion of CVS organisations in Brighton and Hove who were satisfied with the support available to them in their local area increased from 21% in 2008 to 24% in 2010, and those satisfied with the support available from CVSF increased from 15% in 2008 to 21% in 2010.

CVSF's State of the Sector Survey, run in October 2012, showed that the **sector was feeling resilient, and optimistic about the future, despite the current challenges**. 32% of our members felt that their financial situation will worsen in 2012, down from 55% in 2011. 7% of our members felt that they are going from one crisis to the next in 2012, down from 15% in 2011. 29% of our members felt that their funding is good enough in 2012, up from 25% on 2011.

These more optimistic results are the result of the support provided by the CVSF to the CVS. As a result of CVSF's activities in ensuring the sector has access to information, is being supported to be more entrepreneurial and to make the best of opportunities, and CVSF's influencing work to ensure that preventative and community-focused spending is prioritised by the city's decision-makers, we are seeing a more optimistic, vibrant and resilient CVS which is thriving despite growing pressures.

Taking Account: A social and Economic Audit of the Third Sector in Brighton and Hove was last undertaken in 2008. It identified a number of characteristics of the local CVS. The income of the CVS in Brighton and Hove is approximately £55 million per year, much of which is spent in the city on local projects which creates further economic benefits and impacts. As a result, the overall economic contribution of the CVS to the local economy is £96.25 million. 43% of the CVS's income comes in the form of grants, 62% of which come from outside of the city. 33% of the CVS's income comes in the form of service contracts, 46% of which come from outside of the city.

8,000 people work in the local CVS, which represents 7% of employee positions in the city. There are 19,200 volunteer positions in the CVS, of which 11,200 are positions on management committees and boards. Volunteers donate 57,600 hours per week to CVS organisations in Brighton and Hove; this is worth approximately £24 million a year.

Taking Account will be refreshed again in 2013, and will aim to evaluate the current size, importance and value of community and voluntary sector organisations in Brighton and Hove. We anticipate that much of the vibrancy of the Sector as described in the previous Audit will again be found, despite the changing economic and social climates. It is probable that this will have been in part the result of the continued support provided by the CVSF to the local CVS helping it to continue to grow and be vibrant and resilient despite growing pressures.