Mapping and Trends: Community and Voluntary Groups in Cambridgeshire

April

2014

Supporting community and voluntary groups across the whole of Cambridgeshire

Contents

Researched and compiled by CCVS for CVS5

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Cambridgeshire VCS – 2014

The ratio of actively connected groups to self-supporting local clubs and societies is more or less the same as that for other parts of the country: a ratio of about 20:80. 237 of the groups that are actively connected responded to the annual survey. More than half of these groups run entirely on volunteers with 4/5th of the remainder having fewer than 5 staff members. More than half of the groups had a turnover of £10,000 or less with just 15% managing a turnover of £100,000 or more. Most groups this year reported having their own website and communicating by email, whilst few of the groups relied on externally (council-based) websites to keep in touch. Over half are now using social media for promotion and communication purposes. More than half thought their income would remain the same in 2014, whilst 20% though it would be lower and some thought they might have to fold.

Fundraising was a key concern for groups this year, both to maintain their previous level of income and to meet increased need brought on by larger numbers of users or cuts in grants from statutory authorities. There has been an increase in the closure of support groups this year.

Cambridgeshire statutory authorities have all be affected by cuts and have been forced to reduce services as a result. The impact of the Localism Act has not made any significant inroads into replacing these services and there is a high expectation that community and voluntary groups may be able to pick up some of the slack. However, there is a lack of overall coherent strategy and connectivity in relation to the Cambridgeshire community and voluntary sector. The results of this survey should help to illustrate what is realistic, appropriate and timely in managing expectations and communications between actively connected groups, local authorities and others.

Introduction

Cambridgeshire Community and Voluntary groups can be divided into three broad categories: small, local, often village groups or clubs run entirely be volunteers with little or no regular income, medium groups, mostly run by volunteers, perhaps with a part-time administrator and a small regular income and larger groups, managed by volunteers with paid staff and some contracts or commissions, often from statutory authorities and often based in one of the towns. Groups vary in their size and connectivity; generally speaking the smaller they are the more likely they are not to be in touch with local infrastructure or local authorities – these are often described as "below-the-radar". Cambridgeshire is a predominantly rural county with geographical pockets of particular need, not historically eligible for government or external funding and grants due to the overall average lack of deprivation (in relation to the rest of the country.) However the ratio of groups that are in the loop and below-the-radar is similar to that nationally.

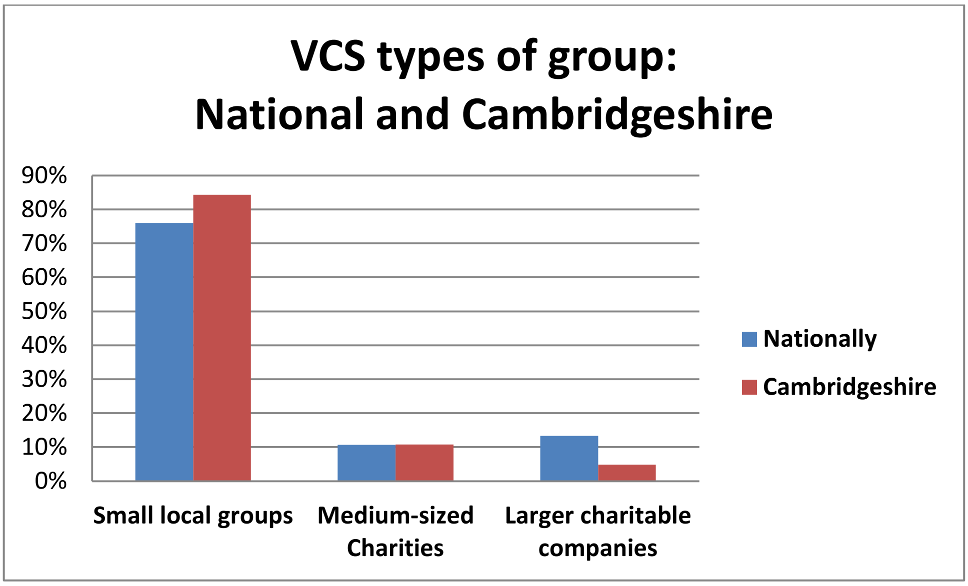

Figure 1 VCS types of group: nationally and in Cambridgeshire[1]

There are three Council for Voluntary Service organisations in Cambridgeshire; Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service covering Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and fenland, Hunts Forum for Huntingdonshire and Voluntary Community Action East Cambridgeshire that covers East Cambridgeshire. These three organisations work in partnership with each other to maximise joint effectiveness, avoid duplication and share expertise.

[1] Mohan, J. (2012) "Entering the lists: what can we learn about the voluntary sector in England from listings produced by local infrastructure bodies?" *Voluntary Sector Review* • vol 3 • no 2 • 2012 • 197–215

Every year the CVS organisations survey groups that are members and collect responses from non-members on a series of questions that indicate what type of support the groups might need in the following year. This year's survey was undertaken between January and March 2014 at a time when the future financial support for community and voluntary groups was in question by a number of statutory authorities. It is perhaps for this reason that the return was much less than last year; 237 as opposed to 352.

Methodology

The purpose of the survey was to capture a cross-section of information from community and voluntary groups in Cambridgeshire using a predominantly digital survey model. This year's survey built on the previously successful use of the online tool www.surveymonkey.com. Individuals were asked to complete the survey online and were also given the opportunity to complete a paper copy or to phone in their answers to a CCVS staff member, if this was not possible. The number of phone or paper based responses was small (4) showing that most groups who took part were happy to do so through *SurveyMonkey*. As this methodology was the same as last year it seems unlikely that it was to blame for the reduction in responses. 845 people were directly invited to take the survey, although the survey was made also widely available through partners' networks and the web. The response rate was 28% overall with 79% of responses coming from member groups.

As well as all partners publicising a web link through various media outlets from newsletters to email signatures, extensive use was made of CVS contact lists. Emails were sent to four separate cohorts, CCVS members, VCAEC members, Hunts Forum members and non-member contacts. To ensure that people only received a single email, duplicate emails were removed where possible. The initial email was followed up with reminders over a period of three weeks to all those that had not completed the survey or opted out[2]. This improved use of the email facility offered opportunities to send emails to selected groups and to monitor where responses came back from. It was this process that led to the doubling of the number of returns over the previous year.

The number of non-member groups contacted was lower than the previous year as the contact lists had been refreshed in response to other surveys undertaken during the year. Reducing duplicates and changed contact details. 48 responses came from groups that indicated they were not yet members of any of the CVS5 organisations; this represented 21% of the respondents. As can be seen from Figure 2, CCVS had significantly more members than the other areas; due to the fact that it covers three out of five districts.

[2] All emails included two opt out options: One by clicking on a *SurveyMonkey* link and the other by responding directly to the email asking to be unsubscribed.

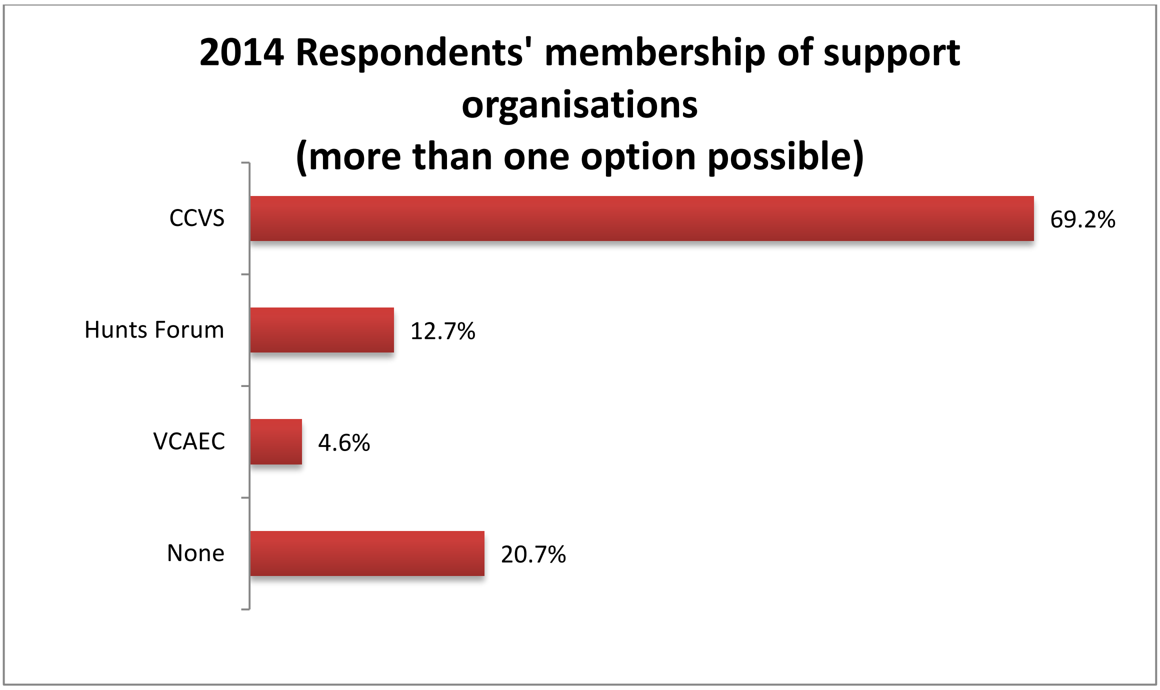

Figure 2 CVS membership of respondents (count 237)

Mapping Cambridgeshire VCS 2014

Profile of groups that completed the survey

Respondents from 237 groups completed the survey. These respondent groups delivered their services over a variety of geographies and were of varied sizes, although, as in previous years most came from groups with a turnover of less than £10,000. This year repeated the questions about income and staff numbers. This allowed us to make some comparison to previous year's surveys.

Size of groups

Community groups often function without large sums of money and rely almost entirely on volunteers. Voluntary groups are characterised by organisations with some annual financial turnover and some employed staff. The cross section of groups by size is shown in Figure 3.

Groups with a turnover of less than £50,000 were mostly represented, 72%, as in previous years (Figure 4). Within this group there has been an increase in the smaller organisations responding and a further drop of the larger groups responding down from 25% to 15% of respondents.

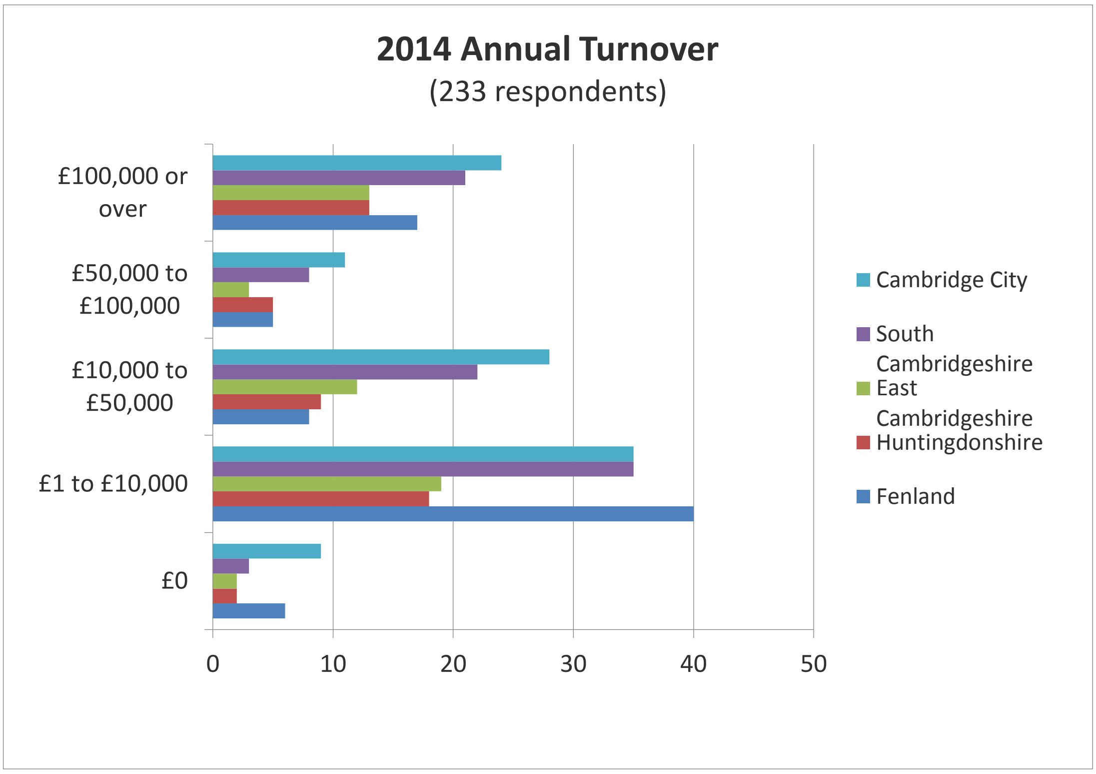

Figure 3 Annual turnover of groups (count 233)

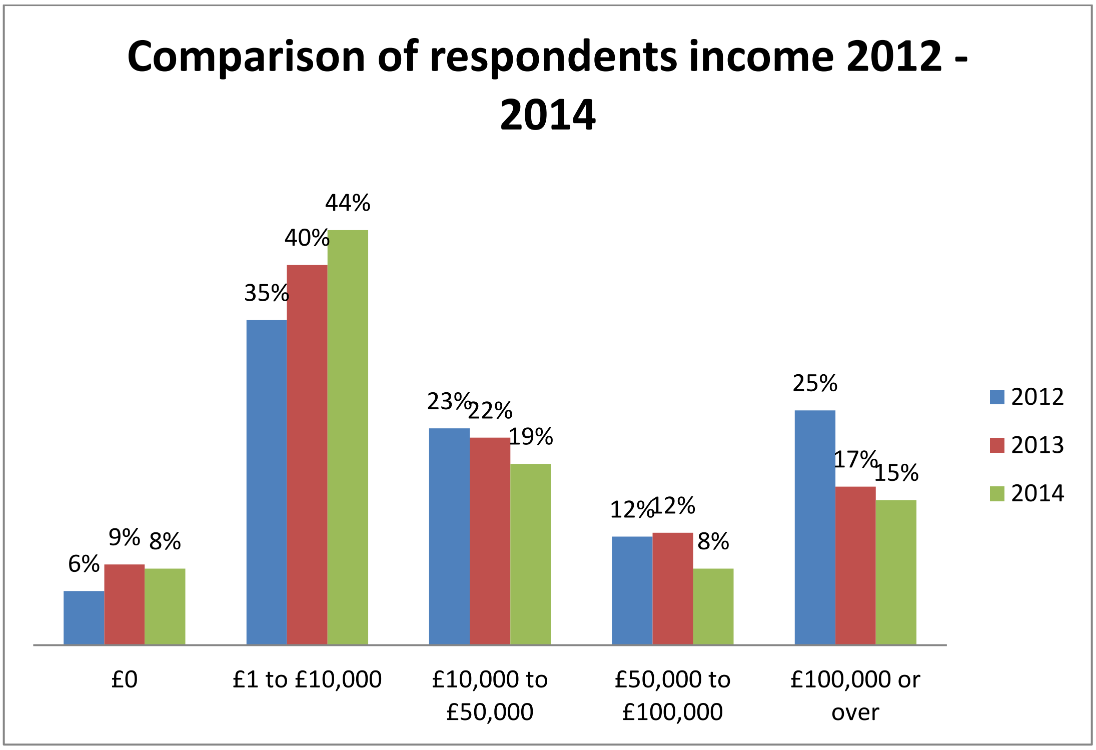

Figure 4 Comparison of community groups by income 2012 to 2014

The ratio of staff to volunteers has been monitored through capturing the number of staff by group's turnover. Figure 5 shows the percentage of organisations with different staff levels. Groups without staff are entirely volunteer-led.

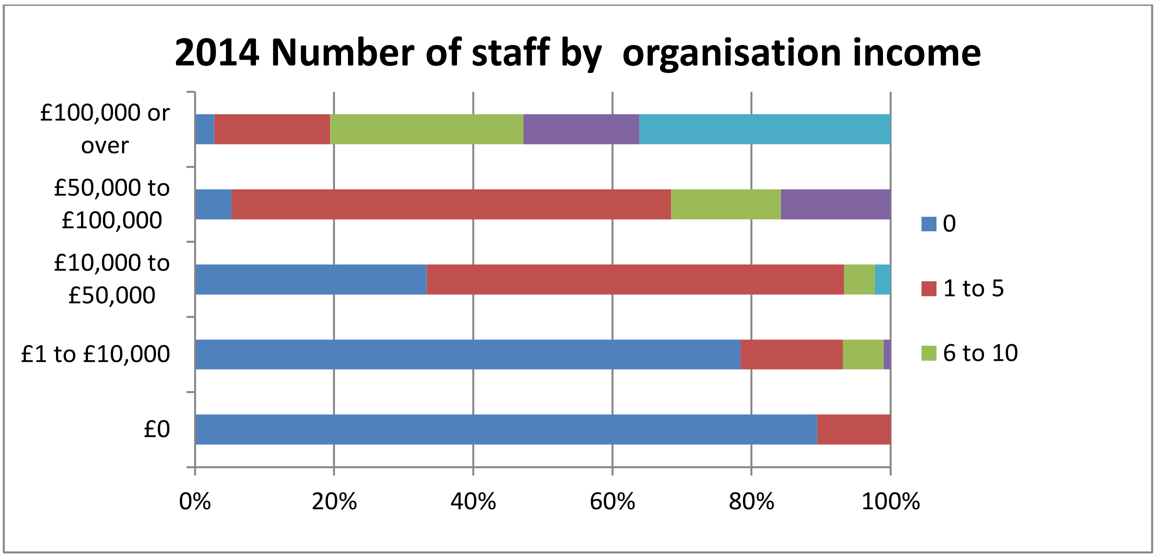

Figure 5 Numbers of Staff by income

Figure 5 shows that most of the groups have very few paid staff. Nearly four out of every five (79%) organisations have five or fewer staff, and over half (51%) have no staff at all. Given the time constraints that face volunteers, this has to be an important consideration when communicating and liaising with the smaller groups. When planning training programmes for groups thought must go into the fact that volunteers will have a cornucopia of experience and skills that will not be easily apparent, unlike staff with job titles. CVS services have to be designed to suit a variety of skills levels for those who are running the groups.

Geographical coverage of respondents

Some groups worked in many districts, whilst others worked only in one. Due to the overlapping nature of the geographical coverage the highest cover was illustrated by the groups that worked in Cambridge City, (Figure 6).The proportion of organisations working in Cambridge City was 48%. The reason for the higher levels in South Cambridgeshire compared to the other non-city districts is probably due to the fact that many Cambridge-based organisations also cover some or all of South Cambridgeshire as they do not recognise the district boundaries, and also many people from South Cambridgeshire are known to access services provided by Cambridge City.

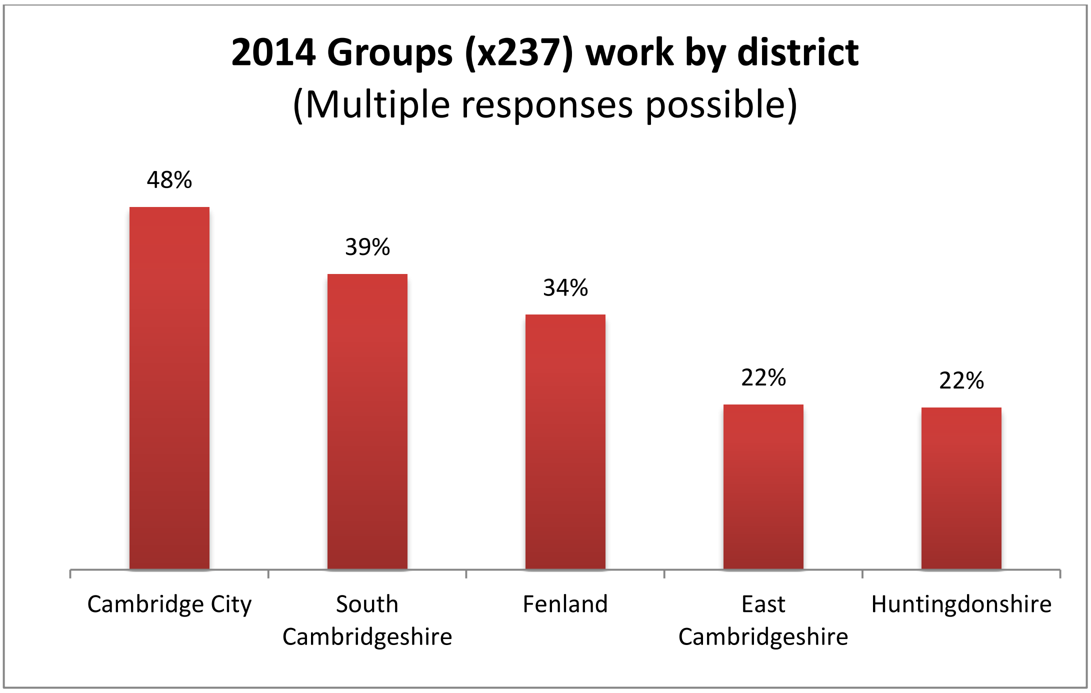

Figure 6 Where groups (x 237) work by district

This concentration of services in Cambridge City is reinforced when examining the number of groups that work in just one district (Figure 7). 32% work in Cambridge. Many groups have historically chosen to base their organisations in Cambridge City to take advantage of the central transport links.

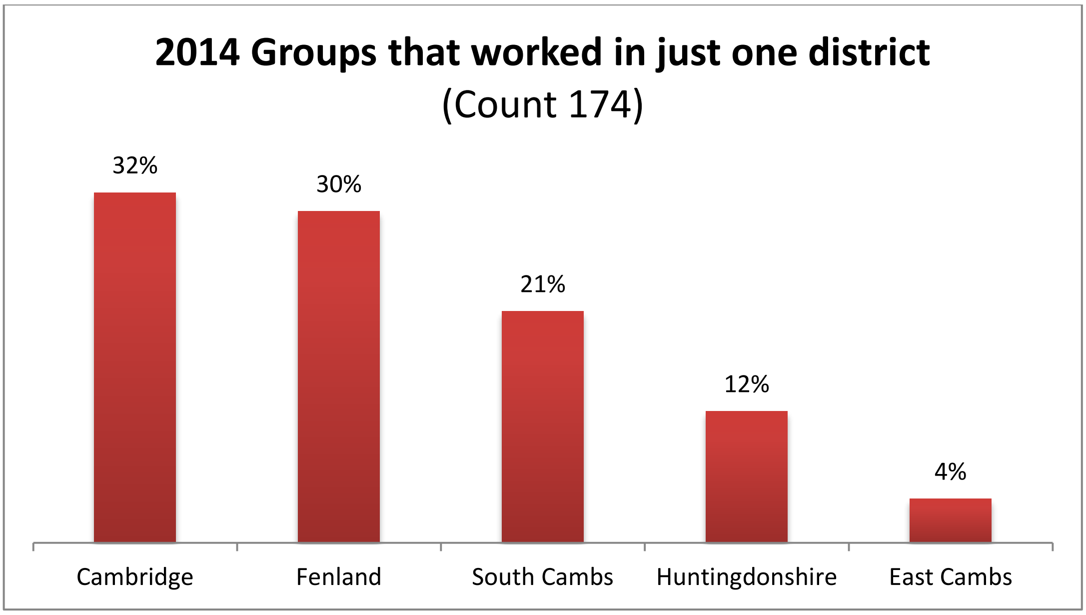

Figure 7 Groups that work in just one district

In 2014 the proportion of groups working in just one district rose from 61% in 2012 to 71% in 2013 to 73% in 2014, whilst the proportion of groups that work across the county has fallen to 8%, down from17% in 2012 and 10% in 2013. Maybe this reflects the feeling of entrenchment that surrounds the sector at this time. Despite new opportunities to join consortia to bid for large commissions of outsourced public services groups appeared to have kept their horns in and are working within the bounds of what they know and trust.

How groups were constituted

In order to establish how groups were regulated, the survey had a question about how the groups were constituted. Groups that carry out charitable activities are not all registered or unregistered charities. The survey has captured a good range of responses from groups right across the spectrum; registered charities, companies limited by guarantee, clubs, unregistered charities, community interest companies, companies with shares and 27 in “other” categories. Those in the “other” category described themselves as church, community group, campaign group, community benefit society, friends group, residents’ association, tenants association, parish council and village pantomime. Most indicated they were registered charities up from 53% to 62%. Figure 8 shows their relative numbers.

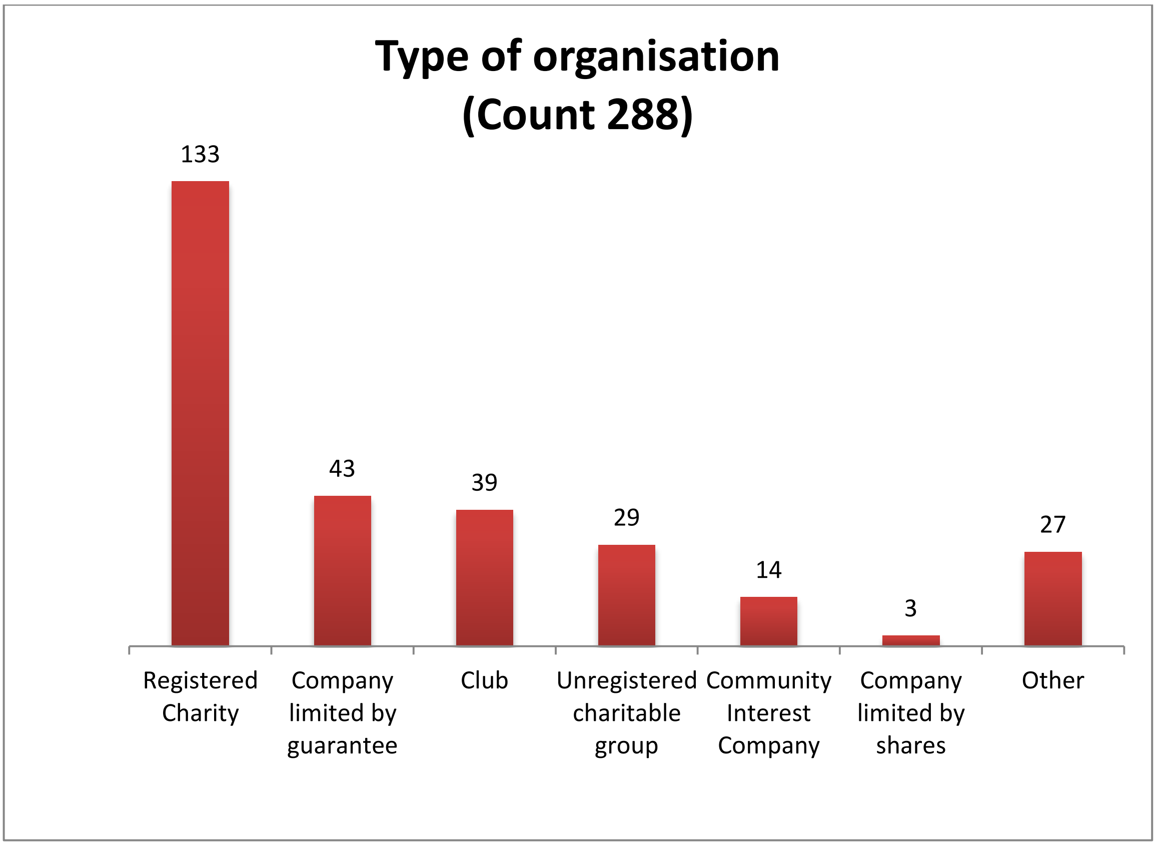

Figure 8 2014 VCS Types of organisation

The results varied depending on size of organisation as can be seen from Figure 9 below. Not surprisingly most clubs and unregistered charitable groups turned over the least annually, with companies turning over the highest amounts and registered charities in between.

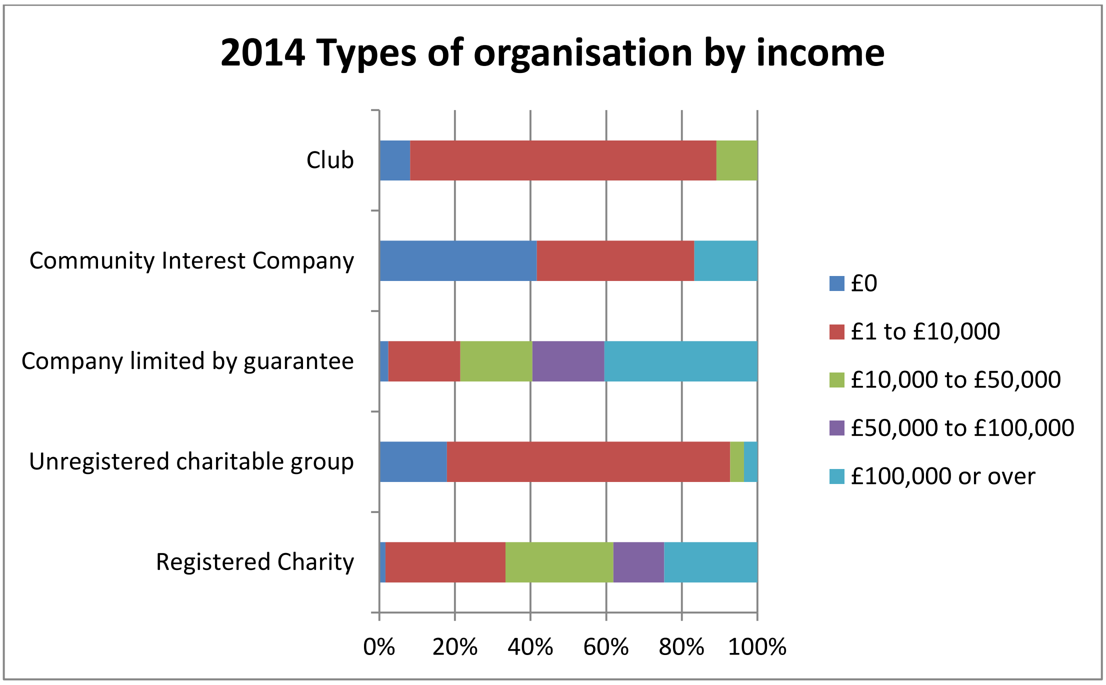

Figure 9 2014 Structure of organisations by size

In 2012 John Mohan published a research paper for the Voluntary Sector Review that undertook to examine the statistical basis for interpreting levels of community and voluntary sector activity in England. It was the largest single study of its kind for England, using data from regulators, local authorities and local infrastructure organisations, like Councils for Voluntary Service. The study area was in the North-West and North-East of England. In particular the research attempted to analyse the level of below-the-radar, or unregulated groups. It was concluded that below-the-radar groups make up between 60-80% of the whole and they are not consistently visible through the datasets. For the purposes of the Cambridgeshire 2014 survey a small study of community groups has been undertaken across a sample of villages and small towns in order to evaluate the status of the lists kept by the Cambridgeshire CVS organisations. Maybe it is due to the more rural nature of the sample in Cambridgeshire that the below-the-radar percentage was around 83%, slightly higher than that suggested in Mohan's study.

Income trends

Groups were asked to indicate how they would describe the fortunes of their charities in 2014; would they have the same income, lower or higher income. 68% thought income would be the same, 12% thought it would be higher and 20% lower. Many of those that thought income would be higher said so because they recorded a need for higher income (to be achieved through fundraising) due to external events like higher rent or more clients/users, with a couple mentioning recently secured new grant income. Half of those that forecast lower income said it was due to reductions in statutory grants or contracts, 13% said it was due to a drop in clients or users.

Beneficiaries of groups

A series of questions gave groups the opportunity to categorise the beneficiaries for whom they provided services.

Of the 231 people who responded to the question "Does your organisation work with specific types of beneficiaries?" 59% stated they work with everyone, an increase on the 54% from the previous year. Of those that indicated they work with specific beneficiaries, the highest percentage work with 'adults' (Figure 10).

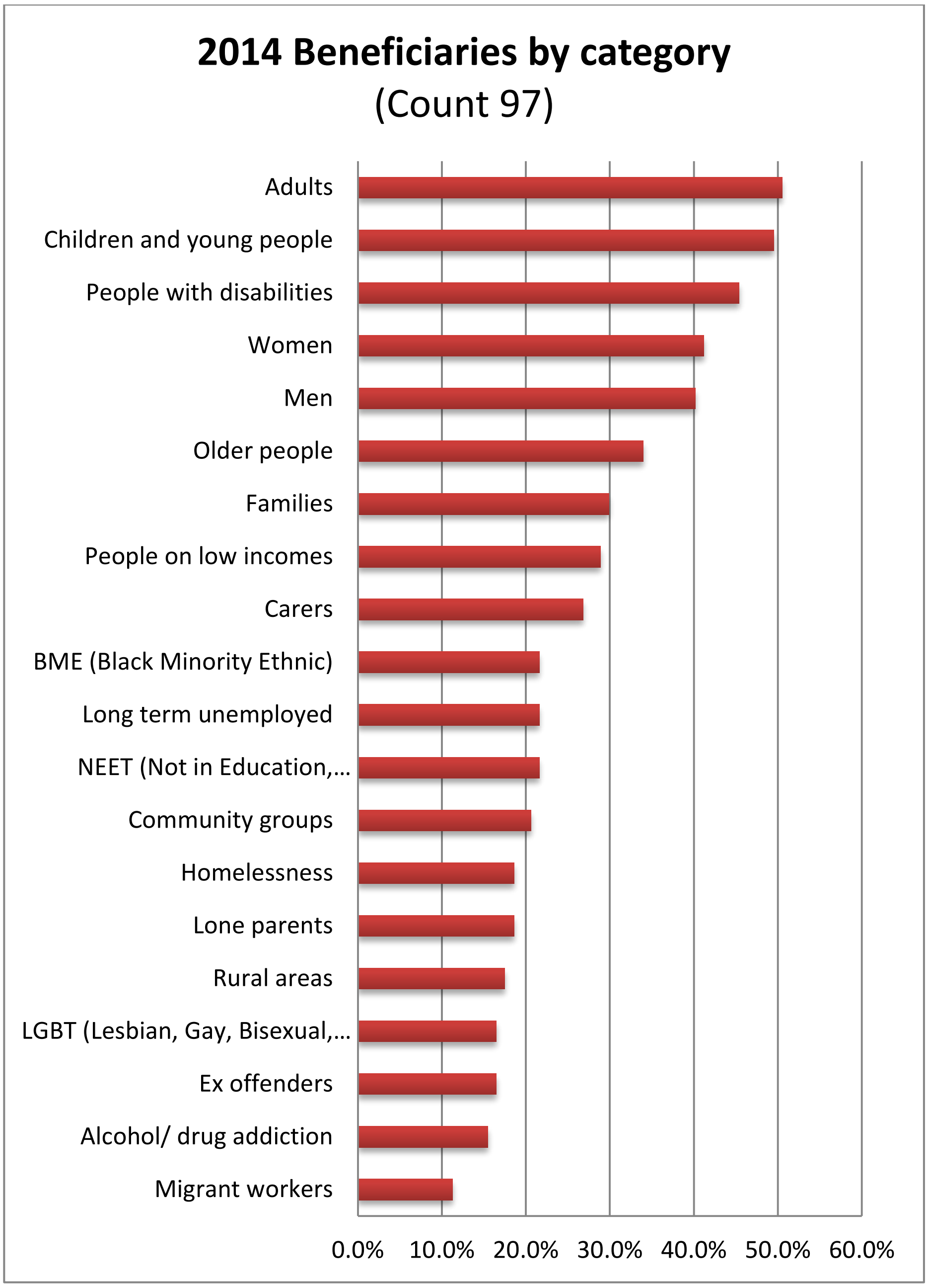

Figure 10 2014 Beneficiaries by category

224 respondents answered the question, "Does your organisation only work with people from a specific age group?". 70% said that they worked with those of any

age. The remaining 30% that specified the age range of individuals with whom they worked tended to work with multiple age ranges. Those working with specific ages are shown in Figure 11 below. It is clear that fewer organisations that worked with 19-25 year olds responded to the survey this year, possibly due to the recent closure of the Children and Young People Infrastructure support agency, which had previously circulated the survey for completion.

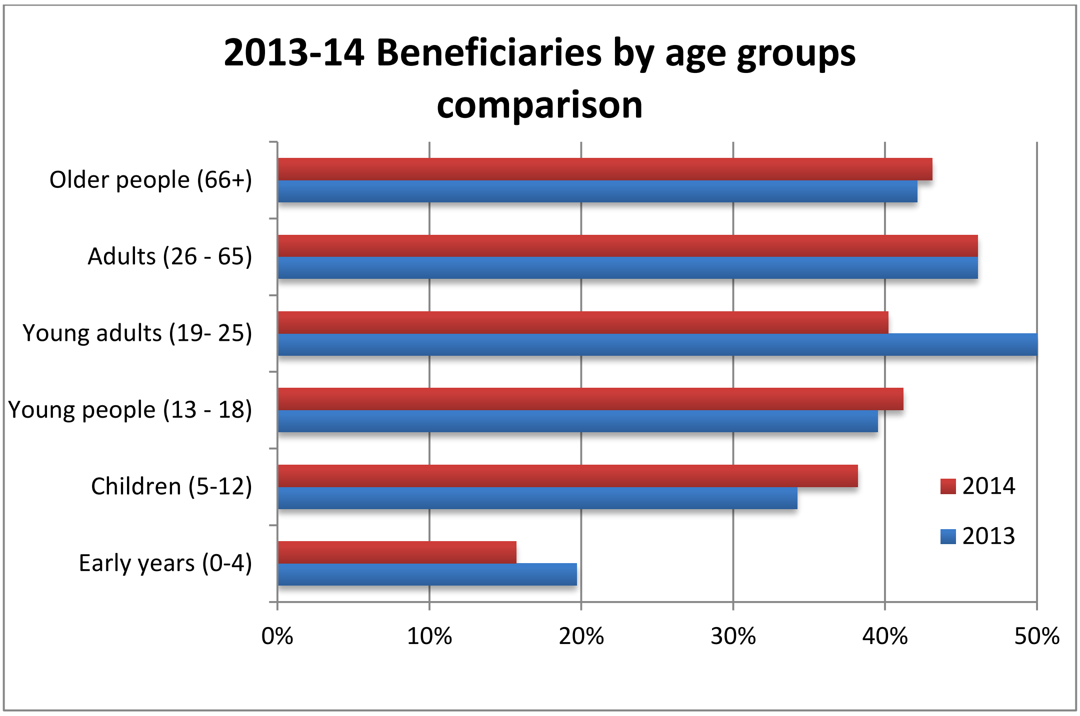

Figure 11 2013 - 2014 Beneficiaries by age group

VCS Support Needs

This year the questions on training needs were divided up into 5 blocks to differentiate between training support that could be provided by CVS organisations and that which would have to be procured separately. The categories were fundraising support, financial management, trustee training, and compliance & general training.

Fundraising support needs

Half of all the organisations that completed the survey wanted help with fundraising. This is slightly more than in the previous year's survey. The figure below (Figure 12) shows the areas that groups wanted training and how they would like it delivered.

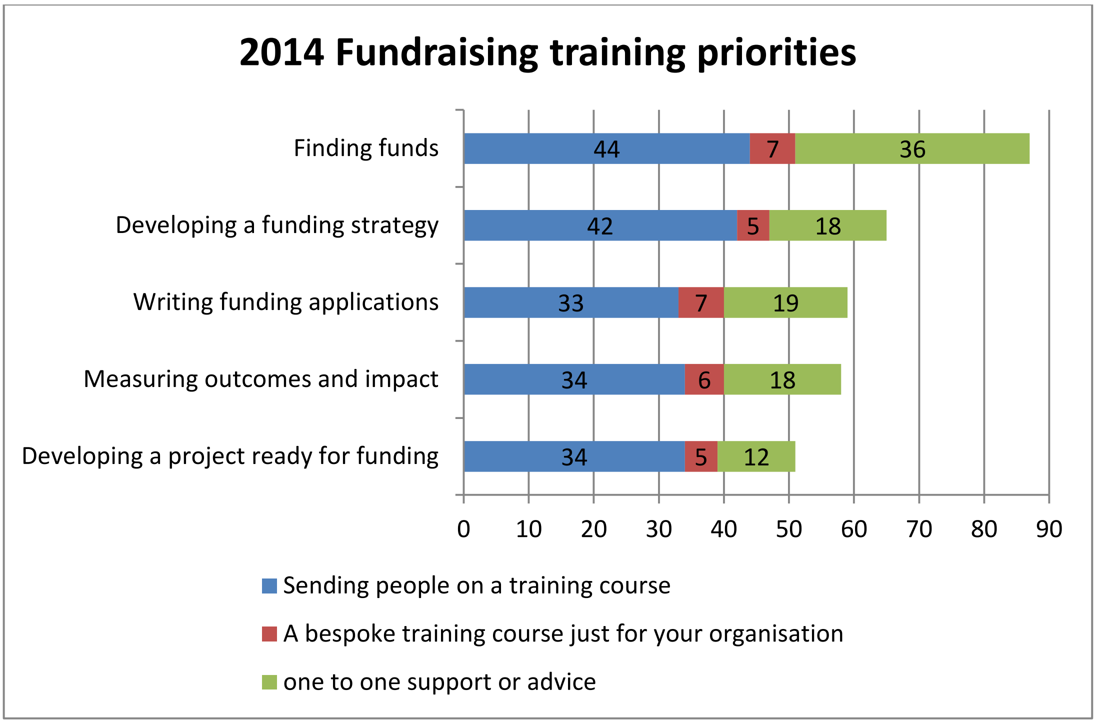

Figure 12 2014 VCS fundraising priorities

Groups have very different funding needs and benefit from one-to-one development sessions that focus exclusively on the requirements for each group. One of the ways of doing this is by using bespoke fund finding software, like *GrantFinder*. This software is purchased through a licensing arrangement, that is relatively expensive. The CVS organisations are keen to find a cheaper way of delivering this service, due to the recent cuts they have incurred in their own grant income. In order to guage the response of users to a chargeable service groups were asked whether they would use the service it it were chargeable. There is a marked difference in how groups want funding training delivered. There is less demand for bespoke training but a much higher demand for one to one support. 27% groups said they would no longer use the service, 26% said they would pay for it and the rest, 47% said they would only use it if it was free at the point of delivery. Given that the current licensing arrangment may no longer be affordable by the CVS organisations these responses are cause for concern. The spread of responses by size of turnover indicated that the wealthier organisations did not want to pay for the service.

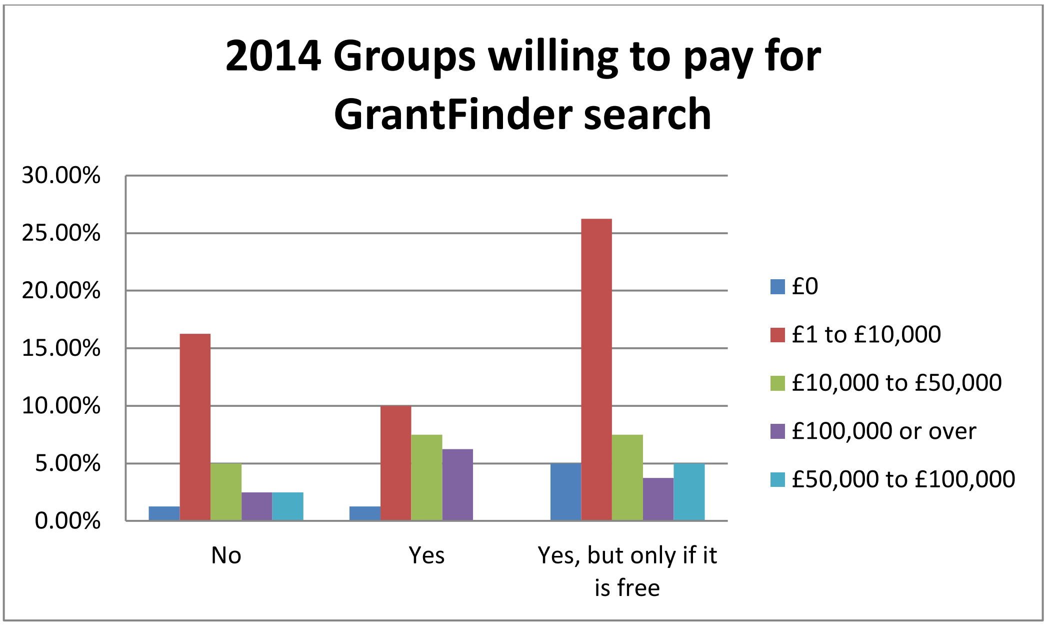

Figure 13 VCS groups willing to pay for Grantfinder search

Financial management training

A smaller number of groups wanted Finance training than either Fundraising or Governance. With only 21% requesting support overall. There was some variation in need based on size with the smallest groups showing the greatest need, Figure 14.

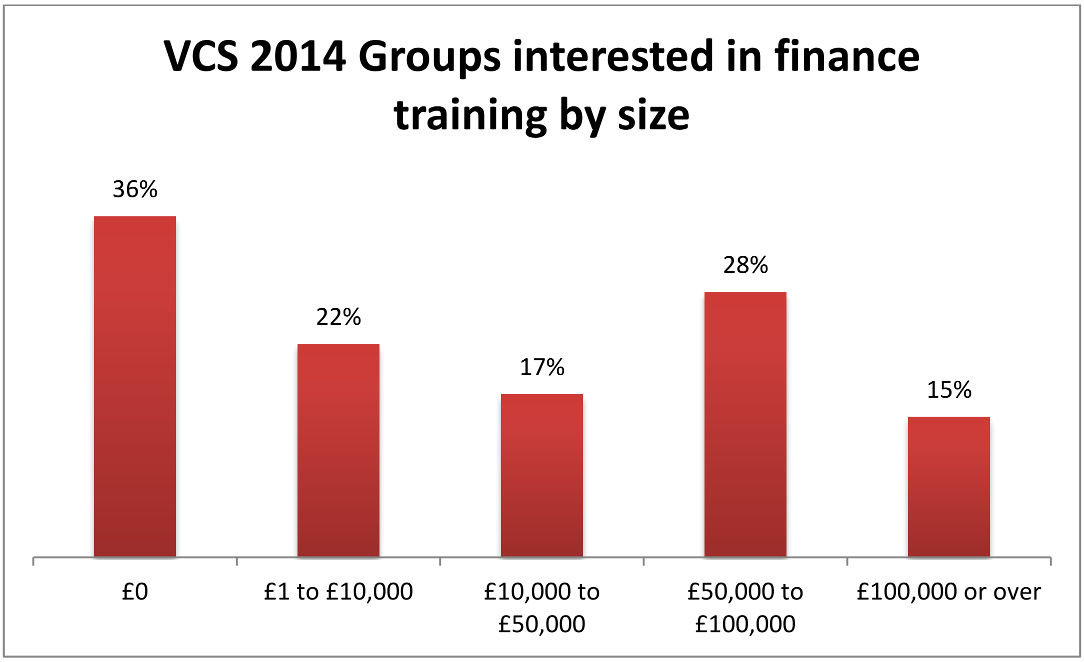

Figure 14 2014 VCS groups wanting finance training

The fact that groups with no annual turnover asked for financial training tends to suggest that perhaps they need help with managing club subscriptions and expenses. Only 38 groups specified what sort of financial training they required

(Figure 15). From experience the CVS organisations have observed that mostly regulated groups are aware of the type of financial training they require, whilst non-regulated groups only realise there is a need when something goes wrong.

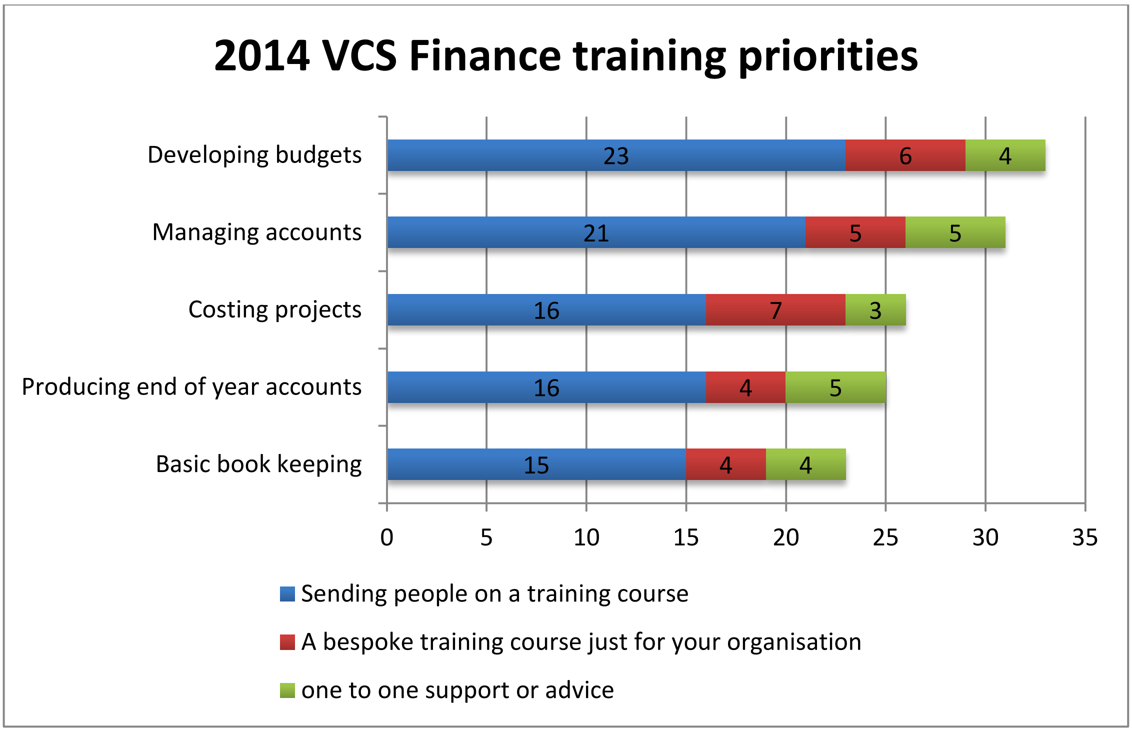

Figure 15 2014 VCS finance training priorities

Very few organisations were interested in a financial health-check if there was a charge for it, however 15 were interested if it were free.

The evidence of incidental calls to the CVS organisations every year illustrate this, which is why briefings on keeping up to date with financial compliance are put on every year. Sometimes just seeing the course advertised is enough for groups to realise that they want to make sure they are up to date. These courses are always filled.

Trustee Training

Trustee or governance training and support with governance continued to be a much requested area of service. This type of training is regularly oversubscribed and there is a growing need indicated through CVS development work for assistance both at entry level and at a more advanced level.

Despite this there was a drop in the number of organisations who trained their trustees, from 48% in 2013 to just 33% in 2014. Surprisingly the biggest drop was in the larger groups. This may well indicate the growing pressure on training budgets as cuts take effect, Figure 16.

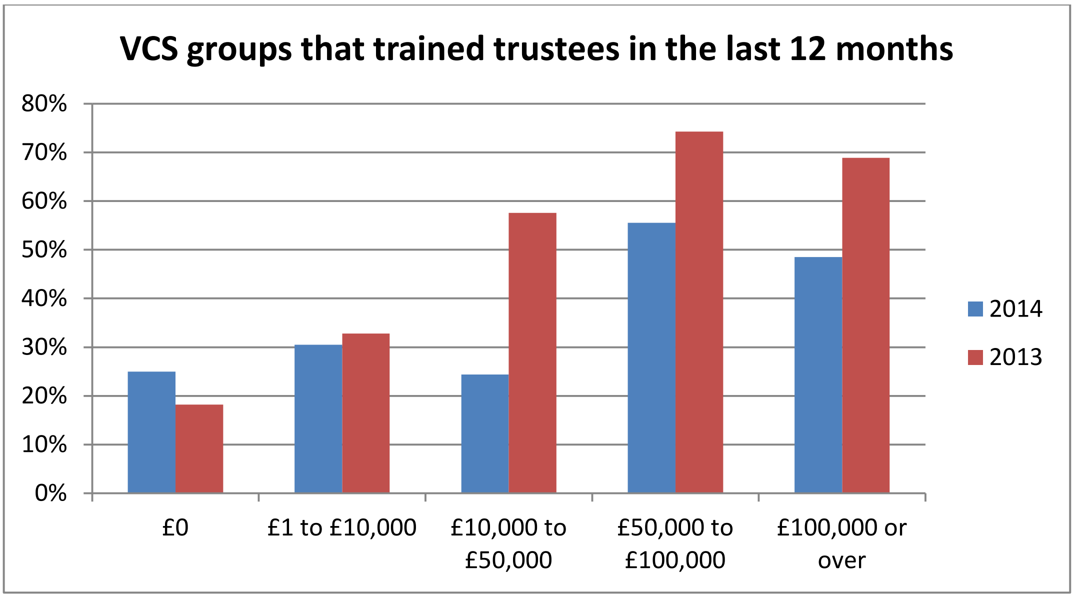

Figure 16 VCS groups that train trustees

Nevertheless over half (55%) were interested in finding out more about training for trustees in the future. The topics they most wanted were around the duties of trustees, strategic planning and running effective committees.

Figure 17 2014 Trustee training priorities

Whilst training courses remain the most requested type of delivery method there is some variation on what would be useful based on size of organisation. Larger organisations are much more likely to want bespoke training for just their own board, Figure 18.

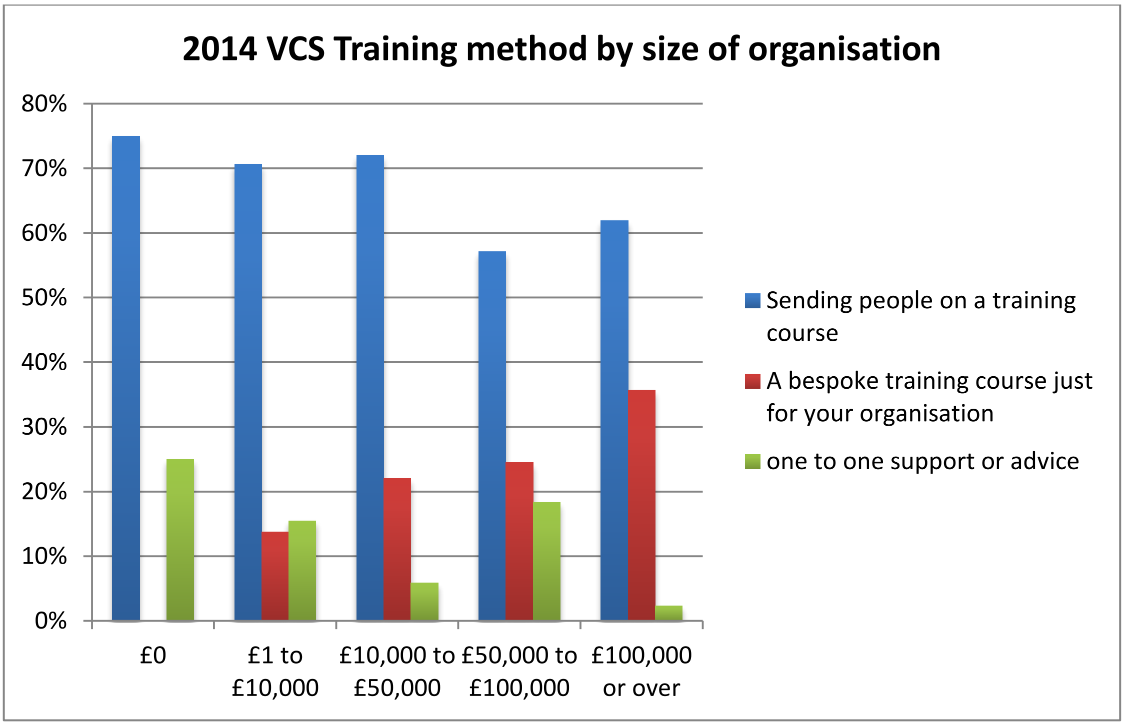

Figure 18 2014 VCS training methods for trustees

Compliance and general training

All the CVS organisations have a good track record of designing, facilitating and promoting relevant training courses for community and voluntary groups. Over 600 places were taken on CVS training courses last year. From the priorities expressed in Figure 19 it is clear that training sessions are the preferred type of delivery for the compliance and general management subjects. After compliance topics like first aid and health and safety the next main areas for development are marketing and project development. These priorities are the ones that the CVS organisations will be looking to source or deliver in 2014-2015.

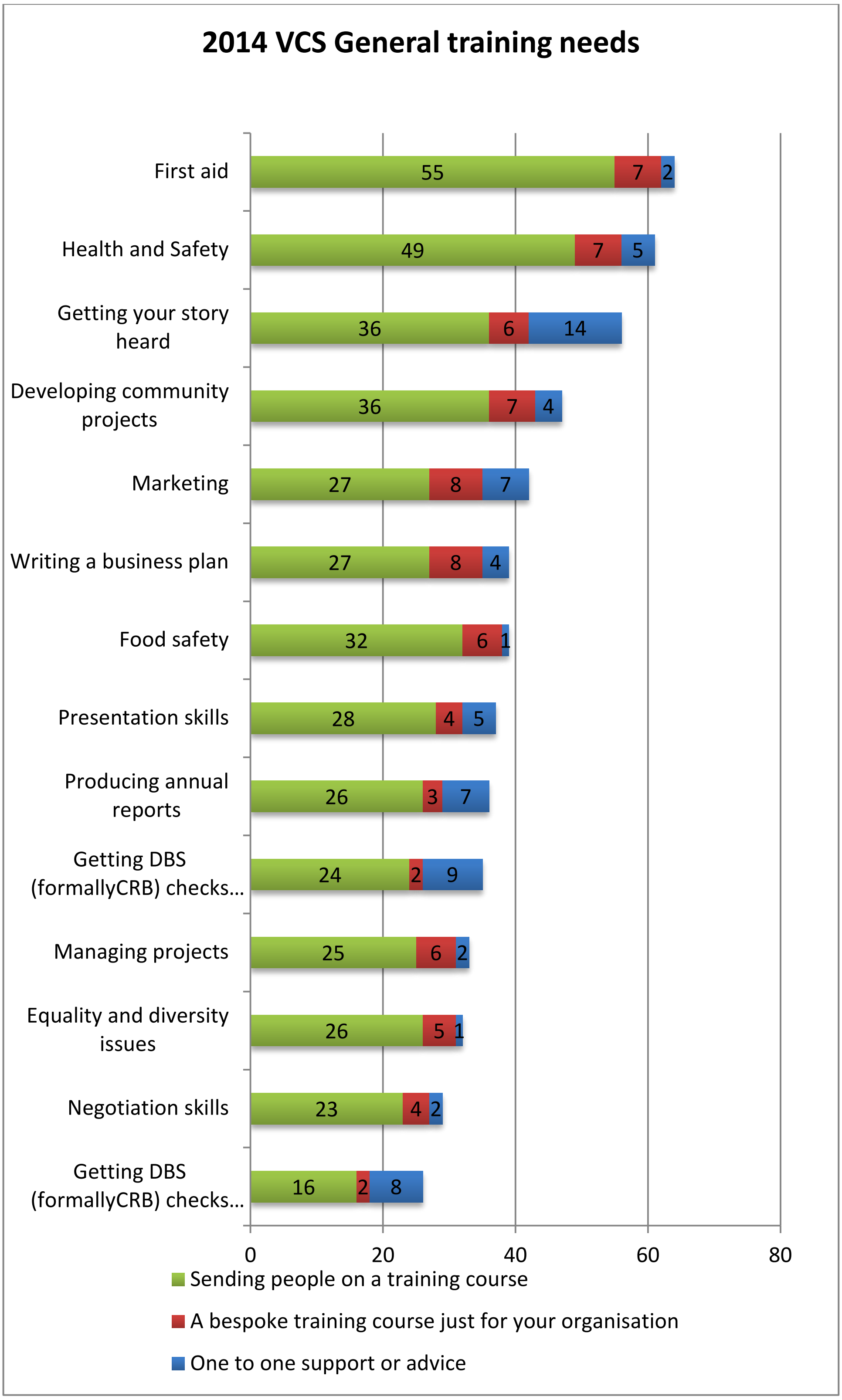

Figure 19 2014 General Training priorities

Networks & Communications

A key role of CVS5 organisations is to help organisations to come together to discuss and plan on shared issues or subjects. Groups were mainly in favour of face to face meetings with those working in similar areas to them, with three quarters (75%) expressing interest in this type of network. A smaller number (48%) were interested in virtual networking opportunities. All the CVS organisations organise regular area meetings to respond to this need which increases all the time; each meeting has a theme which tends to be a topical one, in order to keep the meetings current and relevant.

We asked groups their preference in how they were communicated with. This gave strong support to the current methods of communication, namely email updates, electronic newsletters and face to face meetings, Figure 20.

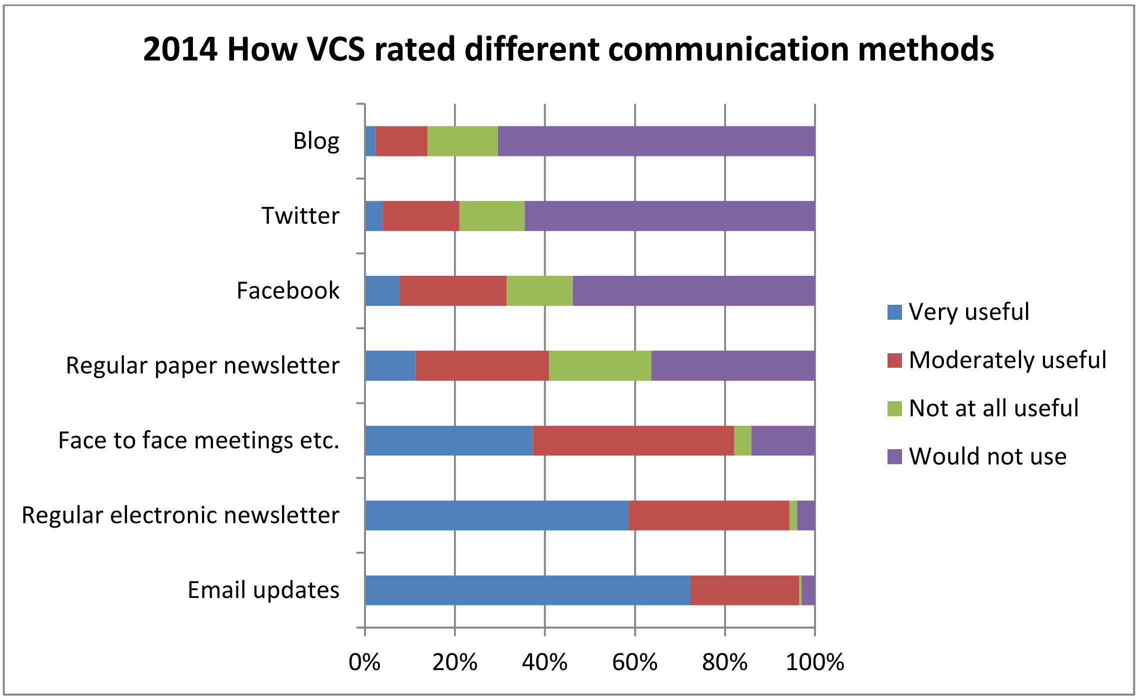

Figure 20 2014 How VCS rated different communication methods

Social media and internet use

This year groups were asked about their use of social media and their training and support needs around this. Previous years have shown that there was always a need for training in these areas and increased numbers of enquiries throughout the year have reinforced this need.

91% of respondents indicated that they used the internet to “help the organisation or the people they work with”. This varied slightly by organisation’s size with the smallest organisations making less use of the internet. (Figure 21)

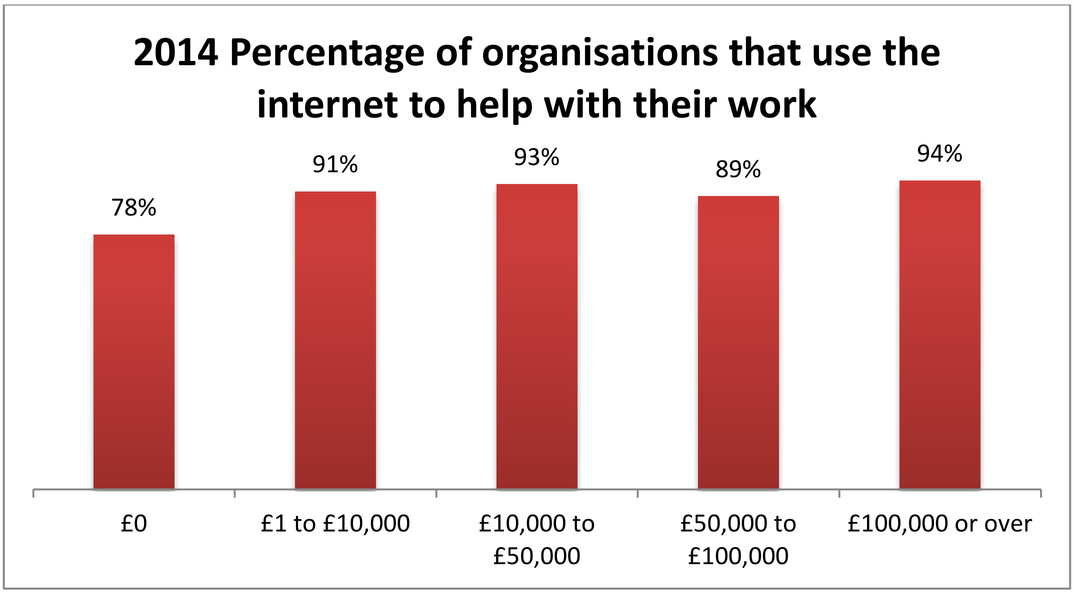

Figure 21 2014 Percentage of groups using internet to help their work

Of those who were not using the internet only 19% wanted help to start, showing that those not already utilising the internet are generally adequately skilled or foresee no use in the tool for their work.

Over three quarters (77%) had a website, but again there were differences when organisations are compared at by size, (Figure 22).

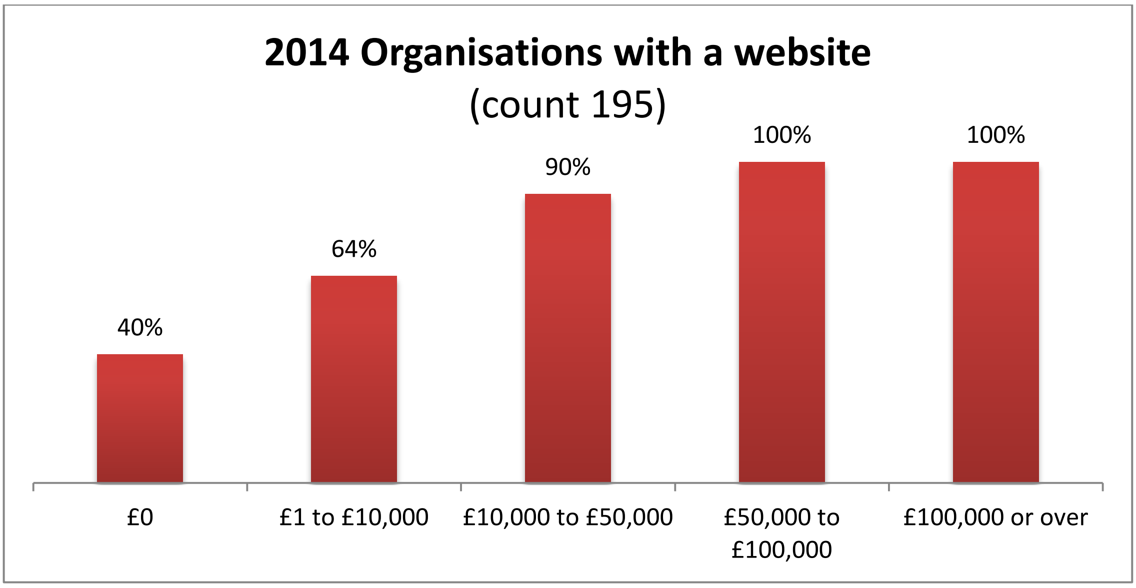

Figure 22 2014 Organisations with a website

Not surprisingly the larger groups, over £10,000 annual turnover and more likely, but not always, to have staff managed a website for the organisation. Only 40% of the volunteer-only groups were using a website for their charitable purposes.

Social media use was another area of inquiry. Just over half (51%) said that they used social media. Of those that used social media it was predominantly through *Facebook* and *Twitter* rather than some of the more specialised options, (Figure 23).

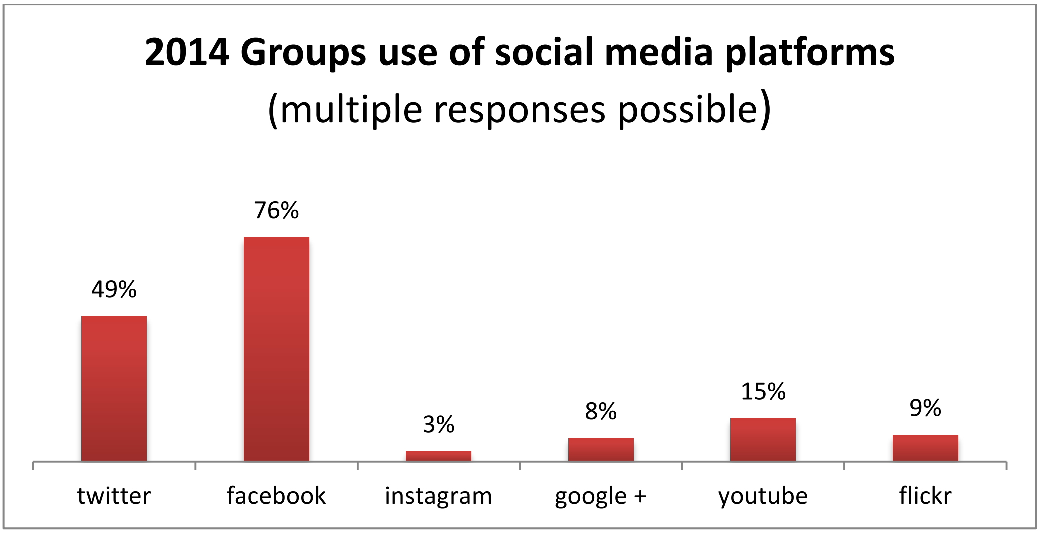

Figure 23 2014 Groups use of social media

There was a real variation of social media use depending on the size of the organisation. (Figure 24)

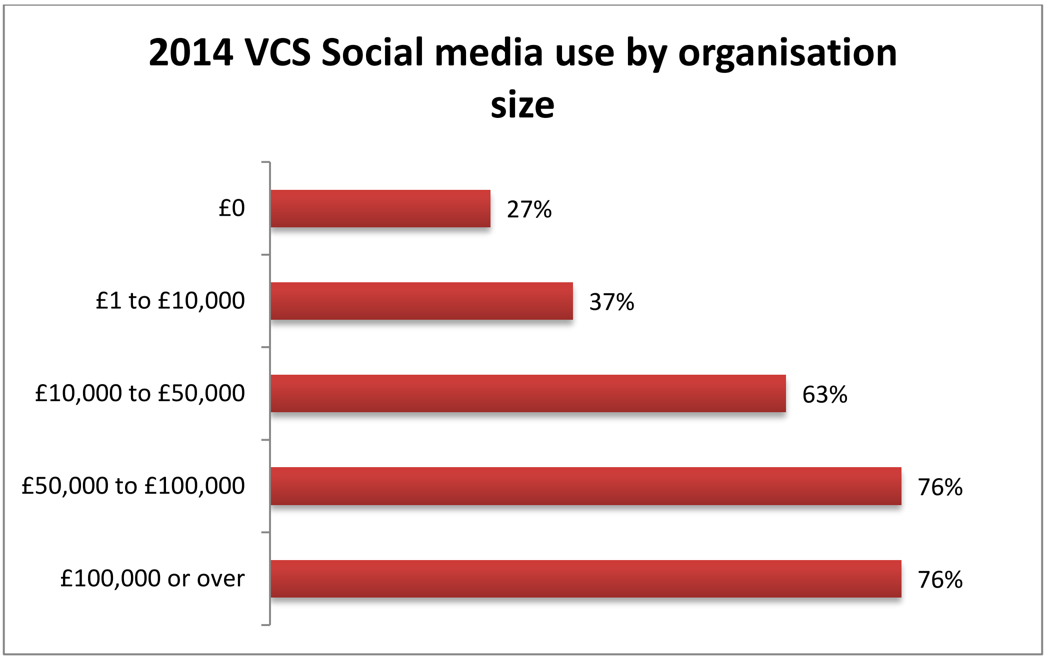

Figure 24 2014 Social media use by organisation size

Smaller organisations were much less likely to be using social media; this has an impact on how they can be communicated with and where they are getting their information.

Just over two thirds of organisations (68%) did not require any help with social media. Surprisingly of those who responded who did use social media 40% wanted help, and of those that responded who did not use social media only 25% wanted help. This implies that there is a significant proportion of groups who are not considering using social media at the moment, (or they are already fully skilled in this area). There was some use of web tools to help improve organisational efficiency by 40% of the respondents. The rest were using tools to share documents and communicate in bulk (Figure 25).

Organisations also indicated they were using other tools with the most common being *DropBox*. Only 7% had a blog and more than 60% of those using the tools requested training in the same, whilst just 34% of those that were not using anything requested training.

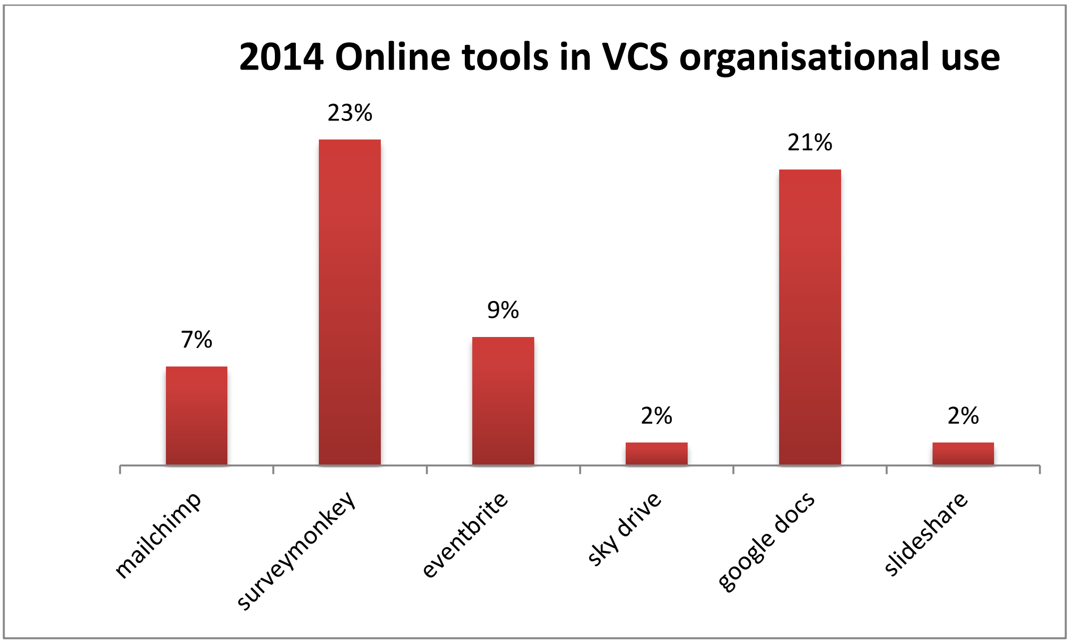

Figure 25 2014 Online tools in organisational use

Groups were asked to indicate their knowledge and use of a number of local websites that provide general information that might be of use to charitable concerns, mostly provided by the local authorities, all of which had been promoted by the CVS organisations during the year. Whilst the ones that had been heavily promoted by the CVS organisations and others were more known and used, there was a strong element that had not heard of any of them (Figure 26).

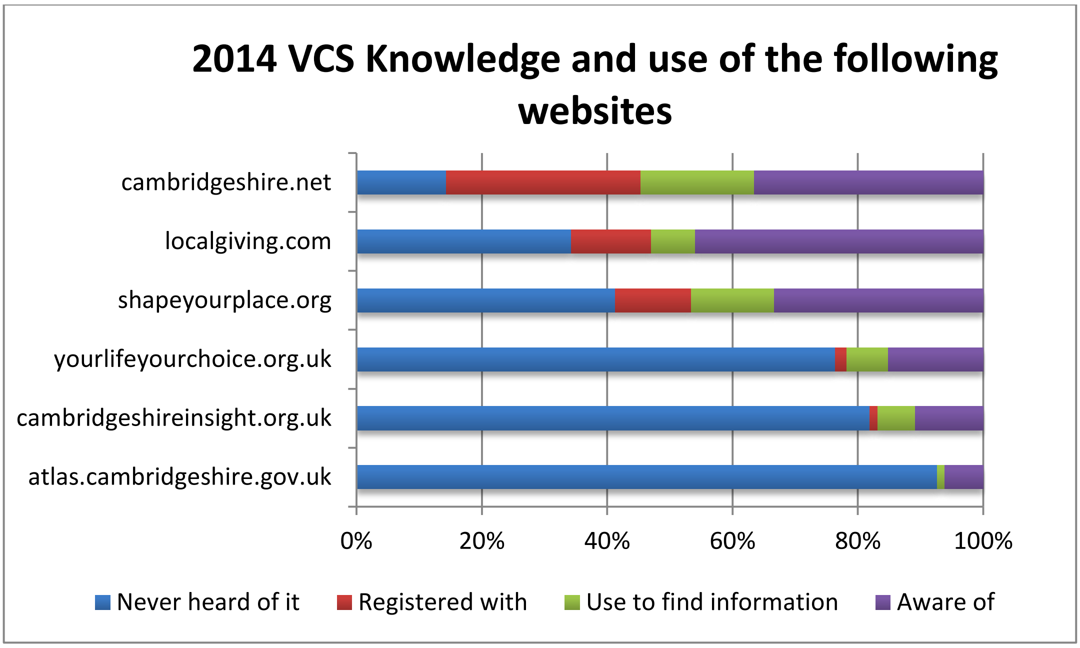

Figure 26 2014 VCS Knowledge and use of other websites

Representation

Over the last two years the opportunities for the community and voluntary sector groups to take part in regular meetings with statutory partners has changed beyond all measure. There are no longer District-wide partnership meetings where it is possible to meet representatives from the local authority, health, fire, police and other sectors. Where relationships with officers have developed well, of course communication and representation continue well. Most people who responded said that they had a very satisfactory or satisfactory relationship with the statutory partners that they had dealings with (Appendix 1). It has become much harder to find ways into the discussion of the development of policy and practice that affect the users of voluntary sector groups. CVS staff realise that it is not always possible for individual groups to spare the time to attend meetings when they do occur, which is why they provide representation as part of their charitable objectives. Figure 27 shows that 88% of respondents felt that it was important that their CVS represent the sector at meetings with the councils and others.

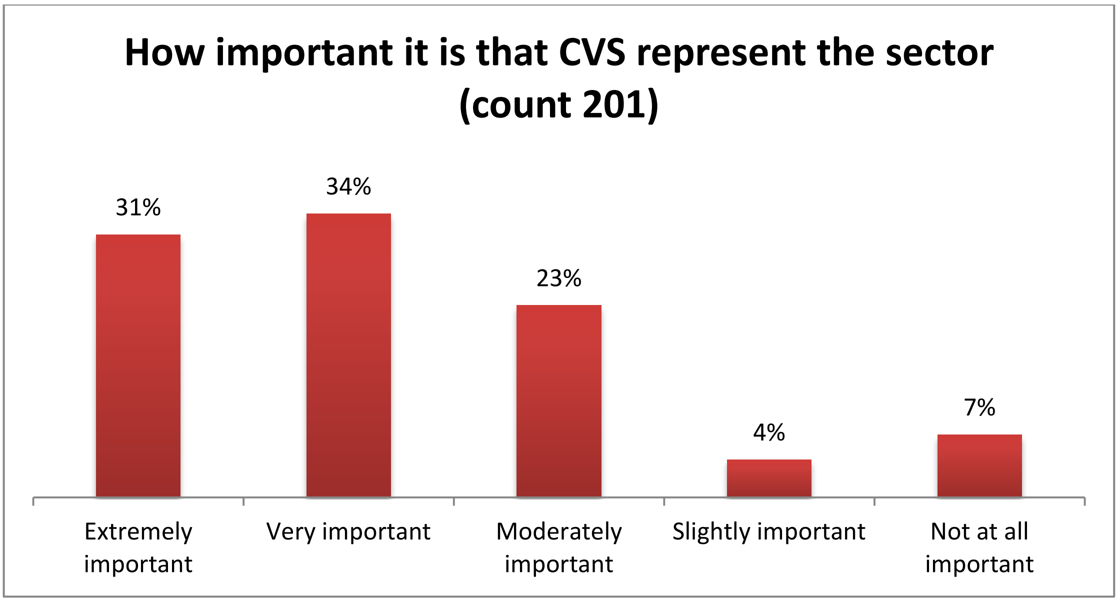

Figure 27 How important is it that CVS represent the sector

Regular updates in the form of monthly or quarterly newsletters are circulated to member groups and others, as has been the tradition for CVS agencies. Over the last few years, with the rapid uptake of digital communications by the community and voluntary sector, CVS communications have increased to include weekly e-bulletins that advertise course, consultations with policy makers and funding opportunities. Again, most of the respondents agreed that this was an important, Figure 28.

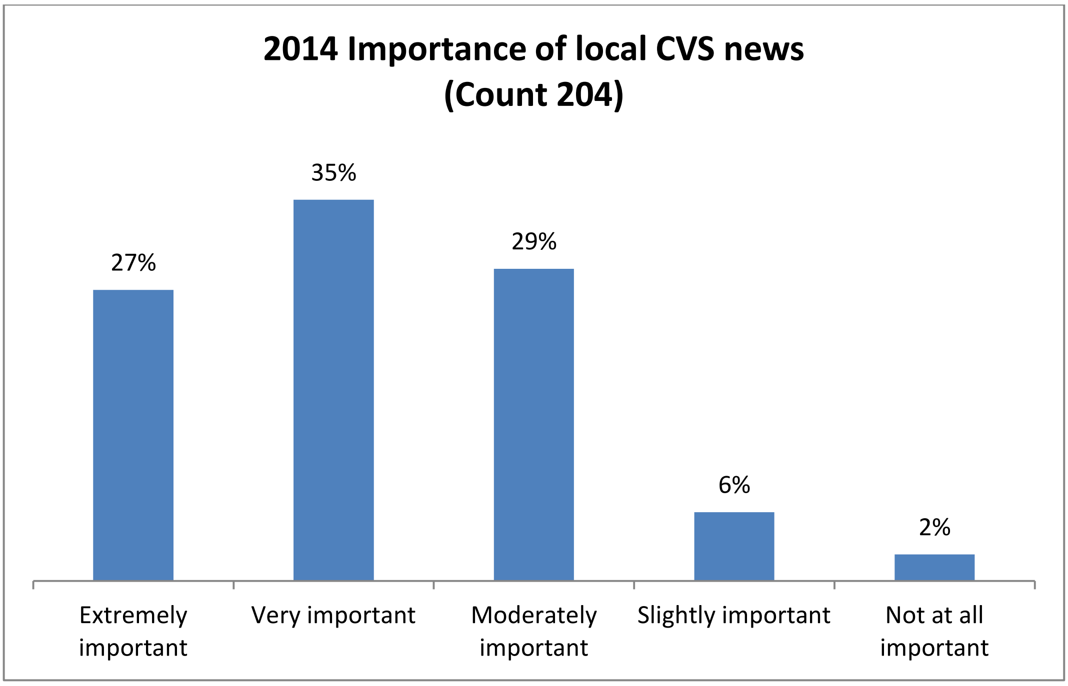

Figure 28 2014 Importance of CVS news

Conclusions

2014 will be a testing year for community and voluntary sector groups, particularly for those whose sustainability has rested on the partnership, grants or contracts with local or national statutory authorities in the past. Opportunities for regulated groups, that are commissionable in the context of out-sourcing public service contracts, will become more distinct and shine a new light on medium and small groups that are sustainable outside these formal arrangements. Most of all the large number of unregulated groups, lying below the radar, may find their reliance on volunteers tested as more and more calls for volunteer assistance are made by authorities and others to help deliver services that were once the exclusive domain of the public sector.

Appendix 1 Satisfaction with statutory partners

We asked groups to indicate how satisfied they were with their relationship with different partners. Figure 29 shows the satisfaction levels for all those groups who indicated there was a relationship.

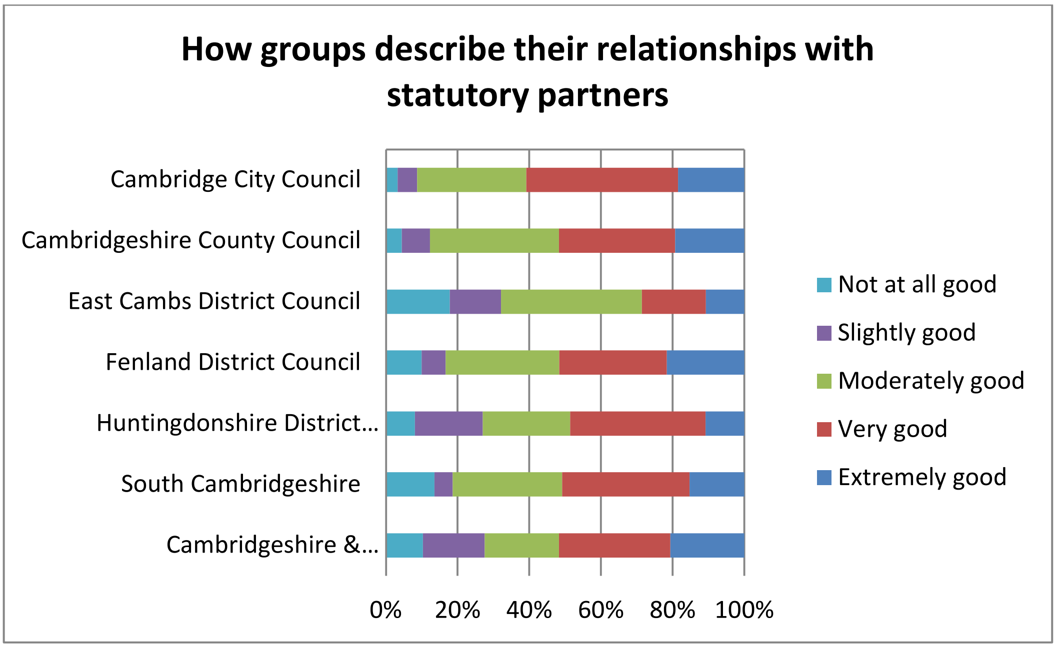

Figure 29 2014 Satisfaction with statutory partners

This results in the following numbers of respondents rating their relationship very or extremely good:

Cambridge City Council	61%
Cambridgeshire County Council	52%
Fenland District Council	52%
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough CCG	52%
South Cambridgeshire	51%
Huntingdonshire District Council	49%
East Cambs District Council	29%