

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- 19TH NOVEMBER 2008

Report by the Economic Development Officer on the 2008 Voluntary Sector Survey

SUMMARY

The report sets out the results of the second Voluntary Sector Survey (VCSS) 2008, which builds upon the survey that was carried out in 2007.

The survey explores the sector's capacity to undertake new roles; including their views on expansion, awareness, understanding and experience of support for the sector, and any barriers to their development. The survey provides a useful "profile" of the sector in the Borough. The survey will also inform the local context and knowledge of two new indicators: National Indicator 6 (NI6, participation in regular volunteering) and NI7 (environment for a thriving third sector), that will be measured by the Cabinet Office in the new Place Survey. The key findings of the VCSS 2008 are summarised in paragraphs 10-25 of the report.

The majority of respondents were small organisations employing less than four full-time paid members of staff. The most popular services delivered were education and lifelong learning, health and well-being and Community development and cohesion. 85% said that they serve people with disabilities or special needs, 84% serve black and minority ethnic groups and 81% serve the general public. Wandsworth local authority district was the primary target area for 58% of respondents. A significant proportion of organisations reported an increase in the range of services provided, along with an increase in the number of people served. The extent of volunteering is a particularly strong feature. The survey also suggests there has been a strong increase in the number of volunteers over the last year. Slightly more VCO reported an increase and decrease in funding compared to 2007. When asked what were the main barriers to achieving change, the top issue reported was lack of funding (78%). It is noteworthy that a majority of voluntary organisations feel that statutory bodies in Wandsworth have a positive influence on their success. Wandsworth Council is the most often quoted source for assistance, followed by charitable trusts and then Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency.

This report is for information.

GLOSSARY

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic
CATI – Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
EDO – Economic Development Office
NI - National Indicator
VCO – Voluntary and Community Organisations
VCSS – Voluntary and Community Sector Survey
VIS – Voluntary Information Service
WVSDA – Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This report is submitted to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information. No decisions are required on it by the Council, the Executive or the regulatory and other committees.
2. If, however, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or recommendations on the report, these will be reported to the Executive for their consideration.

INTRODUCTION

3. A list of the Borough's Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCO) can be found on www.wandsworth.gov.uk/vis. These organisations range from those that are truly "voluntary", in that they have no paid staff, to those with a sizeable financial turnover who provide services under contract to the Council and other public agencies. As such, VCOs are important either as providers, or potential providers of services and/or as representing and supporting local communities or specific sub-groups of the Borough's population.
4. Previously the Government included a mandatory experimental Community Empowerment Indicator in the Local Area Agreement relating to the growth of VCO in each local authority area. As such, this Council agreed that this indicator should be measured by means of a new annual Voluntary and Community Sector Survey (VCSS). This sample survey of the Borough's VCO started in 2007. As a consequence, and following a competitive tendering exercise, the Economic Development Officer commissioned BMG Research to carry out the VCSS in 2007 and for repeat surveys in 2008 and 2009. This was authorised by the Economic Development Officer on 7th August 2008 under the Standing Order No, 83(A) procedure (Authorisation E No 2875). Accordingly, BMG Research carried out the VCSS in 2008 at a cost of £3,700.
5. The questions to be asked in the VCSS 2008 were formulated in consultation with officers from the Administration Department's Policy Unit and the Economic Development Office (EDO), BMG Research and the Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency (WVSDA). Questions were formulated to cover, amongst other things, the topic areas of National Indicator

(NI) 6 and NI7, which included “...how do the local statutory bodies in your area influence your organisation’s success?”

6. BMG Research have also been commissioned by the Government’s Office of the Third Sector in the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Audit Commission to develop the “survey framework and indicator” for NI 7 (environment for a thriving third sector). This indicator, together with NI 6 (participation in regular volunteering), are being measured in the new national Place Survey. The Survey is centrally administered and is gathering information in 149 top-tier local authority areas. A questionnaire is being mailed to 97,000 VCO across the country. The survey is being conducted in two waves, in autumn 2008 and autumn 2010, with headline indicator results due to be published in early 2009 and 2011 respectively.

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SURVEY 2008

7. BMG Research obtained details of all VCO in Wandsworth held on a “cleaned up” Voluntary Information Service (VIS) database. This amounts to approximately 700 local VCO. BMG were required to achieve 200 ten-minute telephone interviews. In advance of the interviews, letters were sent to all VCO to provide background information and to provide the opportunity for contact details to be updated. Stratified random sampling was not employed due to the limited number of contacts available, though BMG aimed to achieve a broad representation of organisation by size and type.
8. For comparison purposes the questionnaire was broadly similar to those used in 2007. However, a number of amendments were made to:-
 - (a) reflect the questions used within the Cabinet Office draft questionnaire exploring sector classification, based on scope of organisation, main area of work and main client/customer group;
 - (b) measure the relative size of the sector in terms of paid staff and volunteers and difficulty in recruiting volunteers;
 - (c) ascertain views on the prospects for change over the year ahead and what factors enhance or limit their capacity to grow; and
 - (d) gauge organisations’ satisfaction with the various local and regional support services.

KEY FINDINGS

9. **Types of VCO surveyed.** VCO were asked to define their organisation by the type of work that they did. Organisations could select as many categories that applied. Over two thirds (68%) of VCO stated that they work within education and lifelong learning, whilst a similar proportion (64%) work within the health and well-being sector. A total of 200 VCO replied as follows:-

Table 1: Which of these areas does your organisation work within?

Area of Work	Frequency	Proportion
Education and lifelong learning (including training)	136	68%
Health and well-being (including medical, health, sickness and disability)	128	64%
Community development and cohesion/civic participation	110	55%
Culture and Leisure (including arts, music, sport and recreation)	94	47%
Economic well-being (including economic development, employment and relief of poverty)	86	43%
Religious/faith based activity	74	37%
Environment (including conservation and heritage)	54	27%
Accommodation/housing	46	23%
International development (overseas aid, famine relief)	46	23%
Animal welfare	10	5%
Other	12	6%

[Totals reported above add up to more than 200 since organisations could select as many categories that applied. This also applies to other tables elsewhere within this report. Where respondents declined to answer a question or answered “don’t know” these have been excluded.]

10. When asked which clients benefited from their organisation’s services, 85% of VCO said that they serve people with disabilities or special needs, 84% serve black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and 81% serve the general public.

Table 2: Which of the following groups are clients/users/beneficiaries of your organisation? (200 respondents)

Client Groups	Frequency	Proportion
People with disability and/or special needs	170	85%
Black and minority ethnic groups	168	84%
General public	162	81%
Children and young people	146	73%
Elderly people	128	64%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people	106	53%
Other Third Sector organisations	102	51%
Asylum seekers/refugees	100	50%
Faith communities	100	50%
Other	20	10%

11. **Geographical area covered.** VCO were asked for the main geographic area covered by their organisation's activities. Nearly 3 in 5 organisations said that they serve the local community, whilst 15% operate in their neighbourhood.

Table 3: What is the main geographic area covered by your organisation's activities? (200 respondents)

Geographic Area	Frequency	Proportion
Neighbourhood	30	15%
Local Authority District	116	58%
Regionally/sub-regionally	10	5%
Nationally	20	10%
Country-wide	12	6%
Internationally	12	6%

12. **Methods of engagement with clients.** VCO were asked how they involved their clients in their organisation's decisions. The most popular methods were as representatives on management committees (81%, 29% in 2007), surveys (68%, 34% in 2007), complaints/suggestion cards (50%, 24% in 2007), and public meetings (48%, 57% in 2007). Except for the use of public meetings, all other methods of engagement have increased in 2008, compared to 2007.
13. **Difficulty engaging with particular groups.** VCO were asked whether they had difficulties engaging with any parts of their target community. Over one in five (22%) reported that they had difficulties, which was slightly down on the findings for 2007 (26%).
14. **Size of organisation.** VCO were asked how many types of the following staff their organisation had access to. The results were:-

Table 4 – Size of organisation (200 respondents)

Paid full-time staff	Frequency	Proportion
0	56	28%
1-4	78	39%
5+	66	33%
Total	200	100%

Paid part-time staff	Frequency	Proportion
0	68	34%
1-4	74	37%
5+	56	28%
Don't know/Refused to reply	2	1%
Total	200	100%

Volunteer	Frequency	Proportion
0	36	18%
1-4	34	17%
5+	128	64%
Don't know/Refused to reply	2	1%
Total	200	100%

15. The figures reported in 2008 for all types of staff (paid full-time staff, paid part-time staff and volunteers), are very similar to those reported in 2007.
16. **Changes in the size of organisation.** VCO were asked whether, since April 2007, they had taken on more, less or about the same number of volunteers. 31% had taken on more volunteers (29% in 2007); 4% had taken on less volunteers (3% in 2007) and 58% had the same number of volunteers (62% in 2007). 28% of VCO reported difficulties in recruiting volunteers, suggesting there has been a strong increase in the number of volunteers over the last year.
17. **Changes in the range of services/activities provided.** VCO were asked whether, since March/April 2007, the range of services/activities provided by their organisation had increased, decreased or stayed the same. More than half (53%) the organisations reported an increase, with just 5% reporting a decrease.
18. **Changes in the number of people served.** VCO were asked whether, since March/April 2007, the number of people that were served by their organisation had increased, decreased or stayed the same. Almost half (48%) of the organisations reported an increase, with just 6% reporting a decrease.
19. **Funding.** When asked whether, since April 2007, their level of funding had changed, 21% of VCO reported funding had increased (19% in 2007); 19% reported that funding had decreased (15% in 2007); and 47% reported that funding had stayed the same (51% in 2007). There has been a slight increase in VCO reporting an increase/decrease in funding, with a slight, corresponding, decrease in VCO reporting that their funding has stayed the same.
20. **Expansion plans.** Many VCO have plans to expand over the next two years. The following table details the type of expansion that is planned.

Table 5 – Expansion plans (200 respondents)

Type of Expansion	Frequency	Proportion
Staff training	142	71%
More volunteers	142	71%
Greater financial support	130	65%
Extra equipment	126	63%
External independent advice	120	60%
IT investment and development	120	60%
More paid staff	96	48%
New accommodation/offices	62	31%
None of these	16	8%

21. Areas of growth relate to staff training (71%), take on more volunteers (71%) and obtain greater financial support (65%).
22. **Barriers to growth.** When asked what were the main barriers to achieving change, the top three issues reported were lack of funding (78%); legislation and other “red tape” (43%) and premises that were too small or in the wrong place (30%). In 2007, the top three issues reported were lack of funding (70%), staff/recruitment (22%) and premises too small or in the wrong place (18%). In 2008 the first and third top rated barriers were the same as 2007, respectively lack of funding (2008: 78%, 2007: 70%) and premises too small (2008: 30%, 2007: 18%). In 2008, the second top rated barrier to growth was legislation and red tape (43%), which in 2007 was ranked 6th at 12%. In 2007, the second top rated barrier to growth was staff recruitment (22%), which in 2008 was ranked equal fourth at 29%.
23. **Support agencies.** VCO were given a list of organisations and asked which of these they contacted when they needed assistance about issues that affected the development of their organisation.

Table 6 – Support agencies (184 respondents)

Support organisation	Frequency	Proportion
Wandsworth Council	147	80%
Charitable trust	132	72%
WVSDA	112	61%
Lottery distributor	97	53%
Primary Care Trust	93	51%
London Councils	88	48%
Learning and Skills Council	71	39%
London Development Agency	55	30%
Bank or other financial institution	55	30%
Other	46	25%

24. With regards to the VIS run by WVSDA, only 44% of VCO had heard of the service, which is lower than the previous year (82%) and one in five (21%) organisations have looked at and/or used the VIS database held on the Council’s website. Satisfaction levels were reasonable for WVSDA (70% Very Satisfied/Satisfied, 22% Neither Satisfied/Unsatisfied), though this would be expected for an organisation that is dedicated to providing capacity-building support for VCO in the Borough. This is somewhat disappointing given that WVSDA is Wandsworth’s main agency for developing the Borough’s voluntary sector.
25. **Influence of Wandsworth statutory organisations.** VCO were asked “Overall how do the statutory bodies in Wandsworth influence your organisation’s success?” Approaching three in five (57%) feel that the statutory bodies in Wandsworth have a positive influence on their success, with 10% stating a very positive influence. Overall, just 5% of organisations feel that the statutory bodies in Wandsworth provide a negative influence.

CONCLUSION

26. The survey provided a useful profile of the diversity of the voluntary sector in the Borough and explored the sector's capacity to undertake new roles, including their views on expansion, awareness/understanding/experience of support for the sector and any barriers to development. The majority of respondents were small organisations employing less than four full-time paid members of staff. A significant proportion of VCO reported that there had been an increase in the range of services/activities provided, along with an increase in the number of people served. The extent of volunteering is a particularly strong feature, as is the reported increase in volunteering that is also linked to "organisational changes" planned over the next one to two years. It is noteworthy that a majority of VCO feel that statutory bodies in Wandsworth have a positive influence on their success. Wandsworth Council is the most often quoted source for assistance.

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11th November 2008

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: -

1. BMG Research Summary: Voluntary and Community Sector Survey, October 2008 – available from Christopher Blyth, tel. 020 8871 7810 or email cblyth@wandsworth.gov.uk
2. BMG Research Topline Results: Voluntary and Community Sector Survey, April 2007 - available from Christopher Blyth, tel. 020 8871 7810 or email cblyth@wandsworth.gov.uk
3. Research Paper: the environment for a thriving third sector, April 2008, BMG Research and Guidestar - available from Christopher Blyth, tel. 020 8871 7810 or email cblyth@wandsworth.gov.uk

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the Committee Secretary, Mr. G. S. Collins (020 8871 6021); email: gcollins@wandsworth.gov.uk can supply it if required.