

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- 18TH NOVEMBER 2009

Report by the Economic Development Officer on the 2009 Voluntary Sector Survey

SUMMARY

Background: The Council initiated an annual survey of voluntary and community organisations (VCO) in 2007. The survey provides a useful "profile" of the sector in the Borough. The voluntary sector survey (VSS) explores the sector's capacity to help residents. It also asks the sector for its views on expansion, awareness, understanding and experience of support for the sector, and any barriers to their development. The survey also informs the local context and knowledge of two National Performance Indicators: participation in volunteering and the environment for a thriving third sector. Given the recession, the survey also looks at how local VCO are coping with the current economic downturn. The key findings of the VSS 2009 are summarised in paragraphs 8 to 25 of the report.

Policy: The relevant Council's corporate objective is the one of "building a prosperous, vibrant and cohesive community". This includes the sub-objective of encouraging volunteering and work with the voluntary and community sector to help provide better services and information.

Issues/proposals: The report sets out the results of the third VSS 2009, and compares these to the surveys that were carried out in 2007 and 2008.

Overall the majority of respondents (70%) were small organisations either employing less than four full-time paid members of staff (36%) or are run entirely by volunteers (34%). The most popular services delivered were education & lifelong learning, health & well-being and community development & cohesion. 79% of VCOs said that they serve people with disabilities or special needs, 86% serve black and minority ethnic groups and 82% serve the general public.

The main barriers to achieving change, was "insufficient funding" (73%). Similar to 2008, it is noteworthy that a majority of voluntary organisations feel that statutory bodies in Wandsworth have a positive influence on their organisation's success.

All of these figures are very similar to those reported in the 2008 survey.

Wandsworth local authority district was the primary target area for 82% of respondents, which was a 24% increase on the 2008 figure. 51% of VCOs reported that since March/April 2008 the range of services provided has

stayed the same, compared with 40% in the previous survey. Consequently, 44% of VCOs reported that the services provided had increased, compared with 53% in the previous survey.

The extent of volunteering continues to be a particularly strong feature and the survey also suggests that there has been a significant increase in the availability of volunteers.

Slightly less VCOs reported an increase in funding compared to 2008, with slightly more reporting a decrease in funding. The funding for 56% of VCOs remained the same.

Encouragingly, the largest proportion (38%) has not been affected by the recession.

Director of Finance comments: N/A.

Supporting information: N/A.

Conclusion: This report is for information.

GLOSSARY

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic

NI - National Indicator

VCO – Voluntary and Community Organisations

VCS – Voluntary Sector Survey

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. The Council initiated an annual survey of voluntary and community organisations (VCO) in 2007. The results of the first survey were considered by this Committee on 19th November 2008 (Paper No. 08-967). The voluntary sector survey (VSS) explores the sector's capacity to undertake various activities; 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 also informs the local context and knowledge of two National Indicators: (NI 6, participation in regular volunteering and NI 7, environment for a thriving third sector). These are also measured by the Cabinet Office in the Place Survey.

4. The VCO listed on the Voluntary and Community Sector Database www.wandsworth.gov.uk/visdatabase, provide the sampling frame for the survey. 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.
5. Following a competitive tendering exercise, the Economic Development Officer commissioned BMG Research to carry out the VSS in 2007 and for repeat surveys in 2008 and 2009. The VSS 2009 was carried out at a cost of £4,790. It will be necessary to carry out another tendering exercise next year to commission a research organisation to carry out the VSS in 2010, 2011 and 2012.
6. The questions asked in the VSS 2009 were formulated by BMG Research in consultation with officers from the Administration Department's Policy Unit and the Economic Development Office and the Wandsworth Voluntary Sector Development Agency (WVSDA).

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR SURVEY 2009

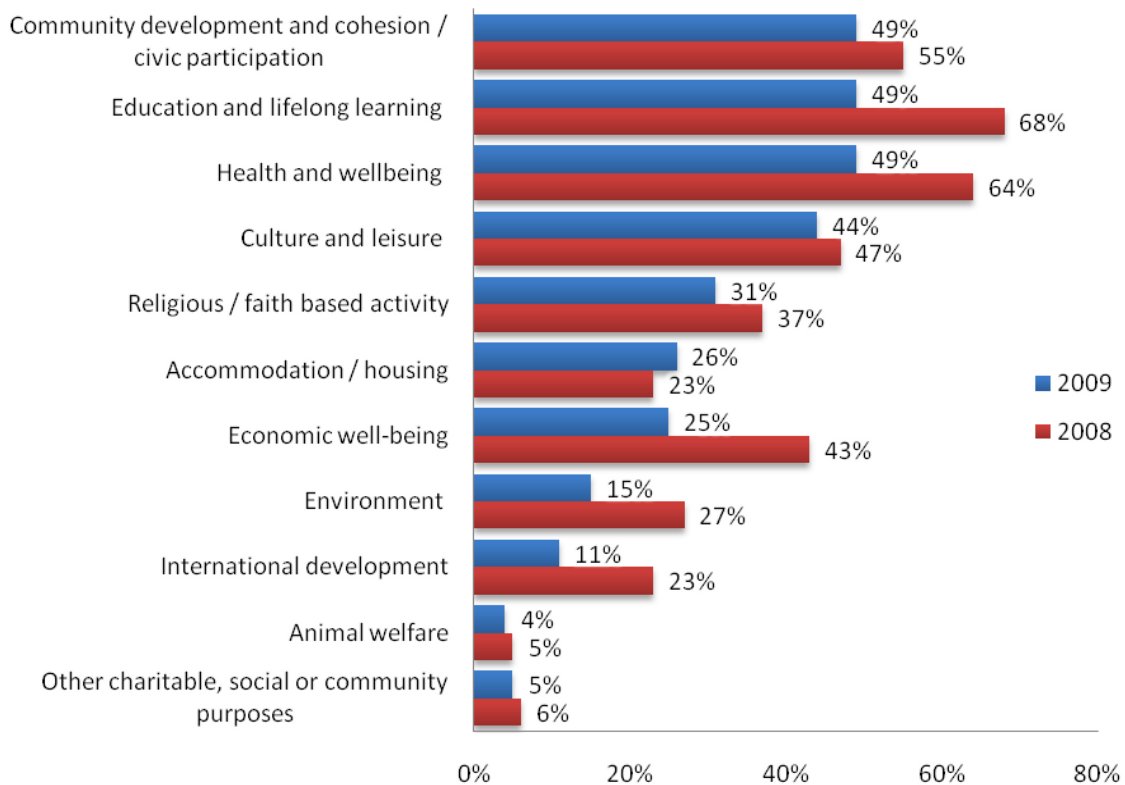
7. The details of all VCO in Wandsworth held on the Voluntary and Community Sector database were "up-dated". BMG were required to achieve 200 ten-minute telephone interviews drawn from this sample. In advance of the interviews, introductory letters were sent to all VCO to provide background information on the survey and to provide the opportunity for their 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 questions asked were similar to those previously used. The questions related to the following broad areas:-
 - (a) explore sector classification, based on scope of organisation, main area of work and main client/customer group (to reflect the questions used within the Cabinet Office's questionnaire);
 - (b) measure the relative size of the sector in terms of paid staff and volunteers and difficulty in recruiting staff and volunteers;
 - (c) ascertain views on the prospects for change over the year ahead and what factors enhance or limit their capacity to grow;
 - (d) gauge organisations' satisfaction with various local and regional support services ;
 - (e) find out about the unmet needs and issues of the VCO and their client groups; and

(f) gauge to affect the recession was having on VCO.

KEY FINDINGS

9. **Types of VCO.** VCO were asked to define their organisation by the type of work that they did. Organisations could select as many categories that applied. Almost half of organisations interviewed state that they work within community development and cohesion/civic participation (49%), education and lifelong learning (49%) and health and well being (49%). In 2008, over two thirds (68%) of organisations stated that they worked within education and lifelong learning, whilst a similar proportion (64%) worked within the health and wellbeing sector. A total of 200 VCO replied as follows:-

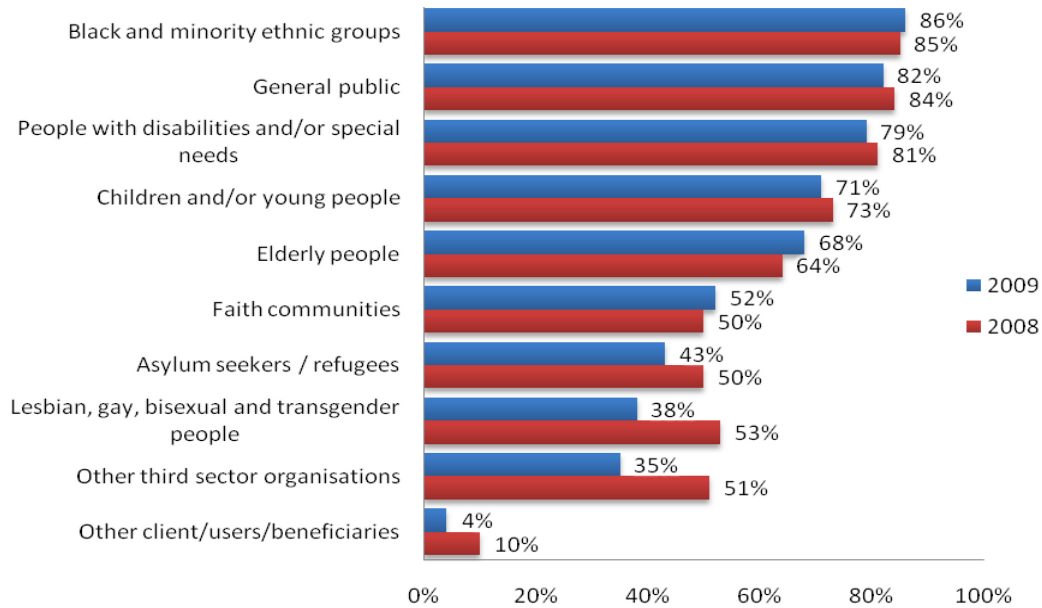
Figure 1: Which of these areas does your organisation work within? (All respondents unweighted base: 200)



[*Totals reported above add up to more than 100% since organisations could select as many categories that applied. This also applies to other figures and tables elsewhere within this report due to rounding differences when analysing to zero decimal points.]

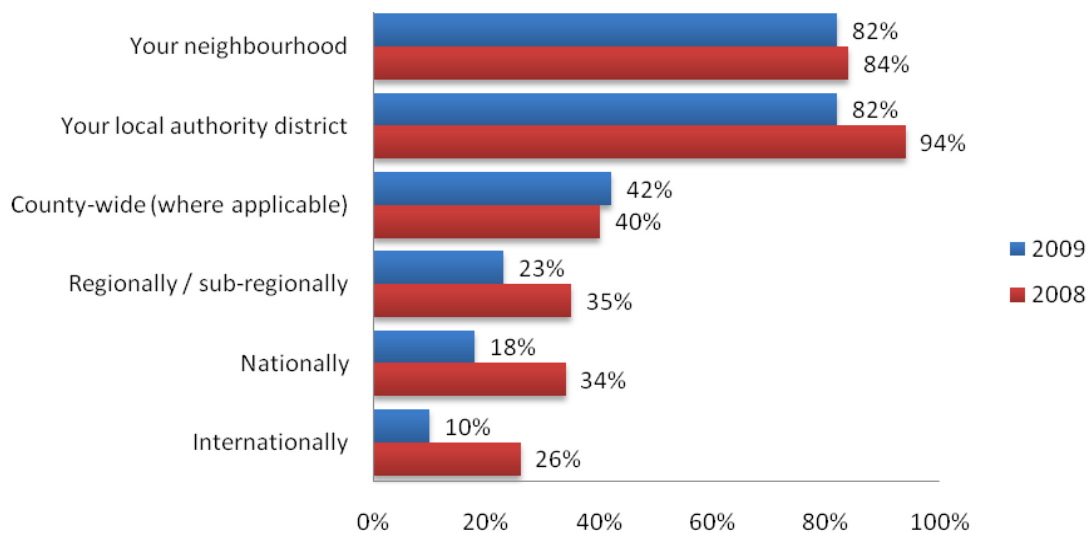
10. When asked which clients benefited from their organisation’s services, more than four fifths (86%) of VCOs said that they serve black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, 82% serve the general public and 79% people with disabilities or special needs. These figures are very similar to those reported in 2008.

Figure 2: Which of the following groups are clients/users/beneficiaries of your organisation? (All respondents – unweighted base: 200)



11. **Geographical area covered.** VCO were asked for the main geographic area covered by their organisation’s activities. Just over four fifths (82%) carry out activities in their neighbourhood and/or in the local authority district. Just over two fifths (42%) carry out activities countywide, whilst less than a quarter (23%) carry out activities regionally/sub-regionally. Although the figures above are similar to those reported in 2008, there has been a reduction in the number of VCOs that are working nationally and internationally.

Figure 3: In which of the following geographic areas does your organisation carry out its activities? (All respondents – unweighted base: 200)



12. **Methods of engagement with clients.** VCO were asked how they involved their clients in their organisation’s decisions. The most popular methods were: 62% as representatives on management committees (81%: 2008, 29%: 2007); 44% via public meetings (48%: 2008, 57%: 2007); 30% use complaints/suggestion cards (50%: 2008, 24%: 2007), and 26% use surveys (68%: 2008, 34%: 2007), and). The use of all of the methods of engagement listed has decreased since 2008.

13. **Difficulty engaging with particular groups.** VCO were asked whether they had difficulties engaging with any parts of their target community. As with previous years, this is found to be highest amongst BME groups (30%), followed by children and/or young people (25%). This is in line with the findings from 2008, where organisations found BME groups (26%) and children and/or young people to be the most difficult to engage with (21%). However, the proportion of respondents who found it difficult to engage with people with disabilities and/or special needs (18%) has fallen from 2008 (23%).

14. **Size of organisation.** VCOs were asked how many types of the following staff their organisation had access to. Two thirds (66%) employ full time staff and 31% employ 5+ full time staff. It is noteworthy that 34% of organisations have no full time staff, which is an increase on the 28% since 2008. Over one fifth (22%) of organisations have access to 5+ part time, whilst more than four fifths (84%) have access to volunteer staff (65% in 2008). The results were as follows:-

Figure 4: Full Time (All respondents – unweighted base: 200)

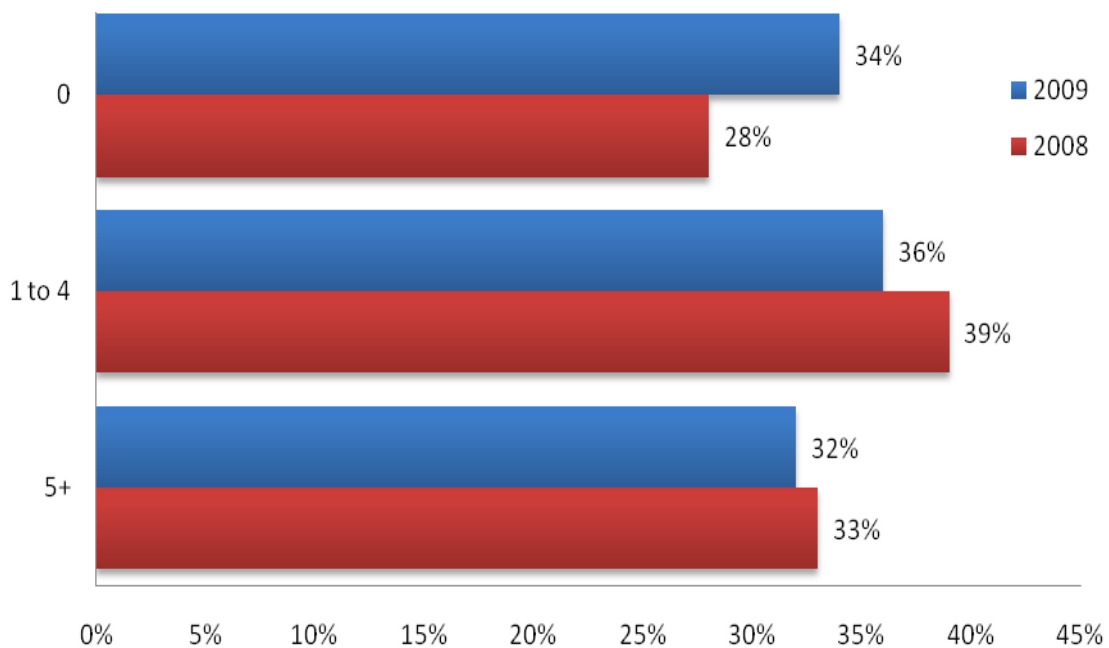


Figure 5: Part Time (All respondents – unweighted base - 200)

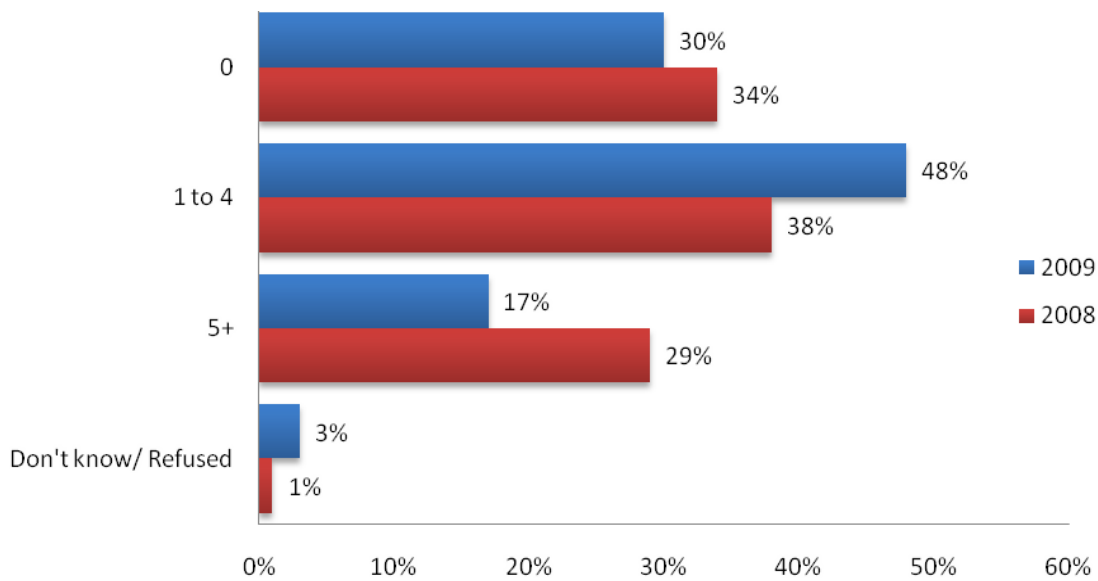
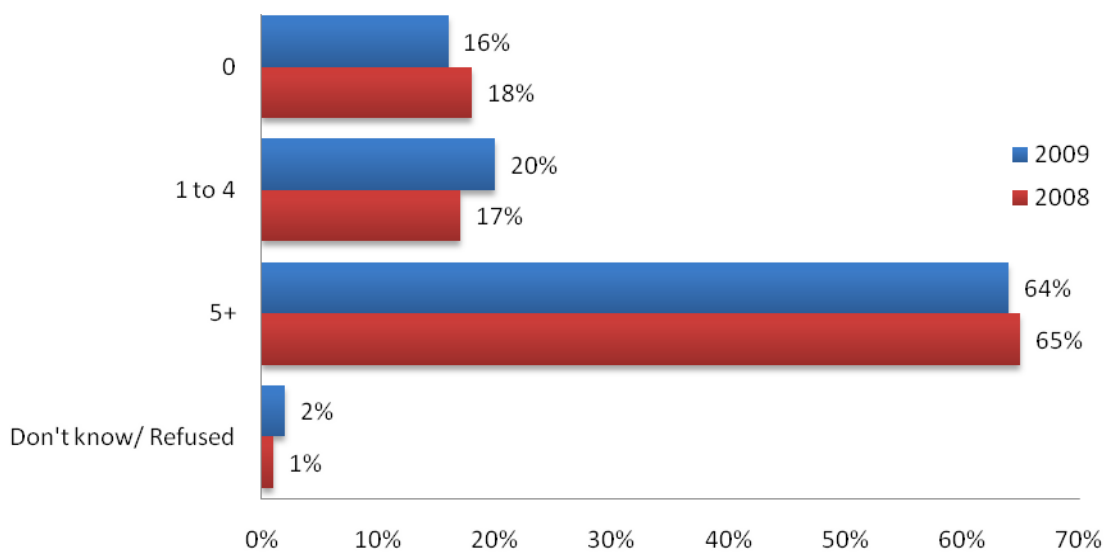


Figure 6: Volunteer (All respondents – unweighted base: 200)



15. **Changes in the size of organisation.** VCOs were asked whether, since March/April 2008, they had taken on more, less or about the same number of volunteers. 23% had taken on more volunteers (31%:2008, 29%:2007); 5% had taken on less volunteers (4%: 2008, 3%: 2007) and 70% had the same number of volunteers (58%: 2008, 62%: 2007). 26% of VCOs reported difficulties in recruiting volunteers, which was slightly lower than the level reported in 2008.

16. **Changes in the range of services/activities provided.** VCOs were asked whether, since March/April 2008, the range of services/activities provided by their organisation had increased, decreased or stayed the same. 44% reported an increase (53%: 2008),

2009 Voluntary Sector Survey

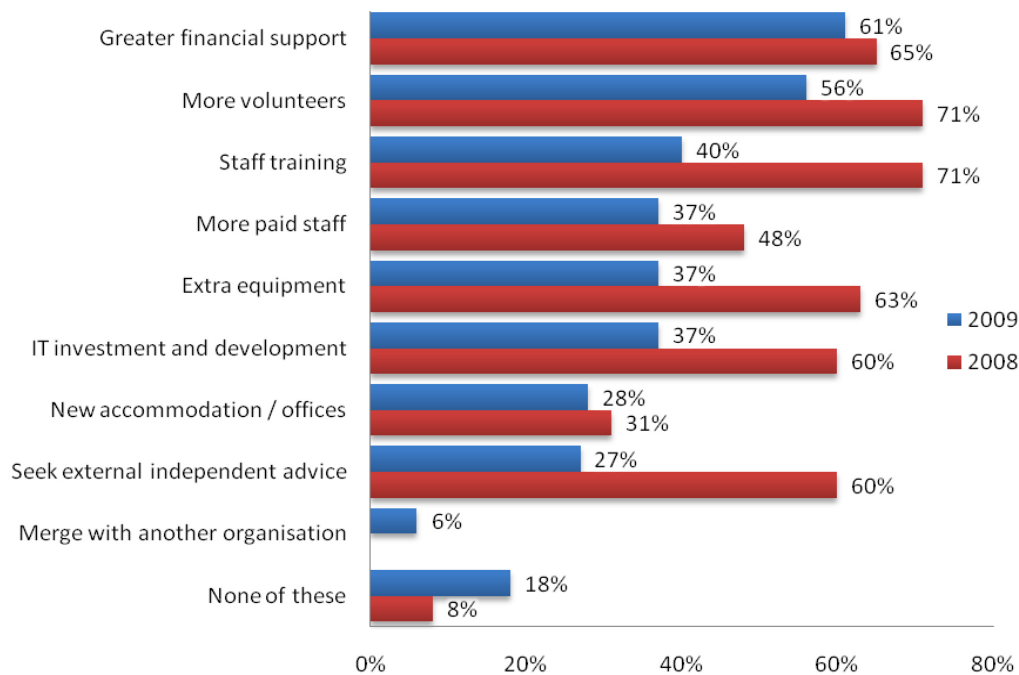
51% reported that the level had stayed the same, with just 5% reporting a decrease (the same as in 2008).

17. **Changes in the number of people served.** VCO were asked whether, since March/April 2008, the number of people that were served by their organisation had increased, decreased or stayed the same. Almost half (48%) of the organisations interviewed state that the number of people their organisation serves has stayed the same, whilst just over two fifths (43%) of organisations say this has increased. Just 9% have experienced a decrease. Compared to 2008, these figures represent a small decrease in the number of VCOs reporting an increase in service delivery, and a small increase in those reporting a decrease in service delivery.

18. **Funding.** When asked whether, since March/April 2008, their level of funding had changed, 18% of VCOs reported funding had increased (21%: 2008, 19%: 2007); 20% reported that funding had decreased (19%: 2008, 15%: 2007); and 56% reported that funding had stayed the same (47%: 2008, 51% in 2007). Since 2008 there has been a slight increase in the numbers of VCOs reporting a decrease in funding, with a 9% increase in the number of VCOs reporting that their funding has stayed the same.

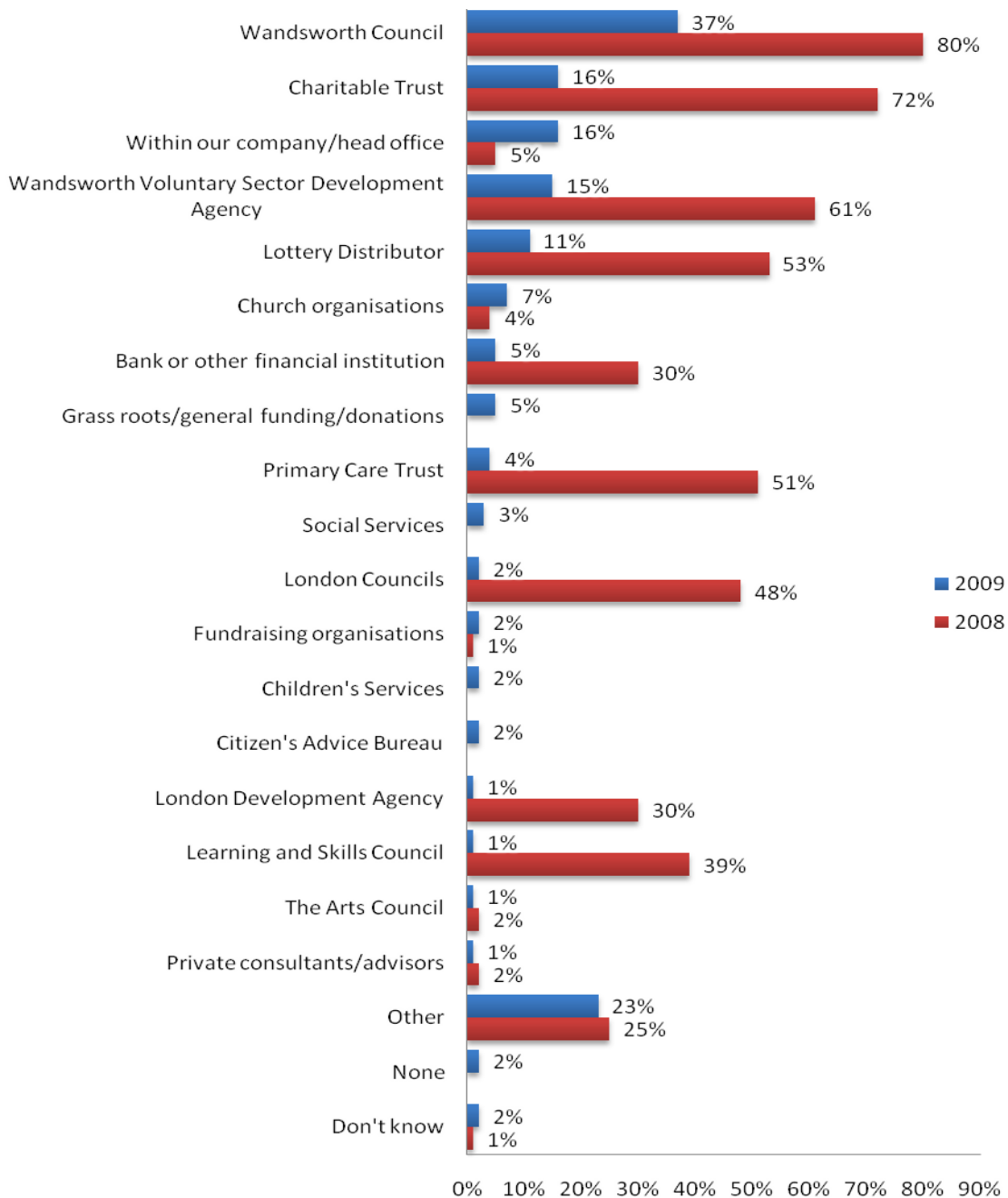
19. **Expansion plans.** VCOs were asked whether they would need to make any of the following changes (see list below) in the next one to two years. Similar to 2008, a high proportion of VCOs cited the need for greater financial support and more volunteers. However, there was a significant decline in the following areas: staff training (40%: 2009, 71% 2008); extra equipment (37%: 2009, 63%: 2008), IT investment and development (37%: 2009, 60%: 2008), seek external independent advice (27%: 2009, 60%: 2008).

Figure 7: Will your organisation need to make any of the following changes in the next one to two years? (All respondents – unweighted base: 200)



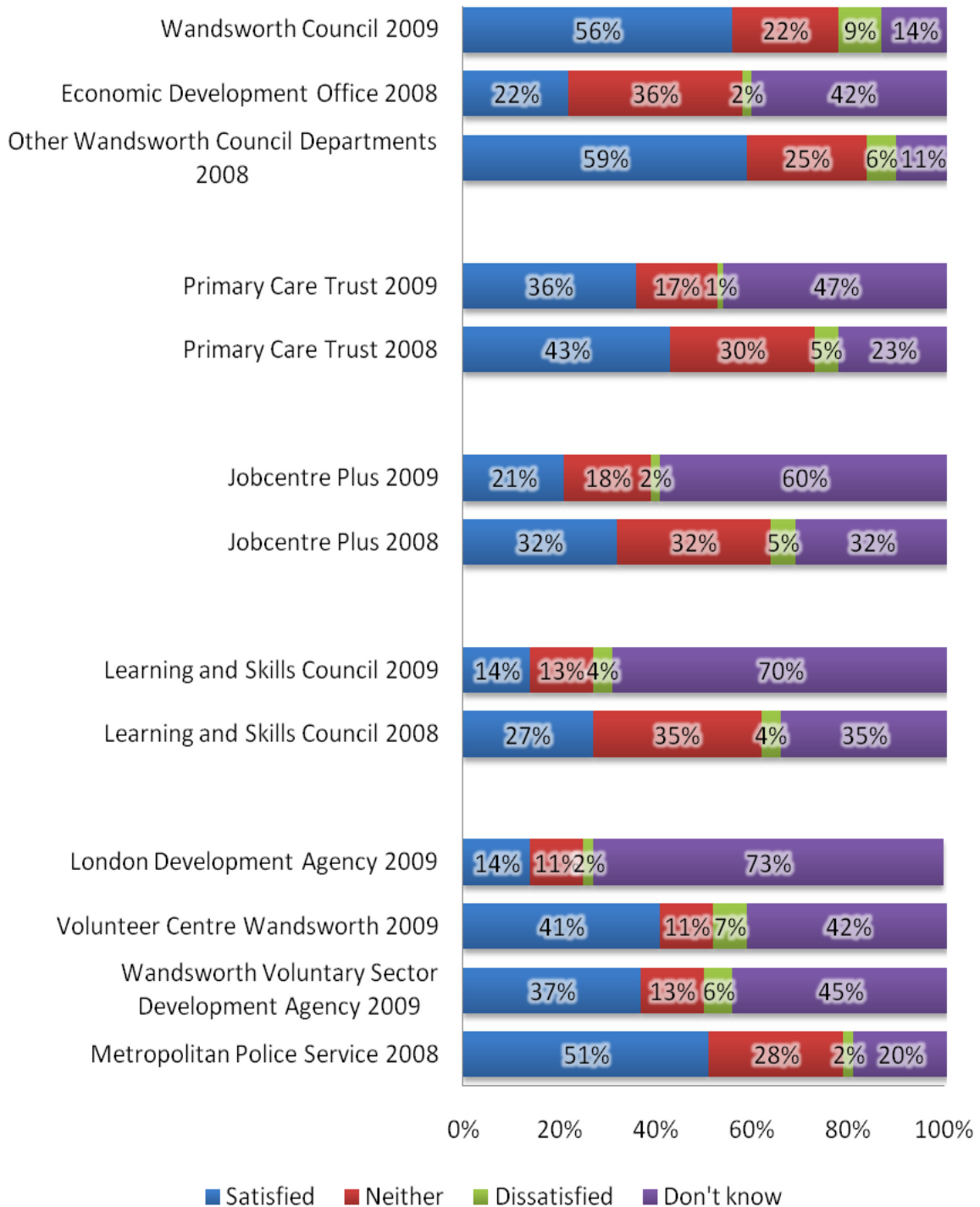
20. **Barriers to growth.** The top four issues reported were insufficient funding (73%); difficulty in recruiting staff (18%), legislation and other “red tape” (16%), and premises (too small or in the wrong place) (13%). These barriers were also the top four issues reported in 2008 and 2007.
21. **Support agencies.** VCOs were given a list of organisations and asked which of these they contacted when needing assistance about issues that affected the development of their organisation. Similar to 2008, when seeking assistance, the first and second choice organisations were Wandsworth Council, followed by Charitable Trust.

Figure 8: Where would you go for assistance should you need it? (Those that intend to make changes – unweighted base: 165)



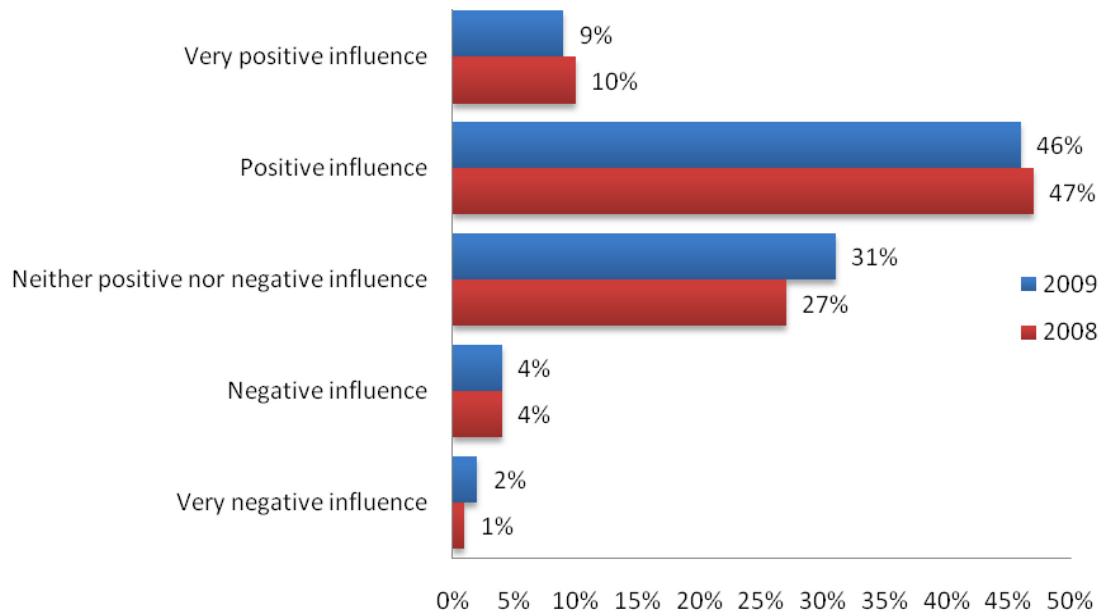
22. **Satisfaction with services provided by various agencies.** Over half of VCOs (56%) are satisfied with Wandsworth Council. Levels of satisfaction with the service provided by the Wandsworth Volunteer Centre were also high at 41%. The level of dissatisfaction is lowest with the Primary Care Trust (1%).

Figure 9: Level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the quality of service provided by various agencies (All respondents – unweighted 200)



23. **Influence of Wandsworth statutory organisations.** VCO were asked “Overall how do the statutory bodies in Wandsworth influence your organisation’s success?” 46% of VCOs feel the statutory bodies in Wandsworth have a positive influence on their success (47% in 2008), with 9% stating a very positive influence (10% in 2008). Just 6% feel that they provide a negative influence (5% in 2008). These figures are very close to those that were reported in 2008.

Figure 10: Overall how do the statutory bodies in Wandsworth influence your organisation’s success? (All respondents – unweighted base: 200)



It is noteworthy that the most common reason why VCO feel statutory bodies provide neither a positive nor negative influence, or a negative influence, is because they have little or no contact with them (19%). This was followed by VCO who say that their funding was withdrawn from the statutory body (14%).

24. **Questions on the recession.** VCO were asked how their organisation has been affected by the recession. Encouragingly, the largest proportion has not been affected (38%). However, 29% said there has been a downturn in funding, with fewer donations and/or grants. 8% say that they have less clients or customers. When asked whether their organisation was already taking action to help survive the recession. One in seven (14%) organisations interviewed say they are making cut backs, whilst a further 13% are seeking extra financial support.
25. **“The Voluntary Sector - Surviving Recession”.** The Council held a conference entitled “The Voluntary Sector - Surviving Recession” on 30th September in the Civic Suite. The event was attended by over 150 delegates. The day-long event was organised by the Council to help develop a better understanding of the impact of the recession on the voluntary sector and to provide information to organisations on how to remain resilient and solvent through the economic downturn. The conference brought together representatives from the public, charitable and corporate sectors, as well as a large cross-section of London's voluntary sector. Throughout the day a range of expert speakers and workshop presenters addressed the following vital areas:

sources of national and local funding; commissioning local public services; social enterprise and business support; and voluntary sector development and sustainability. As part of the evaluation for the event, delegates were asked to give their ratings and comments on the conference. 92% overall rated the day as excellent/good.

CONCLUSION

26. The 2009 survey has again provided a useful profile of the Borough's diverse voluntary and community sector and explored the sector's capacity to undertake new roles, including their views on expansion, awareness/understanding/experience of support for the sector and whether there are any barriers to development. The survey has also looked at whether respondents are being affected by the current economic downturn. The majority of respondents were small organisations employing less than four full-time paid members of staff. The extent of volunteering remains a strong feature, as is the reported increase in volunteering (compared to 2008), that is also linked to "organisational changes" planned over the next one to two years. It is noteworthy that (again) a majority of VCO feel that statutory bodies in Wandsworth have a positive influence on their success. And for a second year running, Wandsworth Council is the most often quoted source for assistance.

Town Hall,
Wandsworth,
SW18 2PU.

MIKE BROOK
Economic Development Officer

10th November 2009

Background Papers

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

1. BMG Research Summary: Voluntary and Community Sector Survey, October 2009 – available from Christopher Blyth, tel. 020 8871 7810 or email cblyth@wandsworth.gov.uk
2. BMG Research Topline Results: Voluntary and Community Sector Survey, September 2009 - 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.