

Voluntary Sector Review

Summary of Feedback from Voluntary & Community Sector Survey

1. Responses

44 responses were received. A list of responders is given at the end of this summary. One response amounted to a single comment: *“Thank you for your letter and questionnaire. None of the questions apply to our organisation as we are a national organisation with women’s issues as its core. We are not about fund raising”*.

Analysis has therefore been restricted to the remaining 43 bodies.

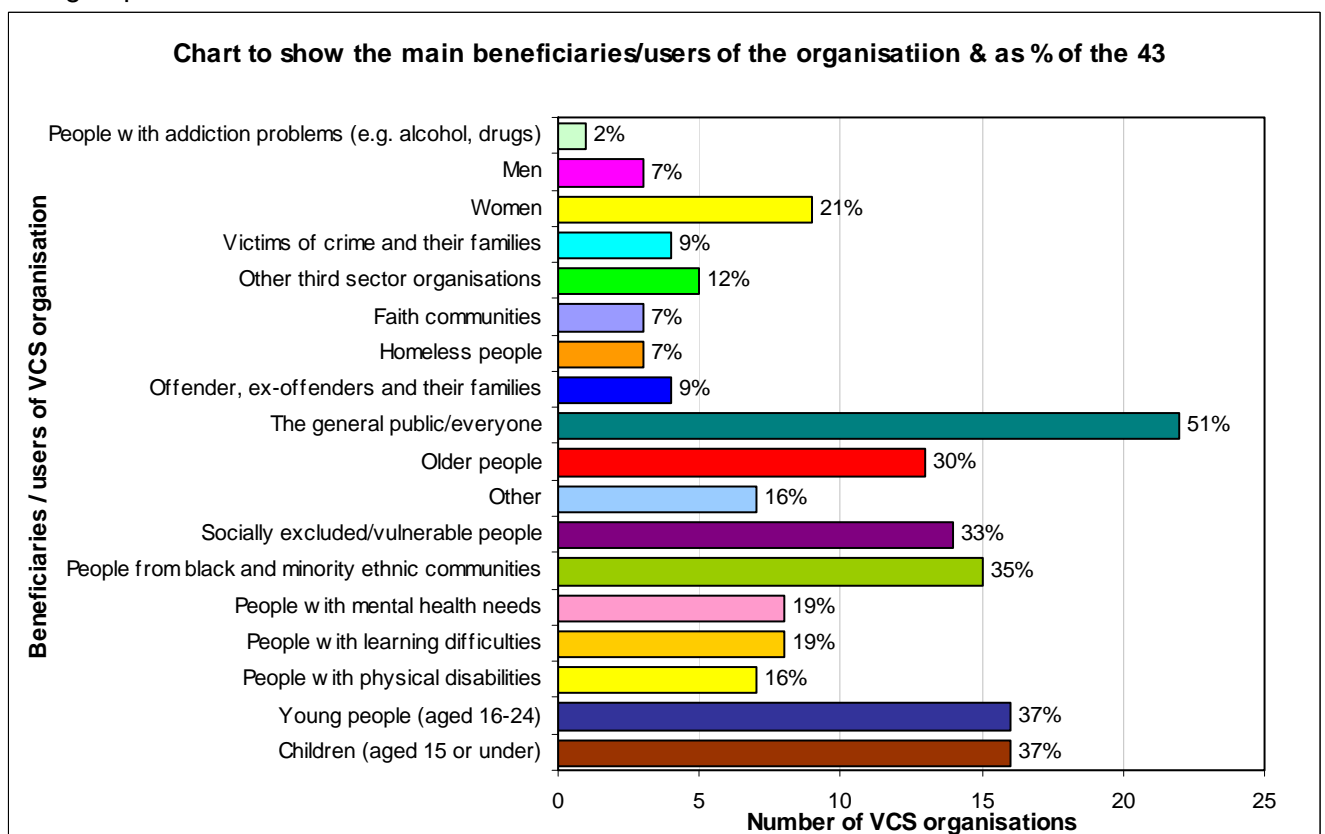
2. Funding / Income

27 (63%) said that they receive funding, or income through contracts, from SBC. Of these, 18 received direct grant funding alone, 9 received direct grant funding AND income from contracts.

Total % of organisation income received	Income from Council - Grant Funding	Income from Council - Contracts
10 – 20	16	5
20 – 30	2	2
30 – 40	1	2
40 – 50	1	0
60 -70	3	0
70 -80	2	0
90 -100	2	0
Total number	27	9

3. User Groups

The organisations were asked to identify what their main user groups were from a list of defined categories. 35 organisations identified multiple user groups, 8 identified single user groups.



18 of the responding organisations said that they received some other form of support from the council as follows:

Type of support from council	Number	As % of responders
Free rental of premises	5	12%
Subsidised rental of premises	5	12%
Support with utilities costs	3	7%
Parking permits	8	19%
Other	6	14%

11 organisations said they receive financial support from other local partners as follows:

Source of financial support	Number
Local Police	1
Local Strategic Partnership	4
Primary Care Trust	4
South East England Development Agency	1
Other local statutory funding	5

Grassroots and Age Concern were also identified as providing financial support by one respondent.

4. Unsuccessful funding applications to SBC

The question “If you been unsuccessful in your application for funding to SBC in the past what was the reason for your application's rejection?” elicited a number of responses;

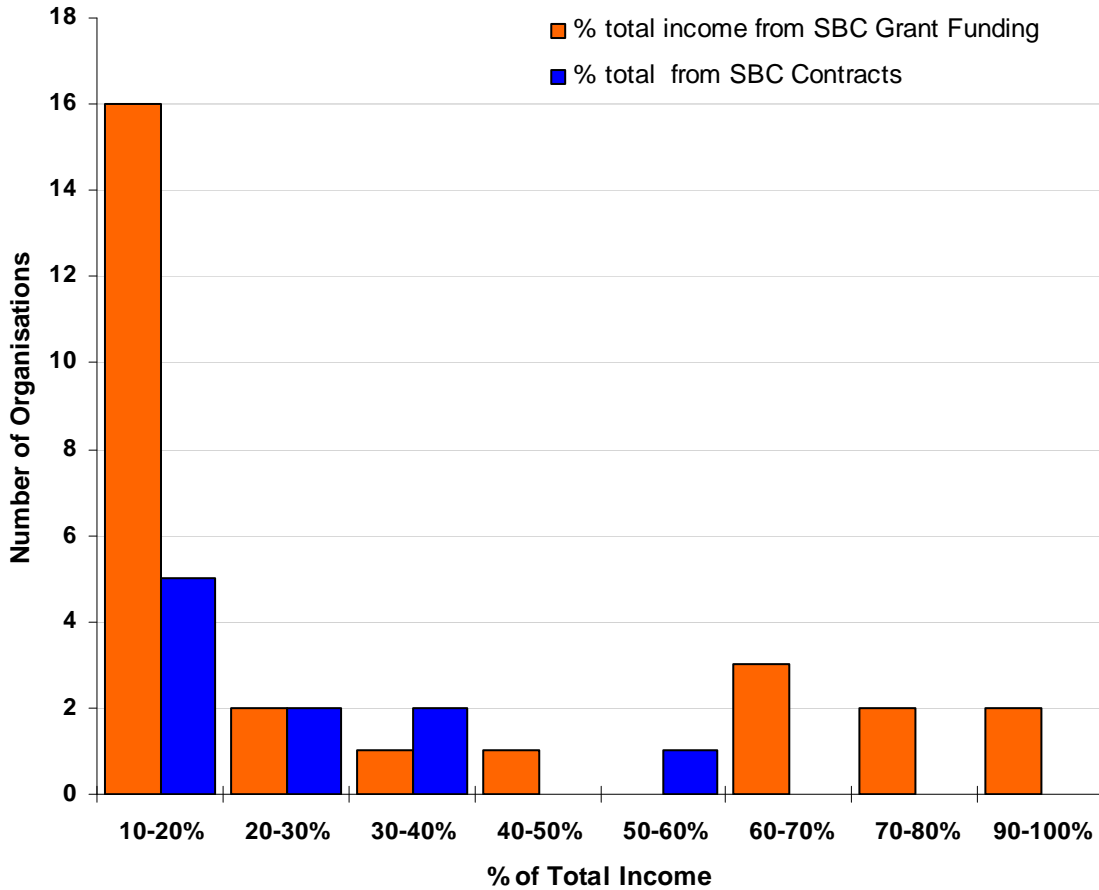
- Two said they had been advised that SBC had no available monies;
- One was rejected on the grounds of a typographic error in application;
- One was advised not to apply for large amounts as only small pots available;
- One was the only applicant in a process which was then deemed invalid due to lack of competition;
- One bid was made before SBC were ready to run with the service;
- One organisation said it was informed as a “stock answer” that they had been unsuccessful “due to the large percentage of applications received...”
- One said it had funding stopped because “as a large organisation you can ‘take the hit’

5. Income from SBC

When asked what % of the total organisation income came from either SBC grants or contracts, 13 organisations said they received no funding, 7 said grants made up between 60 to 100% of their income. Just over half (16 organisations) said grants constituted only 10-20% of their total income. In contrast only one organisation said contracts with SBC provided up to 60% of their total income with a further 10-20% of their total income coming from SBC grants. 8 organisations said they received income from both grants and contracts.

	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	50-60%	60-70%	70-80%	90-100%
% of organisation's total income that comes from SBC Grant Funding	16	2	1	1		2	2	2
% of organisation's total income that comes from SBC Contracts	5	2	2		1			

Chart to show % of VCS total income from SBC Grants and Contracts



The table below shows organisations receiving income from both grants and contracts showing that at least 4 receive 50%+ of their total income from SBC.

% from Grant Funding	% from Contracts	% Total Income from Grants and Contracts
10-20%	10-20%	20-40%
10-20%	10-20%	20-40%
10-20%	20-30%	30-50%
20-30%	10-20%	30-50%
20-30%	20-30%	40-60%
10-20%	30-40%	40-60%
10-20%	50-60%	60-80%
60-70%	10-20%	70-90%

6. Barriers to applying for grants

The question “*what do you perceive to be the barriers associated with applying for grant aid from the Council?*” elicited a number of responses;

There were some very positive comments, with 4 organisations commenting they saw no barriers to applying for grants and one comment inferring the barriers were sometimes within the VCS and not SBC:

“Staff keep on changing, when required they are not available, from voluntary sector...we appreciate staff from Development and Inclusion department for their quick response, concern and eager to help when we need them. Congratulations.”

There were however, some themes running through the perceived barriers to applying for grant funding highlighted below with VCS comments under each theme. Overall the perceived barriers are around lack of awareness of funding available, the complicated and lengthy process, accessibility to SBC, ‘historical’ funding and support, more innovation required and the size of the VCS funding pot.

Transparency, accessibility to and understanding of what the Council is looking for

- Lack of accessibility of SBC to discuss what is required
- Lack of transparency on why and how organisations are funded and a lack of transparency on how to obtain other funding for service delivery.
- Little opportunity to discuss development and potential in terms of what could be gained in return for investment, potential for development of better service delivery.
- Where there are established links with departments or personnel there are opportunities but accessibility seems to be a matter of good fortune as opposed to policy.
- The council do not seem to understand, appreciate or recognize the work we are doing until they need something like a response to a community section consultation. Then we get a call from them.
- Historically It seems that there are many national charities that have branches in Slough seem to achieve more funding (Free Rent etc) than local charities that work mostly in the Slough area

Information on grants and documentation

- Information on grants is not always clear or easily accessible. Each dept has a different approach.
- Difficulty in knowing which (if any) grants we would be given consideration for and where to apply
- There are numerous small grants and contracts which we know that the council offers but there is not one central route of information - rather we have to find the appropriate officer in the relevant department and then ask them to help us identify available sources for grants within the Council. A more unified approach - or a document collating details of all pots of funding would be useful - both for Council officers and voluntary groups who have limited time to research which department has what available to us.
- Time consuming form filling, not getting help to fill out properly, lots of paperwork for elderly people to complete, lengthy and complicated application process.
- Very high standard of application required, most of the BME organisation fall below that standard and miss out funding, despite having the ability to successfully run the project
- The need for matched funding at the level required

Funding

- Too much work kept internal to the council so suitable contracts not offered out.
- Non-availability of funding, cut in VCS funding budget
- The £2000 limit for small grants.
- Too small a proportion of total SBC income is allocated to the VCS. If SBC wishes to have a vibrant VCS it must expect the VCS share of SBC income to increase.
- Mostly, funding seems to be limited to new initiatives and there is a limit on what can be afforded.
- We don't have bank accounts

Duration of funding

- The long term grants appear to be set in stone, there is no opportunity for organisations who are established but do not need capacity building grants to receive any funding.
- The council only fund certain organisations within the borough and the West Indian Community does not seem to fall into any of your categories
- Limits of number of years funding can be applied for
- The LTFA seems to be impenetrable!
- The Council might consider providing 'one-off' three year agreements to support the strategic development of an organisation. Typically this would be to bridge a period where funding is insecure in the short-term but the outlook very positive in the longer-term. This would offset the demise of crucial services in the town.

7. Small Grants Funding

36 organisations responded to the question asking what the upper limit for the Small Grants (currently £2000) should be. Of these;

- 5 were of the opinion that each application should be judged on its own merits and if more funding increased "strings attached" and increased monitoring this may not be appropriate for a small organisation.
- One felt small grants funding was very demanding, particularly on a small start-up organisation and suggested a lighter touch £500 limit with minimal paperwork, which is often the "first grant the group receives". The £2000 should continue to be available as a limit for developing organisations.

The table below sets out the results from the other 31 organisations;

- Those organisations stating £7k + were largely doing so on the basis of viewing the Small Grants as needing to be sufficient to cover most of the organisation's costs for specific events or to run the organisation.
- Almost half (42%) said £2,000 was a useful amount of money for an emerging organisation, although several then commented that organisations should be able to apply in subsequent years where the funding should increase to £5k as they would be better positioned to deliver to agreed requirements and be able to leverage additional funds to match grant funding from SBC.

What should the upper limit of grants distributed under the Small Grants be?					
£2,000	£3,000	£5,000	£7,500	£10,000	£15,000
13 (42%)	4 (13%)	9 (29%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)

When asked what amount of funding should be allocated to the Small Grants Fund (currently 3% of funding is allocated), the responses were wide and varied. In total 31 organisations commented with 7 not saying what the % of funding should be and expressing concern that any increase in funding allocated to small grants would result in cuts elsewhere, given current economic constraints. Others stressed, as before, that each application should be judged on its own merits and the benefits and services that will be delivered should be the key driver for all grant allocation.

One organisation even suggested that the grants should be reduced to less than 3% stating that *“lots of small groups appear to apply for grants but do not have adequate governance in place potentially results in the money not always being used in the most appropriate way”*. At the other extreme one suggested an increase to 33.3% of total grant funding, saying *“small amounts to groups give a great boost and enable them to continue to fulfil their aims. Larger organisations have many more resources available to them”*.

The breakdown of responses can be seen in the table below.

What % of grants budget that should be allocated to Small grants Fund							
less than 3%	Remain at 3%	5%	6%	10%	20%	25%	33.30%
1 (4%)	4 (16%)	7 (30%)	2 (8%)	6 (26%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)

8. Support needed by VCS

The VCS identified a variety of areas in which they needed support;

- IT
- Help completing applications for funding
- Updates on SBC policies, regulations and emerging Govt. policies
- Child protection / safeguarding
- First aid
- Child care
- Financial and strategic investment
- Access to Council procurement/commissioning and training and venues / meeting rooms
- Recruitment of trustees
- Project management and advice on legal matters
- Help to acquire sponsors and PR material

More specifically;

What are your organisations training and development needs?		
Fundraising	23	54%
Managing Finance	13	30%
Governance	16	37%
IT	23	54%
Commissioning	18	42%
Other	2	5% (better meeting venue)
No Support Required	3	7%

32 organisations stated who they thought should provide this support. There were three overarching responses with some suggesting both the council and SCVS should jointly provide the support;

Which organisation should provide this support?		
SCVS	10	31%
Council / Statutory Agencies	22	69%
Larger organisations who have the capacity and infrastructure to do so	3	9%

9. Awareness of SCVS, Voluntary Centre Slough, SBCP & Slough Equalities Commission

Most organisations were aware of SCVS (95%) and the Volunteer Centre Slough (91%), although awareness of Slough Business Community Partnership (80%) and Slough Equalities Commission (66%) was less widespread.

Are you aware of the following organisations				
	Slough Council for Voluntary Services	Volunteer Centre Slough	Slough Equalities Commission	Slough Business Community Partnership
YES	42	40	29	35
NO	0	2	5	7
BLANK	2	2	10	2
	44	44	44	44
	95%	91%	66%	80%

Although awareness is high, responses reported lower receipt of support from these organisations.

Have you ever received support from any of the below -					
	Slough Council for Voluntary Services	Volunteer Centre Slough	Slough Equalities Commission	Slough Business Community Partnership	Other
YES	32	20	6	17	7
NO	9	20	22	21	10
BLANK	3	4	16	6	27
	44	44	44	44	44
	73%	45%	14%	39%	16%

10. Future national challenges, sustainability and opportunities VCS would like to participate in locally

34 organisations responded to the question asking if the VCS were interested in participating in specific activities considering the challenges and changes facing the sector.

74% (25 organisations) said they would be interested in partnership funding bids while 65% (22 organisations) said they would be interested in partnership bids for statutory sector contracts. By contrast much fewer organisations said they would be interested in merging with another organisation or sharing office space (7 and 9 respectively).

When asked specifically about national challenges facing the VCS and how the organisation was planning to improve sustainability and efficiency, encouragingly, a variety of actions were given. These can be grouped into the following:

Ways in VCS are working to improve sustainability	No. identifying this action
Working with SCVS to improve efficiency especially - need help with recruiting and retaining staff	3
Joint working, less duplication,	3
more targeted marketing of services	4
improve internal efficiency, improved business processes to cut expenditure	5
Increase client / member numbers and volunteers	3
Explore alternative / diverse sources of funding	5
Start applying for service contracts	1
Seeking longer-term contracts / winning more contracts	2
Work with other sister organisations across Berkshire to access wider area funding, share resources	1
Merging with sister organisations in SE - take on larger mainstream contracts	1
Need re-assurance of continued funding from SBC	1
Ensuring services provided meet need	1
Acquire longer-term lease on premises	1
Improved cost control system and win more contracts	1
Training and development of staff and employing experience staff	2
Scrutinising procurement strategy to ensure we get value for money	1
Completed strategic review, restructured and cut costs	1
Request opportunity to discuss 3 year plan with SBC to secure funding and after 3 years these resources can be deployed elsewhere	1
Organise fundraising events	1
Exploring possible social enterprise development	1
Specialist skilled trustees looking to create a not-for-profit business model to see us through the recession and beyond	1
Due to the nature of the project we will never be able to sustain ourselves fully	1
Taking successful projects into mainstream provision	1
Using SBC funding to leverage more match funding	1
Retraining staff to support individual budgets	1

11. Additional Comments

There were a number of additional comments, while some were relating to specific organisation needs, generic comments are given below;

- The opportunity to better understand the purpose of this consultation
- Not to rely solely on the internet and email to provide information
- Open debate on a range of factors affecting the relationship with the voluntary sector.
- Better awareness of the support that is available locally and that information should be readily available for those seeking help, e.g. a leaflet to signpost organisations and which could also be available via SBC's and key partner's websites.
- Organisations receiving grants should have to prove their governance is of a good standard - SCVS are developing a quality standard for organisations working with children and young people - this could be extended for all organisations.
- Contracts with the Council need to be realistic. All negotiation needs to be in line with the Compact guidelines.
- Thank you for the wonderful staff who works with the organisations and charities sector.
- SBC needs a very clear picture of its VCS, based upon a sound statistical and evaluative analysis of the existing system. Is this available? For instance, what, in SBC's view, is the value-added contribution of the VCS to the life of the town?
- We are all concerned about the changes that will take place to our grants in 2010...It would be great to see the YOF and other departments funds and contract opportunities highlighted to local charities and voluntary groups to help develop their own financial stability whilst also providing a needed service for the council - there seems to be an obvious missing link in the Council's procurement methods?
- A better process for 'advertising' pots of money that are available at an early stage would be welcome. We regularly get emails from Reading and Wokingham councils advising us of funds available - sometimes very small pots of money, sometimes not in our line at all - but we get to hear about them. We have actually found it easier to get project funds from these councils than our 'home' council. People in Slough do seem to keep their cards very close to their chest - it feels as if there are funds that will always be directed to council 'favourite contacts', and yet there does not seem to be an open system of accredited or preferred suppliers.
- There are a number of small projects and activities that the council deliver in house with paid staff that could be contracted out to the Voluntary Sector, where the group has a specialism.

Responses were received from the following organisations:

1st Langley Company The Boys Brigade
Age Concern Slough and Berkshire East
Aik Saath
ART BEYOND BELIEF
Berkshire East and South Bucks Women's Aid
Bhumika Asian Theatre
Carers UK Slough & District
Chalvey Community Forum
Cippenham Table Tennis Club
Circolo Italiano Slough
Citizens Advice Slough
Destiny Support CIC
Disability Matters
Groundwork Thames Valley
Home-Start Slough
LAMEA (LEBANON AND MIDDLE EASTERN ASSOCIATION
Mothers of Goodhope
Nari Niketan
Over 60s
Pakistan Welfare Association
Parvaaz Project - TAHA
SEEDS Trust
Shelter
Slough Business Community Partnership
Slough Business Community Partnership
Slough Community Transport & ShopMobility
Slough Council for Voluntary Services
Slough Crossroads Caring for Carers
Slough Equalities Commission
Slough Furniture Project
Slough Mencap
Slough Museum
Slough Older Peoples' Forum
Slough Philharmonic Society (Chorus & Orchestra)
Slough Refugee Support
Slough West Indian Peoples Enterprise
Somali Sisters Support Group ..(SSSG)
Soroptimist International Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead
SPACE Counselling Service
Stonham
Survival Education Programmes
Towns women Guilds
Volunteer Centre Slough
Zim-Slough Community Association