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Community Audit and Evaluation Centre
Community North West

Surviving, Thriving or Dying



*Whalley Range Forum, Manchester,
Celebrate Your Alley Gate project*

Resilience and small community groups
in the North West of England

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What are the
resilience needs and
strategies that will
help the survival of
small voluntary and
community sector
organisations in the
North West?

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Section 1

Executive summary and recommendations

Executive Summary

This research took place between July 2011 and February 2012, during a period of unprecedented change within the voluntary and community sector.

The responses from 215 groups across the North West with incomes of less than £50,000 pa (70% less than £10,000, 15% no income) has shown the diversity and fragility of these groups as well as helped indicate the requirements needed for their resilience and survival.

The research was carried out as part of the Taking Part Capacity Building Research Cluster, which is working with research partners across the country. Community North West, a small but vibrant regional organisation identified the need for the research, and partnered on the research. The research was carried out by a Community Development worker with experience of running a regional Third Sector Infrastructure organisation. As a result this research has an 'insider' and participatory approach, focussing on qualitative findings, using case studies and participants quotes to draw out main themes. The participatory approach meant that representatives of community groups devised the questionnaire questions, and discussed the findings at seminars and a Resilience Conference.

The state of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) has become of increasing interest as a result of the emphasis being placed on self help by the current government. The research has supported findings from other recent research in the sector e.g. by Church Action on Poverty but has particularly focussed on small VCS groups in the North West.

This research shows that not only is there an increased demand for the services and resources provided by small VCS groups, particularly those working with 'disadvantaged' groups, but that crucially these groups are struggling to survive. Of the 215 responses, 85 identified as specifically working with disadvantaged groups e.g. disabled people, 80% of these groups said they expected demand for their services to increase (as compared to 68% for all respondents), 78% said they had been affected by Local Authority cuts in funding, and as a result 51% said it was likely that their group would close within the next three years. The likelihood of closure is evident across differing types of groups including co-ops and social enterprises.

The findings show that the groups who are most resilient and likely to survive are those who are involved in self help, rely on their own volunteers and have their own income. In the main, these are groups who have incomes of less than £10,000 pa and identify themselves as community groups (126 respondents).

Section 1

Executive summary and recommendations

However these groups also value professional support and small amounts of resourcing, sometimes shared for example use of premises or facilities although this inter-dependence can often make small groups vulnerable.

The groups who are least resilient are those who provide services for 'vulnerable groups', have paid staff and rely significantly on external funding e.g. from Local Authorities. The findings also show that small VCS groups take for granted and value the provision of information, training and other support that has been provided by organisations who are themselves at risk (e.g. Councils for Voluntary Service).

Fitzsimons *et al* (2011)¹ suggest that for groups to be resilient, like individuals they need confidence, a sense of purpose and 'pro-social bonding', that is, links to other groups both for support, and resourcing, problem solving and empowerment. However our research shows that pressure on groups in relation to increased demands for services and reduced resources to meet this have resulted in increased tension between groups who are competing for funding and resources. This therefore reduces the potential for partnership and effective communication so making the groups less sustainable and resilient.

This research has added a qualitative, focussed dimension to ongoing research on resilience, and has provided an insight into the position of small VCS groups, and the rapidly changing nature of the VCS sector in the North West.

What we will do next:

We are committed to sharing these results with a wide range of stakeholders and policymakers with a view to enabling the continuing debate on the essential role of small CVS groups for community well being and resilience, and the essential changes that are required to enable the resilience of CVS groups.

We recommend that this research is re-visited at a later date to further identify the 'survival rate' of these small VCS groups to ascertain whether there are any signs of recovery and which proved to be the most effective measures in building up their resilience.

Dr. Carol Packham

(Director, Community Audit and Evaluation Centre, MMU)

¹ Fitzsimons, A, Hope, M, Cooper, C, Russell, K. (2011)
Empowerment and Participation in Youth Work, Learning Matters

Section 1

Executive summary and recommendations

Recommendations

Small CVS groups will develop more resilience by:

- Seeking a range of partners to develop and support community self help activity e.g. for funding, the provision of premises and resourcing e.g. (local businesses), Housing Associations, Trade Unions, and schools, colleges/ Universities.
- Setting up peer support networks (e.g. online), and opportunities to meet both locally and regionally to discuss and organise around common concerns.
- The provision of core costs – even small amounts of funding up to £500 may help these groups survive.
- Providing advice and support regarding funding opportunities and accessing alternative sources of funding, and encouragement, advice and support with regard to becoming financially more self-reliant including help with valuing the social outcomes of groups activity to be used as a valuable evidence base.
- Adopting a partnership approach by CVS groups to tackle community issues.
- Supporting CVS groups by helping to attract volunteers and providing training and networking opportunities for members and volunteers.
- Acknowledging that small CVS groups are not able to meet the needs of many people through self help alone e.g. in ‘deprived’ communities and from vulnerable groups. Local capacity building and potential is restricted by factors that require trained workers, expertise and resourcing.
- The tackling of factors such as unemployment, discrimination, poverty, and disadvantage must be prioritised at a structural level to enable small CVS groups to act as a creative bridge, rather than replacement, for essential services.

Section 2

Introduction and background to the research

2.1 Introduction

Small community groups act as the social glue that binds individuals and communities together¹ and are seen as fundamental to current Government policies in delivering Big Society outcomes² as local state services are withdrawn.

However some contend that the 'Big Society' goes hand in hand with deep cuts in public spending, with the new economics foundation (nef) stating that these cuts *'are only feasible alongside a strategy for shifting responsibility away from the state – to individuals, small groups, charities, philanthropists, local enterprise and big business'*. Civil society will be left, nef concludes, *'to fill the gaps left by public services, providing support to increasing numbers of poor, jobless, insecure and unsupported individuals'*.³

A new report from Civil Exchange *"The Big Society Audit 2012"* points out that:

'Far from being strengthened in the first two years of the Big Society, the voluntary sector is now facing a major potential funding gap as a result of an estimated £3.3 billion in cuts in statutory funding.' The report goes on to state: *'Most worryingly, public services delivered by voluntary organisations in disadvantaged areas are more likely to be at risk from public sector cuts and to provide services to disadvantaged people'*.⁴

This research gives a glimpse of the strength and vulnerability of this sector in the North West (NW), the issues they are currently facing and suggests some steps that need to be taken in order to help groups survive and even flourish. The findings contribute to the development of an evidence base on how the economic climate and public spending cuts are impacting on disadvantaged communities in the NW and the groups that support them. Similar research studies have taken place in London and the North East and this report will complement and add to their findings.

Our investigation is uniquely distinctive as we have gathered information on the needs and current issues with regard to survival facing a wide variety of small community groups across the region, and have encouraged the active involvement of members of these groups in this research and in suggesting ways to support this sector.

This research has been carried out with the support of Community North West (CNW). CNW has a very wide membership base made up of small community groups, many of which support vulnerable and marginalised groups in both rural and urban areas; they have proved a useful resource in carrying out this research.

Section 2

Introduction and background to the research

2.2 Background

The Taking Part? Capacity Building Cluster (CBC) is a five year ESRC funded programme based in Lincoln, Goldsmiths and Manchester Metropolitan Universities.

The research consists of case studies, research placements, vouchers and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, all working with partner organisations with a focus on active citizenship and community empowerment.

The CBC's work is aimed at building the capacity of partner organisations, not only by producing useful insights and research data, but also through the research process. To enable this research partners are involved throughout, from identifying the research focus, research questions and methods, analysis of findings and co-production of recommendations for action.

Over the first three of the five years of the CBC it has become apparent that economic and policy changes have created tensions and insecurity within the sector. Increasingly partnership working between organisations has been threatened as commissioning of services has made some Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) reluctant to share ideas when competing for resources, and tendering processes have sometimes resulted in the adoption of secretive practices rather than co-operation.

The research has, however, been able to help build the capacity of partner organisations, by providing information to aid their sustainability (e.g. by strengthening funding bids, or being able to confirm the need for services), as well as by developing their knowledge and skills.

This particular research was based on a partnership with Community North West (CNW) exploring the resilience of small community groups. CNW identified the focus, partly as a result of its own vulnerable future, but also to be equipped to ascertain how to meet the needs of small community and voluntary groups in the North West. An Advisory Group was established and through this group and meetings with representatives of small groups the questions to be asked were identified.

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Introduction and background to the research

Groups with incomes of less than £50,000 were contacted through a variety of networks and asked to complete the online questionnaire.

The responses to the questionnaire were then discussed at a Resilience Conference organised by CNW, and the TUC, to check their significance, and to help make recommendations for action. The quantitative work was supplemented with case study interviews with a sample of respondents. The research has been able to demonstrate the importance of small groups in responding to local needs and the importance of volunteers for their existence.

The research in the CBC is able to chart the rapid changes taking place across the Third Sector. It is hoped that through using a participatory approach research will not merely record these changes but will help sustain organisations, and develop their capacity and resilience in challenging times.

Much of the work of the CBC is still in progress; however reports of completed work can be accessed through the Third Sector Research Centre website or by accessing www.ioe.mmu.ac.uk/caec

Section 3

Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

3.1 The impact of a contracting economy and public sector cuts on the Voluntary and Community Sector, and vulnerable groups

Several recent studies have examined the impact of spending cuts on the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and in particular the effect on those groups active in England's most deprived areas and most marginal communities.

Two recent reports from **National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2011)** (NCVO) and **Church Action on Poverty (2011)**, claim that rising unemployment, cuts in services, and higher living costs have adversely impacted on small voluntary groups and the communities they serve. NCVO's stark research findings show that the voluntary and community sector in England will stand to lose £2.8 billion over the spending review period 2011-2016⁵. The report states that half of all Local Authorities are making disproportionate cuts to the voluntary and community sector and says that although many local authorities are making long term, strategic decisions in partnership with their local VCS with regard to implementing cuts, some are not, and this is causing real damage to the sector and local communities.

The NCVO Report states that: *'The VCS plays an essential role in preventative services. When investment is cut in this area, what appears to be cash savings often have considerable real costs in social and economic terms. Cuts to preventative services are storing up considerable challenges for the future'*.⁶

NCVO set up a website www.voluntarysectorcuts.org.uk in 2010 where groups in England and Wales can report cuts affecting their services. In the North West 75 organisations to date have reported cuts amounting to **£681,875** resulting in loss of staff, and closure of services with many aimed at priority needs e.g. young people, debt advice, community services etc.

In *Tracking the impact of the Cuts* (2011) Church Action on Poverty surveyed Church and faith based projects in deprived areas and concluded that spending cuts are having a disproportionate impact on these groups with 70% now receiving less public funding but with nearly 80% reporting rising demand for their services. Their findings state that groups were also: *'finding it harder to secure grants due to increased competition for trust funding. Rising costs, financial uncertainty and falling private donations are also common side effects of the spending cuts'*.⁷

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Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

An *Evaluation Report on Voluntary Sector North West*, the main infrastructure organisation for voluntary and community organisations in the North West, was published in December 2011. It stated the context of the community and public sector in the North West as follows:

'At this time, the impact of funding cuts and policy shift are being felt across the VCS and especially by groups existing to support the vulnerable and marginalised. The project evaluators identified clear examples of how loss or changes to mainstream services has placed significant pressure on the services of both VSNW, many of their local and regional VCS strategic partners and on frontline groups'.⁸

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) has also recently carried out research on the impact of the recession in communities, community cohesion and community empowerment and the response by the voluntary sector to the cuts.

CDF's research has shown that many organisations are responding to the cuts through collaboration and partnership working. CDF's Chief Executive Alison Seabrooke concludes: *'However, fewer resources and a more competitive funding environment may mean that smaller VCO's lose out in such partnerships. Conversely there is a chance that some small community groups may be insulated from the cuts due to their independence from public funding – small organisations are resourceful, used to running on a shoestring and operating outside public service delivery'.⁹*

The Community Development Foundation 2010 Report: *Learning about the impact of the recession on communities, community cohesion and community empowerment*, which was based on research carried out by a project team from Resources for Change and NCVO in seven Local Authority areas in England, also produced messages from the research which are relevant to our concerns – specifically:

- There is an increased demand for specific services provided by voluntary and community organisations which coincide with a squeeze on resources.
- Reduced investment in the VCS could weaken community cohesion and resilience.
- Reduced investment in the VCS and growing constraints due to the recession could curtail VCO's ability in several arenas: to advocate on behalf of vulnerable people; to press for changes in public and social policy; to be the voice of service users; and to suggest alternatives to market approaches to meeting need.
- There is no consensus on how much very small community groups will suffer from the recession – their independence from public funding might actually protect them. Small-scale support to community groups could be an effective way to use available resources.

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Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

- There are concerns that the recession will lead to greater community tensions and will damage community cohesion as competition for resources increases.
- Several sources link individual and community resilience to social ties and network. People and communities with high levels of social capital tend to fare better in times of recession and are better at developing coping or support mechanisms.¹⁰

In London and the North East, the leading Voluntary sector organisations have been tracking over the past few years, the impact of the recession and spending cuts on the voluntary and community sector and on vulnerable groups.

The London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) carried out a survey of the voluntary sector in London during April and May 2011.¹¹ Their report showed that although 81% of groups said the demand for their services had increased in 2010-2011, **51% had closed services in the same period with 54% expecting to close services in 2011-2012.** 77% were expecting public sector funding for their organisation to decrease and 54% had made staff redundancies. 97% said that the economic climate had a negative impact on their clients and were expecting demand for their services to increase in 2011-12. However 77% were not confident they would be able to meet these increases in demand in 2011-2012.

The London research showed that there was an increase in demand for advice services, and claimed that increasing debt and unemployment would lead to greater poverty, inequality and homelessness. Their responses also suggested that Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee communities, young people, those over 50, LGBT, women and disabled people are being particularly hard hit by rising levels of unemployment and debt, and that the welfare reforms were particularly affecting disabled children and their families.

With regard to volunteering, their research showed that more than 56% have taken on more volunteers however *'spending cuts had reduced the capacity of the VCS to provide support, training and suitable placements for volunteers'* and *'cuts have forced more organisations to depend on volunteers to provide services, reducing their users' access to qualified professional staff'*.¹²

Recent research findings from the Voluntary Organisations' Network North East (VONNE) similarly shows continued decrease in funding, increased staff redundancies, significant increased use of reserves, fear of closure, – but *'increased demand for services from the poorest and most vulnerable in our communities'*.¹³ The report concludes: *'Organisations are facing continued rising demand, but with public sector spending cuts, decreases in funding from trusts and foundations and depending on reserves, they are now in a very fragile state. In six months time many organisations in the sector may no longer be robust enough to survive'*.¹⁴

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Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

VONNE is concerned that vulnerable local people will find it difficult to cope without these organisations able to offer support and services.

Conclusion: Our research with groups in the North West shows similar trends and pressures such as reduced funding and raises concerns that it will be mainly the most independent groups serving their own members interests, rather than delivering services to the most vulnerable, that are likely to survive.

3.2 Resilience definitions, factors and models

There is growing interest in defining, measuring and exploring how best to build resilience for individuals, community groups and communities.

Recent research has shown that crucial to community resilience at a local level are the existence of local small groups and organisations that encourage communities to come together, have a collective voice and access support.

There are many definitions of “community resilience”. Magis (2007) states: *‘Community resilience is the existence, development and engagement of community resources to thrive in a dynamic environment characterised by change, uncertainty, unpredictability and surprise. Resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community and to develop new trajectories for the community’s future’*.¹⁵

The Scottish Community Development Centre (2011) suggests that the term ‘community resilience’ is used in three main ways:

‘...in the context of preparation for, and responses to potential disasters such as fire, flood or climate change. More broadly it is associated with economic and social vitality, typically in response to an economic downturn or crisis. Yet another interpretation is related to defence from violent extremism’.¹⁶

Gilchrist (2009) argues for:

‘the importance and value of building networks within communities that results in individual, families and the wider community building a ‘resilience’ leading to a sense of wellbeing and greater quality of life... Community networks enhance people’s ability to cope with difficulties and disasters – networks of necessity are crucial mechanisms for survival and sustenance of poor or oppressed groups. They comprise communities of shared interest or political identity. Forming (such) communities can be seen as a device for collective empowerment’.¹⁷

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Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

Our research helps the understanding of resilience as it applies to small community groups, and how the greater resilience of small community groups can then help build resilience for communities at a neighbourhood and wider level.

This section will look at four Resilience models that explore how best to measure and build resilience at all these levels, how they are intertwined and the vital role that small community groups can play in contributing to this process.

3.2.1 Carnegie UK: Exploring Community Resilience

Research carried out by Carnegie UK¹⁹ explored the following questions:

- How are communities already resilient and is it possible to encourage the creation of communities which are more resilient in the context of future challenges?
- What is community resilience anyway?
- What outside help from other communities, funding bodies and Government agencies might be useful?

This report suggests that the three types of social capital, bonding, bridging and linking, are useful in building resilient communities. Small community groups are described as essential in contributing to all these forms of capital, and have a vital role to play when their communities are faced with emergency situations such as the recent floods in Cumbria.

Carnegie UK also suggest that there are four significant dimensions of community resilience building that together create a compass and navigation aid useful in steering a course towards resilient outcomes for their communities:

- **Healthy people**
- **Inclusive, creative culture**
- **Localised economy**
- **Cross-community links**

The authors go on to suggest that there are three responses to change: Break through – transformation, Break even – bounce back, and Break down – collapse.

By combining these change categories a new resilience model can be created that can guide communities towards greater creativity, co-ordination and survival.

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Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

3.2.2 The Young Foundation: The Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM)

The Young Foundation has developed a framework WARM to measure well being and resilience at a local level that looks at positive community aspects rather than just at the negative. WARM can be used to measure life satisfaction, map local assets and vulnerabilities, and inform local decision making including developing new local initiatives.¹⁹

There are five stages to this framework:

- Stage 1: Measuring how well the neighbourhood area has fared and is faring
- Stage 2: Identifying assets and vulnerabilities
- Stage 3: Benchmarking
- Stage 4: Understanding and planning
- Stage 5: Implementing a plan

The WARM report suggests that this model should be used on a repetitive basis in order to measure the efficacy of interventions on levels of life satisfaction.

This asset based approach can help support interventions that build resilience in deprived communities particularly if the vital role of small community groups is recognised and supported as part of this process.

3.2.3 The University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland: Building Resilience in Rural Communities Toolkit

This toolkit looks at how best to build resilience in a rural setting but is also of value in an urban context.²⁰ The toolkit is based around using eleven resilience concepts including:

- Social Networks that encourage community involvement
- Positive outlook so that adversity can be seen as a challenge to be overcome
- Learning that can assist with increasing personal and group capacity to cope with challenges and focuses on solutions not just problems.
- Infrastructure and Support Services – how can these be improved and enhanced?
- Diverse and Innovative Economy – one that emphasises the interdependency of businesses and the community.
- Embracing Differences – allows diverse individuals and groups to thrive together
- Leadership – setting up structures that allow individuals, groups and communities to achieve their goals.

These concepts, taken together, were found to be pivotal in enhancing individual, group and community resilience.

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3.2.4 The Community Development Foundation: Resilience Factors

The Community Development Foundation's (CDF) 2010 Report²¹ looked at resilience factors for communities and community groups that would help them cope with the effects of the cuts and worsening economy.

Some of the major resilience factors highlighted in this report were:

- People, who are proactive, can take risks and innovate and have skills and dedication.
- Collaboration – including networking, working in partnership to encourage dialogue, joint solutions and the pooling of resources.
- Good communication in promoting services and facilities locally available
- A “can do” attitude with organisations being willing to try out new things and adopting positive attitudes to dealing with difficult situations locally.

Conclusion: all the above models emphasise the importance of building on positive attributes, combined with networking and seeking partnerships at a local level in order to overcome adversity and encourage the development of innovative ways to survive and thrive. These are useful frameworks when we come to look at our research findings and explore ways forward.

3.3 Research Studies

There are three recent major research projects nationally and in the North West investigating the small community group sector and looking at their survival needs, which this section will explore in turn.

3.3.1 Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) University of Birmingham

This Centre is an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Centre, and is funded by the Office of the Third Sector (OTS) and the Barrow Cadbury Trust from 2008-2013.

Research is being carried out on various streams including ‘Below the Radar’ which is used to describe the wide range of voluntary and community activity not captured by existing databases, public registrations or major voluntary organisations, including work of small and community based organisations working within vulnerable and marginalised communities.

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Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

TSRC states that there is estimated to be between 600,000 and 900,000 small community groups in the UK. Important features are lack of core funding, and permanent staff. These groups are becoming increasingly important to government policy particularly around building ‘The Big Society’. The Coalition Government would like these groups to increase their role in providing local services and contributing to improving the well-being of their neighbourhoods.²²

TSRC has also recently completed a ‘*micro-mapping*’ of small community group activity in two areas of England – one of which is in the North West. Their report concludes that in order to flourish groups need to be connected to and draw on others’ resources, such as membership to specialist networks, support from voluntary and environmental organisations and local infrastructure agencies and use of space in, for example, a church or voluntary organisation. The Report emphasises that self-organised activities need some form of resourcing to exist – whether this is time, space, skills, or financial support.²³

3.3.2 Community Resilience pilot project – Cheetham Hill

This project is directed by CLES (Centre for Local Economic Strategies) and Urban Forum funded by the Tudor Trust in partnership with Manchester City Council.

The aim is to develop a set of community resilience measures, looking at the existence of community resources, external drivers of change, local activity in the different sectors with a particular focus on the social sector, relationships between the local social sector and the local public and commercial sectors, relationships and networks within the social sector, and environmental drivers and community responses to these.

The community resilience measures will be identified using an adaptation of the economic resilience framework developed by CLES, which has already been tested in the UK and internationally.

The new framework will focus on social action and community assets in the neighbourhood and it will also look at how the social sector interconnects with the private and public sectors.²⁴

The community resilience measures will also be informed by the practical examples of activity that makes communities more resilience, brought together by Urban Forum in a Community Resilience Guide.²⁵

Urban Forum followed this work by organising a cross sector workshop in Cheetham Hill and partners have now developed an Action Plan in five key areas to build resilience.

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These included the following:

- **Supporting philanthropic behaviour in the local business community, and linking up giving by businesses in the area with local groups and initiatives**
- **Tackling lack of shared community space in Cheetham Hill through developing existing assets.**
- **Supporting commercial behaviours in the not for profit sector and engagement with public sector commissioning opportunities.**
- **Involving residents in managing community assets, with Cheetham Hill Park as a pilot.**
- **Supporting greater networking across all sectors to generate more cross sector collaborations on activities of mutual interest.**

The action Plan has now been incorporated into Manchester City Council's ward plan, and is also being taken forward through the Communities First Fund in Cheetham Hill.

Diversity, Resilience and Communities

The Young Foundation has been commissioned by the Barrow Cadbury Trust to explore community resilience – a community's ability to withstand shocks and fulfill potential – and the factors that influence it. Fieldwork is being carried out in a multi-cultural inner city area, and a 1930s 'white' council estate both in Birmingham.

This research hopes to uncover the role local organisations play in encouraging resilience as well as the ways in which diversity within a community creates resilience. The aim is to identify the factors that affect a community's ability to tap into wider networks that both allow individuals to maximise their own potential and communities to be economically, socially and culturally vibrant. The research will look at how local institutions influence the ability of communities to be resilient in the face of adversity and identify assets and enabling factors.

Their findings to date include the importance of the role of the Voluntary sector in supporting social capital / bridging capital i.e. social relations within community that have productive benefits. With high levels of social capital communities can increase their resilience and draw resources in. When communities are inward looking they lack the ties / bonds that can do this. Research has looked at how small communities groups are different from voluntary and statutory groups and the importance of significant local people in supporting these groups and networks e.g. Neighbourhood Wardens. How can skills and capacity be improved in current climate? What help is required to support these groups?²⁶

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Resilience: cuts and small community groups – literature review

Conclusion: these studies and research projects contextualise and complement our research, which explores the impact of the current situation on a relatively small sample of small community groups in the North West, which can be seen to act as a barometer for the sector as a whole.

The research projects described above all emphasise the importance of this sector having links with both the public and private sector in order to be strong and healthy, and the need for other enabling factors to be in place such as the availability of community assets and other resources particularly financial.

Section 4

Survey analysis

4.1 Methodology

In order to elicit the maximum number of responses in the most effective and efficient way an on line semi-structured questionnaire was developed which was felt to be most relevant and appropriate for small groups that were either thriving or struggling with an income of less than £50,000.

The purpose of the survey was to explore the most effective ways in which VCS groups could improve their 'resilience' through responding positively to any challenges they may face now or in the future.

The on-line survey enabled a mix of qualitative and quantitative information to be gathered. These approaches meant that groups could voice their concerns/perceptions/opinions as well as plans for the future, and added richness/depth and nuance to the data collection. The survey link was distributed through regional third sector networks and local infrastructure support organisations in order to reach as wide a number as possible of small community groups.

Community North West also organised a series of participatory Seminars on Resilience for small community groups in the autumn which allowed for further qualitative research including interviews, feedback and discussions.

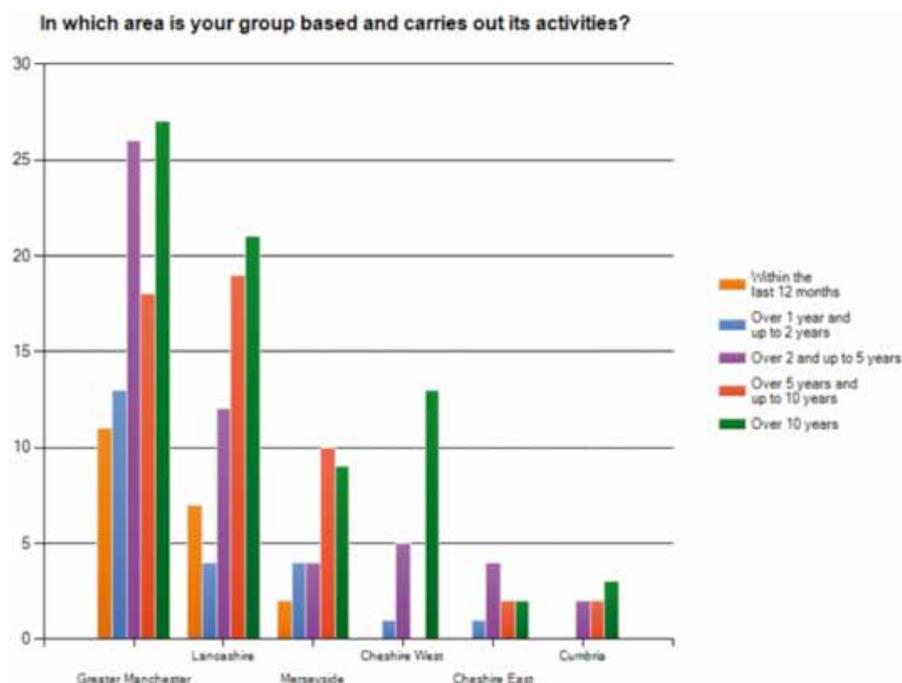
Section 4

Survey analysis

4.2 Key Results

This section summarises some significant results from the survey which are then looked at in more detail in the following sections.

- Responses:** The survey received **215 responses** with the majority of responses coming from Groups from Greater Manchester, and Lancashire, with a spread of responses from the other sub-regions.
- When was the group set up?:** The majority of respondents were from long established groups with **67% in existence for five years or more**. The table below shows that in the majority of sub-regions most replies were from groups that have been in existence for over ten years. However there were replies from newer groups set up in the last twelve months from Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside.



Section 4

Survey analysis

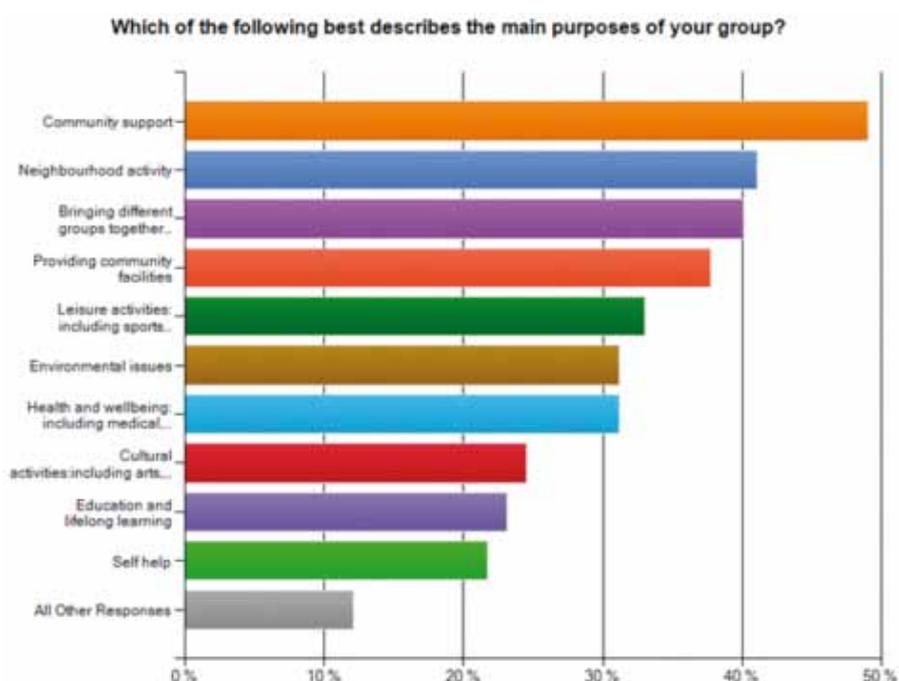
3. **Types of Groups:** Most respondents described their groups as community groups, voluntary organisations, or charities. However there were 46 which described themselves as a Social Enterprise/ Company Ltd by Guarantee / CIC which amounted to over 21% of the responses received.

Type of Group	Percent %	No of responses
Community group	47.4%	101
Voluntary organisation	36.6%	78
Charity	22.5%	48
Other	17.8%	38
Tenants & Residents Group / Association	15.0%	32
Neighbourhood group	13.1%	28
Social Enterprise	8.9%	19
Company Ltd by Guarantee	8.5%	18
Community Interest Company: CIC	4.2%	9
Branch/affiliate to larger organisation	3.3%	7

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4. **Purpose and aims:** Most groups described their purpose as providing community support, neighbourhood activity, and bringing different groups together in the community. However many groups stated that they had a number of purposes and activities. Some groups have been set up with a broad remit to serve their local community; others were set up with a particular remit and had since diversified in order to meet new needs or attract new funding streams. For example: one organisation under threat said that they are *'diversifying into new areas with a partner organisation'*.



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5. **Beneficiaries and activities:** Groups were working with a wide spread of beneficiaries though most benefited the general public, or residents of a particular neighbourhood.

Examples of activities include:

- Making our neighbourhood and community a nicer place to live
- Improving the natural and recreational assets of the area, consulting with local authority about changes, keeping local people informed and seeking funding for improvements
- Reviving the Park as a community asset
- The Forum influences the services planned and priorities in learning disabilities by sharing information and representatives linking to their groups and sharing expertise and local knowledge. They also ensure representation or feedback on important issues
- Reassuring the residents that their problems will be heard and acted upon

6. **Supporting vulnerable groups:** Many groups however are providing services to individuals with particular or specialised needs particularly those that are marginalised. ⁸⁷ Groups said that they mainly worked with individuals such as:

- People from black and minority ethnic communities
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people
- Asylum seekers/refugees
- Homeless people
- Offenders, ex-offenders and their families
- Those with a particular financial need
- People with addiction problems such as alcohol, drugs
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental health needs
- People with particular health needs
- Victims of crime and their families

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Examples of this specialised support include:

- Supporting and advocating on behalf of young people 5-18 years old, especially those from African and Caribbean descent and their families
- Meeting the religious needs of Muslim children with Special Needs
- Learning Disability Forum
- Riding School offering activities for children and adults with both behavioral and physical disabilities
- Women's Transport service for vulnerable groups
- Providing access and learning opportunities for those that are at risk of being digitally excluded
- Providing support services for women suffering domestic abuse
- Disability support for children and young people
- Foodbank
- Credit Union
- Support Group for Asian Women with disabilities

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7. **Groups providing services to those that are vulnerable are at risk:** The survey shows that many of these types of groups may face closure in the near future despite increasing demand for their services. As shown in the table below:

- 51.30% may end within the next three years
- 78.8% have had their activities affected by public sector funding cuts
- 85.5% of groups' income has either stayed the same or fallen since last year
- 80.2% expect demand for services to increase over the next year.

Groups providing services to those with specialised needs = 87		
Should be able to keep going long term	48.7%	
May end within 1-2 years		24.4%
May end within 3 years		12.8%
May end within next 6 months		14.1%
Total	48.7%	51.30%
Are your activities affected by funding cuts by the Local Authority or other public bodies this year?		
No	21.3%	
Yes		78.8%
What is happening with your funding this financial year as compared to last year?		
Stayed the same since last year	26.5%	
Increased since last year	14.5%	
Fallen since last year		59%
Do you expect demand for your services to stay the same, increase or decrease over the next year?		
Stay the same	12.3%	
Decrease	7.4%	
Increase		80.2%

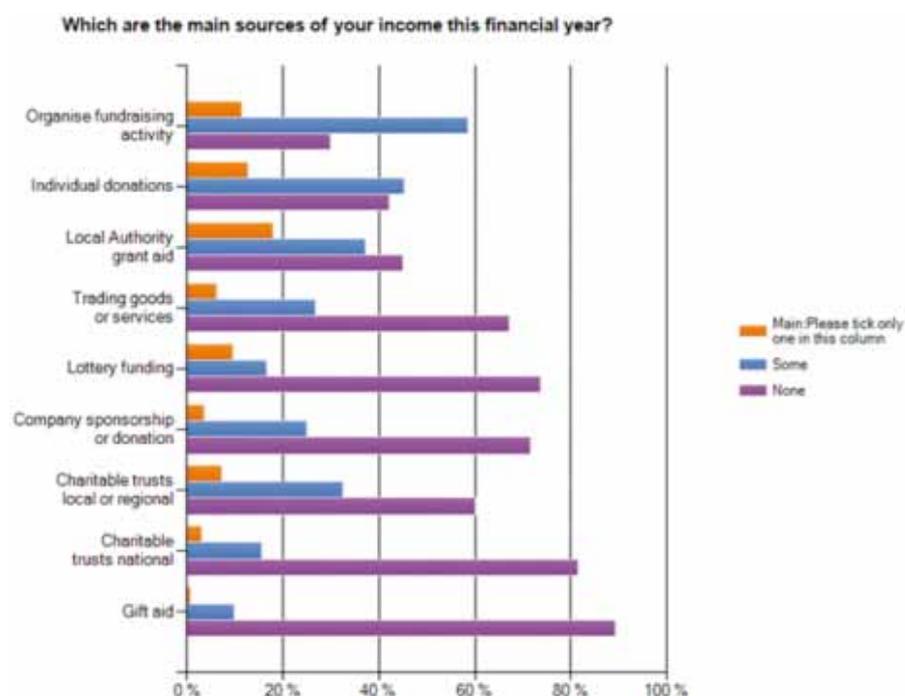
8. **Income:** Just fewer than 70% of groups had income of less than £10k, with nearly 15% having no income.

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9. **Sources of Income:** There is a spread of main sources of income with most coming from groups organising own fundraising activity, individual donations, Local Authority grant aid, trading goods and services and lottery funding. Most groups are maximising their income from a number of sources in order to help with their sustainability. **47% had £0 – less than 5K income so only needed a small amount from different sources in order to survive.**

See table below for main sources of income.



10. **Groups affected by Funding cuts by public bodies:** nearly two thirds of these small groups replied that they had been affected by funding cuts by the Local Authority or other public bodies this year.

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- 11. Income levels this year:** Nearly **85%** of all groups said that their income had either stayed the same or fallen compared to last year. Many commented that the Local Authority was not able to provide small grants this year which they had been dependent on and other funding sources were drying up. There is more competition for resources, and a knock on effect on membership and activity.
- 12. How long can groups continue with their activity?:** The survey asked how long respondents expected to continue with their group's activities. While over **58%** said they would be able to continue long term, the remaining **42% said that they may close between six months and three years**. This is a very high rate of turn-over and responses demonstrated that this is particularly due to cuts in finance, and increasing pressures on staff and volunteers.
- 13. Groups most under threat:** The responses show that it is those groups that have been longest in existence that are most under threat of closure: **62% of groups that had been set up for over five years said that they expected to end within the next three years**. This means that the most experienced groups were fearful of the future and their ability to survive.

The table below shows when groups were set up with how long they expect to continue with their activities.

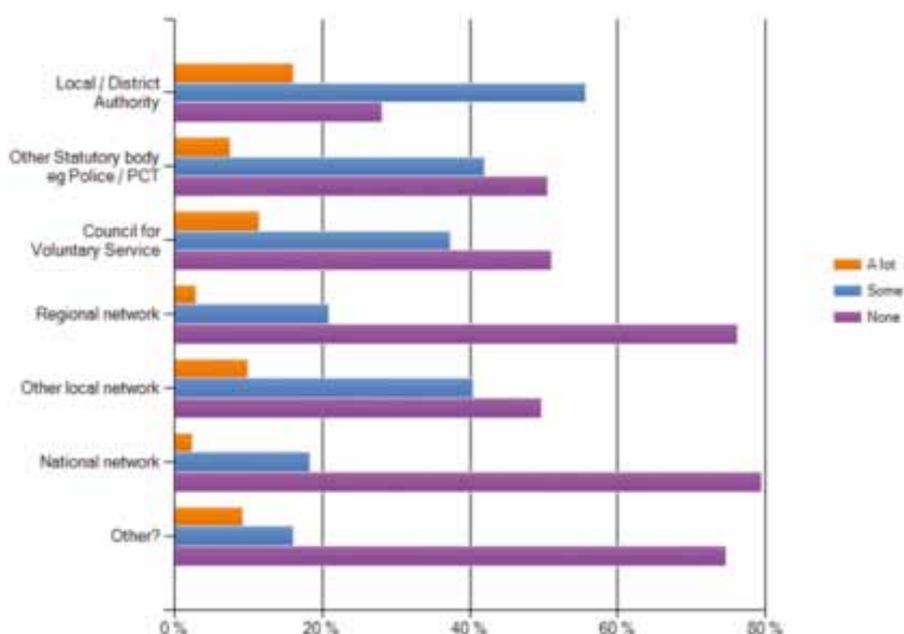
- 14 Demand for Services:** Over **68%** of respondents commented that demand for services from their groups would **increase** over the next year. Many organisations expressed their concerns about coping with increasing demand due to the recession, with less resources including support from the Local Authority.
- 15. Valuing their work?:** Many groups felt that statutory bodies valued the work of their group, and understood the nature and role of their group. However a high number of groups said that this was not the case and they were also not informed on issues which affected them or were subjected to tokenistic consultation.

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16. **Support on offer:** The Survey also looked at how much support was on offer to small community groups from different organisations:

To what extent do any of these organisations currently offer your group support or help?



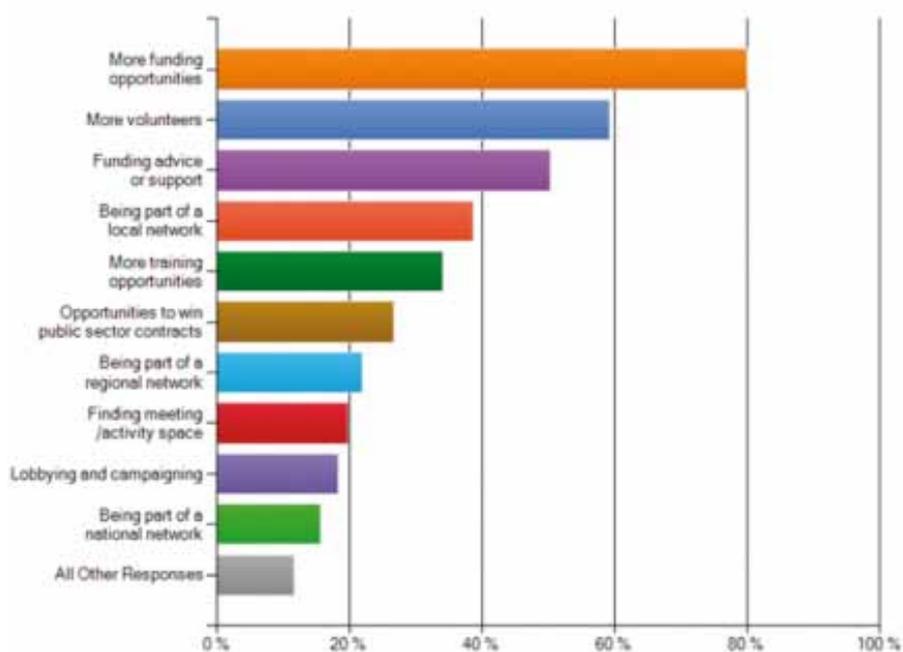
Local Authorities and other statutory bodies are in the main giving vital support to these groups though it would appear this is mainly in the form of small grants which are now disappearing. Councils for Voluntary Service and other local networks also give support, but regional and national networks lag behind. Groups said that they were receiving support from social landlords, national charities, and some local networks. **A large number of small groups are not receiving support from any of these organisations.**

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17. **What will help groups to continue?:** The most popular choice was more funding opportunities, funding advice or support, and more volunteers. However many groups would also value greater training opportunities and being involved more in local networks.

Which of the following options would be most useful for you in continuing your work?



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4.3 Critical themes

The literature and research review, along with the research findings described above, have shown that Voluntary sector groups nationally and regionally are being affected by cuts and as a result this is leading to a reduction in provision of services particularly to those that are marginalised. This section will explore in more detail how this trend is affecting groups that were surveyed in the North West and their responses and needs.

4.3.1 Impact of Funding Changes: from vulnerability to survival

This section will aim to answer the following questions:

1. How are small community groups in the North West being affected by cuts?
2. Which types of these groups are being most affected and how?
3. How much difference has the withdrawal of small grants / funding opportunities made to activity of small groups in the NW?
4. What are groups planning to do with regard to their income in the future given the current economic climate?
5. Are there groups which are not being currently affected by cuts? How are they 'insulating' themselves?

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Q1: How are small community groups in the North West being affected by cuts?

The survey results emphasise that maintaining their income in order to go on delivering services is the major concern of these small groups. As stated above, 70% of groups that replied had income of less than £10k, with nearly 15% having no income. **However nearly two thirds of these small groups had been affected by funding cuts by the Local Authority or other public bodies this year and nearly 85% of groups said that their income had either stayed the same or fallen compared to last year.**

This table looks at how each income band has been affected by cuts. It can be seen that all income bands have suffered **50% plus cuts from public bodies this year.**

What was your group's income from all sources in the last financial year?		Are your activities affected by funding cuts by the Local Authority or other public bodies this year?	
Income	Percent	Affected by Cuts YES %	Affected by Cuts NO%
No income*	14.9%	50%	50%
Under £5,000	31.8%	57.4%	42.6%
Under £10,000	22.9%	62.5%	37%
Under £20,000	8.5%	87.5%	12.5%
Under £30,000	3.0%	83.3%	16.7%
Under £40,000	5.0%	70.0%	30.0%
Under £50,000	13.9%	72.0%	28.0%

* Groups that stated that they have no income but have been affected by cuts may be subsidiaries or reliant on larger groups that have suffered cuts in their public sector funding.

Many groups commented that their Local Authorities were not able to provide small grants this year which they had been dependent on and other funding sources were also drying up. There is more competition for resources which has a knock on effect on membership and activity.

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Comments regarding fall in income:

1. *From last year when we received just under £30,000 it has fallen to under £10,000.*
2. *Groups cannot afford our membership fees as they have lost funding.*
3. *We have managed to get new users, but our main hirer will be leaving in 2012.*
4. *Funders observe a downward trend in the accounts that reduce confidence in committing future funding. Funders will not replace funds perceived lost from statutory sources. Decline in accounts leads to lack of confidence that organisation can deliver; this has led to our declining chance of survival in a year of two national awards recognition.*
5. *Last year we received year three (of three) Grass Roots Grant Programme funding £2000 which isn't available this financial year; along with LA stopping all small grants to community groups, there is no statutory funding streams now available in the borough, apart from the Voluntary Sector commissioned services.*
6. *Cannot compete with the large national charities and housing associations that are now bidding for smaller pots of funding and have the support of the local authority.*
7. *Company sponsorship has disappeared; Lottery funding refused, harder to get regional funding.*

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Q2: Which type of groups are being most affected and how?

The central question the survey asked with regards to vulnerability versus resilience and survival is **'How long do you expect to continue with your group's activities?'**. While over **58%** said they would be able to continue long term, the remaining **42%** said that they may close **between six months and three years**. This appears to be a very high turnover of groups, and a huge acceleration of the normal rate, but in line with the results from London²⁷ and the North East²⁸ discussed above.

The answer to this question divides our respondents into two groups – those with a long term future, and those that consider they may have a short term future of less than three years. These two groups have different characteristics as shown in the following two tables:

Income	Short Term future (may end)	Long term future
No income	12.2%	16.8%
Under £5,000	23%	40.2%
Under £10,000	21.6%	22.4%
Total	56.80%	79.40%
Under £20,000	10.8%	6.5%
Under £30,000	2.7%	2.8%
Under £40,000	4.1%	4.7%
Under £50,000	25.7%	6.5%
	100.10%	=99.90%

Type of Group	Short Term future (may end)	Long Term
Community group	47.4%	45.9%
Neighbourhood group	14.1%	15.3%
Tenants and Residents Association	9.0%	18.0%
Voluntary organisation	38.5%	36.0%
Charity	34.6%	16.2%
Social Enterprise	7.7%	10.8%
Company Ltd by Guarantee	11.5%	6.3%
A Branch of or affiliated to a larger organisation	2.6%	3.6%
Community Interest Company (CIC)	6.4%	3.6%
Other (please specify)	19.2%	18.0%

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These tables show that groups that have a long term future are more likely to have small incomes under £10,000 and to be a Tenants and Residents Group, or Voluntary organisation, and less likely to be formally constituted as a Social Enterprise / Company Ltd by Guarantee or CIC.

So which groups are most vulnerable to closure within the next three years?

The following table looks at six different types of groups that answered the survey with regards to their future:

Future?	All Groups Cut by LA / Statutory funding	Those working with Marginal Groups (86 groups)	Those working with Young people (67 groups)	Those working with BME and Asylum Seekers (35 groups)	Social Business Groups Companies Ltd by Guarantee / Social Enterprises / CICs (39 groups)	Local Community Groups (126 groups)
Should be able to keep going long term	53.3%	48.1%	50.8%	53.1%	51.4%	58.7%
May end within next 6 months	12.3%	14.3%	13.1%	12.5%	14.3%	8.3%
May end within 1-2 years	23.0%	24.7%	27.9%	28.1%	20%	22.0%
May end within 3 years	11.5%	13.0%	8.2%	6.3%	14.3%	1.0%
Total may end:	46.80%	52.00%	49.20%	46.90%	48.60%	31.30%

This table shows that a wide variety of groups are fearful for their future as a result of the fall in their income and other factors. Those groups **that are serving and supporting the most vulnerable and marginalised in society are under threat with over 46%-52% fearing closure in the next three years**. However local community groups are more secure at present and 'only' 31.3% state that they may close within three years.

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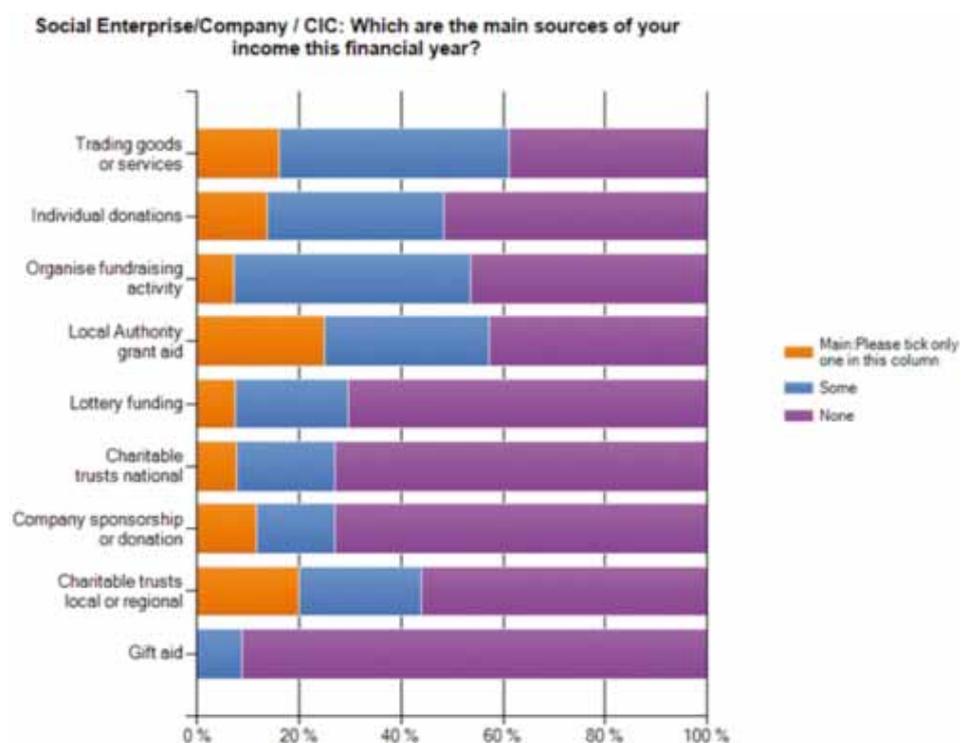
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Example: Social Enterprises

48.6% of those groups that have formally constituted themselves as Community Interest Companies or social enterprises, or Companies Ltd by Guarantee say they may end within three years. Recent Government policy has been keen to develop a better growth environment for social enterprises in the community,²⁹ but this shows that more help is needed to ensure the future of this sector.

In Ippr North's publication **Supporting community and social enterprise in deprived communities: A Good Practice Guide for Practitioners**³⁰ the authors state that social enterprises need support in order to make an 'enterprise leap' from being an organisation depending on voluntary support and grant aid to an enterprise that seeks to operate on a business basis. They consider that the provision of start up funding is vital if these struggling social enterprises are to become independent and thrive.

As can be seen from the Table below many of these groups are receiving funding support from Local Authorities and other sources of grant aid which may be ending.



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Most of these Social Enterprises state that their income has either stayed the same or fallen this year and are worried about the effect on the delivery of their services.

Out of the 39 groups that responded almost a **half** had had a significant decrease in their funding since last year.

One small Social Enterprise that helps residents from a deprived area improve their IT skills, commented with regard to the impact of cuts:

'In our first year we undertook small pieces of project work from the LA which in turn funded the organisation. These are not available this year. We had two paid staff, now we are run by volunteers which can be unreliable. Cuts have also meant that other organisations around us are in turmoil, making it harder for us to network. Larger organisations are bidding for the same small pieces of work as we are, making it very competitive. Most small pieces of work are being taken by the large organisations leaving us with little.' (See Case Study 1)

Another organisation that delivers respite for carers of disabled children said:

'As Local and regional authorities plus government cut services to disabled children the parents will look to us for some sort of respite. Last year we had four sessions per week this year it is down to two.'

Other comments from this group included the following:

- *I feel that the whole concept of funding has to change. There needs to be understanding that community development – where we fit in – it's a long term process and applying for grants every year is not really supporting it when you constantly have to deliver the statistics.*
- *Redundancy consultation period already started.*
- *We fear for the future, but we hope everything will be fine*
- *We know it's needed we just need help*
- *Working in the voluntary sector has never been so tough!*

Some of these groups were more positive however:

'Being a relatively new group, we registered with the Charity Commission in March 2008, even though many of those involved are lacking in knowledge their dedication and determination to turn this organisation around is to be admired. That dedication and determination comes from seeing the improvements in the health and well-being of our beneficiaries and their families/carers. We intend to do whatever it takes to ensure this Charity continues its vital work for many years to come.'

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Q3: How much difference has the withdrawal of small grants / funding opportunities made to activity of small groups in the NW? How are these changes impacting on groups' beneficiaries?

Many groups were concerned that cuts are already impacting on their services and activities or will do shortly. **78 groups replied that they fear they may end within three years.** With these groups under threat how do they see closure affecting their beneficiaries now and in the short term future?

Comments from groups that may end within three years:

1. *Lots of groups who support the most vulnerable people would not have access to food and other goods donated to us from manufactures.*
2. *Two thirds of our funding has been lost, however we have seen a 20% increase in referrals.*
3. *There will be nobody championing the park and trying to stop some of the worst things being done. The commercial income-generating value of parks is scary – and will be used more and more if there is no pressure group. We dread the park returning to the terrible days of the 1990s when it was unkempt dangerous and hardly visited. (See Case Study 3)*
4. *BME people will lose a voice in Cumbria.*
5. *Family carers will suffer hardship, stress, and poor mental health. Cared for people and elderly people living alone will lose already limited independence. All referrers who benefited from our existence will have reduced or zero options for their own roles in supporting people.*
6. *Dreadful – we support young women with serious learning disabilities and they would simply fail to expand their potential – would 'wither'.*
7. *We are the only specialist domestic abuse counselling service in the area, there is nothing else.*
8. *Older people in Pendle will lose a voice and the contacts we have made over the years.*
9. *An extremely deprived and isolated area with very poor public transport will cease to have an IT learning centre, driving up the cost of adult education and creating the loss of a facility helping to get the unemployed fit to return to work.*
10. *Crime will rise, there will be more victims, and less information will be passed to the community.*
11. *The beneficiaries would lose out in training, health benefits, community cohesion and lack of community spirit. It would be a waste of three years work.*

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12. *There will be no activities or services for young people. There will be a rise in boredom and frustration in young people. There won't be safe places and loss of community trust and respect.*
13. *Children who have become more confident and have started to communicate will go back into their shell and have no contact with other children outside a school environment or the home.*
14. *Our community will lose a valuable asset (community building) the knock on effect of which, could include more social isolation, no volunteering opportunities, loss of training opportunities, loss of meeting places.*
15. *The group struggles to understand why without exception it is commended and recognised for its effective work, and the need for its replication across the county, yet still it is unable to secure the small amount of financial support it needs to continue achieving successful outcomes based on local and national health and social care agendas and Big Society ideals. We have extremely limited time left and little opportunity to demonstrate evidence of success over 18 years as our current reduced financial accounts paint a different picture. We simply must do everything possible to find a supporter who can see the folly of our demise when the organisation has led the way over many years on Personalisation, Localism. Independence and choice, and Asset Based Community Development that demonstrates self help and mutual support at neighbourhood level so successfully for so many vulnerable individuals and families, we welcome any idea that will provide the solution.*
16. *Groups like ours will be needed more in the future as public sector jobs go. Accessing help and advice for low income people will be extremely difficult after all the cuts come into force.*
17. *We have recently been awarded nationally and regionally for best community projects and recognized by the Police for the assistance we give to the vulnerable members of the community. If we cease to continue due to the lack of funding then a lot of people will be even more vulnerable, and unaware of doorstep danger.*
18. *Our members worry about cuts to LA services – and bring their worries to us. That means that we can't concentrate on our own more positive work. (Mental Health Forum.)*

These comments demonstrate that vulnerable children and adults who rely on these types of small community groups for care, support, advice, help and activities will in the future either receive no support or become dependent on shrinking state services.

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Q4: What are groups planning to do with regard to their income in the future given the current economic climate?

Despite the cuts impacting on the voluntary and community sector, most groups were still planning to apply for grants locally or look elsewhere for grant aid. However a significant number of groups were considering increasing their own fundraising activity or developing new income generating activity. Others however were considering cutting costs and drawing on reserves in order to continue.

Positive Comments included:

1. *Hosting a national x festival in X area in July 2012 to raise profile with all local groups and people.*
2. *Increasing capacity / activity space to allow us to compete with larger organisations. Also to try and reinstate paid positions as these give the organisation at least a little stability.*
3. *Will consider the Co-op or Social Enterprise option*
4. *We have our own subsidiary trading company which currently gifts all its trading profits to us which cover 30-40% of our annual expenditure.*
5. *Have minimal costs at this time. People offer free time and we use free space.*
6. *We intend to create more fundraising in each of our community groups, until financially things improve where funding/grants become more available but in the meantime as long as the areas are maintained for public use we will be fine.*
7. *We have had some discussion on looking for sponsorships/ partnerships and perhaps annual pledges.*
8. *We already operate at rock bottom cost and always use second hand goods if possible/financially viable.*

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Challenges faced:

1. *We can't reduce our costs. Expenses are coming out of our own pocket as it is.*
2. *We still have financial resources, its people to carry out projects and plan interesting ways of spending our money that are lacking.*
3. *Lack of paid staff means that volunteer's time is taken with day to day running of CU i.e. book keeping and general admin. Additional funding would mean that we can employ staff to cover these roles so volunteers can look to fundraise and apply for more grants.*
4. *We tend to operate 'on a shoestring' so reducing costs is not viable – we will have to seriously review our costings and seek to cover all aspects of our work.*
5. *Have currently been through a cost cutting process. Five members of staff have been made redundant.*
6. *We are always looking to increase activities, but the unstable economy has an impact on families and what they can spend Tough times and tougher ahead.*
7. *Spending reserves*

Q5: Are there groups which are not being currently affected by cuts? How are they protecting themselves?

One group that does seem more insulated are **local community groups of who over 58% say they can keep going long term**. However 64.1% of these groups say that they have been affected by funding cuts this year which has impacted upon their level of activities and they have also been affected by Local Authority cuts to supporting services as shown below. This reduction in resources may mean that though they may continue, their activities have been curtailed and *they may not be so positive about their future if they are surveyed again next year*.

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Comments from Community Groups:

1. *Children's centres no longer contribute financially to activities that we undertake in the community.*
2. *This year we didn't receive any funding at all from the local authority.*
3. *Support in the form of an office dealing specifically with the neighbourhood (the City Council's Neighbourhood Management) which was funded through the Area Based Grant has been closed. Residents do not have the time, expertise and resources in the same way that the Neighbourhood Management did.*
4. *We rely on grants to exist. As the availability of grants has really decreased with the recession it has become very difficult to plan and budget for the future.*
5. *Funding cut by 75% so will struggle to survive. Using reserves.*
6. *Our members worry about cuts to LA services – and bring their worries to us. That means that we can't concentrate on our own more positive work.*
7. *Total cessation of all small grants funding for 'Community sector' groups, particularly Neighbourhood based TRAs.*
8. *Struggling to find grants willing to support our ongoing work as there are so many other projects applying who are also struggling for funding.*

Another Group that some may consider likely to be less vulnerable are **'Faith' Groups** that are serving faith communities and providing religious or faith based activities. Ten groups described themselves as primarily providing these types of activities and included a Catholic community organisation, a group that meets the religious needs of special needs Muslim Children, a Methodist community centre, a mosque, a Social Enterprise supporting disadvantaged youth, a Community Urban Trust and a Meditation Group.

These Groups were distinctive as they described their main sources of income as arising from their own fundraising activity, donations, and trading. However three out of eight said they were affected by funding cuts this year and seven out of eight said that their income had stayed the same or fallen since last year. However six out of eight of these groups said they expect an increase in demand from their beneficiaries.

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Comments from Faith Groups included:

1. *We have had a large interest in our service and are not in a position to cater for this due to our financial situation*
2. *Various different groups are getting affected by cutbacks.*
3. *With society feeling anxious about its future and agencies cutting bottom line work and engagement falling in communities, we are the base line that fixes the grassroots that allow us to stand tall as community individuals and see our potentials, our youth are our future and we need to see them through these hard times to respect their futures and create our own.*

Five out of eight predicted their activities would cease within three years, which shows that these groups are vulnerable in providing services to those most in need.

4.3.2 Meeting Spaces and Volunteers

This section will aim to answer the following questions:

- 1 How dependent are small groups on the availability of meeting spaces?
- 2 What is happening with groups who have volunteers?

Q1: How dependent are small groups on the availability of meeting spaces?

We asked groups where their activities took place. Most groups were using free meeting spaces or rented premises with few owning their own 'spaces'. Some were also able to access for free schools, churches, mosques, and community centres. Many use their own homes to meet, or even the local park. The majority of organisations also planned to stay in the same premises for the foreseeable future. **Comment:** *Use members' houses for meetings. Hiring rooms is too expensive (£12-50 per hour).*

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Quotes:

1. *We are in a Council building which is being sold off so are awaiting information.*
2. *We have been looking for larger accommodation for 18 months and nothing suitable has been available in that time. We have a damp building with a tight, narrow staircase that means we can't use the upstairs for activities CIC (see Case Study 1)*
3. *We know that the use of our free to hire premises is short term but have no idea how long this will be for – we are nervous about this but are trying not to worry about it.*
4. *We need to consider rent increases which haven't been defined yet.*
5. *Premises cannot be any smaller. Landlord very supportive and has reduced already inexpensive rent to help our cause.*
6. *We still have meetings for free at X centre where we originated. It would be good to have our own premises if we could afford it.*
7. *We rely entirely on free meeting space and have no office space*

Comment: It may be that in the future some of these venues will want to charge or if incomes drop then there are less opportunities for groups to use premises to hold their activities where they have to pay.

Recommendation: Neighbourhood plans need to recognise the need for local community groups to have easy access to affordable meeting spaces and Local Authorities and infrastructure organisations should help these groups to find these meeting and activity spaces in a variety of venues.

Other organisations such as Housing Associations, places of worship, and local businesses can also play a part in supporting small groups with accommodation and making best use of community resources.

Q2: What is happening with groups who have volunteers?

A major theme throughout many of the responses to the survey is around volunteers – recruiting, training, keeping, role description. Groups needed volunteers but those that were most valuable had leadership skills. Also crucial to the group was the ability to effectively manage the volunteer workforce.

With cuts in grant support many groups are now replacing trained workers with volunteers which often impacts on service delivery making it more unreliable which means that beneficiaries are not always receiving services from qualified professional staff, which is in line with the findings from LVSC (2011)³¹ and supported by the qualitative comments from the research.

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Comments regarding losing staff and replacing staff with volunteers or relying solely on volunteers:

1. *Lost support staff, and funding not available*
2. *Full time members of staff hours decreased from 30-15 hrs per week. Seasonal Canoe staff decreased from three to two members of staff and a reduced summer programme from five days per week in the holidays to two days per week*
3. *Have currently been through a cost cutting process. Five members of staff have been made redundant. (Vulnerable women project.)*
4. *Funding for member of staff was cut.*
5. *In our first year we undertook small pieces of project work from the LA which in turn funded the organisation. These are not available this year. We had two paid staff, now we are run by volunteers which can be unreliable. Cuts have also meant that other organisations around us are in turmoil, making it harder for us to network. Larger organisations are bidding for the same small pieces of work as we are, making it very competitive. Most small pieces of work are being taken by the large organisations leaving us with little. (See Case Study 1)*
6. *Lack of paid staff means that volunteers' time is taken with day to day running of CU i.e. book keeping and general admin. Additional funding would mean that we can employ staff to cover these roles so volunteers can look to fundraise and apply for more grants.*
7. *Won XX competition for signing up most volunteers and public vote. We haven't been doing much promotion as we have issues around our capacity to deliver work as we don't have any full time staff.*
8. *Most of our work is based on contribution of volunteers – many of them have very low paid jobs and if we can't even reimburse their expenses they will not be able to help.*

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Comments regarding Groups that need volunteers with skills:

1. *We need more volunteers – not just ‘foot soldiers’ but people with skills and abilities to lead activities with volunteers and run the committee, do admin etc. We have lots of willing volunteers but they need managing – our experienced skilled people are burnt out. People with political nous. (See Case Study 3.)*
2. *We can only take on more volunteers without skills provided we have more with initiative, experience, good health and leadership potential. We need help from somewhere in how to expand our volunteer base with people who can do admin and activities!*

Comments regarding difficulties in attracting new volunteers to take on leadership roles, to get involved or to replace those who wish to retire:

1. *Many people who volunteer are involved with many different groups, so their time is limited. It is difficult to find people who will take unpaid leadership roles given the demands on people’s time either from working full time, family commitments or involvement with other organisations. I think activities will reduce unless another leader can be recruited because it is very difficult to run a group (which is active and more than a discussion group) and work full time. Not sure how much appetite there is from employers, encouragement generally/ public debate for part time working unless it is job share (which is a big pay cut).*
2. *We have a very small group of volunteers of sufficient capacity to run the association effectively and need to increase the number. Unfortunately, we constantly encounter a total lack of interest from most residents.*

Comments regarding Staff and Volunteers being subject to increasing pressure from clients as resources contract:

1. *At the moment we reduced our days of work from three to one day a week but our beneficiaries are even following me some times at home which I and my colleagues are stopping them from doing!*
2. *Our biggest problem is volunteers, we need to entice others to join the committee so that help can be on offer and our services can stay open longer.*
3. *There have been no new volunteers to the committee for a few years, so we are not replacing people as they leave, more work is being piled on the remaining members – mainly me. (Secretary)*

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Survey analysis

The survey also asked what groups were intending to do with regard to staffing and volunteer support in the future:

65% were keen to take on more volunteers however again it was pointed out that volunteers needed support.

Comments included the following:

1. *We only have very small groups of volunteers, four or five in each of the community groups I volunteer in. It would be excellent to have a volunteer networking site i.e. like MMU/MU which I am now getting volunteer help from.*
2. *We can only take on more volunteers without skills provided we have more with initiative, experience, good health and leadership potential.*
3. *We simply need core costs for basic service to survive. Development plans are awaiting security of the core basic service before those plans can be implemented. Development plans will fill identified gaps in local services and lead to employment and better service opportunities for beneficiaries, and volunteers.*
4. *Considering – let's be positive. Whether this happens will depend on getting sufficient funding and support.*
5. *Electing additional Trustees.*
6. *If we have sufficient turnover after the first six months we will employ our first two staff members.*
7. *More volunteers, will open the centre longer.*
8. *We will take on paid staff if the funding is available.*
9. *Can't take on more volunteers without staff to support them.*

Professor John Mohan from The Third Sector Research Centre has pointed out that '*critics suggest that the Big Society is premised on an unrealistic vision of what voluntary action can achieve, drawn from the prosperous Home Counties, in which there exist strong networks of voluntary organisations, supported by wealthy individuals, and staffed by a prosperous, well-educated citizenry many of whom have time on their hands. This may bear little relation to the complex social challenges of disadvantaged inner-city areas or to the needs of communities blighted by structural unemployment which has lasted over a generation*'.³²

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Survey analysis

He continues by stating that: *'the civic core is composed of people who are more likely than their counterparts in other groups to be middle-aged, have higher education qualifications, are owner occupiers, actively practice their religion, and have lived in the same neighbourhood for at least ten years. Some demographic groups are very heavily engaged indeed. Defined in this way, the groups of the population are unevenly distributed, reinforcing the theme about geographical variation in the capacity of communities'*. He also suggests that voluntary action is something *'we dip in and out of depending on personal circumstances'*.

In deprived areas there may be more barriers to participating in supporting local community groups as can be seen from the comments from our survey.

Conclusion: As can be seen from above volunteers are not a replacement for paid staff, do not necessarily have the skills that are required, need support, training and expenses which are not also always available, and can be resistant to be used in the place of trained staff. In particular, there are difficulties in finding and keeping volunteers from more deprived areas to deliver support activities to others.

Recommendations:

Small groups will benefit if volunteering can be made more attractive through the availability of expenses and the provision of training and support. Local Authority, public sector organisations, and infra structure organisations can help in this way, and if groups can be encouraged to network and share information, training and resources, then supporting volunteers might become easier.

4.3.3 Support Needs from Statutory and Voluntary Sector

Many groups felt that statutory bodies valued the work of their group, and understood the nature and role of their group. However a high number of groups said that this was not the case and they were also not informed on issues which affected them or were subjected to tokenistic consultation.

Comments fell into three categories: **Positive**, **Negative** and **Mixed** with regard to partnership working and engagement.

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Survey analysis

Positive Comments :

1. *We work closely with all interested parties.*
2. *We have had excellent support from our local Councillors, the police, and gradually various local council agencies (e.g. environmental health, public sector housing, etc.)*
3. *Beginning to be recognised as Environmental Group.*
4. *We have a good working relationship with LA.*
5. *We have good links with the PCSO and work in partnership on projects. Also Ward Councillors and Housing Association.*
6. *Good partnership working.*
7. *Our group is recognised and valued as a support network within our community.*
8. *Because the group is no longer formally linked to the Partnership Board, it is more difficult to secure involvement. We do get it but the initiative tends to be mainly down to the volunteer activity in raising the issues, reporting in and formally writing for the group. More recently the volunteer was invited to a formal task group and event to contribute.*
9. *They are aware of what we do and recognise that the value of our weekend activities, they have done supported us in times past.*

Negative comments included :

1. *We have been trying for years for them to consult us.*
2. *Most of the public sector authorities often consult with only those BME groups who are mainly identified in Census categories. They do not consult with other ethnic minorities who may not be on Census identified category list but are significant local community. We support X Diaspora community which is one of the largest ethnic minority community in Greater Manchester area and recognised by Oldham, Rochdale and Manchester Councils as significant local minority ethnic community but never been engaged or involved in at strategic level. There is no specific research, study or mapping needs analysis available on this community.*
3. *The local authority are sadly lacking in many areas. They have recently scrapped ward committees which means there is little opportunity for communities to input into local decision making until new ways are set up by Councillors (if they ever will be) There are no small community groups being funded this year.*
4. *There is an element of self interest from statutory bodies; we are only informed about issues if they want to say they have had feedback.*

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5. *The Council has told us via X (their puppet ALMO voluntary sector organisation) that 'our interests are too broad to fit into Council structures'!*
6. *We are a member of the Local Strategic Partnership. The Council value our role in this but other bodies don't really engage as much any more.*
7. *Sometimes consultation is tokenistic, especially if they know they're not going to like what they're told. e.g. cuts.*
8. *There is a clear disconnect between our ambitions and the statutory bodies, a lack of knowledge and understanding about the benefits we can bring– our role is about developing the economy, bringing the community together to achieve that, and promoting our town to visitors and businesses. It is high level, strategic work, combined with grassroots community projects. It is difficult for well-established, political and older community dynamics to understand and appreciate.*
9. *They may value it. Whether they will pay for it is a different question.*
10. *Our local Council knows that we exist; we have performed at local Council run events and an event where one local councillor is the chair of a charity group and asked for us specifically. I think that we are just a local choir, nothing more.*
11. *It would be good if they did. We work with a number of LA, but X Council is particularly bad at engaging and communicating with us.*

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Survey analysis

Mixed Comments included the following:

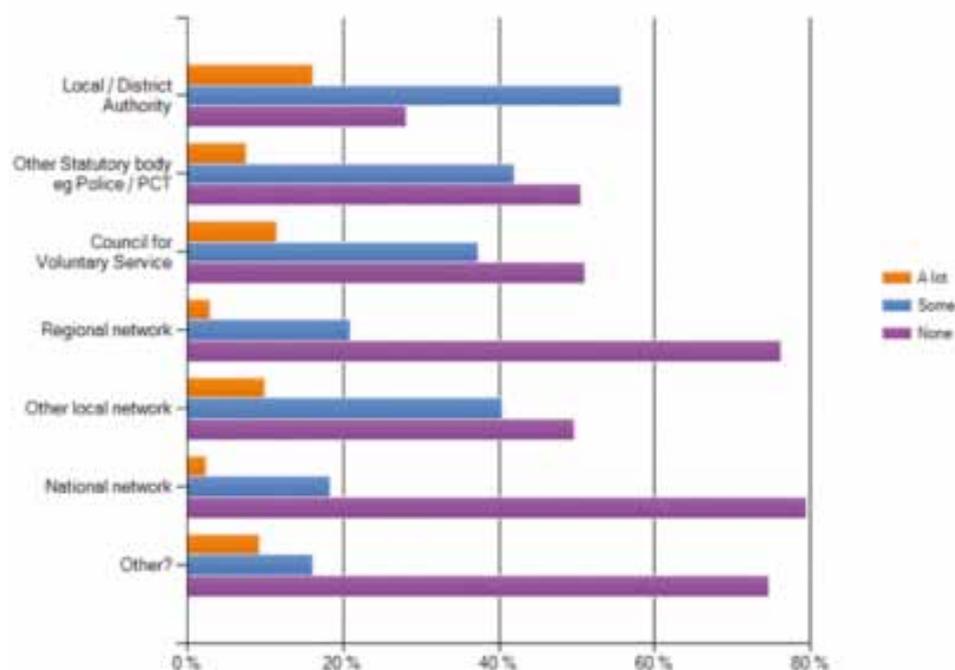
1. *The answer to all of these is “a bit” rather than ‘yes’ – we feel that the park staff really don’t value us, we are a thorn in their side and make them do more things than they want. We are not consulted on some really crucial issues yet are on others... Very personality based – we have some positive relationships and some negative ones.*
2. *Representatives from the Local Authority are very supportive in every way. None of the other statutory bodies listed are proactive. Health/PCT has not been in touch at all. This may be explained by the fact that they may be unaware of our existence (the group has been officially constituted for less than six months).*
3. *Yes but only sometimes. The local authority could engage much more with groups such as ours to reach a much wider group of people and residents.*
4. *Generally, the forum are viewed as a valuable asset, however, some arenas forget their good work and omit to invite them to information days, meetings and conferences.*
5. *Very good relations with County Council but very poor at local level.*
6. *Understanding our role. Some do and some don’t. However well we publicise, many do not know who we are. Those that do know us are excellent in giving and taking advice, sharing experience.*
7. *The Police work with us and fully support our work (high crime area), Social Landlords are slowly learning how to respond, but extremely hard work to get them to support us, and Council is openly hostile on occasion. Councillors churn bears testimony to their repeated perceived lack of support, as electorate offer them one term, then they are usually booted out as unsupportive of our community. There have been one or two notable exceptions over the past ten years. (Not party politics, simply community based perceived support/lack of interest). (See Case Study 7)*
8. *Consulting us when it suits – maybe. Keep us informed or supporting us in terms of capacity-building – no.*
9. *The local authority do but the Health Services and Primary Care Trust do not.*
10. *They understand but do not help financially.*
11. *The local authority and the police work with us well; the other bodies tend to ignore us.*

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Survey analysis

The Survey also looked at how much support was on offer to small community groups:

To what extent do any of these organisations currently offer your group support or help?



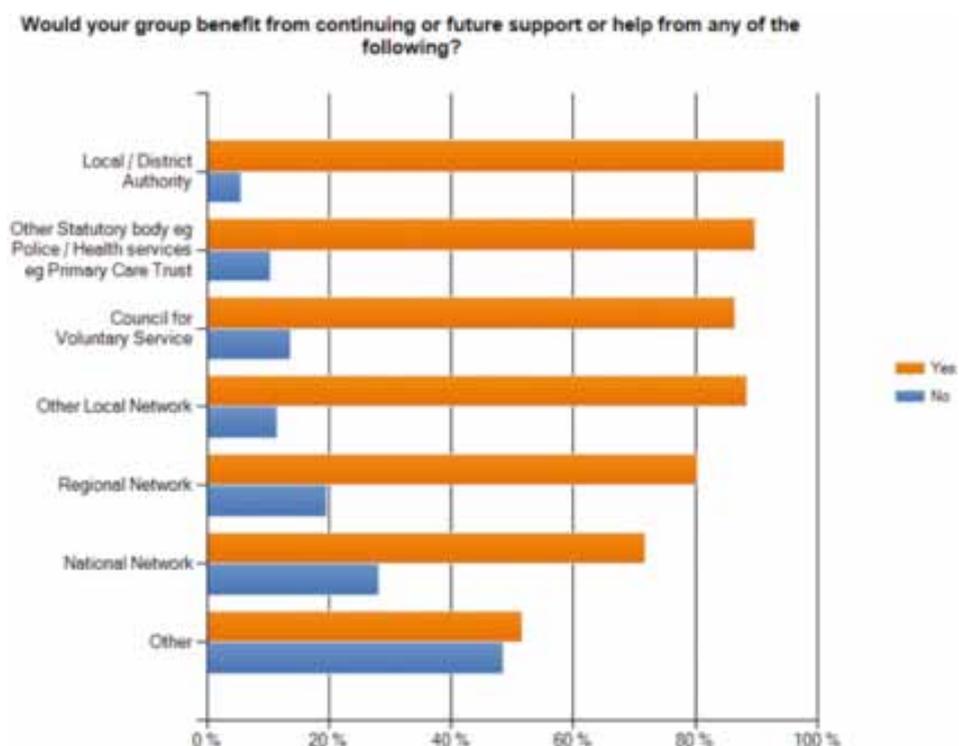
This Table shows that Local Authorities and other statutory bodies are in the main recognised as giving support. Council for Voluntary services and other local networks also give support, but regional and national networks lag behind. Groups said that they were receiving support from Social Landlords, national charities, some local networks.

However there is a the large number of small groups that are not receiving support from any of these organisations particularly with so many struggling to find funding and resources to continue.

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Survey analysis

Groups were also asked if they would benefit from continuing or future support or help from a variety of sources. As can be seen from below, most groups feel that they would benefit from support from all infrastructure support organisations.



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Survey analysis

4.4. Resilient Groups

A small group of organisations that responded to the survey which appear to be surviving and possibly even thriving. They are making positive and successful efforts regarding their income.

In particular 33 groups had the following characteristics:

- Their activities had not been affected by funding cuts by the Local Authority or other public bodies this year.
- Their income had either stayed the same or risen in the last year.
- They said they should be able to keep going long term.

Their comments included the following:

1. *We are being more pro-active with local companies.*
2. *Negotiated ongoing support until March 2012. Thereafter expected to become self-sufficient and adopt a 'business' approach to costing.*
3. *We got a grant from the council to pay for public liability insurance and to fund our project, improving our back alley for community use – e.g. community garden, activity area, etc.*
4. *Greater proportion from our own fund raising as compared to grants.*
5. *More individual donations to pay for hired room. Selling/trading odds and ends. Table Top sales. Working with other group where split takings for day event.*
6. *Sponsorship/website advertising and events revenue is increasing.*
7. *Due to paying a sessional worker, she has increased funding applications and winning bids.*
8. *Recently made a CIC so setting up to begin paid work.*
9. *We obtained funding from the Tudor Trust, which when included with the contingency contribution from the LA, made up for the loss of ABG funding.*

These Resilient Groups are a sub-set of those Groups that stated that they should be able to keep going long term as described above.

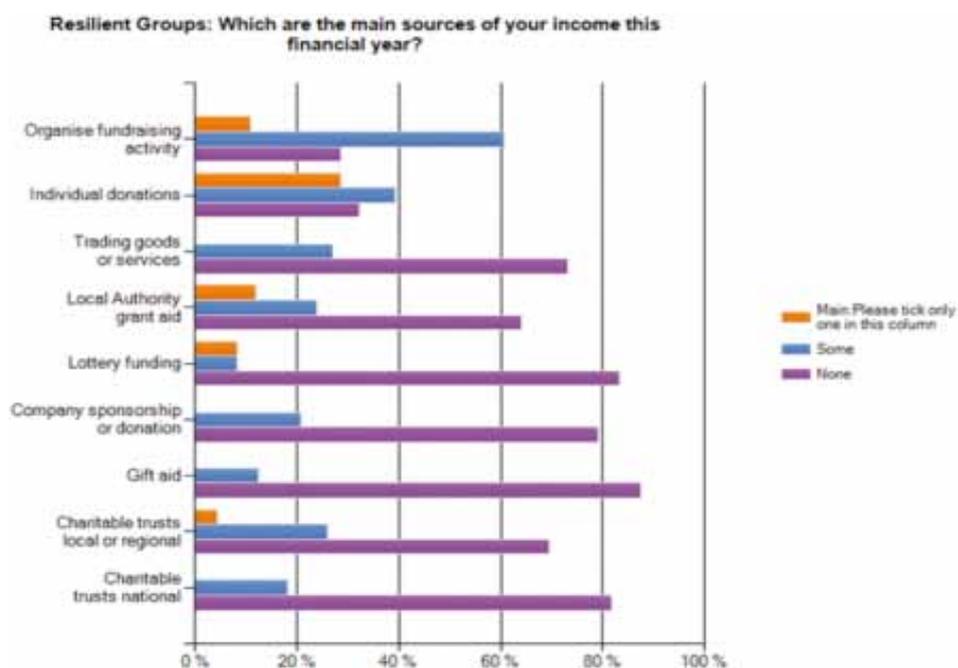
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So in what ways are 'Resilient' Groups distinctive from the others?

- Most have been in existence for some time (over 85% between two and ten years and 51.5% between five and ten years).
- They mainly described themselves as community or voluntary groups, neighbourhood groups or Tenants and Residents groups. Their main purpose is to bring different groups together in the local community, providing community facilities and community support and some are also providing specific activities for particular groups in the community e.g. young people.
- They are groups focused on particular purposes for their own members and supporters (e.g. a History Society, An Anglers society, Community Environmental groups, Scout Group, TARA, a Community Choir, Civic Society, Gardeners Group, Community Art Gallery, and Sporting Groups for young people).
- Most had very small incomes (63% from 0 to £5k pa).

These Groups are distinctive from the May End Groups as their main sources of income are through organising their own fundraising activity, individual donations, trading goods and services and only then Local Authority grant aid, and charitable trusts. This contrasts with the May End Groups who are dependent on grant aid from the Local Authority and only then their own fundraising and individual donations.



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Survey analysis

The Resilient Groups raise some of their income from hire of rooms and facilities, weekly subs, and subscriptions, and only then look for outside support.

They tend to focus on increasing their own fundraising as their priority and then were satisfied that they had sufficient income and resources to meet their needs. They would like to have more financial reserves and are looking to apply for grants locally or elsewhere to increase their own fundraising.

This differs from the May End Groups who stated that their main priority would be to apply for grants locally or elsewhere and only then increase their own fundraising activities

This can be seen in the next two tables:

Q12 Sources of Income this year?	Total of Some and Main sources of Income					
	Long term future		Resilient		May end	
Group: May end: 78 Resilient: 33 Long term future: 110	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Organise fundraising activity	1	76.2	1	71.40	2	65.10
Individual donations	2	58.7	2	67.90	3	57.70
Local Authority grant aid	3	47.7	3	36.00	1	65.50
Charitable trusts local or regional	4	35.5	4	30.40	4	41.50
Trading goods or services	5	31.8	5	26.90	5	34.60
Charitable trusts national	8	16.9	7	18.20	8	20.80
Company sponsorship or donation	7	24.7	6	20.80	6	32.80
Gift aid	9	10.4	9	12.50	9	12.00
Lottery funding	6	25	8	16.60	7	25.80

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Survey analysis

Q: In the next year are you considering doing any of the following with regard to your group's income?

Type of Groups	Long term future		Resilient		May end	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Increasing own fundraising activity	2	69.1	1	57.6	3	59.0
Increasing trading own goods or services	6	18.2	6	15.2	6	9.0
Developing new income generating activity	4	35.5	4	27.3	4	33.3
Applying for grants locally	1	70.9	2	54.5	1	78.2
Applying for grants elsewhere	3	67.3	3	45.5	2	67.9
Reducing costs in order to protect activities or services	5	29.1	7	9.1	4	33.3
None of the above	7	11.8	5	24.2	7	2.6
Other	8	2.7	8	3.0	5	12.8

These Resilient small groups were in the main positive about their future and made comments as follows:

- *We are looking closer to working with other groups to share best practice.*
- *Our TRA will survive we always manage to and despite everything will continue. We have very few overheads and no staff salaries to find. Sustainability comes very cheap for us. (See Case Study 7)*
- *We are very ambitious, we are strategic, and we see a lot of opportunity in our town. We are very innovative, we are very focused and committed, and we feel we have found an independent, alternative solution to dealing with town centre decline – which does not rely on public subsidy. It is frustrating that we haven't yet succeeded in convincing the local authorities. (See Case Study 2)*
- *We are very happy with the level of support we receive from local and national sources. We know where to go and who to ask.*
- *We have been in existence since 1964, providing our tenants continue to rent space in our premises and lease our other building we should continue in existence.*

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Survey analysis

These findings support Craig (2008)³³, which states:

'The following five factors were found to enhance an organisation's feelings of independence:

- 1. If they receive funding from foundations and charitable trusts, particularly long-term, core funding;*
- 2. If they raise a portion of their own income;*
- 3. If they have a positive attitude towards commerce;*
- 4. If they engage in advocacy;*
- 5. If they are creative in the way they meet the demands of Funders.'*

The research findings also supports the characteristics identified by the CDF research quoted above,³⁴ that indicates that resilient groups will be **proactive, collaborative, communicate well and have positive attitudes**.

It is clear that these resilient groups are more likely to have a long term future. However most of these groups serve their own members or interests and do not see their function as to support others or to deliver wider services. This is particularly problematic when there is a clear indication that the need for services has been shown to be increasing particularly amongst marginalised groups and in deprived communities. Our research shows that it is these groups that offer services to the most vulnerable that are most at risk of disappearing as it is more difficult for them to raise funding through their own efforts particularly in communities hard hit by unemployment.

Section 5

Resilience, small community groups and the big society

Reflections and Conclusions

1. Although some small CVS groups are insulated from the cuts due to their independence from public funding, many are delivering vital services to marginalised groups in deprived communities and are struggling now that their access to small grants has come to an end. This has meant that trained staff have been made redundant, leaving more pressure on a diminishing core of volunteers and a reduced service for beneficiaries.
2. The major resilience factors, such as **willingness to be proactive, collaborate, communicate, and be positive** can all be seen as important individual and group qualities. However our research findings do emphasise that even with leaders having these qualities many groups are struggling to continue and do not have the support they need from the Local Authority, other statutory organisations, and from infra-structure organisations in the form of consultation, engagement, funding, training, and advice. Without this partnership approach this sector will struggle to continue and demonstrate resilience.
3. As shown in resilience models, CVS groups will benefit from having strong and supportive relationships with other small groups and with the public, private and voluntary sector in their local areas. In many cases this is not happening, rather there is increasing competition for scarce resources with groups competing and not co-operating.
4. Those groups that serve their own members rather than deliver services to others and obtain funding through their own efforts rather than from grants are more likely to survive and be more resilient.
5. Conversely those groups that are reliant on staff or volunteers are particularly vulnerable in deprived areas as public sources of funding recedes and the number of willing and skilled volunteers reduces.
6. Support organisations can provide help with accessing alternative sources of funding, encouragement, advice and support with regard to becoming financially more self reliant. Support organisations can help groups identify the social value³⁵ of their work, to act as a valuable evidence base when seeking funding. Support organisations can also help with attracting volunteers and providing training and networking opportunities for volunteers for groups.
7. Activists that recognise the need for small CVS groups to carry on their vital work need to campaign for more resources from local and central government to ensure that vulnerable beneficiaries do not suffer from a withdrawal of services. The provision of core costs (even small amounts of funding up to £500) may help these groups survive.

Section 5

Resilience, small community groups and the big society

8. Groups need help with securing suitable premises to meet and as a base for activities. Other groups or sectors can help through providing small amounts of funding to help make this happen, or sharing or providing premises. Local Schools, Colleges, places of worship, Housing Associations, businesses, community centres, Local Authority offices etc can all help by providing meeting spaces at low or no cost.
9. Peer Networking in order to share resources, training and support is vital. Larger voluntary sector organisations and Local Authorities have a vital role to play in providing these opportunities locally, regionally and nationally as well as supporting the development of on-line resources that will assist groups with taking their work forward.
10. CVS groups need alternative partners who can support and help develop their activities e.g. local businesses, places of workshop, Housing Associations, Trade Unions, and Colleges / Universities.
11. New partners can commit to supporting CVS groups through their corporate and strategic plans while central and local government should consider how best they can practically encourage and assist this sector to survive and thrive, working together with them to meet needs in our diverse communities.

Appendix

Case studies

Case Study 1

Learning Centre for IT skills (Digitally Excluded)

- Community Group, Social Enterprise, Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Set up 1-2 years
- Income under £20,000
- May end within 3 years

Provides:

Community facilities and training for digitally excluded and local residents. Free drop in internet facilities / peer support.

Activities take place:

Rented office space.

Suffered from cuts this year:

In our first year we undertook small pieces of project work from the LA which in turn funded the organisation. These are not available this year. We had two paid staff, now we are run by volunteers which can be unreliable. Cuts have also meant that other organisations around us are in turmoil, making it harder for us to network. Larger organisations are bidding for the same small pieces of work as we are, making it very competitive. Most small pieces of work are being taken by the large organisations leaving us with little.

Income fallen since last year:

UK Online Centres offer some support, but this year's funding regime has created competition amongst centres which is unhelpful.

Promotion:

Speaking to Job Centre and other organisations, going out and about to meet with groups etc, leaflets in other venues, radio promotions / press releases etc.

Most useful to continue work:

More funding opportunities. Being part of a local network. Finding meeting /activity space. Opportunities to win public sector contracts. *We have been looking for larger accommodation for 18 months and nothing suitable has been available in that time. We have a damp building with a tight, narrow staircase that means we can't use the upstairs for activities.*

Increased demand for services:

When times are hard, people come to us for help finding work, training etc and for peer support and some social interactions. They use our services for free – they would find it difficult to access online services without us, and may risk digital exclusion. The centre provides a social setting that is relaxed and cost free where people can come out of their homes to meet people.

Appendix

Case studies

In the next year plan to:

Increasing trading own goods or services. Developing new income generating activity. Applying for grants locally. *Increasing capacity / activity space to allow us to compete with larger organisations. Also to try and reinstate paid positions as these give the organisation at least a little stability.* Taking on more volunteers; taking on more paid staff; moving to larger premises; bidding for a local contract; developing new initiatives; developing new ways of working.

Case Study 2

Local Community Interest Group

- Community Group, Neighbourhood Group, Social Enterprise
- Set up 1-2 years
- Income under £10,000
- Should be able to keep going long term

Provides:

Generally to regenerate our town – involved in marketing, promotion, branding, events, and enhancements.

Activities:

Take place in free meeting or activity space.

Working with:

The general public / everyone / residents in a local neighbourhood; older people, children aged under 13 and young people aged 13 to 24

Not affected by funding cuts this year. Funding increased since last year.

Main sources of income:

LA grant aid, company sponsorship or donation / own fundraising. Sponsorship / website advertising and events revenue is increasing.

Comment:

There is a clear disconnect between our ambitions and the statutory bodies, a lack of knowledge and understanding about the benefits we can bring – our role is about developing the economy, bringing the community together to achieve that, and promoting our town to visitors and businesses. It is high level, strategic work, combined with grassroots community projects. It is difficult for well-established, political and older community dynamics to understand and appreciate.

Appendix

Case studies

Useful:

More funding opportunities; funding advice or support more volunteers. *A general appreciation and awareness of the benefits our group can bring. We are local residents, volunteers, with professional skills in design, planning, regeneration etc. We have vision, ambition, and a lot to offer. Yet it is difficult to move forward when the community and local authorities do not understand what we can achieve. It is difficult for the older community / politicians to grasp that inward investment, business support, environmental enhancements, visitor economy, etc should take priority over bins, and over-exaggerated claims of anti-social behaviour.*

Demands for services will increase over the next year.

In the next year considering:

Increasing own fundraising activity; increasing trading own goods or services; developing new income generating activity; applying for grants locally and elsewhere; taking on more volunteers.

We are very ambitious, we are strategic, and we see a lot of opportunity in our town. We are very innovative, we are very focused and committed, and we feel we have found an independent, alternative solution to dealing with town centre decline – which does not rely on public subsidy. It is frustrating that we haven't yet succeeded in convincing the local authorities.

Case Study 3

Friends of local park

- Community Group / Neighbourhood Group
- Set up 10 years ago
- Income under £50,000
- May end within next 6 months

Main activity:

Work with residents in a local neighbourhood and campaign around environmental activities. *There seems to be far less activity going on in leisure services parks dept (paid staff) so we cannot get anything done. We have raised money for projects but nothing moves! Some staff are unmotivated and off sick with stress. We feel like we are just a nuisance and they wish we would go away.*

Also, there is a big demand for renting out the park to outside festivals who will pay but leave the park in a terrible state for local people (most of us have no gardens, we live in small terraces with back yards). Also the building we have used for meetings and wet weather activities needs to get income from being rented out for meetings etc. This is doubly problematic – it has to be kept very clean and empty of messy workshop stuff and also it gets booked so we now have to phone up before we come to see if we can come in! The wardens no longer have time and resources to do any work with schools – if it's to continue we have to do it.

Appendix

Case studies

Funding fallen since last year:

We had an exceptional year last year as it was the park's centenary so we raised lots of money especially for projects during last year. This has not been repeated mostly because we are exhausted and still haven't spent all the money we raised as projects are so slow to get finished by the Local Authority Leisure Department.

We feel that the park staff really don't value us, we are a thorn in their side and make them do more things than they want. We are not consulted on some really crucial issues yet are on others.

If our group reduces in size or ceases to exist then there will be nobody championing the park and trying to stop some of the worst things being done. The commercial income-generating value of parks is scary – and will be used more and more if there is no pressure group. We dread the park returning to the terrible days of the 1990s when it was unkempt, dangerous and hardly visited.

We still have financial resources, its people to carry out projects and plan interesting ways of spending our money that are lacking. We can only take on more volunteers without skills provided we have more with initiative, experience, good health and leadership potential.

Fear that we may collapse temporarily at least. I hope I am wrong.

Case Study 4

Community Dance Group

- Set up 25 years
- Income under £5,000
- May end within 1 – 2 years

Main activity:

The Group provides activity for health, wellbeing and for social contact. Recently their events and class attendance have dropped dramatically as many women can no longer afford £5 for classes. Fewer events are now planned in the community.

The Group's income has fallen this year:

Local authorities will not be providing as much funding support in the future because of cutbacks and economic problems.

One of the Authorities has been very supportive over the years but very little from the others, and they are not supportive when you approach them. Had lottery funding in the past and been very grateful for that as it has kept us going but numbers have fallen dramatically recently.

Appendix

Case studies

Main sources of income are trading goods or services; individual donations; Local Authority grant aid and Lottery funding. They are applying for some funding for grants locally and elsewhere but not as hopeful as in previous years.

Comments:

We would also like to attract younger people 14+. Most of our ladies are 40+ and a lot over 60. It is a great way to develop creative and art related skills and a healthy way to stay fit and healthy for life. It is needed in our catchment areas.

Feel quite depressed that people are not attending like they used to for all the reasons especially lack of money to spend on health and leisure for themselves.

We are willing to try anything. We did have teacher training to teach dance in the community but that has failed. Out of six, one finished the course and remains with us. Some just set up on their own anyway, which is ok but does not ever show credit to the founders and those who help to run the root group.

I am the founder and getting near to finishing. I am a retired teacher. The groups will fold if we do not get younger people and keep middle aged and older members who are generally disadvantaged financially. Be a shame if no one will take over from me because numbers are continuing to drop.

Case Study 5

Community Group supporting European Migrants

- Set up 2-5 years ago
- Income under £5,000
- Future uncertain

Main activities:

Community support; cultural activities e.g. drama, social media; education or training; helping people to access services or benefits; information or research; inter-generational work activities for specific groups e.g. young people, older people; advisory service.

Already affected by cuts this year. BME group and funding not renewed this year. Income fallen since last year.

Appendix

Case studies

Useful:

More funding opportunities. Funding advice or support; more volunteers; finding meeting /activity space. Finding office space; opportunities to win public sector contracts; more training opportunities.

Expect demand for services to increase over the next year.

Impact if group reduces in size or ceases to exist:

Very negative. Many European migrants will have no-one else to turn to. As for other local residents, we are the only initiative that I am aware of which is encouraging co-operation between European migrants and local community or residents groups.

In the next year considering:

Increasing own fundraising activity; developing new income generating activity; applying for grants locally; will consider the Co-op or Social Enterprise option; taking on more volunteers; taking on more paid staff.

We still have meetings for free at local (BME group premises) where we originated. It would be good to have our own premises if we could afford it.

In the next year considering:

Working more closely with other groups. Changing the group's legal status. Bidding for a local contract. Developing new initiatives. Developing new ways of working. Campaigning or lobbying. *Let's be positive. Whether this happens will depend on getting sufficient funding and support.*

We are a small but very rare community group working with European migrants in the UK. We are still very fragile despite having completed a wide range of formative projects. With support, we can grow and flourish for the benefit of local communities. But we will require support.

Case Study 6

Community Partnership – including providing youth facilities

- Set up 5-10 years ago
- Income under £10,000
- Should be able to keep going long term

Provides:

Neighbourhood activity; providing community facilities; working with residents in a local neighbourhood.

Main activities:

Community support; sports and recreation; helping people to access services or benefits; provide information and meeting facilities.

Appendix

Case studies

Rented:

Office space and rented meeting or activity space.

Activities affected by funding cuts this year:

We rely on grants to exist. As the availability of grants has really decreased with the recession it has become very difficult to plan and budget for the future.

Funding stayed the same since last year:

Our current grant will finish in December 2012.

Most useful for continuing:

More funding opportunities; more volunteers; being part of a local network. Being part of a regional network.

As incomes become more limited with the recession, families and older members of the community will ask us for help in providing social, play or learning opportunities for them at no or little costs.

It has taken eight years to bring about the changes in our community. However we still need to work to support people's attitudes to looking after their area and making positive changes in their own lives. If the partnership group was to cease now many of the changes could break down very quickly which would be devastating to the area.

Considering:

Increasing own fundraising activity; applying for grants locally; applying for grants elsewhere; reducing costs in order to protect activities or services; taking on more volunteers.

As chair person of the local partnership I have campaigned vigorously and worked with local young people to convince the local authority of the value of a youth centre in this area. This has been successful and with support from our local high school we have secured new premises and funds to renovate an unused building and create a new youth centre. We have negotiated office space in this new centre which will be completed in 2012.

Final comment:

Central government talk of the need for people to develop a 'Big Society'. Many groups such as ours are already doing this in their own areas. Now all this local work needs to be pulled together nationally and given the credit and funding from Central government to ensure it can continue and expand. There are so many valuable opportunities for young people to gain life skills and experience through groups such as ours that should be used and valued.

Appendix

Case studies

Case Study 7

Tenants and Residents Group

- Set up 5-10 years ago
- Income under £5,000
- Should be able to keep going long term

Provides:

Tenants and Residents advocacy or support for residents in a local neighbourhood; room hired on an MOD facility (SLA).

Income fallen since last year.

Activities affected by funding cuts this year:

Total cessation of all small grants funding for 'Community sector' groups. Particularly Neighbourhood based TRAs.

Last year we received year 3 (of 3) Grass Roots Grant Programme funding, £2000 which isn't available this financial year, along with LA stopping all small grants to community groups. There is no statutory funding streams now available apart from the Voluntary Sector, Commissioned services etc.

Support from other sectors:

Police work with us and fully support our work (high crime area). Social Landlords are slowly learning how to respond, but extremely hard work to get them to support us, and Council is openly hostile on occasion. Councillors churn bears testimony to their repeated perceived lack of support, as electorate offer them one term, then they are usually booted out as unsupportive of our community. There have been one or two notable exceptions over the past ten years. (Not party politics, simply community based perceived support/lack of interest).

Increasing Demand for services:

Services are worsening /cuts. We are bound to have to support more vulnerable people as a result.

Future:

Our TRA will survive, we always manage to and despite everything will continue. We have very few overheads and no staff salaries to find. Sustainability comes very cheap for us.

We are an unincorporated organisation and fully independent. That's the only way we retain complete credibility and support of all local residents. We are not and never will be a service provider as all Voluntary Sector organisations become.

Appendix

Case studies

Final comments:

We will struggle for core costs (small grants are vital), but will survive... we started with no income and we operate on a shoestring budget. We are effective despite lack of Council support. Soon there will be only commissioned voluntary sector service providers and local 'voice' groups for local residents. That's the only possible outcome of the reforms agenda being implemented by the Coalition Government. It will re-shape the Voluntary Sector completely, but won't even scratch the 'Community sector' which has never been well funded, is innovative, and flexible to local conditions. The Localism Bill empowerment agenda could even be the long awaited saviour for the under the radar sector... Planning and Housing Powers etc.

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