

# STATE OF THE VCSE SECTOR IN SOLIHULL

## Summary Report

June 2020

## Acknowledgements

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We would like to thank every organisation in Solihull who took the time to contribute to this survey, this year and in previous years. We would also like to thank all colleagues who helped shape the questionnaire and share this across their networks.

## Methodology

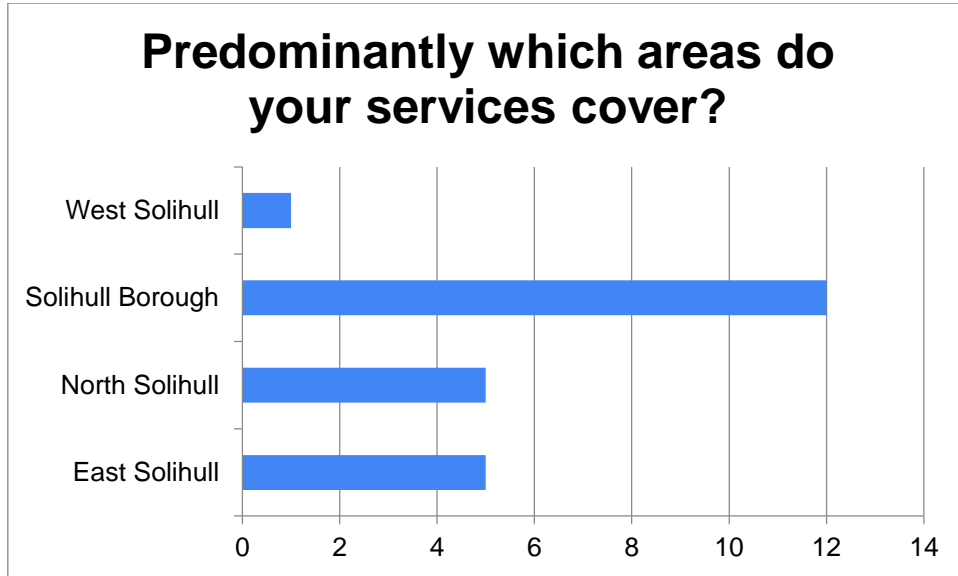
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Whilst the data collected is accurately and transparently presented below, it is based on those organisations that completed the survey during April 2020. It is worth noting that as an infrastructure organisation we are acutely aware of many voluntary and community sector organisations who are not currently in operation, due to reduced capacity, and therefore may not have received the information about the survey and this *may* affect some of the data and conclusions.

It must also be stressed that this survey is very different from previous State of the Sector surveys and reports where we can draw conclusions about the wider size and shape of the sector.

This initial report is intended to be a summary only, with broad analysis of the effect the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the voluntary and community sector in Solihull. We aim to do greater analysis by locality and by organisation size to give a deeper understanding of the impact in different parts of our diverse sector.

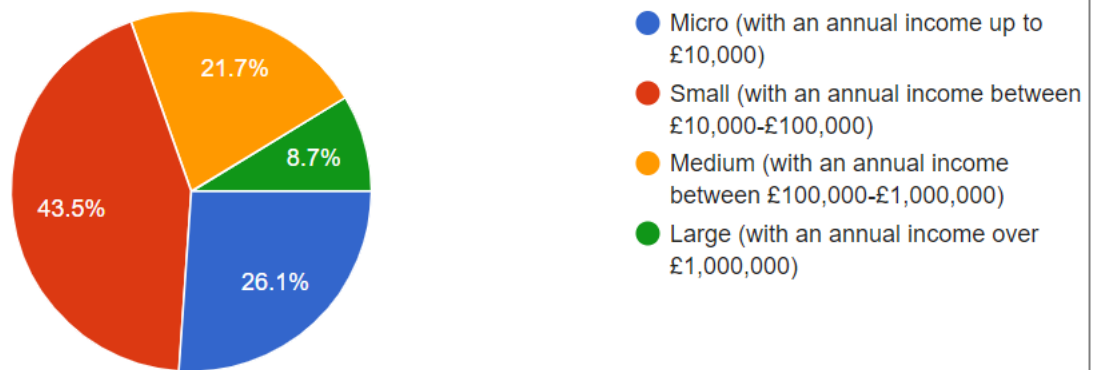
# Organisation Information



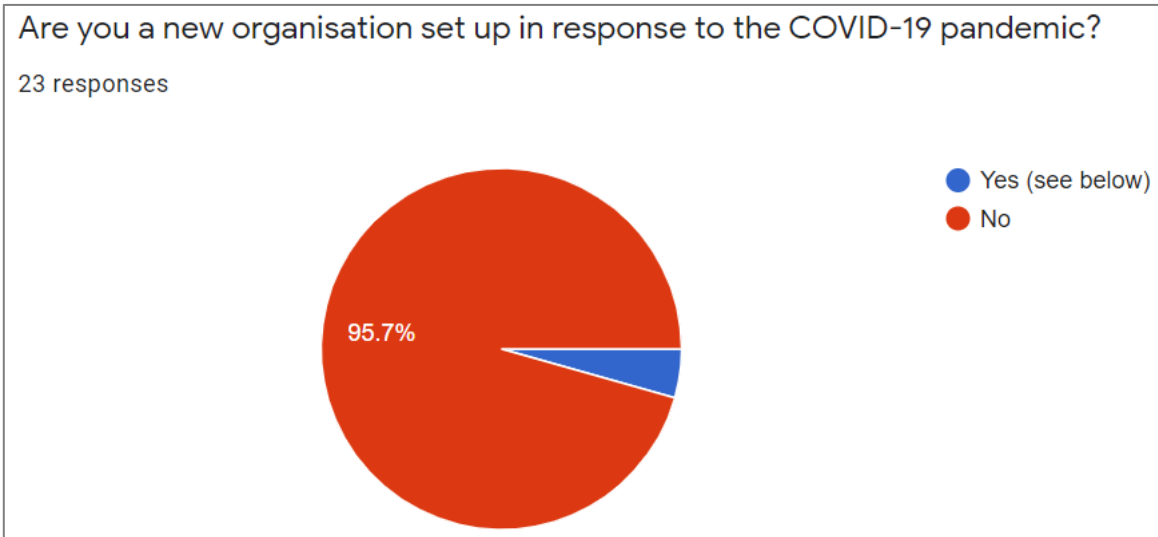
The majority of organisations that responded to the survey have a Borough-wide remit.

## What size of organisation do you consider yourself?

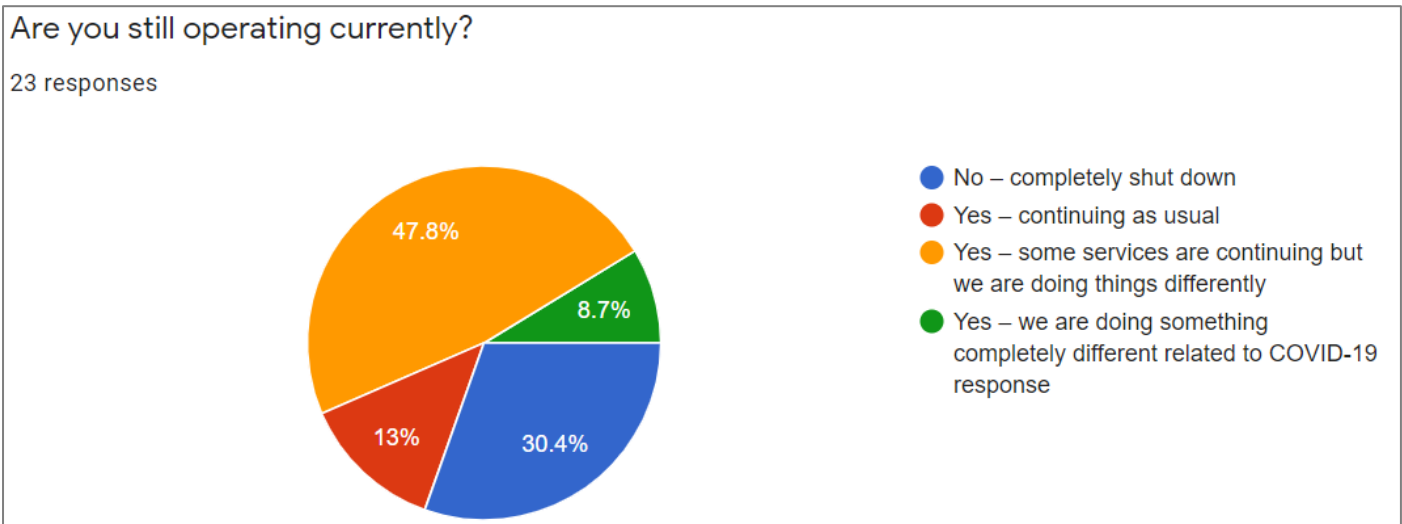
23 responses



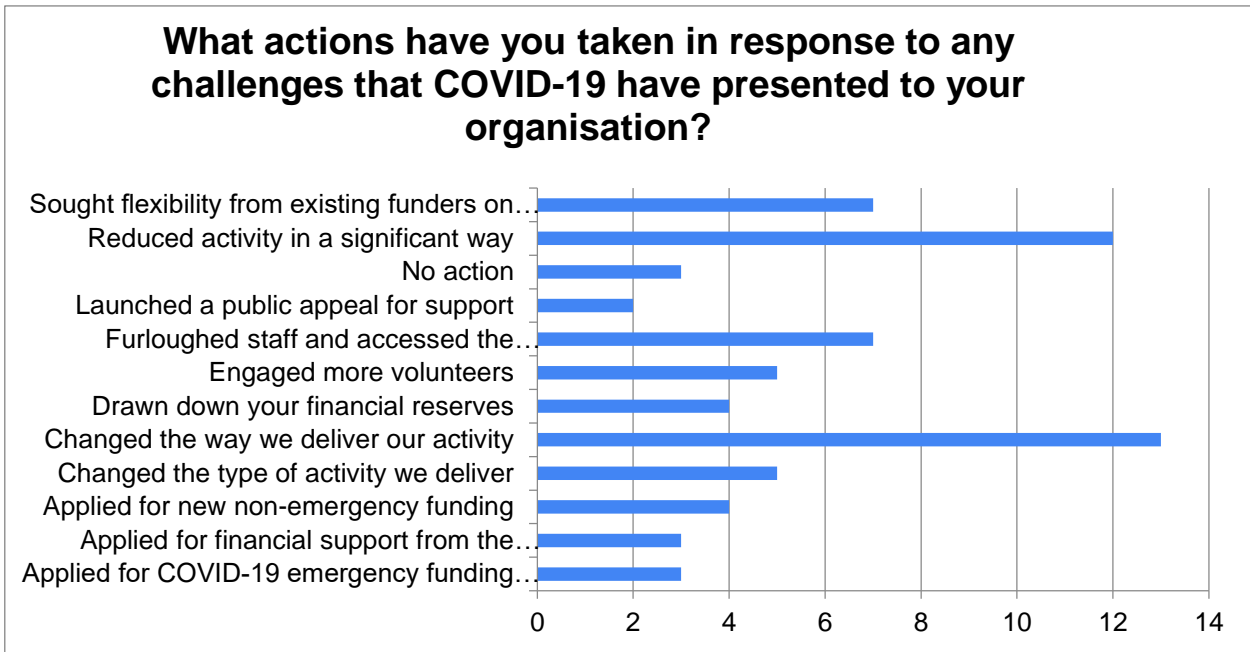
The majority of organisations responding stated they were ‘small’ and ‘micro’ (as defined by NCVO <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/profile/size-and-scope>). Anecdotally, through CAVA’s own work in the sector and previous State of the Sector reports, we know these sizes are typical of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Solihull; therefore we feel we have collected information from a representative sample.



Only 1 organisation responding to the survey classified themselves as 'new', set up in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, and who indicated that they were likely to continue after the 'crisis period'.



69.6% of respondents have continued to operate throughout the crisis period.



Organisations have taken a range of practical actions to reduce the impact of the crisis on their operations. By far most respondents said they had changed the way that they delivered their services and that their service delivery had reduced significantly. A range of other examples were given, e.g. expanded social media, negotiated rent with landlords, negotiated reduced hours with staff, applied for business grants via the local authority, e.g. receiving business rates relief or the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund which would have been available for the likes of charity retail shops and community centres/village halls.

## Partnership Relationships

We asked whether respondents had linked into the local authority hubs, how had this been, and also had they seen a change in referrals. 4 respondents said they had linked in.

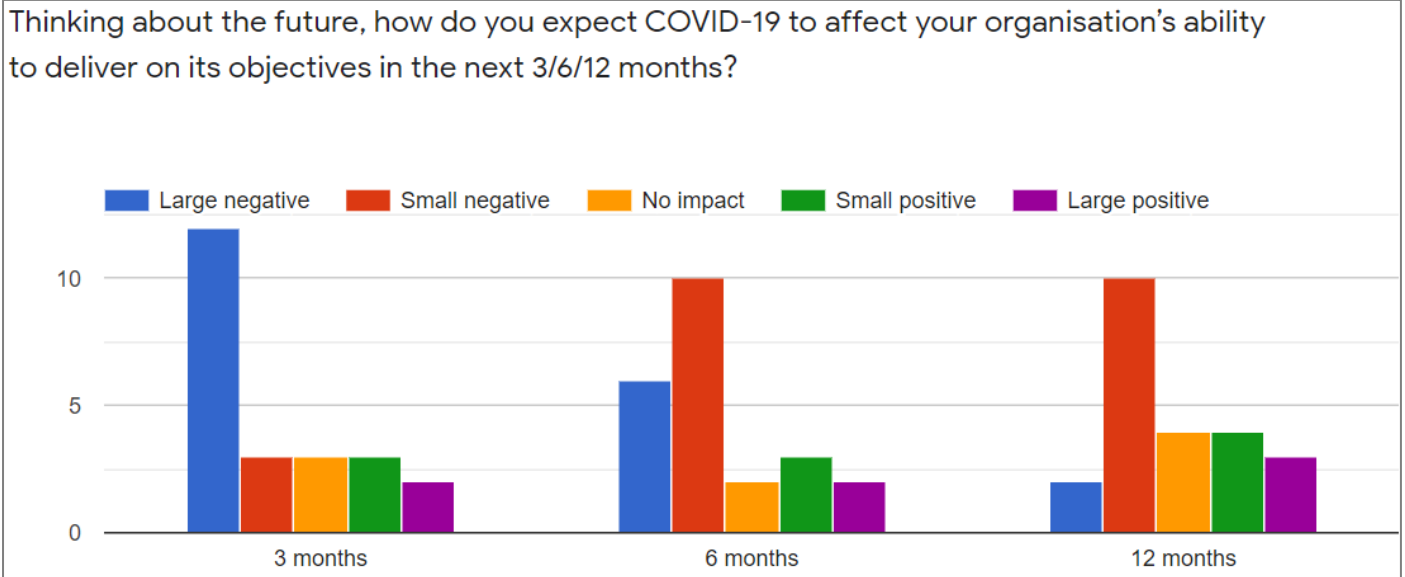
People cited some mixed relationships; we cannot draw any patterns or conclusions from this, but comments included:

“Yes we have taken on more referrals for those older people who are shielding/easements”

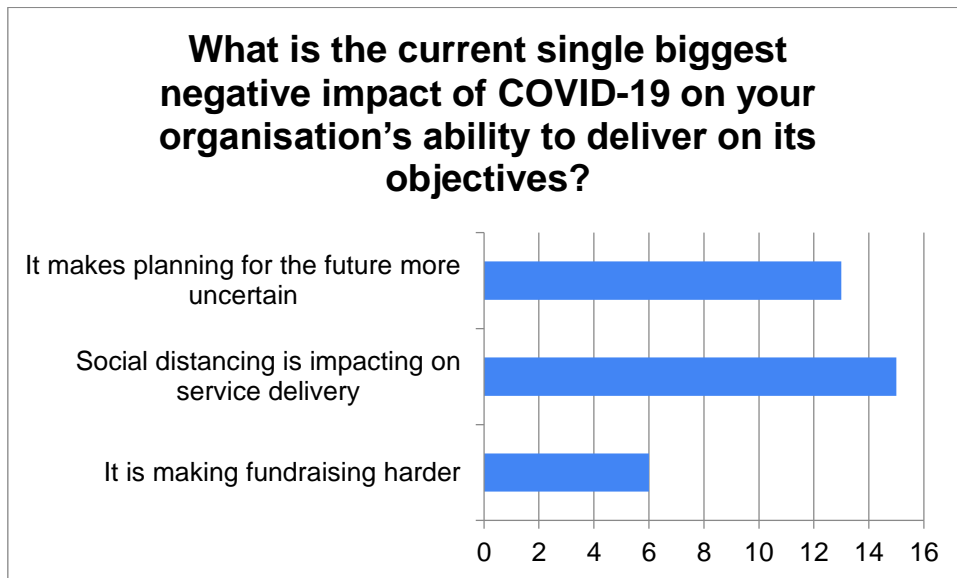
“We have taken part in the covid meetings, referrals to and from the shielding team, sch and other partners. We have worked closely with gps in the south, foodbanks, local mutual aid groups and community grps. We have not had a referral from the advice hubs.”

“Yes - we have taken referrals from different agencies so our "network" has grown.”

## The Future



We can see a positive decrease in concern from organisations about their ability to deliver their objectives over the next 3-12 months.



We can see that the guidance around social distancing is the biggest concern for organisations about their ability to deliver their objectives, followed by the difficulty in planning for the future. Comments include:

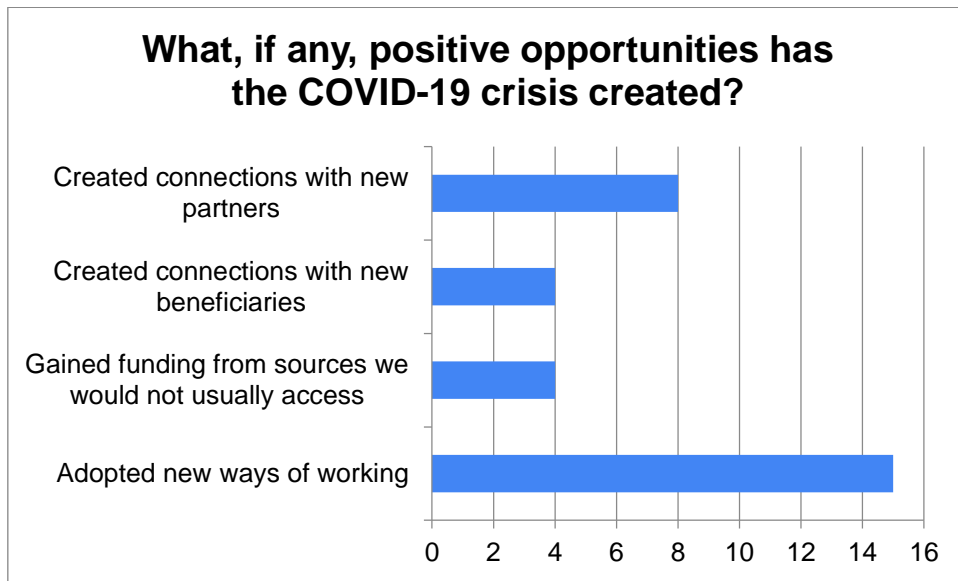
“We are not able to meet as a steering group”

“We are facing staffing issues and shortages (paid and unpaid)”

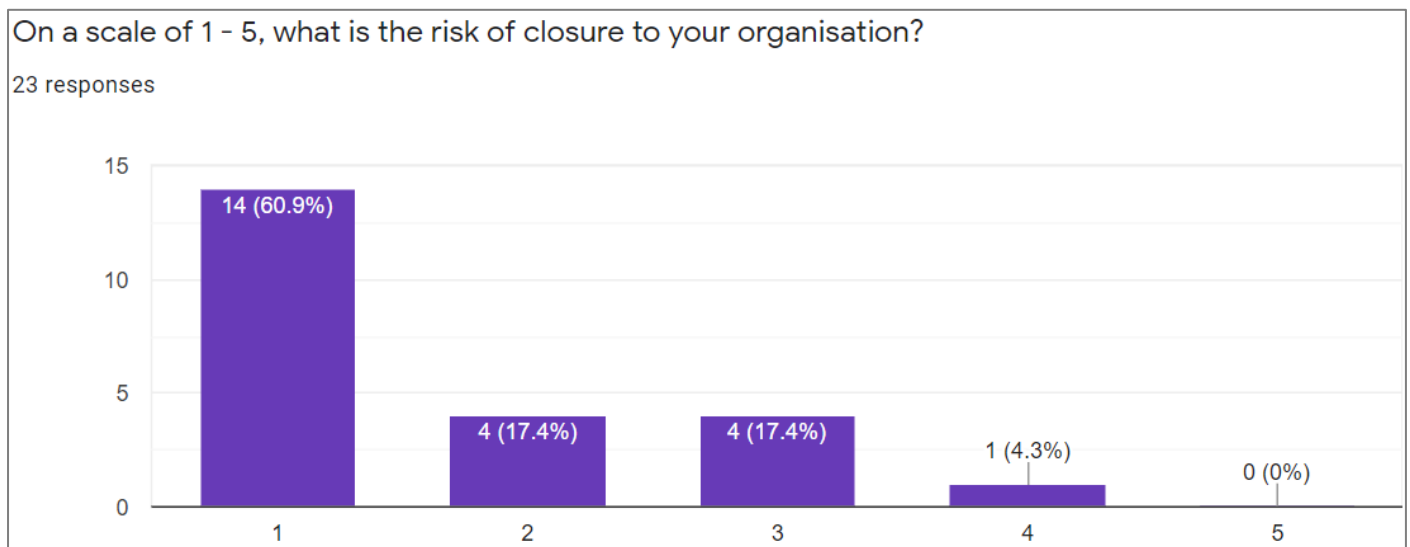
“Retail shop, shut down, now re-opening, lost more than £60k Revenue, staff potentially at risk of loss of jobs, bank still not provided application for bounce back loans, very little available funds as not directly working with vulnerable etc.”

“Project funding may become harder and more specialised/targeted upon groups rather than preventing problems within those groups”

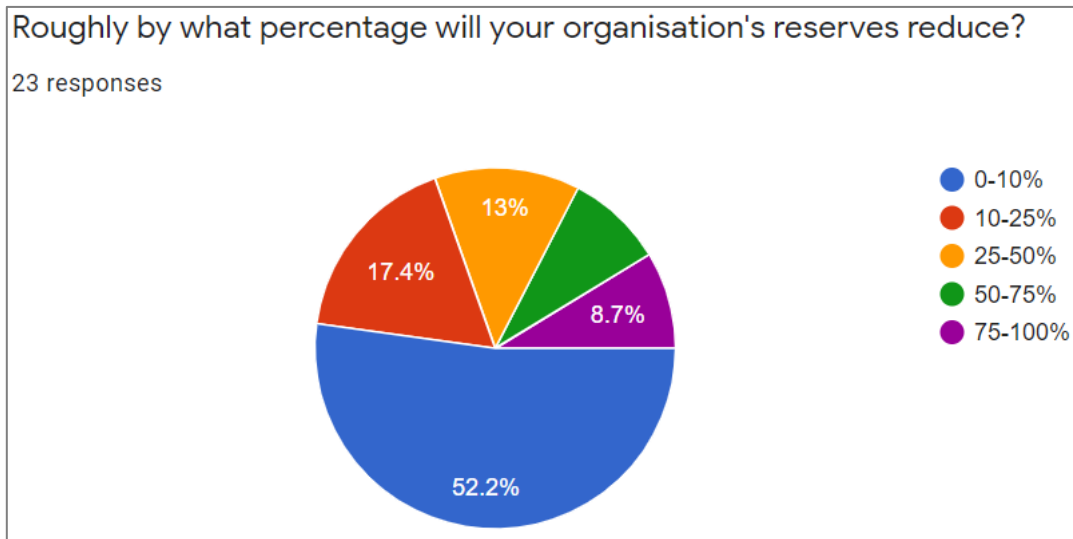
“There will be period where we are rushing to complete existing projects and start new projects that are cover specific.”



A very encouraging message is that 74% of respondents said they felt there were some positives that had come out of the crisis, predominantly the opportunity to adopt new ways of working.



We of course had to consider that some organisations are finding the situation more stressful than others, and there is a risk of closure. Encouragingly *only* 4.3% stated that this was a ‘likely’ risk, with 78.3% stating it was less likely. We cannot however ignore the fact that there is a chance that some organisations will find continuing impossible and we have to prioritise our support to those (with restoration or closure as necessary), also bearing in mind our statement around methodology.



Encouragingly 52.2% of respondents stated that their reduction in reserves was less than 10%, implying a good level of resilience within organisations and their finances, however 17.4% of respondents stated these would reduce by over 50%.

With both the risk of closure and reserves reduction we will do further analysis of this by type/size of organisation in the detailed report.

## Assistance

We asked organisations what other forms of assistance they would need from CAVA, local authorities and others. We had a range of comments, a vast majority asking for support to identify core funding, volunteer recruitment and clarification of central government guidance for measures needed to reduce lockdown, also:

“Guidance and advice with regard to offering food and hospitality. We have been running a community cafe and other cafe based groups for elderly and families which have had to be suspended.”

“we will continue to need financial support from the public, good partnerships with the public and voluntary service and increasingly with the private sector”

“It would be useful is the discretionary top up grant criteria was worked out to ensure social enterprises can access at least a level of parity with the profit making businesses and the charitable sector. The timing is very important and is still not available despite the country now starting to ease some measures.”

“Digital audit and it support”

“Advice on getting people/groups together, how to build confidence in our community, build resilience.”



## Other Comments

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“...we are engaging our young members (aged 6-18) via our virtual weekly section meetings on zoom. Although not ideal and doesn't suit everyone, parents are thanking us for keeping some normality.”

“In a strange way, this crisis has brought out the good in people and especially in our ability as a community and voluntary sector to respond to immediate need”

“It took us time to realise that undertaking voluntary work outside the home was allowable subject to social distancing and protecting at risk volunteers etc from the guidance to employers. It would have been helpful if that advice had come from [X agency].”

“The economic recovery plan mentions "social enterprise" and it is considered to be supported through the enterprise for success project. I would respectfully suggest support for social enterprises needs to be provided by specialized business support organisations who understand the balance and triple bottom line, not a generic start up support programme.”

“Concern for the viability of of [sic] local community centres ... from prolonged closure which would have an impact on us.”