

# **Sandwell Voluntary and Community Sector - Leaders Survey Report - Autumn 2013**

## **Introduction**

Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is a key local infrastructure organisation, providing representation, development support and capacity-building for Sandwell's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). During September and October 2013 SCVO invited the VCS in Sandwell to share information and views on the current and future state of Sandwell's VCS.

The survey received a total of 59 responses: providing just over a 7% return rate. This report draws out key information and is split into the following sections:

### **Section 1 – Headline Finding**

### **Section 2 – Sandwell VCS Service Delivery**

### **Section 3 – Financial Position**

### **Section 4 – Threats**

### **Section 5 – Partner Relationships**

### **Section 6 – SCVO's Service to You**

### **Section 7 – Next Steps**

This report also draws on data about Sandwell's VCS held by SCVO's web-based database [www.sandwellvcs.info](http://www.sandwellvcs.info) which details 965 active community organisations in the Borough in November 2013. The report has been compiled by Leona Bird, Strategic Engagement Officer, at SCVO.

Further information on this survey, intelligence on Sandwell's Voluntary and Community Sector, and information on SCVO's support role can be obtained from Leona Bird on 0121 525 1127 or e-mail: [leona@scvo.info](mailto:leona@scvo.info)

For the purposes of this report, definitions of 'small', 'medium' and 'large' are based on annual income; this is provided as a guide, whilst recognising the arbitrary nature and natural exceptions and limitations of this.

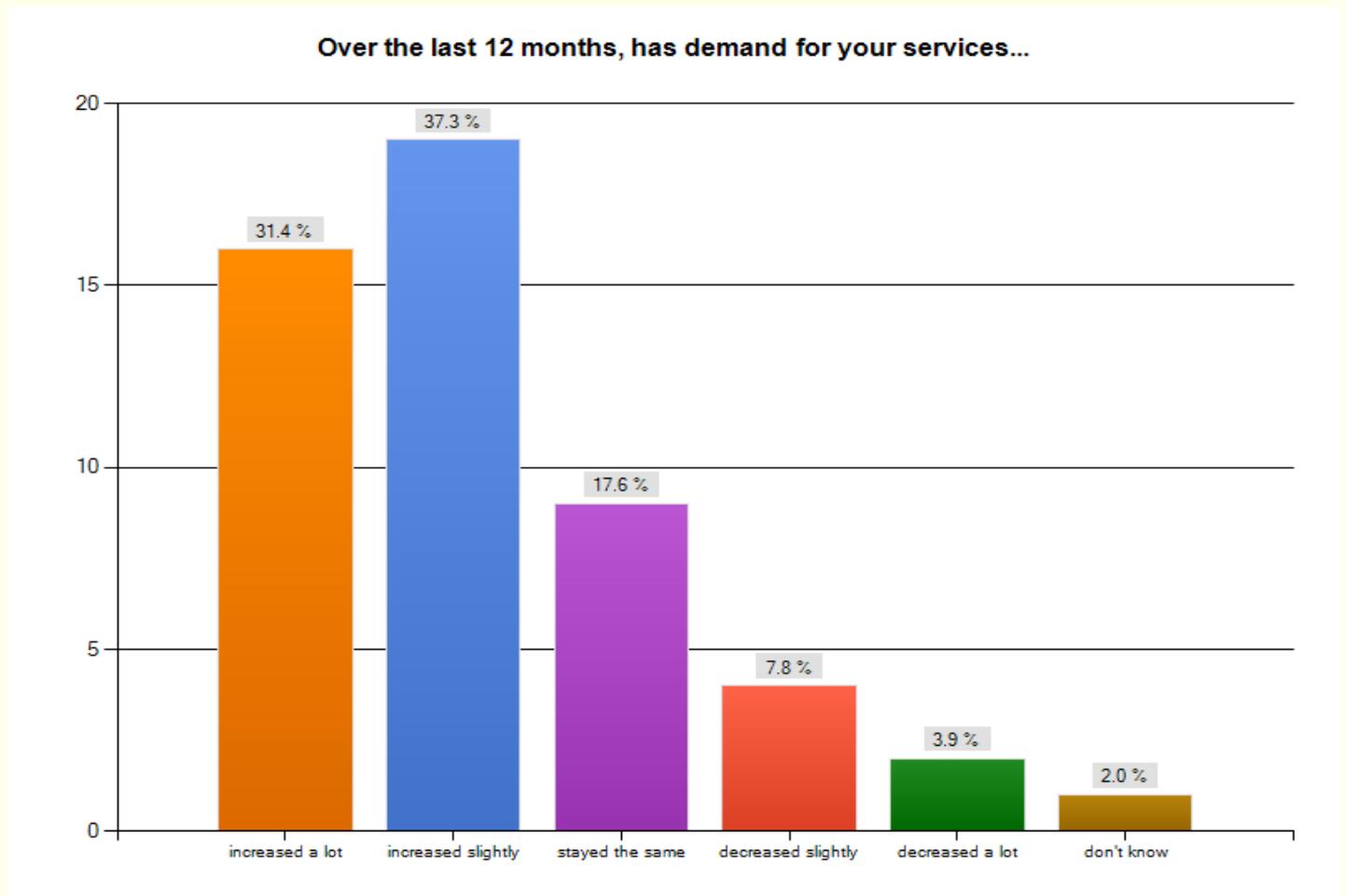
- 'Small' organisations have an income not exceeding £15k;
- 'Medium' organisations have an income not exceeding £250k;
- 'Large' organisations have an income in excess of £250k per annum.

## 1. Headline Findings

- Small and Medium Organisations are seeing the Clinical Commissioning Group as not being relevant to them.
- Large and medium organisation are seeing budget cuts as a main threat.
- Small organisations' biggest threat are funding processes that don't recognise the importance of local Sandwell provision.
- Medium sized organisations are less reliant on public sector funding compared to last year.
- Larger organisations have seen the biggest increase in demand for their services, however have had to reduce their services due to capacity.
- There is a greater demand on smaller organisations for services compared with last year, but financially they are coping.

## 2. Sandwell VCS Service Delivery

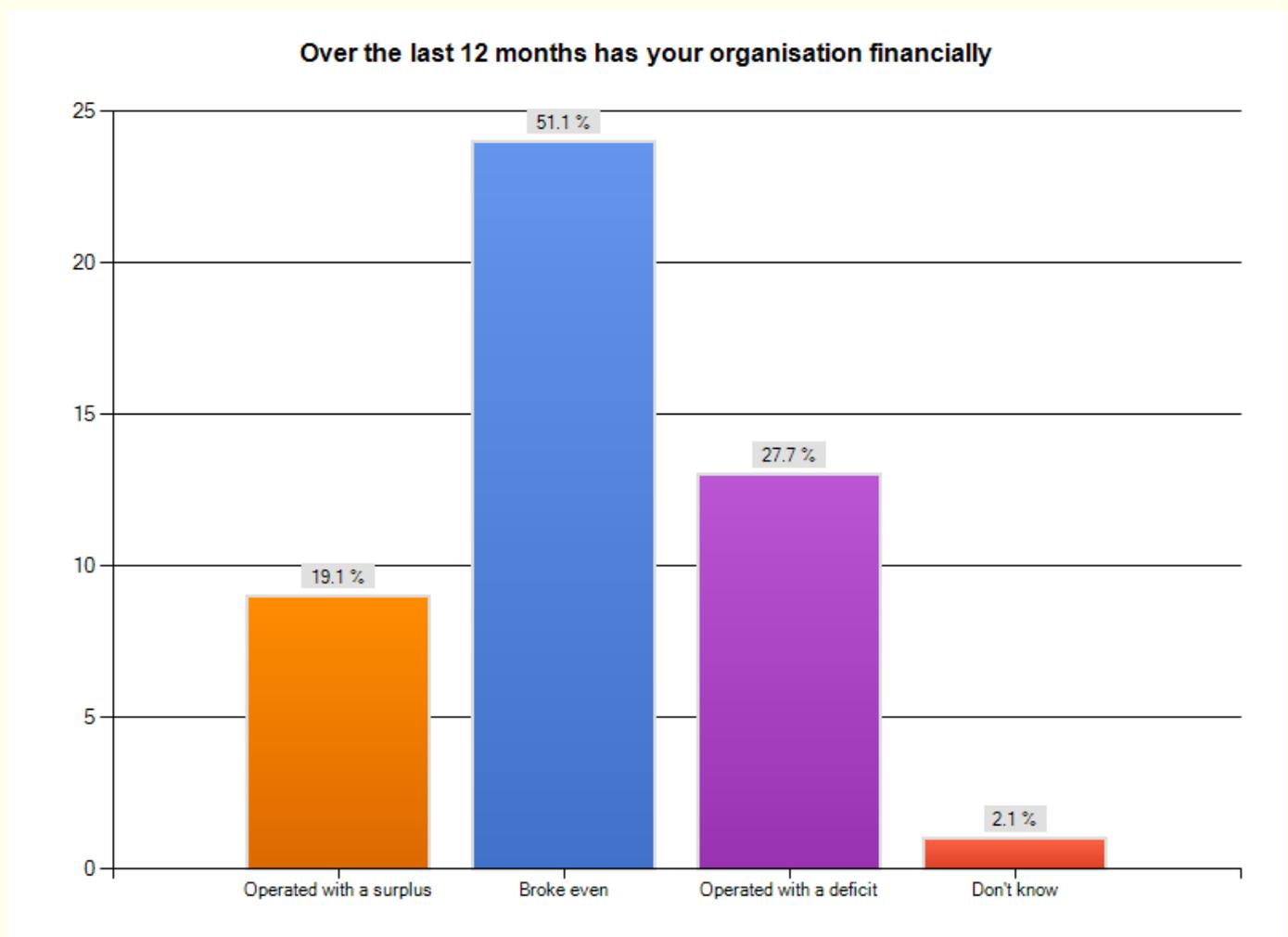
### (i) Changing Demand for Services



One of the key issues looked at was the demand on services, whether need or take-up of services is increasing and also whether an organisation's capacity is growing to meet the need. Over half of respondents experienced an increase in demand on their services. There was a greater demand on smaller organisations compared with last year's findings. The larger organisations saw the biggest increase in demand and had the least amount of capacity to meet demand. The majority of organisations who had seen a slight increase in capacity were medium organisations.

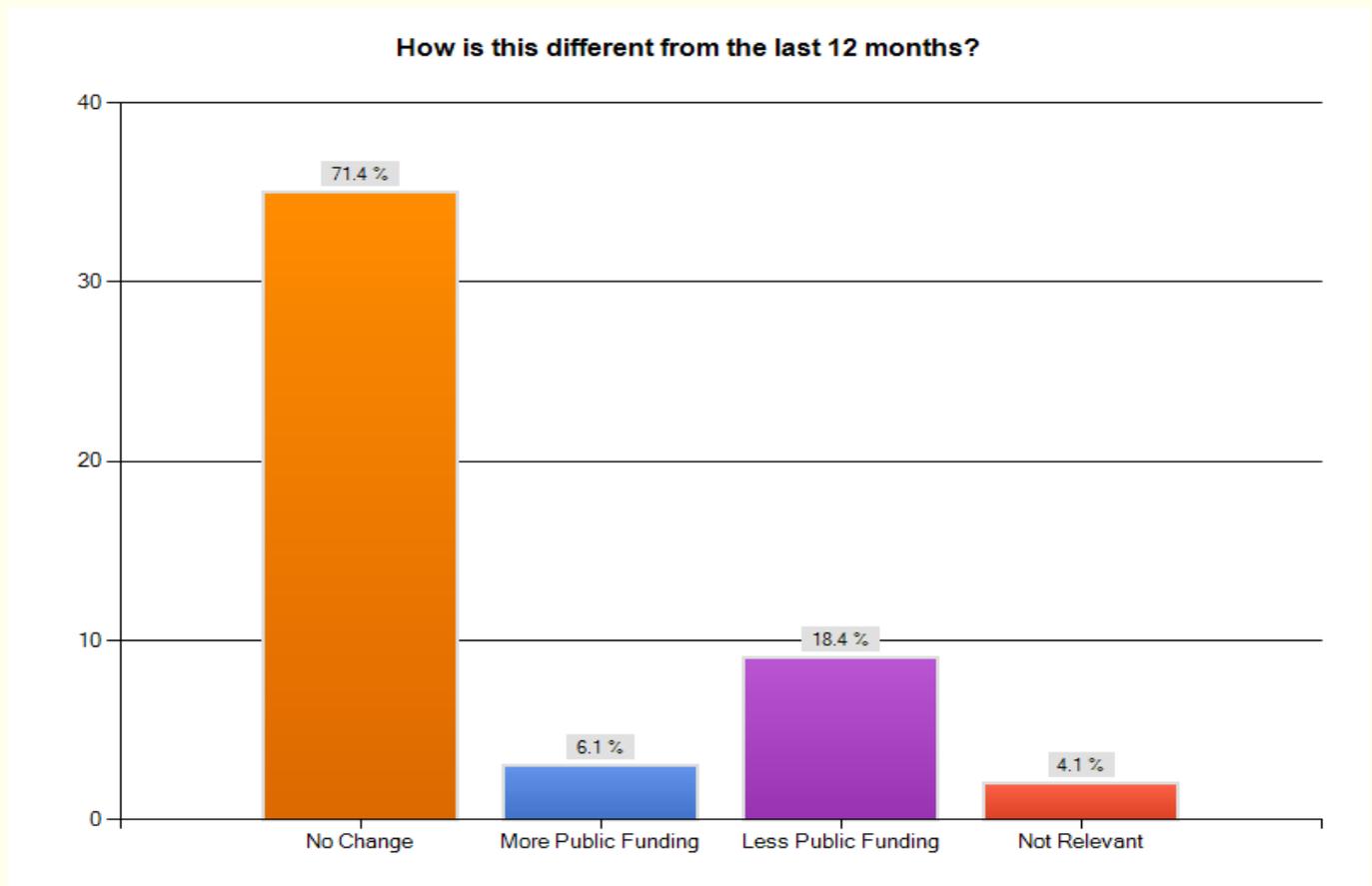
### 3. Financial Position

#### (i) Have organisations operated at a loss, broken even or benefited from a surplus



Organisations were asked about their financial health and whether or not they were breaking even, doing better or worse financially over the last 12 months.

The majority of respondents were breaking event. The majority of organisations operating with a surplus were medium sized organisations. The majority of organisations who had seen an increase in demand for services were financially able to meet this demand.

**(ii) Funding received from the Public Sector**

Half of all respondents reported that funding received from the Public Sector was only a small amount (less than a quarter) of their total income; over one third of respondents received no funding at all from the Public Sector.

Over half of respondents reported that there had been no change in the amount of Public Sector funding compared to 12 months ago, with just under a third reporting less public sector funding.

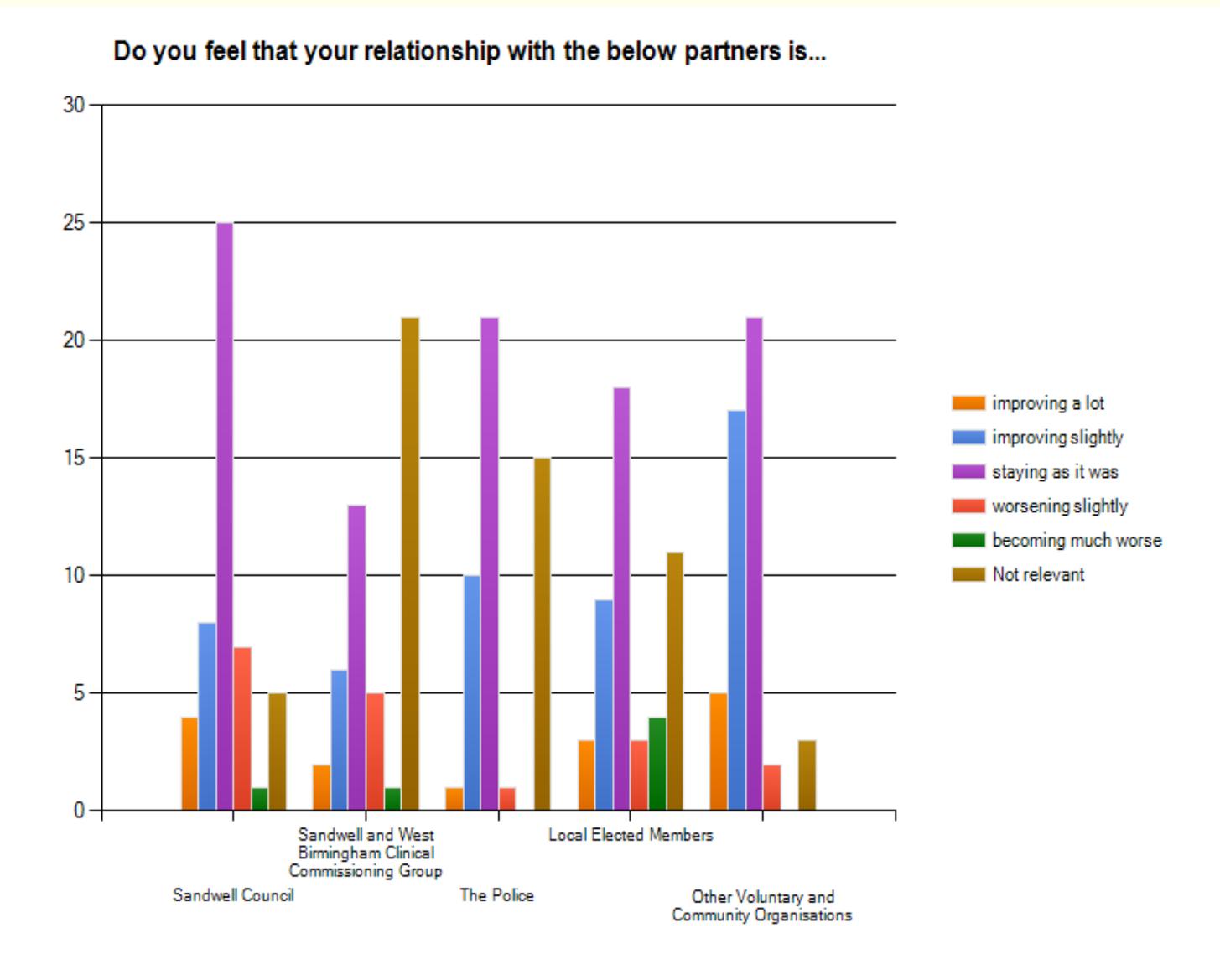
Looking forward to the next 12 months, around half of respondents felt that there would be no change in their funding position and sustainability, with the other half feeling that they would need to either reduce their services a little (27%) with a smaller amount more vulnerable in having to reduce their services greatly (10%).

There was a level of optimism amongst respondents in terms of the Sector's ability to survive and thrive over the next 12 months. With 41% feeling fairly optimistic and 22% feeling neither optimistic or pessimistic.

#### 4. Threats

Larger and medium sized organisations felt that public sector budget cuts were the main threat for them with smaller organisations finding that funding processes that don't recognise the importance of local Sandwell provision being their biggest threat. An ageing membership and inability to recruit and retain staff and volunteers was another common threat that was given as further options by respondents.

#### 5. Partner Relationships



A high proportion of small and medium sized organisations felt that the relationship with Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group was not relevant to them. Relationships amongst the Sector were the ones seen as the most improving. Despite an emphasised role for local elected members in commissioning, again this relationship was seen as not relevant by a high proportion of respondents.

## **6. SCVO's Service to You**

Organisations were asked various questions about the services provided by SCVO in order that feedback received would help to ensure it continues to improve and be responsive to the needs of the organisations it supports. Respondents highly value SCVO's communications including its e-bulletins, newsletter and website.

In addition to this there was a high regard for the Capacity Building Support provided around funding, governance, business planning, financial planning and quality systems support.

The Strategic Engagement support of SCVO in facilitating Forums and networks for the Sector to have dialogue both with each other and also with statutory partners was also valued.

## **7. Next Steps**

SCVO will take forward the learning and insights from this survey to support its work promoting the value of Sandwell's Voluntary and Community Sector and the difference it makes in meeting the current and future needs of Sandwell's communities. In particular these findings will be shared with local public bodies to support and add to focus the efforts to create an environment for a thriving Voluntary and Community Sector.

**SCVO would like to thank all Voluntary and Community Sector leaders who participated in this survey.**