



Creating Better Community Workspaces

Survey Report – February 2019

1. Introduction

In November 2018 SCVO publicised a survey through which local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations might share information on their current or future accommodation needs, and their views on what kind of workspaces might enable their services to be more sustainable and effective.

“Delivering your activities and managing your voluntary group or charity from good quality premises or a suitable base within the local community ranks as a high priority for most VCS leaders. However, we know that finding affordable workspace can be challenging – and even moreso with tight budgets or short-term funding.

Increasingly organisations are looking to find flexible premises to operate from – whether this is co-locating with other like-minded organisations, ‘hot-desking’, or operating outreaches or surgeries in community spaces.

SCVO is keen to support organisations who are looking for better accommodation to find improved short or long-term solutions. This can sometimes mean helping to bring together and connect organisations with similar requirements, signposting organisations into specialist help, or linking organisations with peers in the Sector who can share their past experiences of seeking and securing premises. Following our last accommodation survey of the VCS in 2014 we supported a number of organisations to find new premises and organised a ‘Finding the Right Premises’ training event.

Whether you are currently looking to find premises for the first time, or to relocate your operations to somewhere new, we would like to hear from you. All information shared will be treated in the strictest confidence.”

This report outlines the findings from the survey.

2. Respondents

- A total of 24 VCS organisations completed the survey.
- Only 3 respondents consider that they offer localised activities; the remainder operate a borough-wide service.
- Just under one third of organisations see themselves as supporting those who are facing specific challenges and concerns, through targeted interventions

(perhaps accessed through partner referrals); the remaining two thirds support those with specific challenges but also see their role as working with the wider community and delivering prevention or early-intervention support.

- Three-quarters of respondents are currently leasing premises in Sandwell. Information was captured on the length of lease agreements which varied from 1 months' notice to 5 years.
- Considering employee and volunteer numbers, there is a wide range of requirements for space being suitable for staff teams typically numbering 5 to 15 people. Two organisations need to accommodate over 30 employees and volunteers.

3. Interest in new workspace

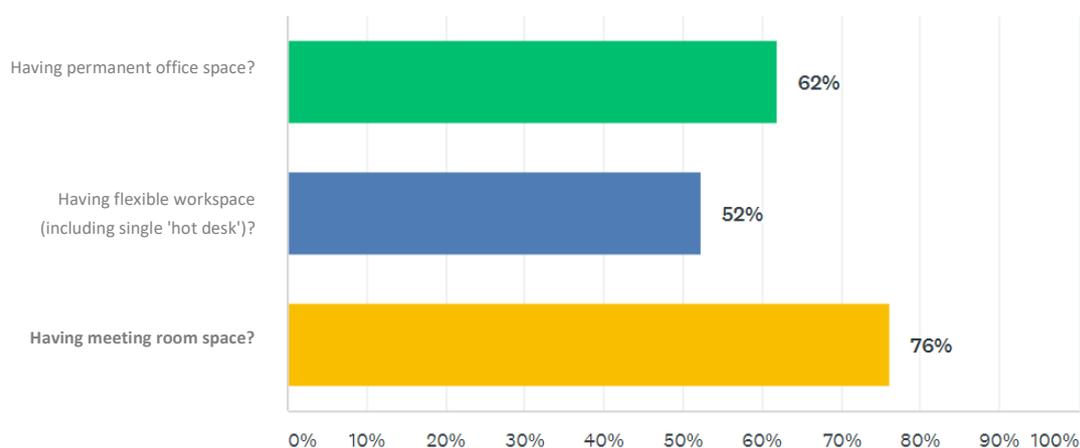
Organisations were asked if they have an interest in looking at new workspaces to relocate their main office HQ or to deliver an 'outreach' service in a specific location (eg by using hot-desking arrangements).

- An equal proportion of organisations (70%) are interested in new workspace for localised outreach work as are open to considering relocating their main office HQ to new premises. One third of respondents are interested in *both* scenarios.

Organisations were also asked whether they want permanent office space, hot-desking space or meeting rooms. All options are popular, with meeting room space particularly of interest.

Would you be interested in...

Answered: 21 Skipped: 3



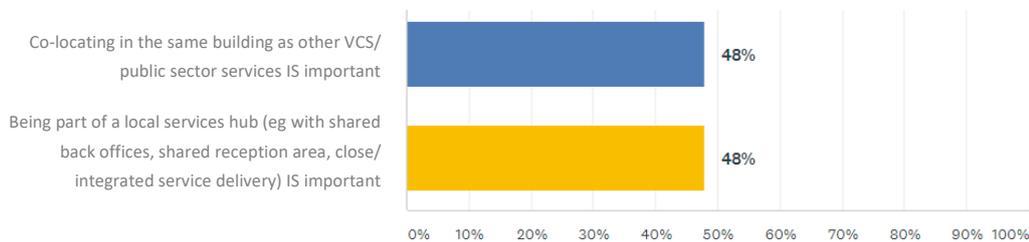
4. Interest in Co-location

The survey tested the appetite of respondents towards co-location with other local organisations, including with Sandwell Council services.

- Just over half of respondents are not interested in seeking co-location with other local organisations
- Almost half of respondents *are* interested in co-location and see this as an important element in deciding where they locate their services
- Almost half of respondents are interested in a more collaborative approach to co-location, including shared back office support, shared reception and closer/integrated delivery of support services

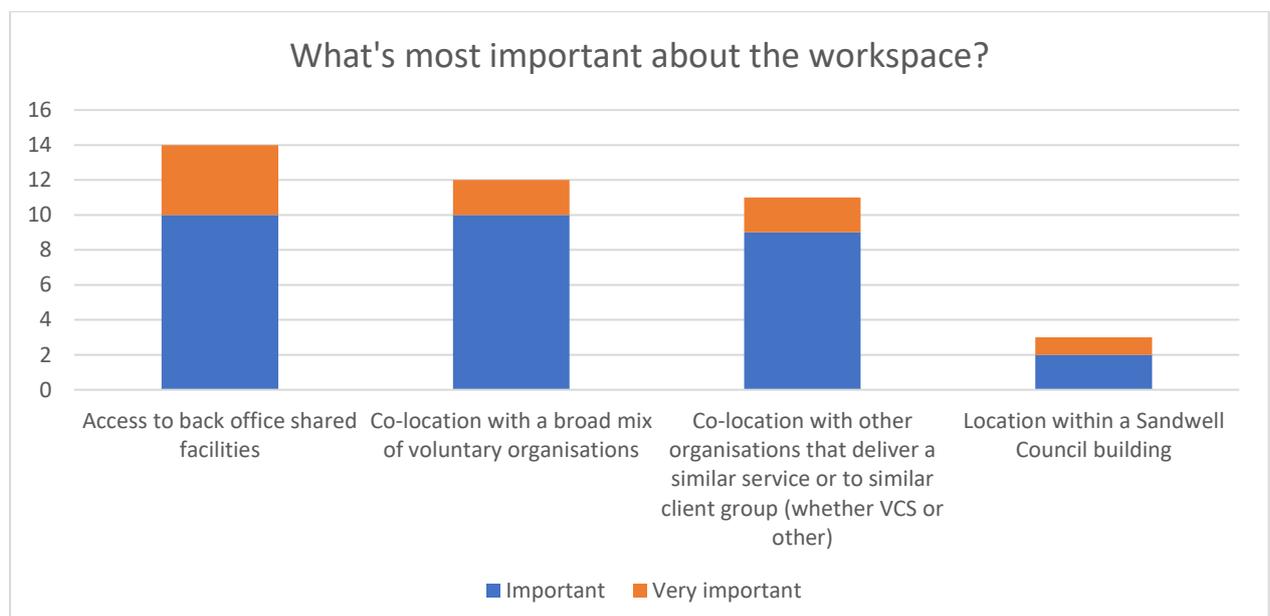
Please state which most closely describes your views on co-location (tick as many as you want):

Answered: 23 Skipped: 1



These views on co-location are confirmed by respondents, when asked ‘What’s important about the workspace?’

- Shared back office facilities are the most important factor for the majority of respondents and ‘very important’ for almost a quarter of organisations
- There is little interest in specifically seeking out Sandwell Council premises to re-locate to



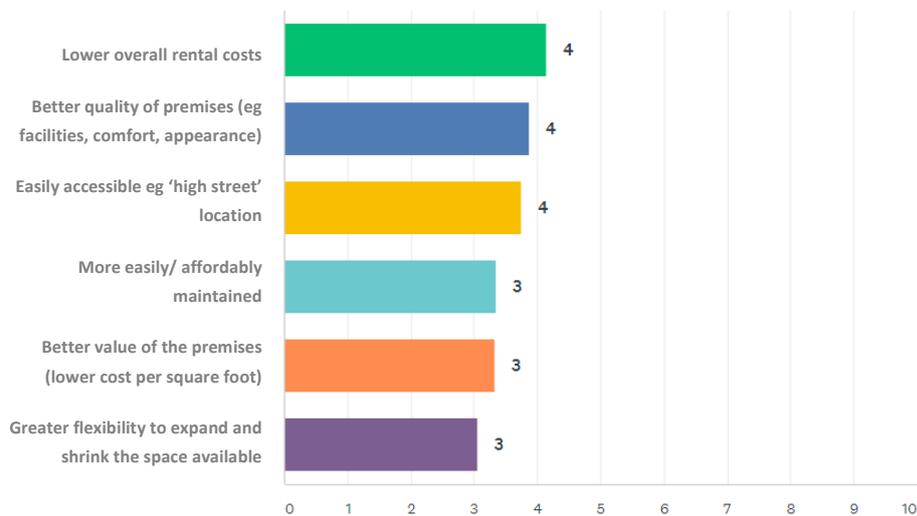
5. What are the preferred features and location for a new workspace?

Respondents commented on a range of different factors which would impact decision-making for new workspace.

- Cost was the greatest priority, followed by quality and an accessible location.

Which of the following would be a priority for you (1 being highest priority, 6 being lowest priority)?

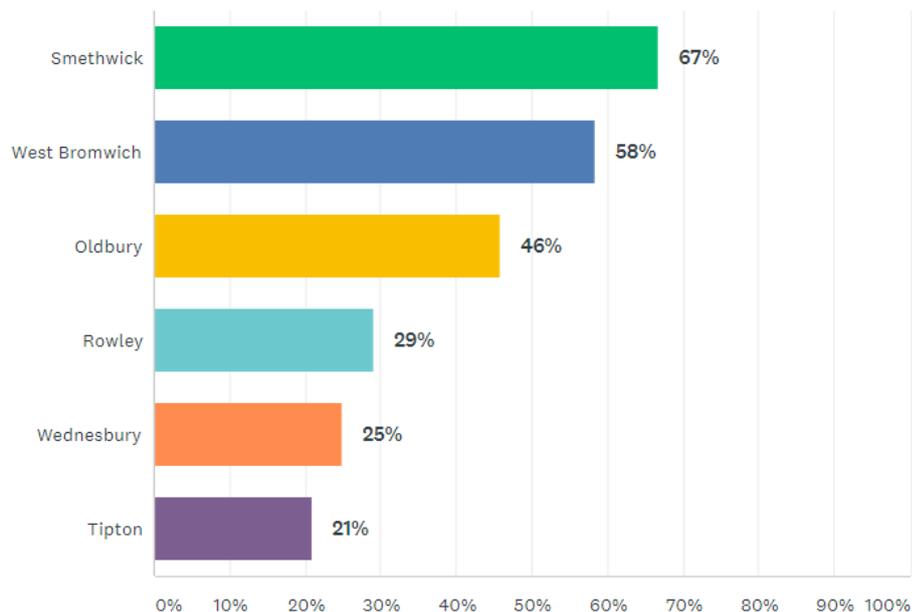
Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



- Just under half of the organisations are only interested in new workspace in one town (and all these respondents focus on either Smethwick or West Bromwich).

Where would you be prepared to be located?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



- In terms of the scale of demand: the sum total of staff and volunteers involved in organisations interested in locating in Smethwick is 157; the total for West Bromwich is 128 people. Despite the fact that fewest organisations wished to use accommodation in Tipton, it had the fourth highest count of staff and volunteer numbers, standing at 94 people.
- Half of respondents are open to considering workspace which is situated in any one of 3 or more towns

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