



Community Impact Bucks
supporting charities, communities, volunteering

STATE of the
SECTOR
REPORT
2019



A snapshot of the
voluntary sector in
Buckinghamshire



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Katie Higginson - CEO, Community Impact Bucks

In January 2020, when the survey at the heart of this report was launched, news was starting to emerge from halfway across the world of a novel coronavirus - few of us then anticipated the profound effect it would have on our lives.

On 23rd March, two days before the planned publication of this report, the Prime Minister announced that the UK was going into a state of lockdown to attempt to control the pandemic. The voluntary sector, as ever, was ready to turn on a sixpence to respond to changing needs and had already set about tackling the impact of the pandemic on our communities.

Now, three months on, it feels strange to think back to the time before the virus. This report, then, stands as a touchstone to remind us of how things were, and a benchmark to compare ourselves to in a world that has changed so much.

Since this report was written, the pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges detailed here and creating new challenges for the sector on a scale never seen in my lifetime.

We are shortly preparing to launch a Covid-19 update survey to identify where the sector is now, and what is going to be needed through the recovery phase and to support longer-term resilience for our communities and the voluntary organisations that serve them.

Without doubt, the pandemic has shown us that voluntary action is the glue that holds our communities together, and that the services provided by our charities, voluntary and community groups and social enterprises have been never more needed.



Katie Higginson
CEO, Community Impact Bucks
June 2020

Voluntary Sector in Bucks

4,750* voluntary organisations
including **2,532** registered charities



58% 
experienced an increased **demand** for services

65% work very locally in a number of neighbourhoods/villages



Making a difference



90%
of voluntary organisations in Bucks reduce social isolation



94%
improve health & wellbeing

84%
empower people

91%
increase confidence

95% 
improve community cohesion

Challenging times

32% 
have used reserves to cover essential costs like rent and salaries



51%
stretched or overstretched for volunteers



33%
state their biggest challenge is funding

1: THIS REPORT



This report looks at the state of the voluntary sector in Buckinghamshire in 2019.

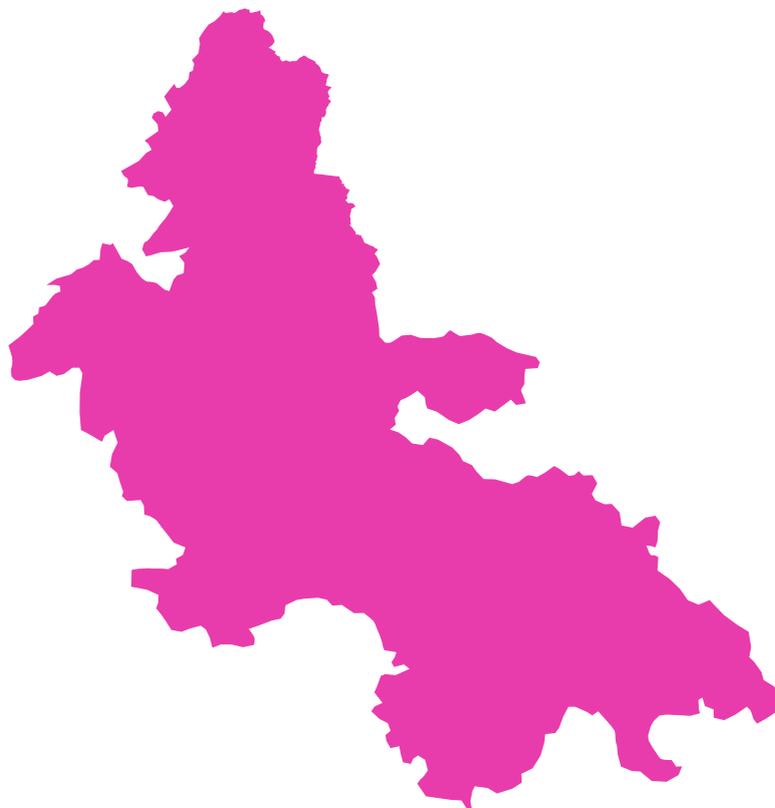
Compiled at the start of a new decade, it looks at the voluntary sector in Buckinghamshire in the context of the picture at a national level. It also picks up on some key challenges for our society, which have repeatedly hit the headlines and where the voluntary sector plays an important role.

The report draws on data from the Charity Commission, national research reports, and our own survey of Buckinghamshire voluntary organisations.

For the purposes of this report, Buckinghamshire means the area to be covered by Buckinghamshire Council, the unitary authority established in April 2020.

There is no single accepted name for or definition of the voluntary sector. This report uses the NCVO definition¹:

the term 'voluntary sector' includes registered charities, unincorporated voluntary and community groups, and non-profit distributing social enterprises.



2: THE BIG PICTURE



The voluntary sector forms an important and integral part of the UK economy and community.

There is an increasing appreciation of the importance of voluntary groups, not just in terms of what they deliver but more broadly their impact on social cohesion, individual wellbeing and civic engagement².

There are over 168,000 registered charities in England and Wales with a combined annual income of over £77 billion. 2,532 of these are in Buckinghamshire with an estimated total income of over £1.1 billion³.

2,532 registered charities in Bucks with an estimated income of £1.1 billion

There are 17 'major' registered charities (with an income of over £10 million) operating in Bucks. These include private schools, housing and residential care providers. These charities account for one third of the total estimated income of all charities in Buckinghamshire. If we disregard these 17 'major' charities, Buckinghamshire charities' estimated total annual income is £782,441,819⁴.

This is supplemented by a vast number of smaller unregistered charities, clubs, societies, Community Interest Companies, and Charitable Incorporated Organisations.

These come in all shapes and sizes but are all independent from the state and private sector, working not for private profit but for the public benefit, making use of voluntary participation.

In the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey, 40% of respondents were voluntary sector organisations that are not registered charities⁵.

We estimate there to be in the region of 4,750 formal voluntary organisations in Buckinghamshire, including registered charities, sports clubs and Community Interest Companies⁶.

4,750 formal voluntary organisations in Buckinghamshire, including registered charities, sports clubs and Community Interest Companies

Non-registered informal voluntary groups do not, of course, appear on any official records and, from a public data point of view, are effectively invisible.

Despite this limitation, various organisations have tried to estimate the scale of this invisible part of the voluntary sector and their work indicates the number of entities in it could be as much as four or five times the number of registered charities, which would mean the overall number of organisations in Buckinghamshire could be in the region 11,000⁷.

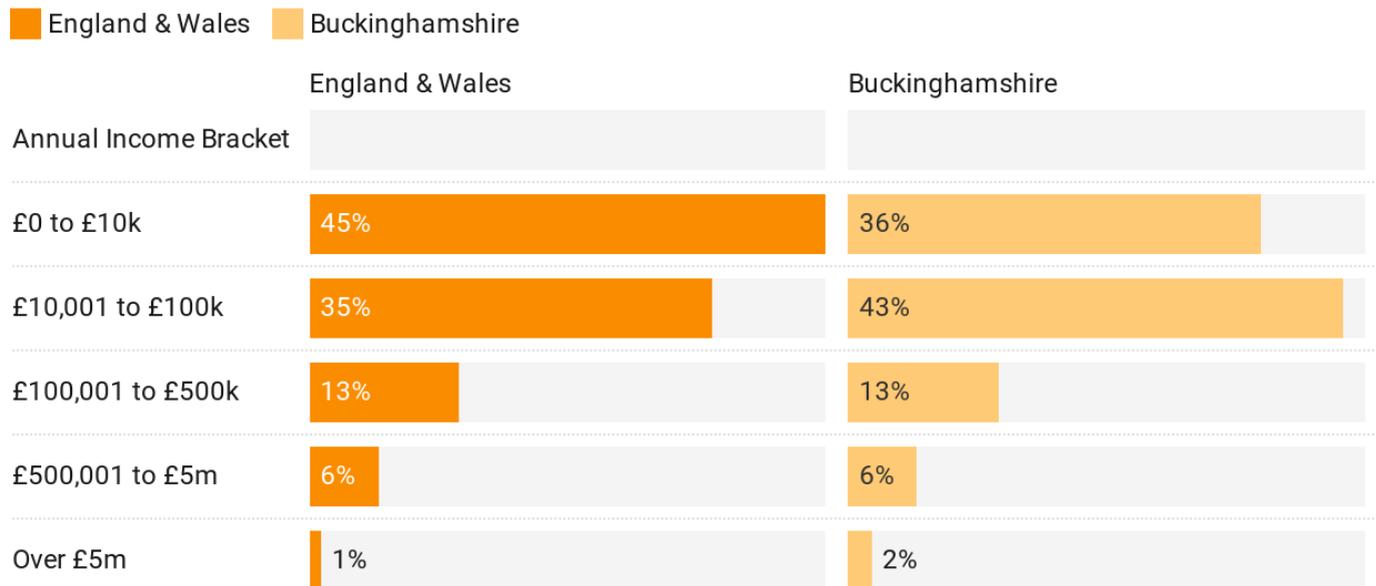
This patchwork of organisations, large and small, presents a complex picture, both nationally and in Buckinghamshire.

The range of activities carried out by the sector has always been wide, but in the last decade the voluntary sector has become increasingly involved in more complex service delivery that would previously have been handled by central or local government (for example, in some areas of safeguarding, medical research, homelessness and loneliness)⁸.

3: THE SIZE OF THE SECTOR

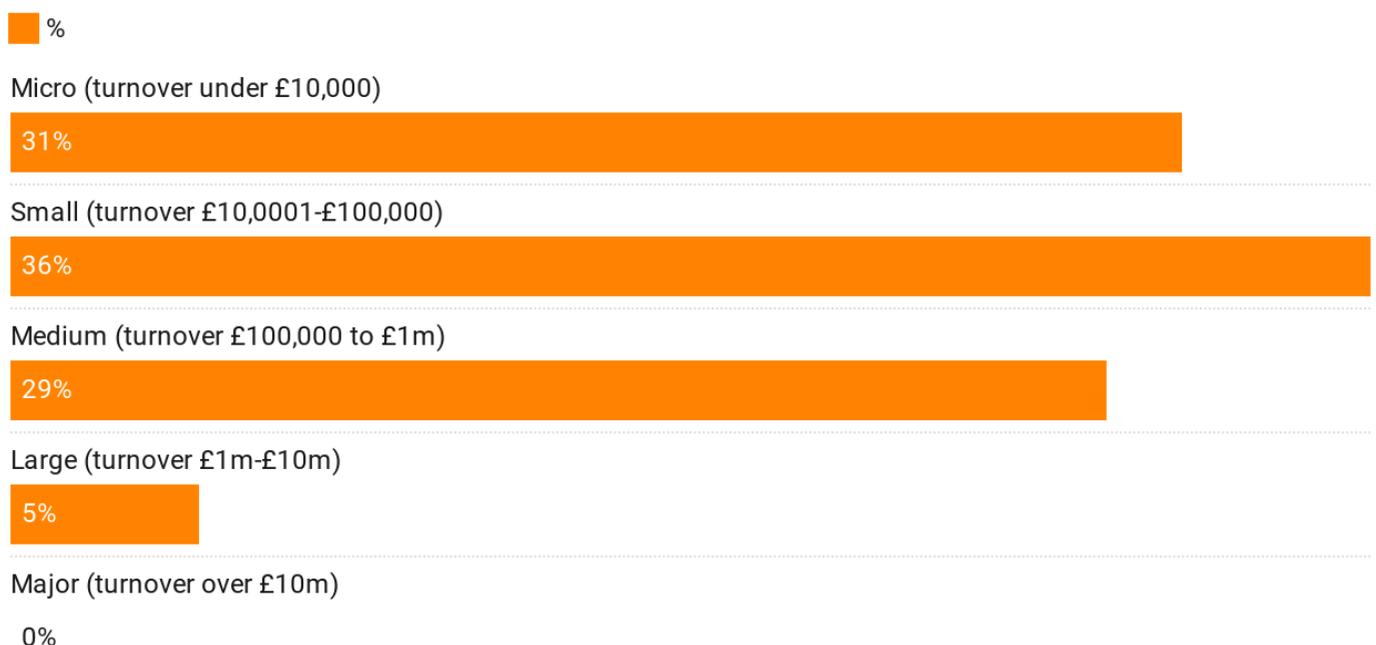


In terms of income, the majority of registered charities are small or even micro in size (both nationally and in Bucks)⁹. The graph below compares income ranges of Bucks charities and the national average across England & Wales:



However, respondents to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey skewed more towards the medium-sized voluntary organisations, with a turnover of £100,000 - £1m¹⁰.

The graph below uses the NCVO definition of organisation size.

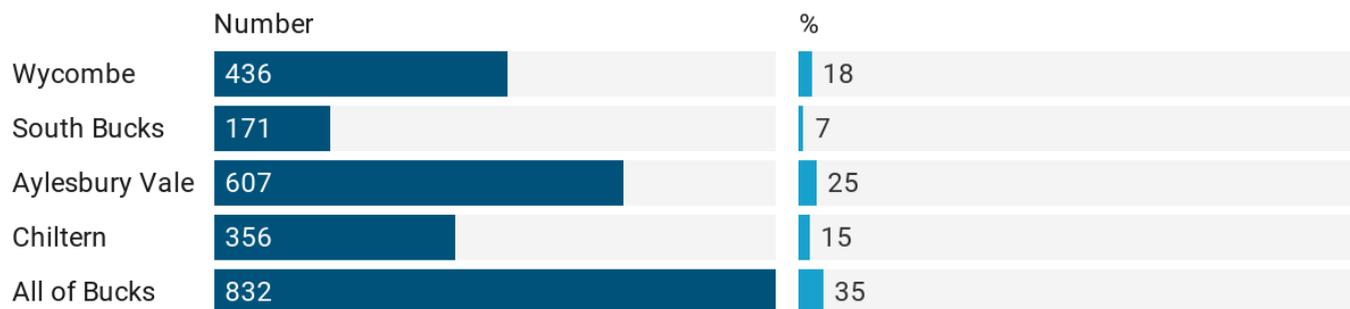


4: WHERE ARE CHARITIES OPERATING?

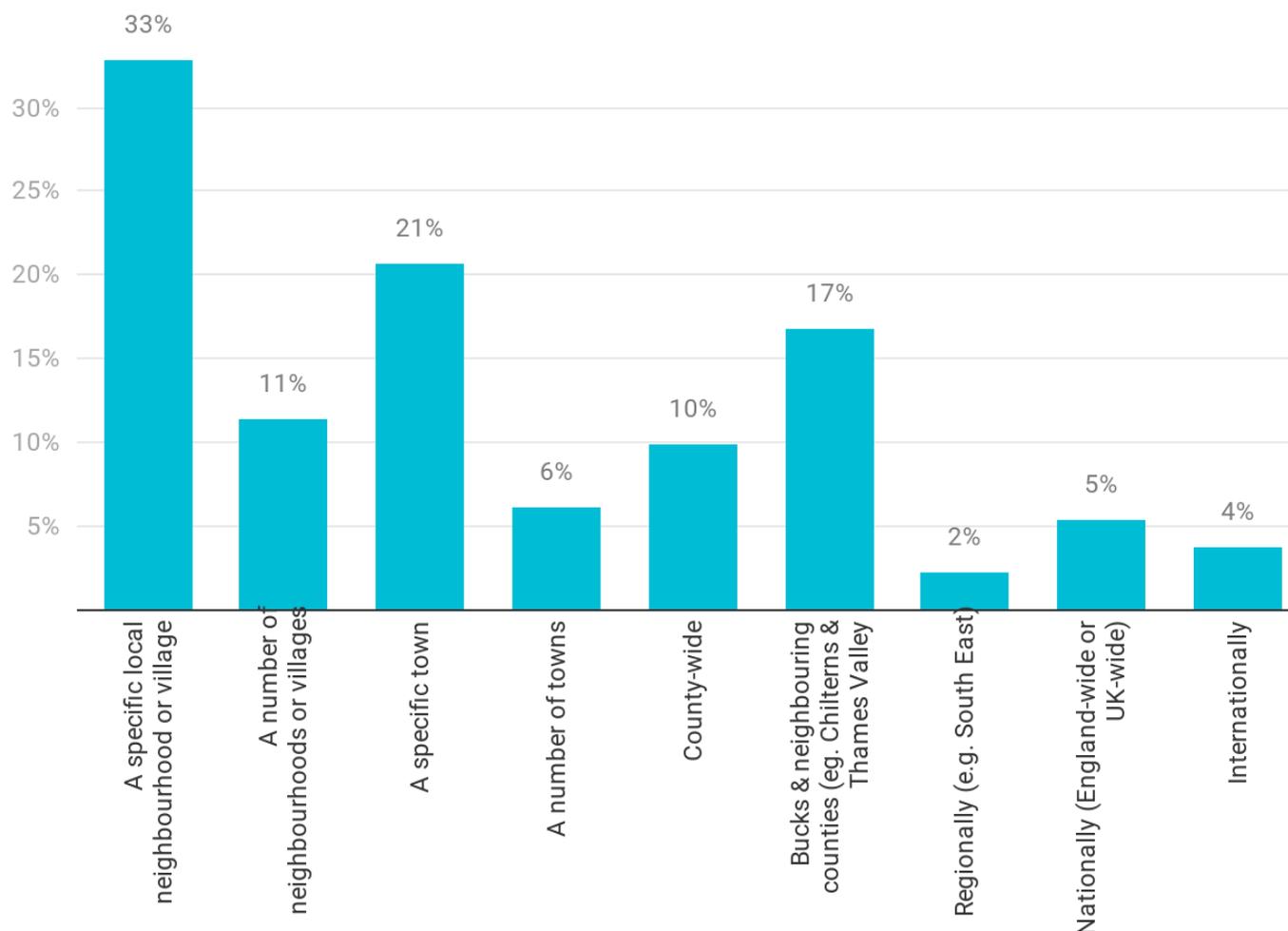


Some registered charities, particularly the smaller ones, have a very local focus; others operate nationally or even internationally.

This chart shows the distribution across the four District Councils operating in Buckinghamshire in 2019¹². Charity Commission data was matched by postcode to the District Councils in place in 2019.



The majority of organisations responding to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey provide their services in a very localised area such as a specific neighbourhood, village or town¹¹.

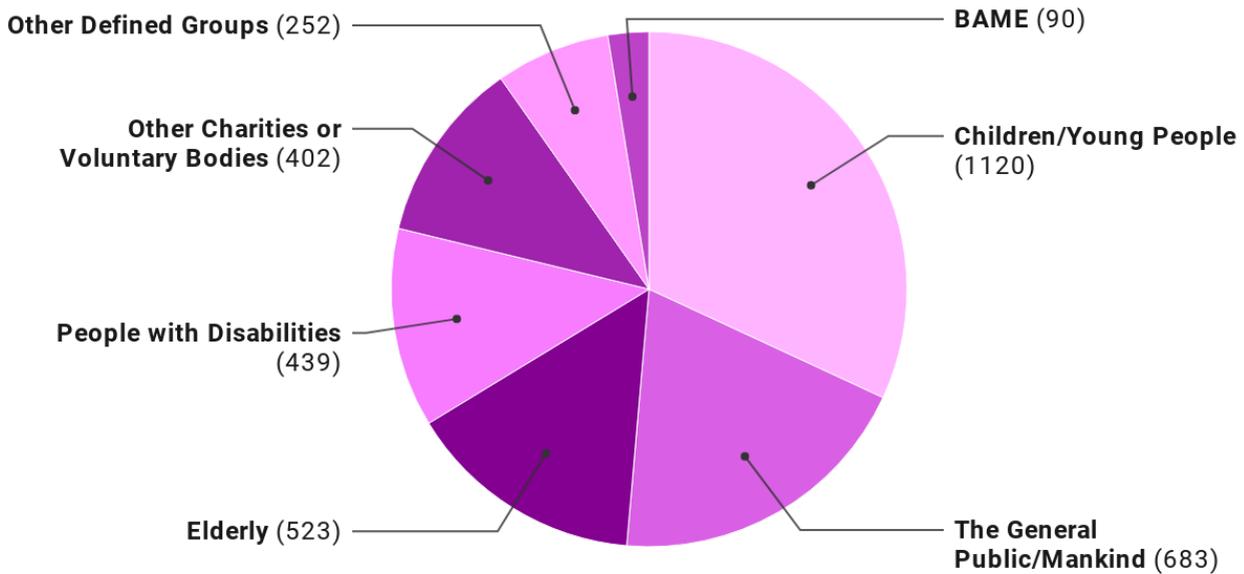


5: WHAT ARE CHARITIES DOING?



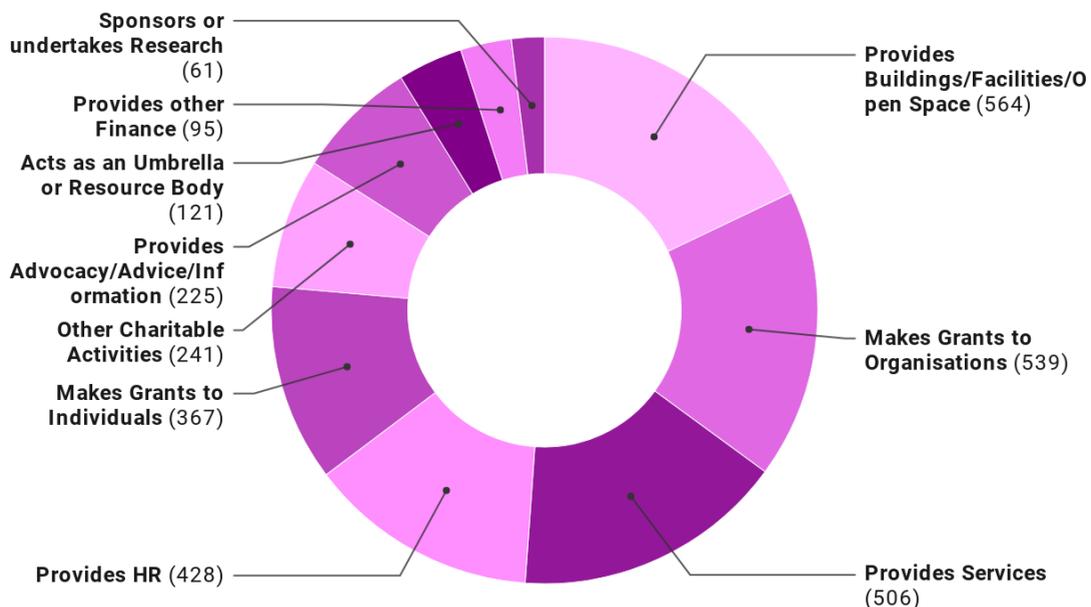
Who charities serve

Children and young people are the most common category of beneficiaries served by registered charities in Buckinghamshire, according to classification by the Charity Commission¹³. A charity can benefit many different groups of people and this chart does not necessarily reflect principal activity of the charities.



How charities operate

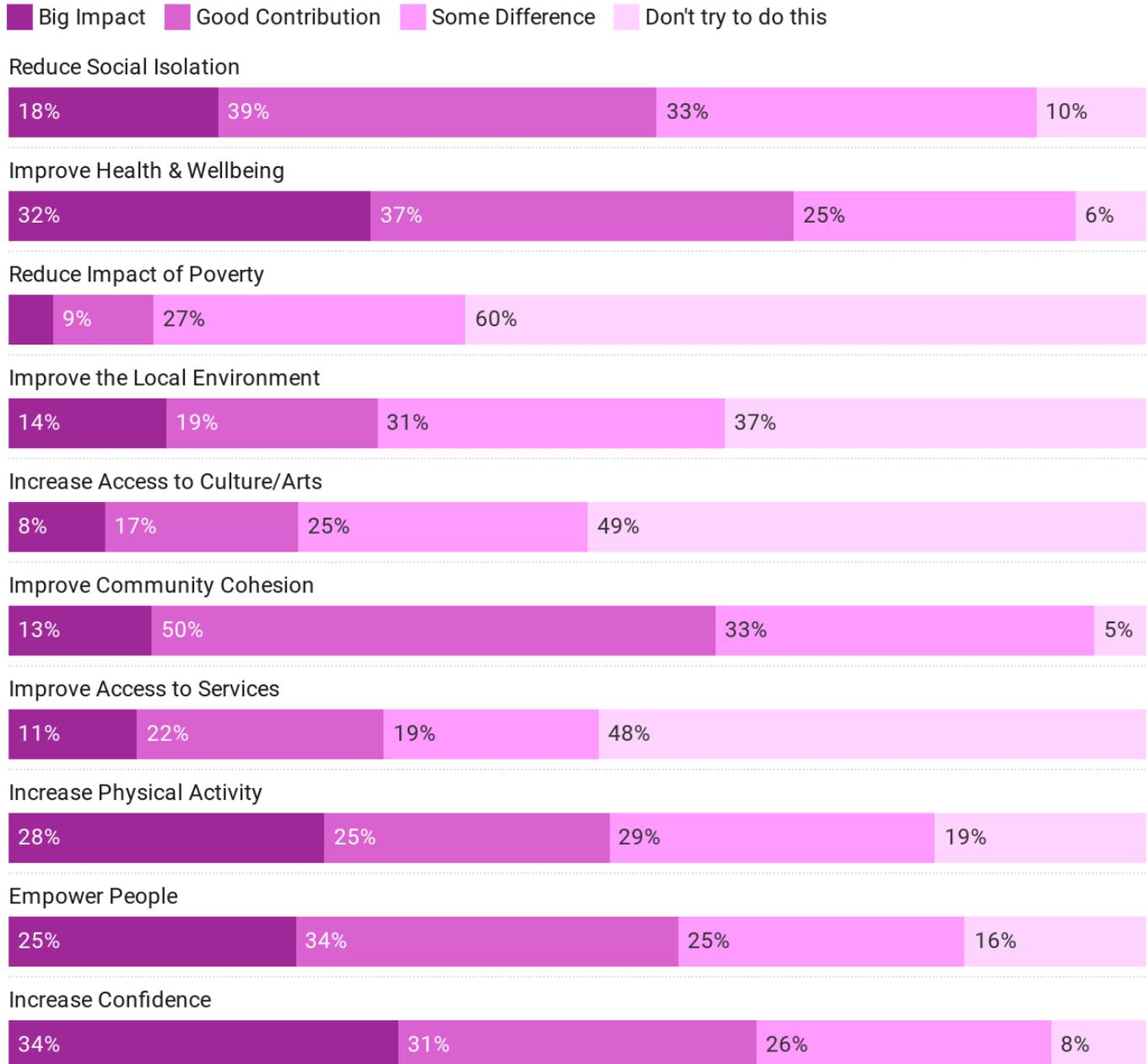
This chart shows how Buckinghamshire's registered charities operate, according to classification by the Charity Commission¹⁴. Charities may operate by more than one of these means and this chart does not necessarily reflect the predominant method of operation of the charities.



The difference voluntary organisations make

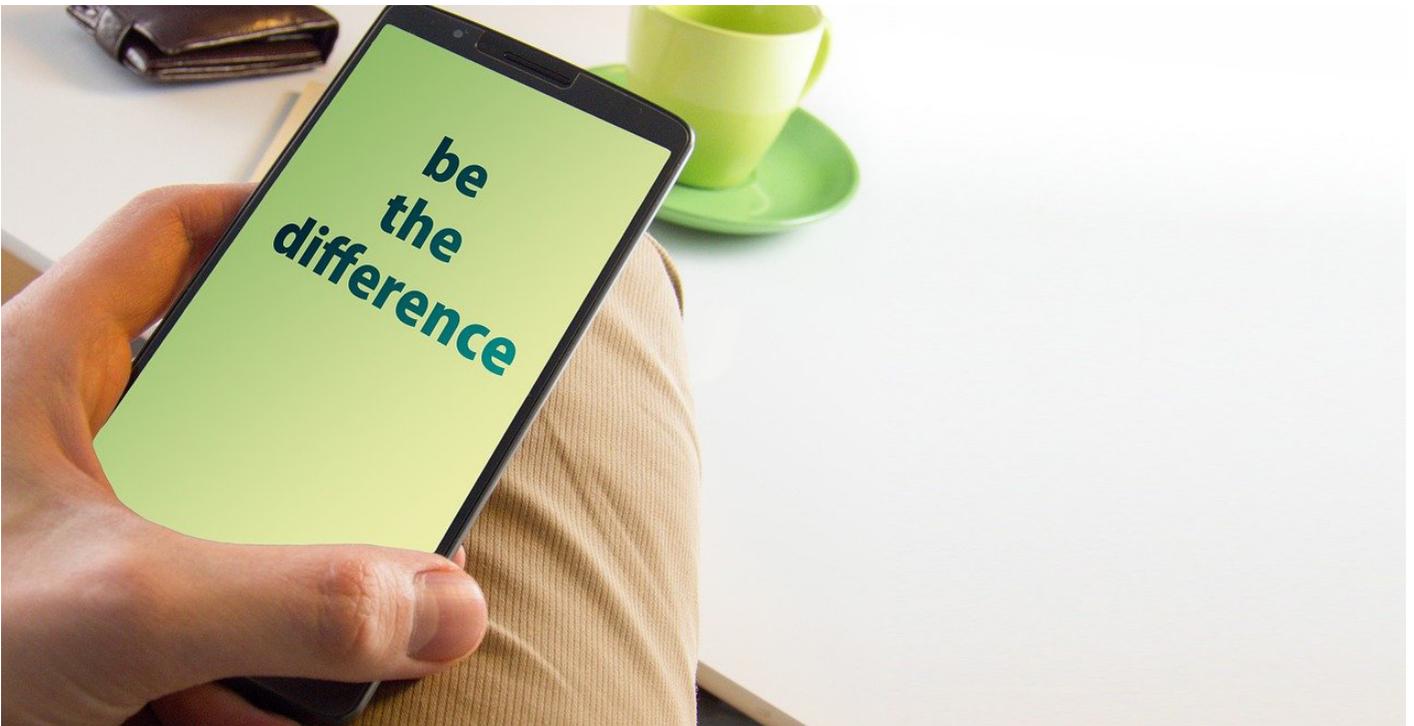
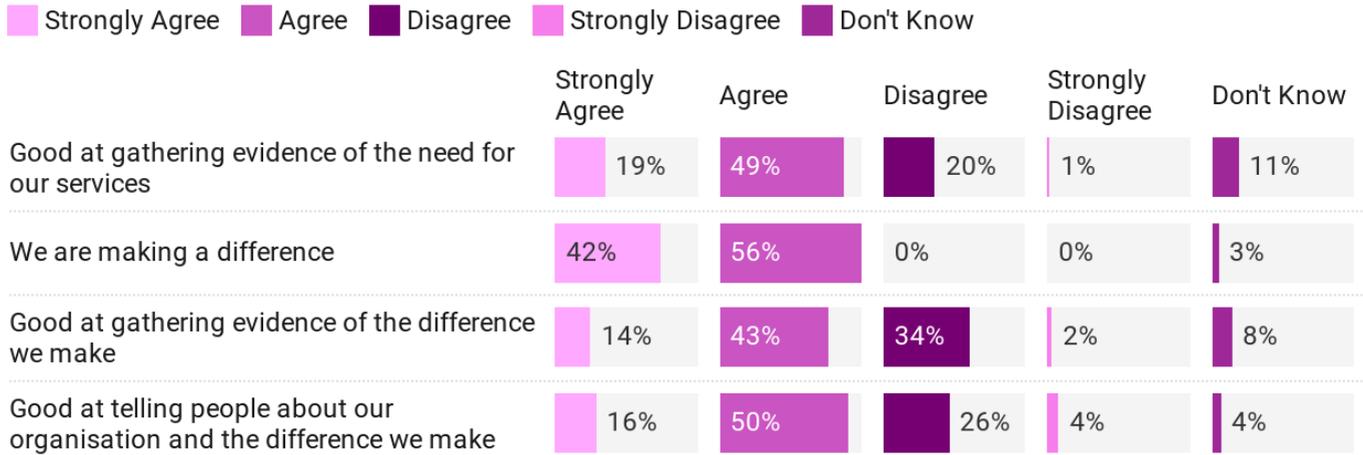
From all types of voluntary organisation in Buckinghamshire, whatever their aims and area of operation, there is a high level of confidence that they are making a difference.

Over 96% of voluntary organisations agreed or strongly agreed that they are making a difference.



94% of voluntary organisations said they made at least some positive difference to health and wellbeing¹⁵

However, only two thirds of respondents felt that they are good at publicising their organisation and the difference it makes¹⁶.



6: THE PEOPLE INVOLVED



VOLUNTEERS

Levels of volunteering remain broadly stable¹⁷. Nationally, 20.1 million people volunteered through a group, club or organisation during 2017-18¹⁸ and around 11.9 million of those volunteered at least once a month in 2017-18¹⁹.

Looking at volunteering both through a group and informally, in 2018-19, 38% of adults in the UK volunteered at least once a month²⁰.

38% of adults in the UK volunteered at least once a month

People living in rural areas are more likely to have taken part in volunteering regularly than those living in urban areas, and people living in the least deprived areas are more likely to have volunteered than those in the most deprived areas²¹.

Women remain more likely to have volunteered than men²².

10% of volunteers give time via employer-supported volunteering²³. Although this is a small part of volunteer participation overall, some in the voluntary sector perceive an increased demand for this type of volunteering, with more employers getting involved or wanting to do more²⁴. It is also interesting to note that one of the most common barriers to volunteering is work, with 49% of respondents who do not volunteer regularly saying it was because of work commitments²⁵.

In Buckinghamshire, an average of 37 volunteer hours are given per month to the organisations that responded to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey, but this varies hugely (from 1 hour per month to 10,000 hours per month)²⁶.

In 2019, ten voluntary organisations in Buckinghamshire received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, an award which recognises exceptional service within communities and is the

highest honour for volunteer groups in the UK.

Buckinghamshire has 1.5% of registered charities (in England and Wales), but Buckinghamshire's voluntary organisations received 3.5% of the total number of Queens Awards given across the whole of the UK²⁷.

10 voluntary organisations in Buckinghamshire received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service

Locally, more volunteers would be welcome: 51% of respondents say that their volunteer numbers are stretched or overstretched.

About half of the organisations who responded to our survey saw no change in volunteering levels in 2019. 25% saw an increase in volunteer numbers, but 18% saw volunteer numbers fall²⁸.



51%
stretched or overstretched for volunteers

A recurrent theme in challenges faced by local organisations is the age profile of volunteers and trustees “It is difficult to get younger people to assist as they have family/paid work commitments that take precedence”³⁰.

The same survey asked about the biggest challenge facing respondents going forward. One of the most recurrent themes was volunteer recruitment with almost a third of respondents seeing this as their biggest challenge.

LEADERSHIP

By contrast, the management teams in local organisations are much more likely to be stable than not. In our survey, 85% of respondents agreed that they have a stable management team (e.g. senior managers, trustees, committee members)³¹.

However, 40% feel Trustee numbers are stretched or overstretched.

85% have a stable management team



EMPLOYEES IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

National research tells us that, compared to June 2017, there has been a small decrease in the number and proportion of people working in the UK voluntary sector. This was in contrast to small increases in the numbers working in the public and private sectors³².

The voluntary sector has a skilled workforce: it has the lowest incidence of skills gaps amongst employees compared to other sectors.

The voluntary sector workforce has the lowest incidents of skills gaps compared to other UK sectors²⁹

The majority of the voluntary sector workforce are women, with men making up a third of the total workforce in June 2018.

The proportion of younger people (aged 16-34) working in the voluntary sector has increased by 3% since 2017, but the workforce remains older than other sectors, with 38% of employees aged 50 years and over compared to 35% for the public sector and 30% for the private sector.

The proportion of workers from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background remains low (9% vs 12% in the public and private sectors, and 13% in the population as a whole). This has not changed in the last six years³³.

The proportion of workers from a BAME background is lower than other UK sectors – this hasn't changed in six years.

7: MONEY MATTERS



One of the challenges faced by almost every organisation in the voluntary sector is securing sufficient income for its activities. Indeed, for many it is their biggest challenge.

The Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey asked what organisations saw as the biggest challenges they face, and 33% of respondents identified funding or income issues³⁴.

33% said funding or income was the biggest challenge

This is hardly surprising, as 58% of respondents saw the demand for their services increase in 2019 but only 40% reported any increase in income³⁵.



DONATIONS

Nationally, fewer people report that they are giving money to charity, but those who do give are giving higher amounts. Overall, the total amount given to charity in 2018 was largely the same as 2017 at £10.1 billion³⁶.

Nationally, fewer people are donating, but those who do give higher amounts

In 2018-19, 75% of respondents to DDCMS's Community Life Survey³⁷ said they had given money to charitable causes in the last 4 weeks, the same as in 2017-18 and 2016-17 but lower than 2013-14 when 82% had given to charitable causes.

In its 2018-19 survey, DDCMS asked people what would either encourage them to start giving to charitable causes, or to increase the amount they currently donate.

There were a number of possible reasons, the most commonly given was "if I had more money" (37%); the reason next most often given (28%) was having confidence that the charity or organisation uses the money effectively³⁸.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

According to the UK Civil Society Almanac³⁹, income from local government has been falling while income from central government has grown slightly.

An important element of funding from central government for charities takes the form of tax relief.

For 2018-19 the estimated total amount of tax relief to UK charities is £3.79 billion (although nearly 60% of this relates to relief from business rates). This is over £100 million more than the previous tax year.

The total amount of tax relief for individuals as a result of charitable giving is estimated to be £1.53 billion for 2018-19. This is £30 million more than in the previous tax year. Both reflect long-term upward trends⁴⁰.

Locally, there is some nervousness about the level of funding from public bodies (including local and national government and the NHS). In the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey 2019, more than twice as many thought that public sector funding would decrease than those who expected an increase⁴¹.

One potential barrier to accessing funds that the smaller local organisations encounter is to do with the scale of their operation. As noted earlier, most local voluntary organisations provide their services in a very localised area such as a specific neighbourhood, village or town.

Bids for funding the NHS or the Local Authority may be on the basis of services to be provided over a wider area, or on the basis of a minimum level of service provision, neither of which is possible for a very localised voluntary organisation.

Whilst collaboration with other organisations can be a way round this, such collaboration is in itself time-consuming, stretching the resources of voluntary organisations still further.

Responses to our survey show voluntary organisations collaborate in many ways but, while there is often a suggestion from outside the sector that charities should be looking at mergers, survey responses suggest that this is not something that charities want or expect to do⁴⁵:

Already doing this
 Expect to do more of this
 Don't expect to do this
 Haven't considered doing this

Informally collaborating more with other charities or not for profit groups



Entering formal partnerships with other charities or not for profit groups



Sharing resources with other charities or other not for profit groups i.e. staff, premises, equipment



Merging with other charities or other not for profit groups



INDEPENDENT GRANTS

According to the Association of Charitable Foundations in 2017-18 an estimated total of £6.5 billion in annual grants were given to the sector by charitable foundations⁴².

The top 299 foundations awarded £2.6 billion in grants, a rise of 9.9% over the previous year. Almost two-thirds of foundations (64%) increased their grant-making in 2017-18, despite the majority of these also experiencing a fall in income and/or asset value.

There is more recent information available from 360Giving but not all funders report their grant data to 360Giving⁴³, so it is important to remember that trends in these figures or may not be indicative of the overall level of independent grants in 2019.

The total of grants made by funders who do report their grant data to 360Giving reduced in 2019 to £711.7 million in 2019 from £1.7 billion in 2018.

The amount reported as given in Buckinghamshire reflects that decline, but not by such a large degree (£429,128 in 2019, down from £513,773 in 2018).

EARNED INCOME

It's widely felt that one of the more financially sustainable methods of securing funds is through earned income such as selling goods or charging for services. The Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey found that 39% of those providing information about funding sources derived 25% or more of their funds from earned income⁴⁴.

39% say earned income makes more than a quarter of their total income

OTHER INCOME SOURCES

Nationally, income from legacies grew by 10% in real terms from 2007-2017⁴⁶, and 27% of charity supporters saying that they have left or intend to leave a gift in their will in 2019 (up from 21% in 2010)⁴⁷. However, only 23% of respondents to our survey reported any income from legacies.

Only 8% of the respondents to our survey get even as much as 10% of their funding from sponsorship or donations from business⁴⁸.

USING RESERVES

According to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey⁴⁹, 32% of respondents had to dip into their reserves to fund essential costs in 2019.

32% had to dip into their reserves to fund essential costs in 2019.

On average, respondents to the survey had large enough reserves to cover running costs for 10 months but 17% of those respondents have less than 3 months' worth of reserves, meaning their ability to withstand sudden drops in income or take advantage of new opportunities is limited.

17% have reserves equivalent to less than 3 months' running costs



8: SPOTLIGHT ON SOME IMPACTS OF AUSTERITY



Although the age of austerity is officially over, its effects persist and organisations in the voluntary sector continue to address them.

POVERTY & DEPRIVATION

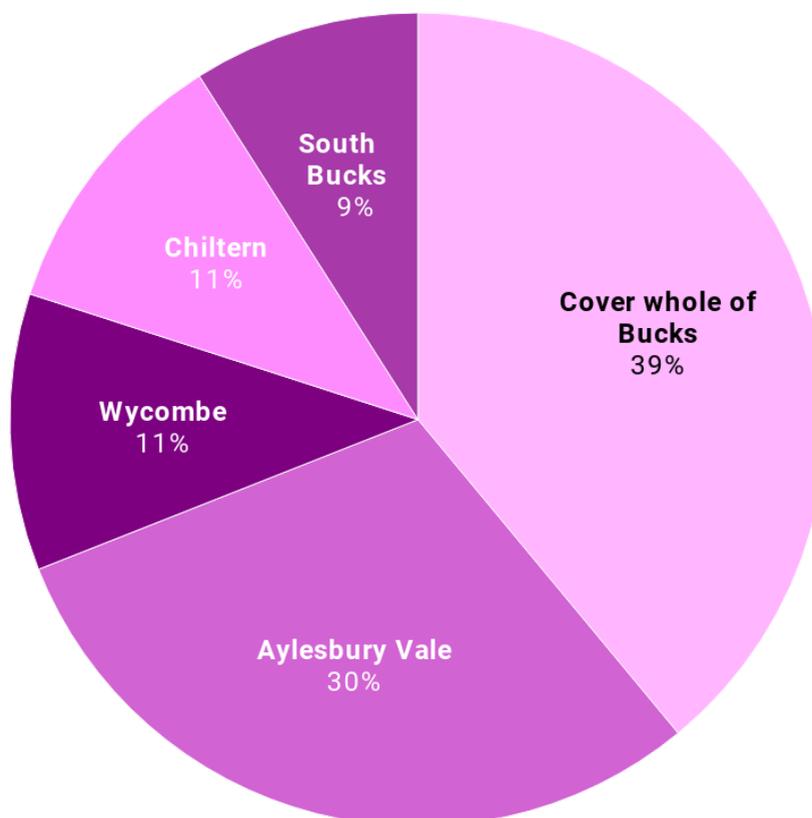
Buckinghamshire is relatively prosperous, with many areas within it being ranked among the 'least deprived' in England by the English Indices of Deprivation 2019⁵⁰ published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

However, there are pockets of deprivation within the county, such as in some areas of Aylesbury and High Wycombe, where households are faced with real difficulties in terms of one or more of the main areas of deprivation (income, employment, education, health, crime, access to housing & local services and living environment).

There are pockets of deprivation within the county, such as in some areas of Aylesbury and High Wycombe

There are 236 registered charities in Buckinghamshire⁵¹ which have a stated aim of the prevention or relief of poverty. The distribution of these across the county is as follows:

■ Cover whole of Bucks ■ Aylesbury Vale ■ Wycombe ■ Chiltern ■ South Bucks



Even if a charity does not have an aim of directly addressing poverty, its activities may have the effect of mitigating the impacts of poverty.

Even though fewer than 10% of the registered charities in Buckinghamshire aim to prevent or relieve poverty, 40% of organisations responding to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey 2019 felt that they make at least some difference in reducing the impact of poverty⁵².

The Indices of Deprivation are less able to identify pockets of deprivation that exist in more sparsely-populated rural areas, where the existence of poverty and deprivation in these communities may be masked by neighbouring affluence⁵³. Rural communities lack access to the services and amenities available in larger towns and cities, which may exacerbate other challenges experienced by people living in those communities.

Deprivation in rural areas may be masked by neighbouring affluence; rural communities lack access to services and may find other challenges are exacerbated.

FOOD BANKS

The scale of charitable food parcel provision in the UK is large: in 2018/19, around 2,000 food banks distributed an estimated two-three million emergency food parcels to 1-2% of all UK households. As at June 2019, there were an estimated 2,070 food banks in the UK⁵⁴.

The Trussell Trust is the UK's largest network of foodbanks and it saw April to September 2019 as the busiest half-year period to date. During the six months, 823,145 three-day emergency food parcels were given to people in crisis in the UK. This is a 23% increase on the same period in 2018 – the sharpest rate of increase the charity has seen for the past five years⁵⁵.

From April – September 2019 The Trussell Trust saw a 23% increase in demand for emergency food parcels compared to the previous year.

This trend is also present in Buckinghamshire, which has 4 foodbanks and a Community Fridge almost all of which opened in the last decade.

In 2019 Buckinghamshire had 4 foodbanks and a Community Fridge

Many of these are supported by more localised collections points, or example in supermarkets and parish churches.

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is present in Buckinghamshire as it is across the UK. Crisis UK's report 'The homelessness monitor: England 2019'⁵⁶ showed that 78% of Local Authorities in the South of England (excluding London) reported that homelessness in their area had increased in the previous year.

In 2019, 78% of Local Authorities in the South of England reported an increase in homelessness.

Worryingly, the prevailing feeling among local authorities across England is pessimistic, with over 50% expecting forthcoming welfare reforms to produce a significant rise in homelessness.

Across Buckinghamshire, charities are fighting homelessness, offering support and advice as well as emergency accommodation including the Wycombe Homeless Connection whose annual review in 2019 said:

“Wycombe showed a higher rate of rough sleeping than the South East of England, itself the worst region outside London, largely due to the shortage of affordable housing”⁵⁷.

9: ADDRESSING SOCIAL COHESION & WELLBEING ISSUES



The voluntary sector is widely recognised by national and local government as being a key player in addressing many of the issues facing modern society.

LONELINESS

In its Loneliness Strategy⁵⁸, the Government says that

“the voluntary sector already plays a vital role in tackling loneliness and bringing people together.”

"It can create strong, integrated communities and challenge obstacles that isolate people or groups. In its delivery of services and projects, it can equip people and communities with the knowledge and skills to recognise loneliness and tackle it".

Around 10% of people over 65 in the UK are experiencing chronic loneliness at any given time. In Buckinghamshire this would be around 9,400 people⁶¹.

TRANSPORT ISSUES

In both isolated rural villages and in urban areas, many Buckinghamshire residents are unable to access public transport. Hospital-provided transport has contracted significantly in recent years⁵⁹.

There are currently over 40 volunteer car schemes and 12 community minibuses throughout Buckinghamshire, helping to meet their community's transport needs.

In June 2019 Community Impact Bucks surveyed Community Transport groups in the county. Results of this survey showed that over 1,300 Buckinghamshire residents volunteer for a community transport scheme and make around 25,000 journeys annually.

Over 1,300 Buckinghamshire residents volunteer for a community transport scheme and make around 25,000 journeys annually.

96% of those journeys are for a hospital or GP appointment. Other trips were to attend a day centre, to get shopping or to attend other types of appointment.

However, in 2019 there were no voluntary schemes servicing Aylesbury⁶⁰ or High Wycombe following the closure of schemes in recent years due to lack of funding. These areas have high numbers of elderly and disabled residents who are unable to access public transport.



10: A FORWARD LOOK: CHANGES IN THE PIPELINE



Buckinghamshire is facing significant change

POPULATION

Buckinghamshire is facing significant change and large-scale development with the addition of approx. 40,000⁶² new homes and potentially 100,000 more residents, as outlined in the three emerging Local Plans.

On top of this, north Bucks is anticipating an additional wave of housing development around the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, formed by the East West Rail project (from Bicester to Bedford, and Aylesbury to Milton Keynes) and the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway (with the preferred route going across the Vale, north of Aylesbury – a pause to this plan was announced in March 2020)⁶³.

Proposals suggest one million new homes are to be built across the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge Arc by 2050⁶⁴.

This scale of development and construction will significantly change the shape of Buckinghamshire and the needs of its residents.

There will be a huge impact on existing communities and infrastructure (schools, roads, GP, services) and new residents may also feel isolated, perhaps lacking knowledge of local services or social connections within the community.

NHS

The NHS long term plan says that it aims to put in place more than 1,000 Social Prescribing Link Workers by the end of 2020-21, rising further by 2023-24. This is with the aim that more than 900,000 people are connected to wider community services that can help them with their health and wellbeing⁶⁵.

This relies on the availability and capacity of community groups that can help them. The NHS Plan cites activities from singing to swimming, cooking to conservation, lunch clubs to libraries.

Social Prescribing Link Workers in the NHS will connect patients to community activities and services that can help them with their health and wellbeing.

Link workers will also be able to advise where to go for further guidance about housing, debt or legal issues (which may be provided by the voluntary sector). At the time of writing, 10 out of an allocated 14 social prescribing link workers are in place in Buckinghamshire.

The delivery of social care services in Buckinghamshire will also change as part the integrated care system⁶⁶.

Both of these developments are likely to lead to an increase in demand for many services provided by voluntary groups.

In the strategy for All-Age Mental Health and Well-being⁶⁷, both NHS Buckinghamshire CCG and the shadow Buckinghamshire Council recognises the part that the voluntary sector plays.

“A significant amount of additional services are provided by the voluntary and community sector. A large proportion of this support is delivered using money from fundraising, with some services such as befriending, employment support and day services supplemented from local authority prevention grants.”

UNITARY AUTHORITY FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Buckinghamshire Council, a new single unitary council within Buckinghamshire, came into effect on 1 April 2020⁶⁸.

It replaces the five councils – Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council.

Under the new Council, 16 Community Boards will be set up across the county with the aim of helping the new council build strong links with local communities and respond to local needs more effectively⁶⁹.

Buckinghamshire Council have allocated £3.9 million to Community Boards to support local projects.

A number of respondents to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey saw the transition to the new unitary council as the biggest challenge facing them in the coming year⁷⁰.

CLIMATE CHANGE

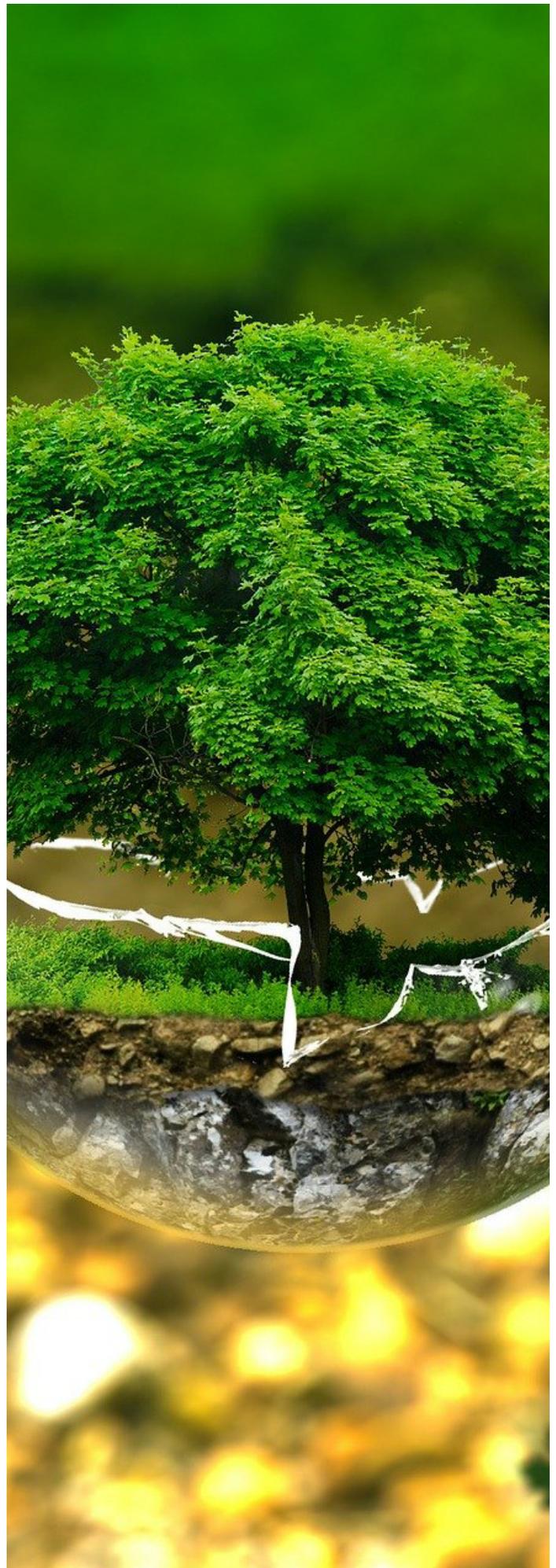
Social enterprises are responding to the scale of the climate crisis more proactively than many other businesses.

According to Social Enterprise UK, nearly nine out of ten social enterprises report that their organisation actively aims to minimise its environmental impact.

75% of social enterprises stated that they see environmental considerations as being of equal or more importance than cost when it comes to procurement decisions.

This compares to 24% of smaller and medium sized businesses⁷¹.

70% of organisations who responded to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey said they want to improve their organisation's environmental sustainability⁷².



11: CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE



NOTE: all findings were drawn before the outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK.

Some sources were pessimistic about the future of the voluntary sector, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Civil Society Futures, fewer than half of charities were confident they will still be operating in 2021⁷³.

The CAF Charity Landscape report⁷⁴ (based on a survey of charity leaders) is similarly downbeat: “Issues with anxiety, uncertainty and fear are impacting many charities already. Public sector austerity may continue under the ongoing uncertainty caused by Brexit and it is important that charities are consulted and informed alongside others as key stakeholders who are affected by this uncertainty”.

Responses to the Community Impact Bucks State of the Sector Survey really brought to life how tough the climate was for the voluntary sector.

When asked what their biggest achievement was in 2019, two organisations gave a one-word response: “survival”.

But it is not all doom and gloom.

The same CAF Charity Landscape report shows that charity leaders tend to be more optimistic about the future of their own organisations (75%) than they are about the future of the sector in general (54%) and overall economic conditions (7%). Optimism for the future of their organisations is unchanged since 2017 (73%)⁷⁵.

According to our survey, two thirds of respondents see the need for their services increasing in the future.

This contrasts with expectations on income (only one third of respondents expect income to increase), and expectations regarding levels of volunteering (only 30% of organisations saw volunteering levels as likely to rise).

Within Buckinghamshire, there is a mixed picture regarding confidence about the future of the sector.

51% of respondents to our survey said that they were unsure about how to deal with some of the challenges they face or to make the most of all opportunities.

12% said that they had multiple issues for which they need more support.

Only 34% of respondents felt that they know what they need to do and are working to a plan.

The decade of austerity has left its mark, with persistent problems blighting the lives of some Buckinghamshire residents.

Voluntary organisations are committed to tackling those problems but, as one such charity said:

“We’d rather not be needed”⁷⁶.

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