



# Survey of South Hams voluntary and community groups 2023

South Hams CVS sent out a consultation survey to a range of community and voluntary groups working in South Hams. The survey was open for five weeks between May and June 2023. Of the 400 organisations approached by email, we received 50 responses.

All the respondents deliver services in South Hams. A third of the respondents said they worked across South Hams or South Devon/Devon and/or a wider geographical remit. Many of the other respondents delivered services from South Hams' towns, but with provision to surrounding parishes. While there were a range of groups responding, the majority had a caring focus.

The survey aimed to assess our community and voluntary groups current and future needs around their sustainability, training and support, governance and the barriers to achieving their aims.

The following pages provide a snapshot of the current picture for our voluntary and community groups—with both qualitative and quantitative information. The findings show that many of our organisations have identified specific needs around funding, sustainability, training and volunteer recruitment. The latter also includes trustee/board recruitment, in particular the need for specific skill sets.

South Hams CVS has already started work on meeting the identified needs. Currently we are recruiting a Fundraising Manager to start in the autumn. This role will help to build our capacity in priority areas while offering training/guidance around fundraising for our voluntary and community groups. We are also working on developing our training programme and reviewing how we can better assist our voluntary and community groups with their communications, volunteer recruitment and governance.

For more information on your local car scheme, please call: **01752 690444** or email: [info@ringandrider.net](mailto:info@ringandrider.net)

*Can you make a real difference to someone's life?*

**VOLUNTEERS**  
*urgently needed!*

Many residents in your local community are currently struggling to access essential services due to lack of transport. Please can you spare some time to help your local community members to get to GP, dental or hospital appointments?

MILEAGE EXPENSES PAID!



*Volunteer recruitment is a priority need for many of our groups*

*South Hams CVS works with local voluntary and community organisations*



**It's not just a cup of tea ...**

*— but a life saver for an isolated person.*

Many residents in the Modbury area would love to chat with someone over a cup of tea, a game or an activity, or to go for a stroll—even for as little as an hour or so a week.

It's a really rewarding experience—as our volunteers will testify—and the highlight of the week for an isolated person.

**Befrienders are urgently needed!**

Tel: 07554 997140  
Email: [modburycaring@gmail.com](mailto:modburycaring@gmail.com)

In association with South Hams CVS  
Modbury Caring Community Registration Number: 2012022

# Sustainability

Organisations were asked about their income sustainability. They were given five options and asked to choose the best fit.

While 20% of the responses identified a particular issue around funding, a similar number noted that their income is robust and they have the necessary skills and relationships in place. The other 60% of responses felt they could do better in terms of income generation, even if they are currently financially sound.



Although this question primarily related to sustainability of income, the issues raised in the comments were more wide-ranging as survey respondents perhaps wished to address their immediate concerns.

As anticipated, the priority concerns in the individual comments related to income generation via fundraising and grant applications. But there were a variety of responses with concerns around reduced donations alongside rising costs. Some of the responses mentioned engaging with local businesses, while others were part of larger national organisations with different funding streams. Responses also included considerations around training needs and legal support.

In terms of income generation, support is needed in the form of fundraising and bid writing training sessions, identifying funding sources, one-to-one advice around specific areas, but also more substantial help for new organisations.



We need all the support we can get with funding. We have raised some small grants for specific areas of work recently but core costs are a problem. There is much we would like to do if we had the resources.

Help with identifying funders, making grant applications ... the whole issue of sustainability for a small charity in the current climate.

Ideas and a fund raising/income 'tool kit' would be useful to motivate trustees, who take responsibility for initiating and agreeing fund raising opportunities/income generation. It often seems onerous to our trustees, who are often busy with other things.

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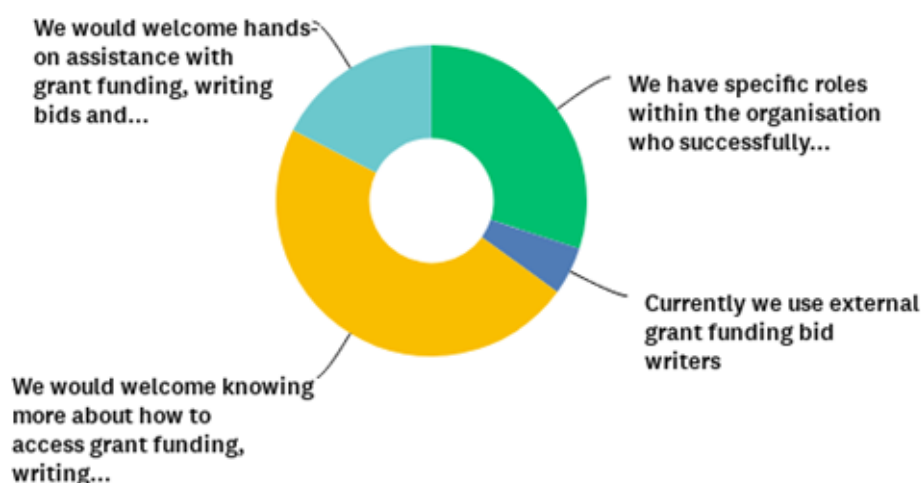
Generally our income base is sound but as with everyone we are faced by rising costs and funders who are also squeezed.



## Access to grant funding

Organisations were asked what support they would value in terms of accessing grant streams. They were given five options and asked to choose the best fit.

Thirty percent of the organisations had specific roles, whereas 5% paid for external grant-funding bid writers. However, the vast majority of organisations would welcome more help whether this is with hands-on assistance or access to information and training.



We have someone in place who writes the bids (me!) but as I'm Director too, I have so much on my plate that I often struggle to manage the bid writing, management and evaluation. We could do with skilling up in reporting on our projects. So many templates we have used for the funders purposes, but we haven't developed our own integral reporting tools as we would wish to, though we have a huge amount of resources to compile. Sometimes this can seem to be an overwhelming task!

Accessing appropriate funding, core funding and project funding. Developing a strategy and getting funding to support that. Needs analysis of local community. We are so small, it is hard to do all of this ourselves, when we are busy delivering services too. Coordinator is face to face worker as well as all of these things.

We are a small organisation and have applied for one grant and want to expand and apply for more. A workshop on how to write good bids would be useful.

We have had previous bad experiences with bid writers who have drained our resources with no successful bids. The person we are currently using has trusted references but we are awaiting outcomes.



Some of the responses in this section and the previous page relating to income sustainability have noted the issues relating to grant funding now being aligned to projects rather than core costs.

While a few organisations stated that they are self-sufficient or using bid writers, the majority expressed a need to understand how to source funding streams, write applications and the subsequent reporting.

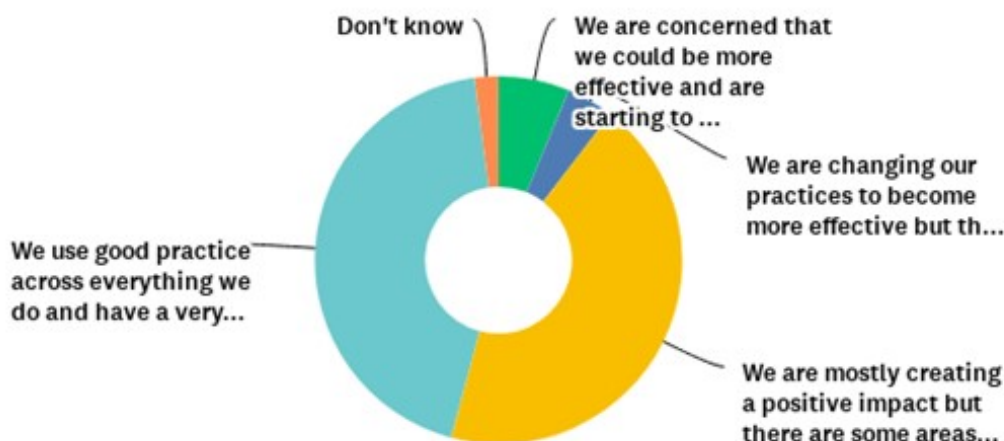
Interestingly, when SHCVS has run training around grant funding bid writing, the uptake has been low—yet the need is demonstrated here. While our new fundraiser role may be able to support with this, it is unlikely that one-to-one assistance will be possible for the sheer scale of need demonstrated here.

This means we need to consider how to meet our groups' training needs by providing toolkits, online training sessions—with more than one date on offer—alongside other opportunities, particularly noting that capacity and time an identified issue.

## Making a difference

Organisations were asked how the work they undertake makes a difference for their communities and creates the maximum impact. They were given five options and asked to choose the best fit.

The vast majority felt they were mostly creating a positive impact (44%) or undertaking good practice across everything they do with a very positive impact for our beneficiaries (44%). Ten percent of the responses felt concerned about being more effective, although half of these noted that there was resistance to change or the changes were patchy.



Although the majority of the tick-box responses were positive, the individual comments did draw out specific areas of need.

A number of respondents mentioned the issues related to finding skilled staff members, while others touched on volunteers, governance, demonstrating impact, networking and joined-up working.

These areas are examined further in the survey where more in-depth questions are asked about specific needs.

One response did, however, raise a point that appears to be an issue for some of our smaller caring groups, particularly when there is an identified unmet need in their community: 'I think some members are fearful of failure and also change.'

These responses will enable SHCVS to more effectively support and train our voluntary organisations in their valuable role in our communities.



We are a well established organisation and have reached a kind of plateau stage of operation which is manageable and sustainable for the existing managing committee of volunteers. There is scope for us to expand our reach and scope of activities, but we do not currently have the organisational capacity to drive that forward.

The key issue is finding staff who have the evaluative skill sets and also possessing the caring and empathetic skills sets needed, at the salaries we can afford to pay.

There are different ideas within the group. I think some members are fearful of failure and also change. Not sure how to tackle this?

We'd like to improve the way we monitor and evaluate our services - to include impacts on wellbeing, and incorporate more qualitative feedback from our clients. At present it tends to be focused on practical improvements and energy savings. We'd like to bring this to life more.

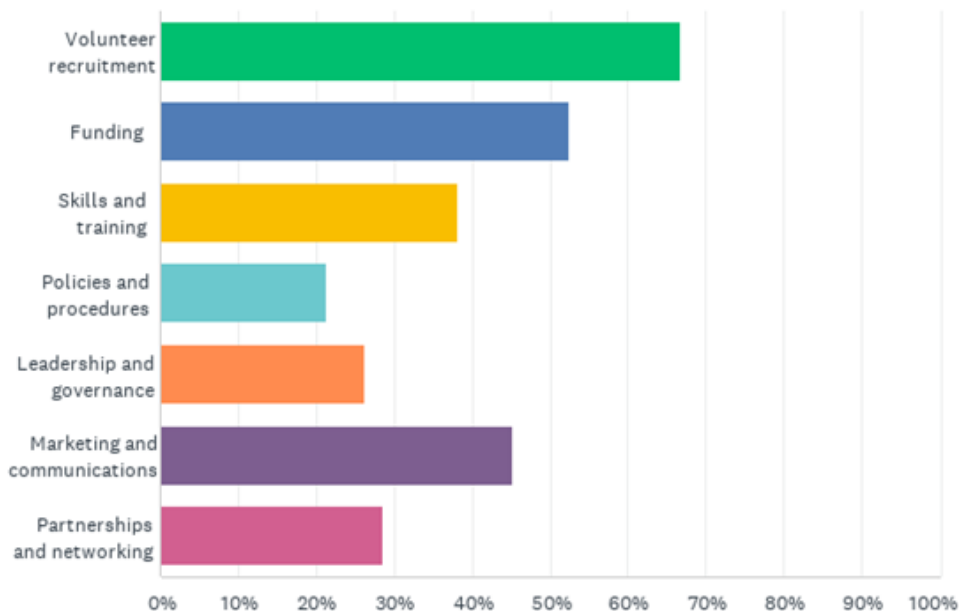
I would like to see more support for CEOs of small charities, particularly with HR and strategy as well as possibly networking opportunities with others.

We are mainly novices and governance, finance and planning are areas of specialism that need work.



## Enabling our VCSE to achieve their aims

Organisations were asked to tick their identified needs in terms of volunteer recruitment, funding, skills and training, policies and procedures, leadership and governance, marketing and communications, and partnerships and networking. They could tick more than one item.



There's a shortage of quality training for charities in Devon - and it costs a lot, e.g. to send someone up to London. It would be great if you could establish a bigger local market for training.

New thinking on community development would be helpful.

We have a huge number of policies but nothing to really check what might be missing.

Policies as laws change, leadership and governance is pretty strong in our organisation but local support for that and Trustee inductions etc would be useful. As would longer term planning/development support.

We need more trustees.

Volunteer recruitment is a priority at the moment, but some guidance around volunteer management would be useful. Partnerships and networking, particularly with other similar organisations ... Transport is a concern for us too - are there policies available for us to adapt so we can create our own patient transport service?

The main benefit from being part of Kingsbridge and District Caring Alliance is the information sharing and networking with other members.



As expected, volunteer recruitment was highly scored, although not all organisations are finding this an issue. Perhaps this is due to many of the larger organisations using fewer volunteers and more paid employees—or having effective recruitment campaigns/schemes for volunteers, with communications staff in place. This would be worth exploring further.

One of the respondents noted that it would be useful to find out what other caring and transport organisations are doing. The planned District-wide Caring Alliance meetings could potentially assist with providing some learning from each of the main caring organisations in the area (we have two local Alliances already in place).

Several of the responses mentioned training needs, while others mentioned policies—in particular with changes in law.

Community development was raised several times, including training and new ways of thinking.



## Volunteers and recruitment

Organisations were asked to respond if their organisation had identified a need around volunteer recruitment.

Of all the respondents, 31 organisations identified an issue with volunteer recruitment. Of these, 45% were concerned that the lack of volunteers is currently impacting their organisation's work, while 55% said that they currently have enough volunteers but are concerned about future volunteer recruitment.



Since Covid, the issue of volunteer recruitment seems to have become more challenging.

Anecdotally, we are told that volunteers prefer to do ad-hoc roles at—for example—a fun day, rather than regular sessions. The latter is desperately needed for important volunteering roles such as befriending

One respondents said: 'We certainly struggle for volunteers across the board and it is challenging when people are away or ill as there aren't the people to cover them. I'm not sure how you could help with this as we are aware that everywhere is struggling for volunteers at this time.'

But, while the outlook seems more challenging than before, publicising opportunities has proved fruitful.

One article SHCVS undertook in the Imag encouraged four potential volunteers to come forward in Ivybridge, with two of those signing up to become community car drivers. If SHCVS had more staff capacity, we could really benefit our local organisations with their communications and volunteer recruitment, among many other areas.



It's more a case of training and empowering volunteers to start their own projects. There also seems to be fewer volunteers generally in Bridgetown as opposed to the centre of town. This may be due to fewer retirees, lack of confidence, busy families, etc. Not really sure...

We have a very busy Transport service and need more volunteers both here and in befriending and fundraising.

We just about have enough volunteers at the moment. This means that whilst we currently have enough volunteers, it's difficult to expand our services further because we can't overstretch our existing volunteers. Any help at all with volunteer recruitment would be welcomed, and perhaps helping us to fine-tune role descriptions or sharing ideas for volunteer enrichment and socialising events.

Help with publicising and promoting local volunteering opportunities.

We would benefit from an increased flow of volunteers.

Like all other organisations, we are struggling to recruit drivers. We have dropped from 22 to 10 since the Pandemic. Advertisements etc bear no fruit.

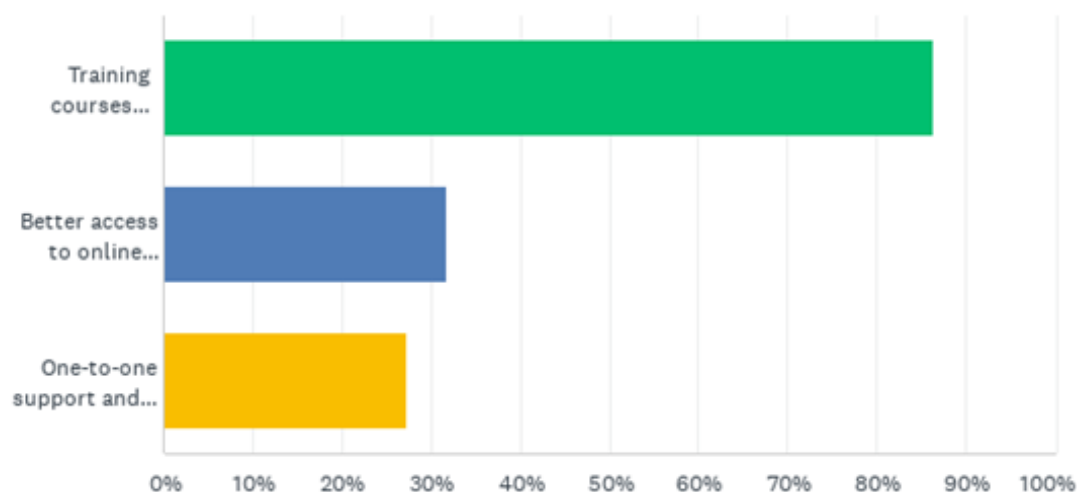
We would like advice on securing more recruits and help with advertising volunteering opportunities.



## Training and skills

Organisations were asked to respond if their organisation had identified a need around additional training and skills—and how could SHCVS better meet the identified needs.

Of all the respondents, 22 organisations identified a training and skills need. Individuals were able to tick more than one box. Of these, 19 wanted to attend training courses provided through SHCVS or another provider, 7 wanted better access to online materials, while 6 wanted one-to-one support and guidance.



All of the above are needed. Sharing of skills across different organisations, perhaps through social events that will help build relationships.

Safeguarding, first aid and any skills that support management would be helpful.

Mental health awareness.

Events Management, Community development (Asset based approaches), Marketing & Publicity, Volunteer management.

We would like to have staff, trustees and volunteers given the opportunity to attend a dementia awareness workshop, maybe 2-3 hours long.

Affordable First aid training is often a gap we struggle to fill.

Online training is available but what we need is face-to-face small group training. This could be done in partnership with others with the same needs.

We have not done a training assessment. There is no training provision in place currently.

It would be good to access someone at SHCVS who could sit down and talk through/mentor us around what we are doing and what the potential gaps are.



There are developing themes around training in these responses but none mention grant funding at this point, so it is important to reflect on all the responses throughout this survey when considering training needs.

A one-sized approach—face-to-face, online, toolkits—also wouldn't work for these specific responses in this section. Yet—as previously mentioned—even for the groups who prefer a F2F training session, the times/dates become a barrier for attendance.

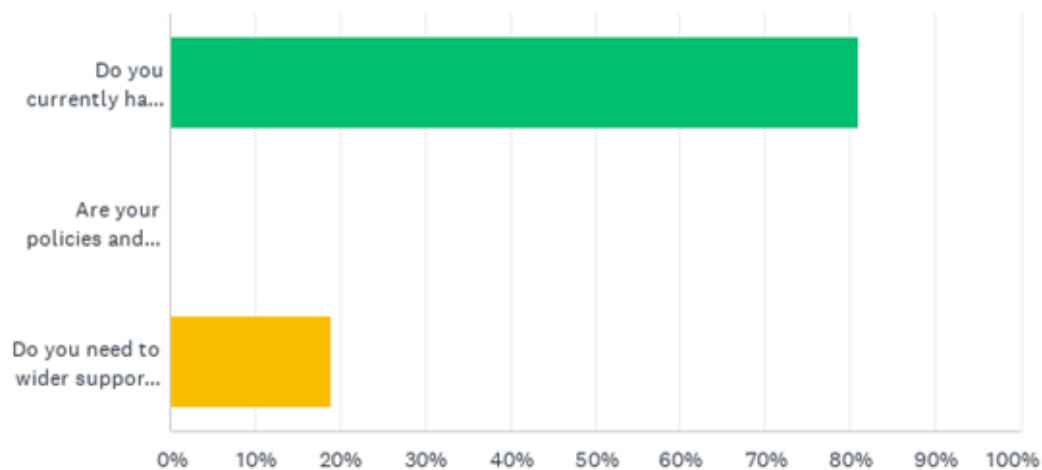
In addition, these responses raise the query as to whether our training communications are reaching groups—even though we have a substantial mailing list and we also use social media.

Other opportunities need to be considered including a communications role to support SHCVS and our voluntary and community groups.

## Policies and procedures

Organisations were asked to respond if their organisation had identified a need around policies and procedures.

Of all the respondents, 21 organisations identified a need with regard to policies and procedures. Of these, 80% said that they currently had the correct policies and procedures in place, but were concerned about keeping up-to-date with new rules and guidance. The rest said they needed wider support with their organisation's policies and procedures.



While none of the organisations said that their policies and procedures were out-of-date, we did have one group responding to explain that they didn't have any documented policies or procedures. We will write to offer support—with signposting to websites where this information can be found.

With this in mind, some of the responses may make it worthwhile for SHCVS to consider providing basic guidance online—with a table showing the expected documents for most organisations—and links to other websites.



I prefer online materials to access information, but find the SHCVS website confusing to use sometimes.

We have superb policies and procedures and do review them annually. It would be useful though if we received information in any core changes to guidance with regard for instance, health and safety and safeguarding.

An up-to-date list of minimum policies for a charity would be helpful together with information needed to ensure they are up to date.

We have the basics in place but could do with a review and regular updates.

I guess with our aspiration for QA any input and guidance will be gratefully received

Support with reviewing and updating/ improving our policies and procedures would be helpful.

Our policies are due to be reviewed in the next couple of months, so any help at all regarding new rules and guidance would be very useful and timely.

We do need to review our policies and update them to latest standards.

All OK at present. Reviewed annually. New policies put in place where necessary.

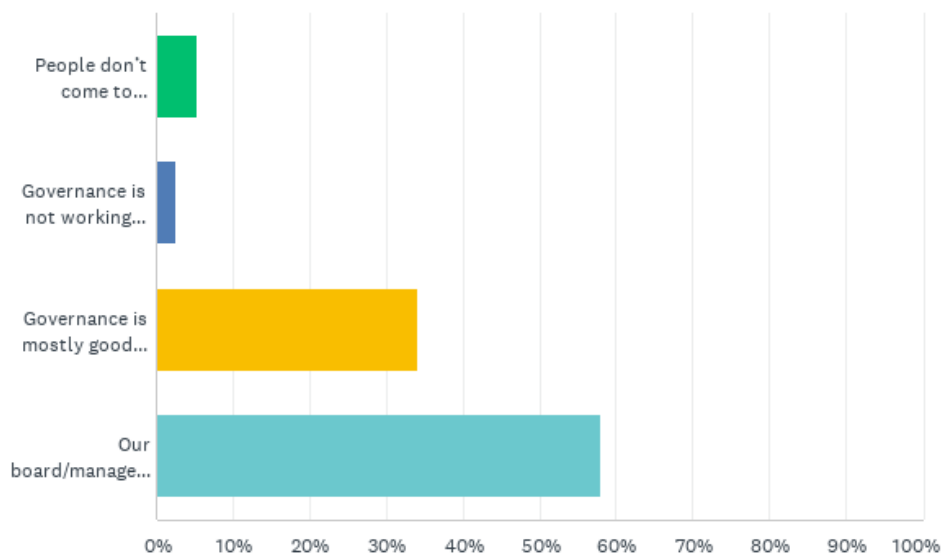




## Leadership and governance

Organisations were asked to respond if their organisation had a good governance. Respondents were asked which best described their board or management committee.

Of all the respondents to the overall survey, 38 organisations chose to answer this question. Of these, 58% said that their board/management committee is taking the organisation forward, working well together and ensures good governance. 34% said that governance is mostly good enough with some areas where improvement is needed. A small percentage said that people don't come to meetings/don't know their roles or governance is not working well enough but we are finding ways to improve.



Help with recruiting new voluntary directors - skills and networks gap analysis and help us find people with the skills we need and time to contribute.

Training courses for trustees, perhaps an online course we could all access simultaneously with materials to reference later. If one-to-one or in-person support is available just to provide a refresher or any updates on trustee responsibilities and governance skills, we would be very interested.

People come to meetings but in my opinion, aren't empowered to take action in their community. As mentioned I feel that there is a fear of failure and losing control from some more established members of the group.

We desperately need a good treasurer, our current one is reluctant and inexperienced in the role and I as chair am really doing the budgeting and accounting.

Our trustees have a broad range of key skills for the charity to be strategic. We invested a great deal in training and recruitment five years ago.



Although the majority of respondents assessed their governance as good, a theme from the responses was the recruitment of board members and trustees. There seems to be a particular issue with recruitment into roles where specific skill sets are required. SHCVS offers Devon Connect but we may need to consider other communication streams.

Training was also identified as a need, alongside refresher training to keep trustees/board members up to date.

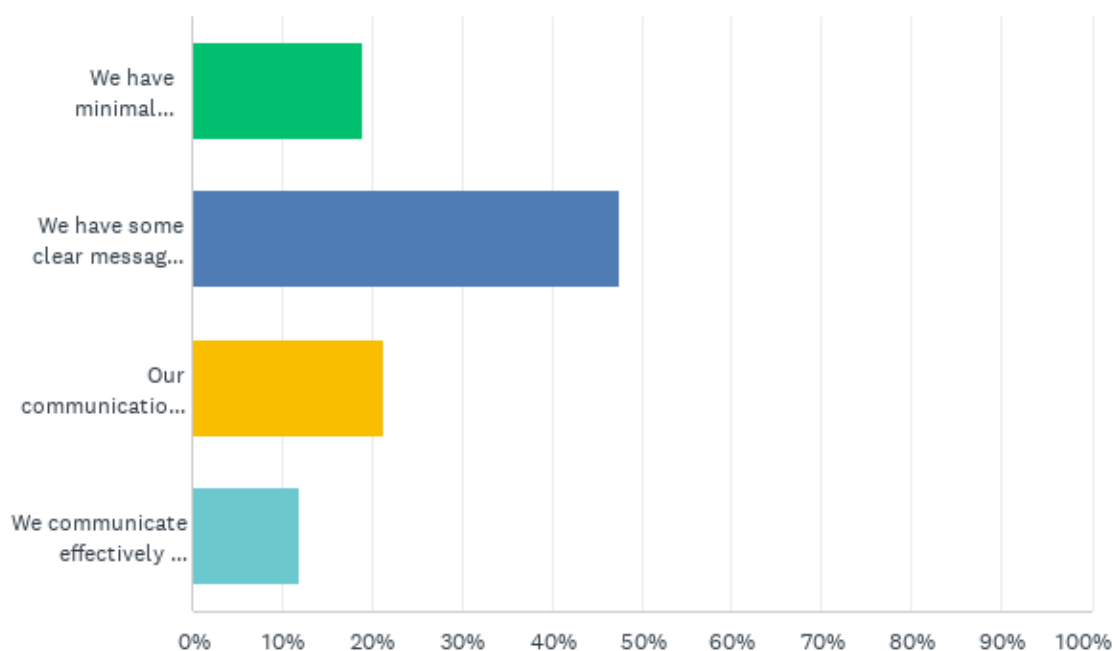
One of the respondents notes that their organisation is struggling with long-standing committee members not adapting to the changing environment and fearing the loss of control by bringing in newer members. This is something that we have come across in the community, and it can be challenging to encourage change in this respect.

The Quality Mark—offered through SHCVS—has been mentioned. This encourages organisations to review their policies and procedures, in addition to leadership and governance.

## Marketing and communications

Organisations were asked about their marketing and communications. Respondents were asked to describe their organisation in terms of influencing their external environment—and how they communicate effectively with all their stakeholders including communities, beneficiaries, funders and policy makers.

Of the 42 responses, 19% of respondents said they have minimal communication. The highest percentage—with 47%—was ‘We have some clear messages we are aiming to communicate and we respond to some consultations’. 20% felt their communications were good, while the smallest percentage (12%) of respondents stated that they communicate effectively and purposefully, and have clear messages that they communicate in a dynamic way and have a clear effect on their intended audience.



It doesn't need an in-depth analysis of the responses to understand why the larger VCSE organisations say they can communicate effectively, while our smaller groups need support.

By helping our community groups to more effectively market themselves, it would also bring wider benefits—not just for service delivery and demonstrating impact—but, as one survey respondent noted, in terms of volunteer recruitment.

While a future communications role would be an asset in terms marketing and communication support, it would be helpful to provide training for groups who cannot afford to buy in services, but really need to publicise their work and needs more effectively.



We have very limited resources available to give this and would like to be more dynamic re shouting about play, early years education and influencing our community to understand more about what it is we do and why it is so important.

We would particularly welcome more training on social media marketing and M&E.

Deliver face-to-face sessions with groups on how to maximise the effectiveness of Devon Connect

We are a small team that is pushed for time, and this always ends up on the back burner. Some bespoke support and/or access to a marketing and communications service could be really helpful.

Marketing materials can be a little tired and old fashioned. some training in more powerful design would be useful.

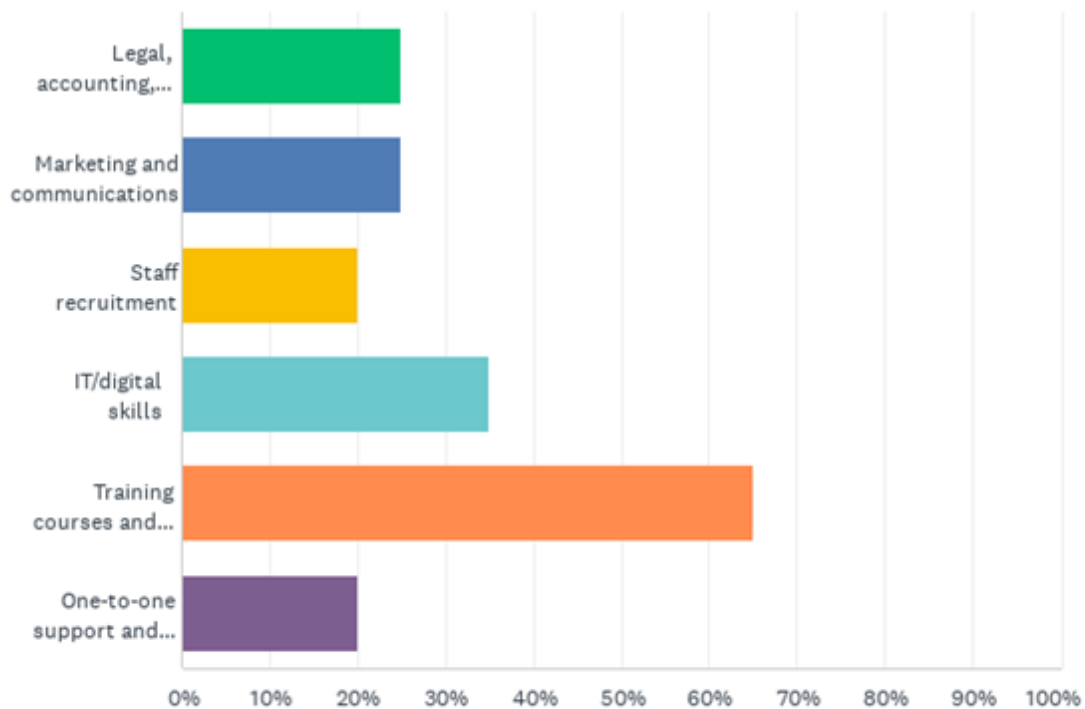
Training, 121 support and guidance would all be very useful. As would help to recruit marketing volunteers.



## Payment for support

Organisations were asked to respond if their organisation would be prepared to pay for support.

Of all the respondents, 20 organisations responded. The organisations were able to tick more than one identified need.



“

Whilst funding is limited for paid support/training, we do appreciate that there are costs involved for people delivering it, so yes we would be prepared to pay towards training if necessary.

I'm not sure the group has funds for training. I'm not entirely sure some would value training (sadly). They may well take up free training though.

Legal HR advice when needed.

We would need to give this aspect more thought, as we have not outsourced or bought in this kind of thing in the past.

We have no funding, so it would be a bit difficult to pay for anything!

We already pay for accounting - if there was good quality training/support then I would be prepared to pay for it .

It depends on cost but would be willing to contribute.

We are self funding to the level we need for survival.

”

While 20 of the respondents said they would be prepared to pay for support, there were a number who stated that they simply wouldn't be able to afford to do so—or support wouldn't be valued enough to fund it, considering other priority areas.

In terms of those willing to consider paying for services or support, all the areas apart from training courses and IT/digital skills had similar levels of response.

In the previous sections, many had said they need support with marketing and communications, but just five would be willing or able to pay for this. Four organisations would be willing—or able—to pay for one-to-one support or guidance.

The highest level of response was for paid training courses.