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Local Business Giving: between the raffle prize and a new source of funding

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Acknowledgements

The research for this report was funded by Sheffield Hallam University's Knowledge Exchange Programme and NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action). The aim of the project was to develop an understanding of the contribution businesses make to voluntary and community organisations at a local level. The project had the following objectives:

- to undertake a review of existing approaches to measuring the contribution of local businesses to the VCS at a local level
- to undertake a pilot study on one geographical area (Greater Manchester)
- to undertake primary research into three examples of business giving supported through the Transforming Local Infrastructure fund.

A further objective of the project was to produce a report which is of use to NAVCA's members. The authors of the report are grateful to all those who gave their time freely to participate in the research. However, the responsibility for the report and any residual errors rests with its authors.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Considerable attention has been given to the role of large businesses in supporting charities; however, relatively little research has been undertaken into the contribution of SMEs to the voluntary and community sector at a local level. This report is based on an exploratory study which reviews existing evidence of business giving, analyses local voluntary and community sector survey data on business engagement, and case study research in three localities which have developed business giving initiatives.

Policy Context

The Coalition Government has shown considerable interest in the role business may play in supporting civic action. This has largely focused on the role of the large corporate sector, with relatively little attention given to local places and small firms.

However, in the Coalition Government's agenda to recast the role of the voluntary sector at a local level, Transforming Local Infrastructure (TLI), includes as part of one objective the development of better partnerships with local businesses. This provides the basis and focal point for this research report.

Business Perspectives

In a similar way that there is no unified voluntary and community sector, there is no unified small business sector. Both sectors, to the extent to which they can be even be called sectors, comprise many parts.

More fruitful avenues both for research but also for the sector may be to think in terms of networks, relationships and flows of resources (financial but more likely in non-monetary terms).

We also found that the potential for business giving is likely to vary quite markedly across the UK, something which we argue has been given insufficient attention in the formulation of policy.

Third Sector's Perspective

There is very little robust data on the extent and nature of business support for local voluntary and community organisations.

The overwhelming finding from this research is that local business support for, and engagement with, the voluntary sector at a local level is very low: few organisations receive financial support. The financial support that is provided represents a tiny fraction of the sector's total income.

Larger organisations are more likely to receive financial support than smaller ones, but small/micro organisations make up the majority of the sector. Most organisations do not have frequent and direct dealings with local businesses, particularly when compared to local authorities for example.

However, business-sector relationships should not be discounted. The findings suggest a reasonably significant group, a core of organisations, for which relationships with business are important.

The existence of some outlier examples of positive practice suggests that there are opportunities for some organisations to get something from developing relationships with business. A question which this raises is what is the extent of these opportunities, or the amount of headroom for business contributions to be increased? Moreover, is there value in VCS organisations committing resources to increasing financial contributions from the private sector? And if there is, how might this be done?

Local Practices

The local research into three TLI projects revealed the following lessons:

- **Building relationships matters**. One respondent reported that the 'hard sale doesn't work' when trying to create and sustain relationships and the aim is to 'build and nurture trust'
- **Business giving cannot just be about giving money**, particularly for small businesses
- **Infrastructure organisations are being required to 'reinvent their role**, and be clear about the value they are adding'. As such they have to offer some tangible benefits to frontline charities
- **Developing local business giving takes time**. As one respondent noted: 'this is a process that can't be forced on anyone and it's not something that will happen overnight'.

A further message which was made on several occasions was that there needed to be mutual benefit for both the private and the voluntary and community sectors.

Conclusion and Lessons

We draw a series of ten conclusions and lessons together at the end of the report.

The overarching findings are that there are limited opportunities for the voluntary and community sector from business giving, certainly in terms of finding alternative sources of funding. However, it is an arena in which there is likely to be interest for some time.

There are therefore a range of implications for the response of the sector, understanding how relationships with business may be developed and the space for more innovation by infrastructure organisations. However, we also conclude by suggesting that it will mean more for some places than others.

Introduction

1

1.1. Introduction

Considerable attention has been given to the role of large businesses in supporting charities: whether through the release of staff on a pro bono basis, payroll giving, and corporate sponsorship of a charity. More broadly these activities are often grouped under a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) banner of major businesses. However, relatively little research has been undertaken into the contribution of SMEs to the voluntary and community sector at a local level. Exceptions to this include:

- research by the DTI in 2003 with Business in the Community *Engaging SMEs in Community & Social Issues*[1]
- recently published research by former Labour MP Tom Levitt into SME community engagement in York and Bradford. This is funded by the JRF[2]
- research being conducted by Kay Allen to support the establishment of Trading for Good, an initiative to promote corporate responsibility by small firms.[3]

What is apparent is that there is very little evidence into the scale or trends in giving by SMEs at a local level in the United Kingdom. Despite this, business giving has become a key component of the Government's strategy to promote civic action. Whilst there is an array of research based on case study evidence (see for example Beth Breeze's excellent work on giving by High Net-Worth Individuals,[4] research on Family based Foundations[5] and Barclays research on the intentions of high value account holders[6]) none of this looks at businesses themselves.

Research into why small businesses engage in communities tends to reveal some striking patterns. A good example of this is research by Madden, Scaife and Crissman on SME engagement in communities in Australia. The research revealed the following:

- small firms have an interest in supporting local communities

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1 BITC (2003) *Engaging SMEs in Community & Social Issues.* London, BITC. http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/publications/engaging_smes.html

2 See Levitt, T (2013) *The Social SME. A Study of Small Businesses and Selected Social Responsibility Issues in Bradford and York*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Report is available on the internet: http://sector4focus.co.uk/home/smes-in-the-community-my-jrf-report/

3 http://www.tradingforgood.co.uk/

4 B. Breeze (2011) *The Coutts Million Pound Donors Report 2011*. Coutts: London.

5 B. Breeze (2009) *Natural Philanthropists: Findings of the Family Business Philanthropy and Social Responsibility Inquiry*. Institute for Family Business: London

6 Barclays (2011) *Barclays Wealth 2011 UK Wealth Map.* London, Barclays *http://www.barclayswealth.com/insights/assets/pdf/2011-UK-Wealth-Map.pdf*

- it is useful to combine individual and corporate motives for support as most small businesses are privately owned and ownership and management roles are combined
- some small businesses receive a lot of requests for support from charity fundraising campaigns. Most requests are ignored as a result
- support is less likely to be about contributing financially, and more likely to be about giving expertise, time and materials. [7]

The authors go on to make the case for better dissemination of best practice to businesses on how to engage in communities.

Despite relatively limited evidence on the extent of giving in the UK, the Government is currently rolling out a programme to promote giving by businesses through the Cabinet Office 'Innovation in Giving' programme, delivered by NESTA as part of their Public Services Lab programme.[8] This includes a new strand of work in 2013 to increase the level and scale of community contribution from business, including SMEs. They correctly highlight that this is an underdeveloped area (compared to the major corporate sector).

This report stems from discussions with the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action around the extent to which we can develop the evidence base, particularly using quantitative data around local giving. We have also consulted NESTA around the review of literature in this field. These interests come together around the development of better quantitative evidence into giving by SMEs and from this to understand key trends, the areas of VCS activity which are supported and importantly geographic disparity.

1.2. Seeds of the same plot or a different model of capitalism?

Research into business giving cannot be undertaken without some reference to the uneasy and contested relationship which has grown since the financial crisis between the market, the state and society. Debates around this relationship have been most acutely focused on the pervasive and sometimes unchecked role of the financial sector and its influence in shaping the everyday lives of citizens and the recasting of national systems of welfare.

The rise of Corporate Social Responsibility has also raised questions around the role of business in relation to society. Some have approached this through the lens of citizenship, seeking to describe what might be the rights and responsibilities of business.[9] In contrast, for those on the libertarian right, any suggestion that business may have anything other than a role to maximise profits for shareholders is described as heresy.[10]

Following the financial crisis and prolonged period of low growth/recession in most European economies, continued questions have been asked around whether other models of capitalism need to be found which recast relationships between state, market and society.

[7] Madden, K., Scaife, W. and Crissman, K. (2006), 'How and why small to medium size enterprises (SMEs) engage with their communities: an Australian study'. International Journal of Nonprofit Voluntary Sector Marketing v. 11 pp. 49–60.

[8] http://www.nesta.org.uk/areas_of_work/public_services_lab/giving

[9] Burchell, J. and Cook, J. (2006), 'Confronting the "corporate citizen": shaping the discourse of corporate social responsibility', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, v. 26 n. 3/4 pp. 121-137.

[10] Margolis, J.D. and Walsh, J.P. (2003), 'Misery Loves Companies: Rethinking Social Initiatives by Business' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 48: 268-305.

Our small scale research project does not seek to provide answers to these very big questions. However, it does seek to provide evidence around what might be happening in the mediating role of the voluntary and community sector in terms of society-market relationships at a local level. These issues will be returned to in conclusion.

1.3. The Research

This report is based on an exploratory study. Three sets of evidence were collected and analysed:

- existing literature on SMEs and what can be considered to be known about their engagement with society
- primary data drawn from a major survey of VCS organisations in a northern city region of England. This survey contained closed and open questions around the sector's relationship with business
- case studies in three locations across England: a northern rural county; a northern metropolitan unitary area; and a London borough.

Alongside this evidence we also reviewed a wide range of academic and policy literature.

The report is structured around the three forms of evidence with wider academic and policy literature woven into each section. We start though with a summary of the policy context.

Policy Context

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2.1. Promoting Giving

The Coalition Government published Green and White Papers on Giving[11] and launched initiatives such as Every Business Commits and Innovation in Giving. Every Business Commits, for example, suggests the following:

- continue to support employees who are already giving their energy and time
- make available and actively promote payroll giving to all employees
- encourage volunteering and philanthropy – perhaps by making your company's time, skills, and resources available to neighbourhood groups, local arts organisations and for social action
- help employees learn how to get involved in social action, for example by supporting them to take a Citizen University course.

Trading for Good, mentioned in the introduction, was a key outcome from the Every Business Commits initiative.

However, policy attention is largely focused on the large corporate sector, and the role of employee volunteering, corporate or venture philanthropy and specific initiatives. Examples of such initiatives include employability and outreach to disadvantaged young people programmes. In the large corporate sector these activities generally fall under strategies of Corporate Social Responsibility. A further initiative is the Government's Business Connectors programme. Led by Business in the Community 'Business Connectors are talented individuals seconded from business, trained by Business in the Community and placed in communities of greatest need to build partnerships that tackle local issues'.[12]

What is striking about the policy narrative to date has been the relative absence of discussion around what corporate giving might look like at a local level, and the scope and scale of SMEs contribution to this.

2.2. Transforming the Voluntary and Community sector

As part of a wider array of initiatives to promote civic action, under the broad and unwieldy policy label of the Big Society, the government has sought to recast the role of the voluntary and community sector. This is primarily in terms of its relationship

[11] See HM Government (2010), *Giving Green Paper* (available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78906/Giving-Green-Paper.pdf)and HM Government and HM Government (2011), *Giving White Paper* (available at: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8084/8084.pdf)

[12] Business in the Community see: www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/business-connectors- See more at: http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/business-connectors)

with the state, but also to encourage greater engagement with business. In the vanguard of policy initiatives working at a local level is the Transforming Local Infrastructure (TLI) programme. TLI is a £30 million fund from the Office for Civil Society and administered by the Big Fund. It aims to increase long-term sustainability of local infrastructure and reduce the need for on-going central Government support.

The main outcomes for TLI include:

- frontline civil society organisations can access a wider range of high quality support, networking and volunteering brokerage opportunities and value them more highly
- there is stronger local leadership for civil society organisations which contributes to better partnerships with local businesses and the local statutory sector
- infrastructure organisations, including volunteering infrastructure, are transformed so that they are more efficient, effective and are able to learn and grow with less dependence on state funding.

Research by NAVCA into TLI explored the engagement of business in the programme. NAVCA found that the vast majority of bids (around 90 per cent) say something about working with the private sector (only seven say nothing explicit on this). This study also found an aspiration amongst infrastructure organisations to develop better relationships with the private sector through 'increased contact and engagement, new partnerships and better information for existing and potential partners as a result of consolidating and improving the infrastructure service/support offer'.[13] In terms of giving by businesses much of the focus of TLI proposals is stimulating payroll giving, employee volunteering and philanthropic donations from business owners.

[13] Cooke, S. (2013) *Transforming Local Infrastructure Bids analysis*. Report available at: www.navca.org.uk/transforming-local-infrastructure-analysis

Business Perspective

3

SMEs account for 99.9 per cent of businesses in the UK; 59.2 per cent of employment; and 48.7 per cent of turnover (National Statistics, 2013).

3.1. What existing evidence suggests about SME giving

Although SMEs are often reliant on locality, and are often assumed to be more 'local' than large firms simply by dint of their size, SME attitudes differ. This is partly to do with a predominant feeling that, as an SME, their impact on local communities - either positive or negative - is negligible (Farinelli *et al*., 2005)[14]. But the local rootedness of SMEs can also be overplayed. Curran and Blackburn (1994)[15] show that SME networks are often geographically stretched and - especially in the case of small and micro firms - often have very few employment ties to the local community. Curran (1993 p.10, cited in Blackburn, 2012) neatly summarises these points:

> *the assumption that locality coincides with the activities and 'world' of small business owners is misconceived since the market interactions of many SMEs reach beyond their immediate locality and owner-managers often have little affinity with the location in which their business is located*[16]

In many ways SMEs are less reliant on local labour markets and infrastructure than larger firms. This may sound counterintuitive given the notion of 'footloose' international capital, but large firms of all types require physical assets based in localities. By sheer dint of their size they rely on local labour markets and infrastructure to a greater degree than small firms. This does not necessarily diminish with returns to scale as size increases (Curran and Blackburn, 1994).

Although now close to a decade old, NatWest/SerTeam (2004)[17] provide some illuminating figures in this regard. Their survey of small businesses found that just a quarter of SMEs feel 'very much' part of their local community, although a further 30 per cent reported feeling part of their local community 'to an extent'.

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[14] Farinelli, U, Johansson, T B, McCormick, K, Mundaca, L, Oikonomou, V, Örtenvik, M, Patel, M and Sinti, F (2005) "White and Green": Comparison of market-based instruments to promote energy efficiency. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 13, pp1015-1026.

[15] Curran, J and Blackburn, R (1994) Small firms and local economic networks: the death of the local economy? London, Paul Chapman.

[16] Curran (1993) TECs and Small Firms: Can TECs Reach The Small Firms Other Strategies Have Failed To Reach? Kingston University. in Blackburn (2012) Segmenting the SME Market and Implications for Service Provision: A Literature Review. London, Acas. http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/5/0912-Segmenting_the_SME_market_-_Literature_review.pdf

[17] NatWest/SERTeam (2004) Quarterly Survey of Small Business in Britain. http://www.open.ac.uk/business-school/news/school-publications/quarterly-survey

Lower levels of formalisation within SMEs can work both for and against the adoption of CSR more generally. On the one hand they are less likely to operate as profit-maximising enterprises than a large organisation: only two per cent of small business owners surveyed by Natwest/SERTeam (Q1 2006) were mainly motivated by the desire to 'make money' and aimed to expand their business significantly in the following three years. By contrast, 45 per cent were mainly motivated by independence, the desire to 'be my own boss'.

But SMEs are also less likely to have established systems of CSR (although formalisation is not necessarily a barometer for action – Yassim, 2008)[18] and the NatWest/SERTeam found that 16 per cent of smaller firms felt that 'smaller firms need to be more socially responsible', while 81 per cent felt that either 'these issues are not really relevant to my business', or 'most small firms behave responsibly anyway'.

The risk here is to view SMEs as an homogenous body (see Blackburn, 2012). The term 'SME' covers a large size range, both in turnover and employee numbers. It also covers firms operating in all sectors of the UK economy, and - as noted - smaller firms are more likely to operate according to the values of their owner:

> *'Small firm' is not a description: it denotes membership of a sector which is a political and economic construct, relatively recent and still evolving. It is hard to see unifying characteristics. Many self-employed people would not think of themselves as small firms; and other businesses will define themselves sectorally ("I'm a butcher",) or by reference to their locality or region ('I run a northwest building firm'). They have different motivations: ('I'm an engineer – not an entrepreneur: I want to make things, not money')' (DTI, 2002: p. 14 cited in Blackburn, 2012).*

Blackburn (ibid.) outlines the Business Link approach to SME segmentation, focused on six 'types' of business:

- pre-starts
- start-ups
- lifestyle businesses (those without aspirations to 'grow')
- growth
- steady state
- corporate growth.

This, however, tells us little about the propensity of different types of SMEs to engage in charitable activities. Natwest/SERTeam (2004) for instance, find – perhaps unsurprisingly - that SME sectors that tend to rely on local trade for business, and especially personal contact with residents, are most likely to see themselves as part of the local community. 90 per cent of hotels and restaurants and 81 per cent of retail businesses saw themselves as 'part of the local community' compared to 28 per cent of wholesalers and 42 per cent of businesses engaged in 'business services'. This reflects the fact that small business leaders are particularly sensitive to activities in relation to their immediate stakeholders: employees, customers and suppliers (Fassin, 2008).

[18] Fassin, Y (2008) SMEs and the fallacy of formalising CSR. *Business Ethics: A European Review* 17, 4 pp364-378

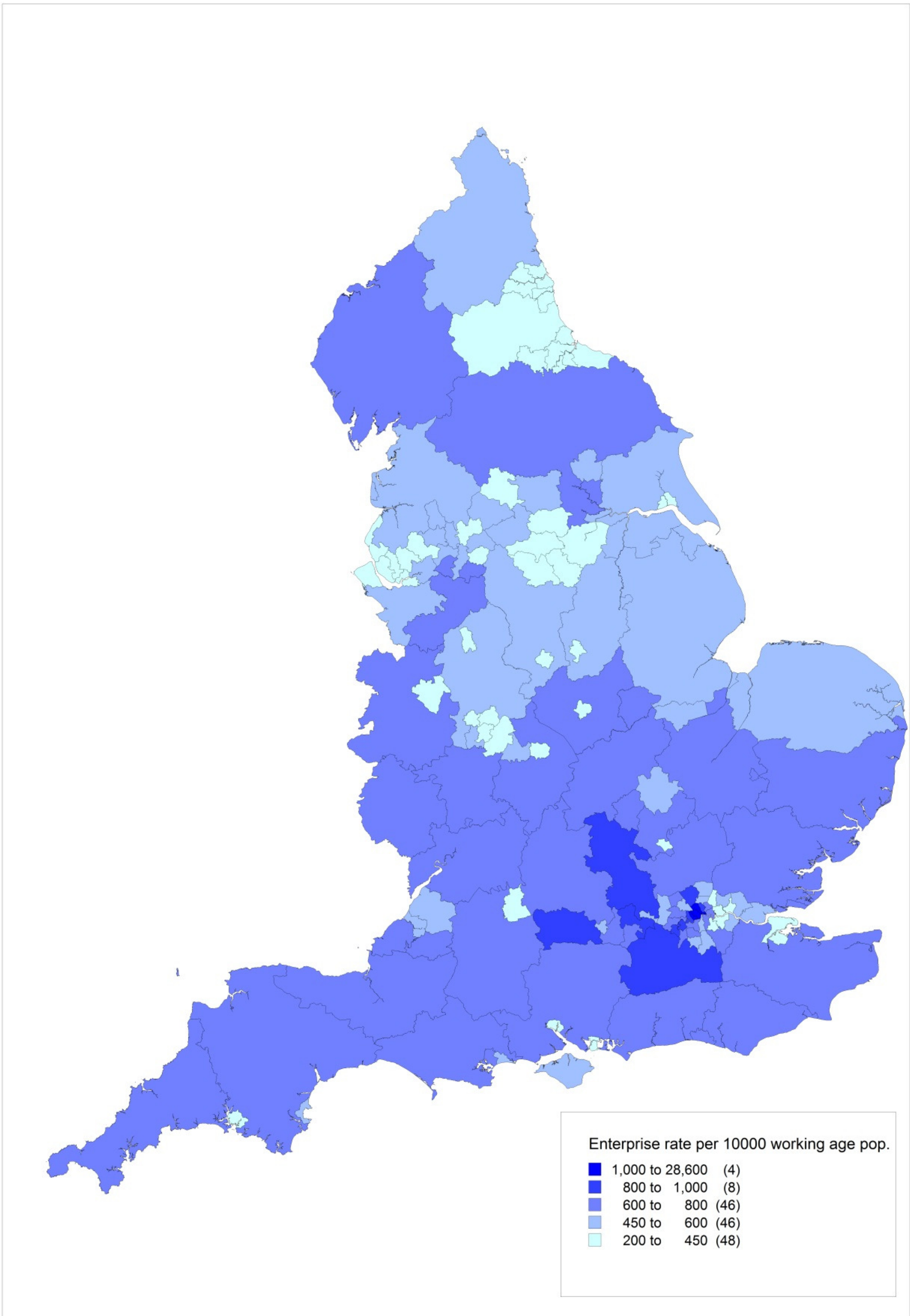
When asked how their business contributes to the local community, supporting charities and community events featured high on the list of options, with 41 per cent of respondents (and 63 per cent of small retailers) choosing this option. Smaller SMEs are less likely than larger SMEs to see themselves as part of the local community, and are also less likely to support charities and community events. Only 16 per cent of one-person firms thought that their business contributed to the local community through supporting charities and community events, compared to 58 per cent with 20 or more employees.

3.2. Geography Matters

Furthermore, geography is important to understanding the relationship between businesses and VCS. Using existing datasets for English local authorities it is possible to generate a preliminary understanding of the geographic distribution of enterprises and of charities, and the relationship between the two.

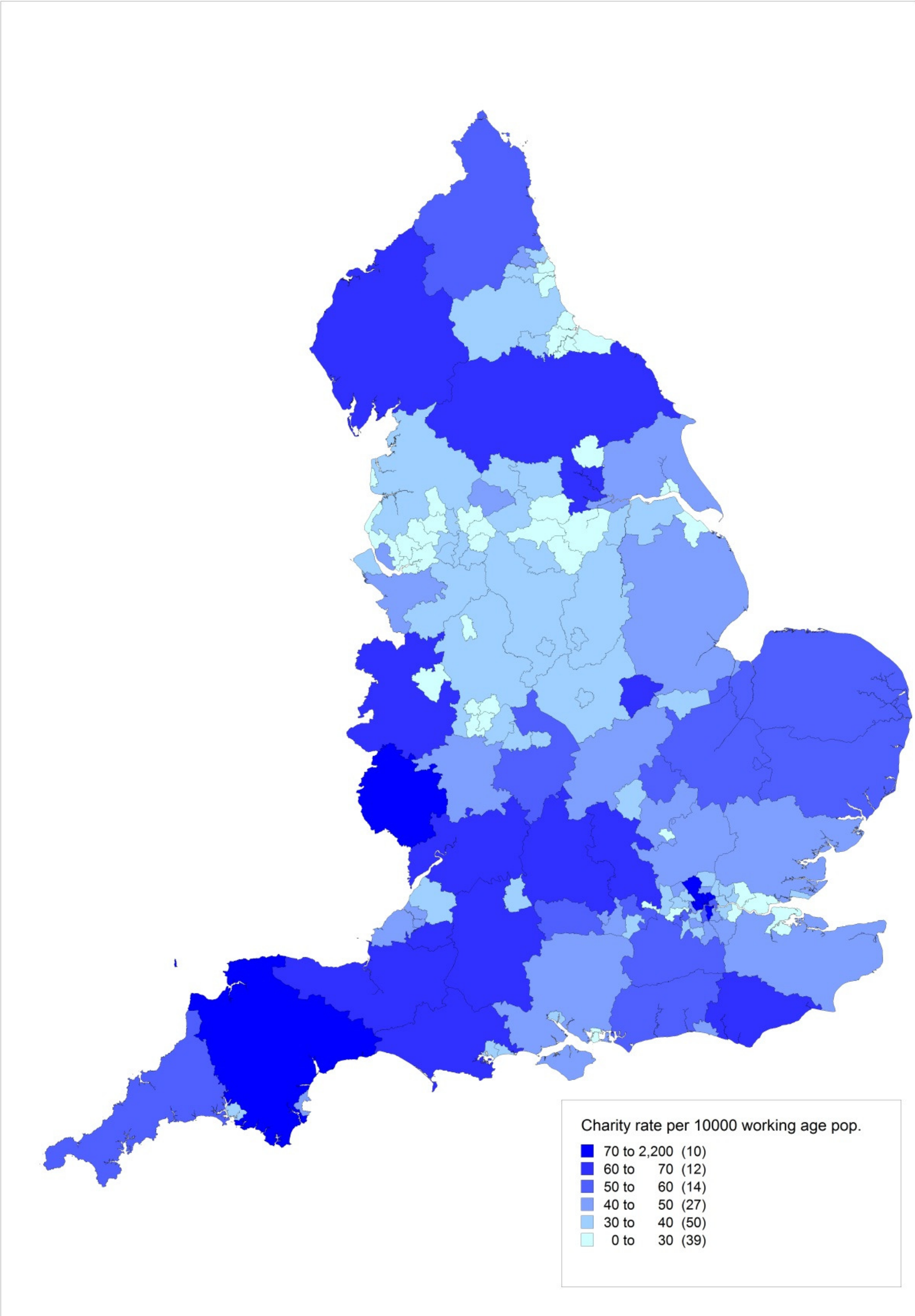
The data reveals some clear, if perhaps relatively expected, trends. Figure 1 shows a map of enterprise rates per 10,000 working age population. It highlights a clear north-south divide. Particularly low rates are found in South Yorkshire, Merseyside, Teesside and Tyne and Wear: England's least prosperous city-regions. Central London and the Home Counties have particularly high enterprise rates. The differences between places can be quite startling. Discounting the outliers of Westminster and City of London (which have low populations but high numbers of businesses), enterprise densities across London are still considerably higher than for, say, Tees Valley. By way of example the London Borough of Camden is home to more than five times as many businesses per 10,000 working age residents as Middlesbrough (1616 in Camden compared to 308 in Middlesbrough). This is not an unexpected conclusion, but it is important to note the level of disparity between different areas. An initial point to make is that, inevitably there will be more opportunities for VCS organisations to engage with local businesses where there are more local businesses.

Figure 1: Enterprise Rates by English Local Authority



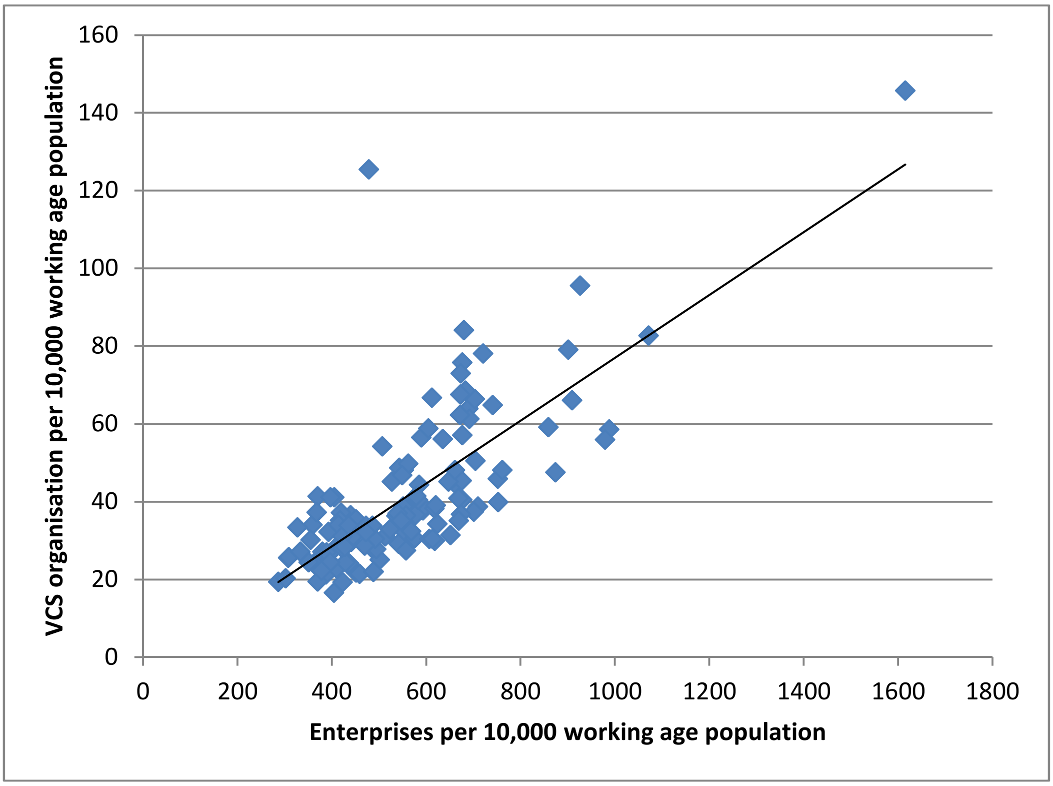
This picture is reinforced by Figure 2, showing geographic distribution of VCS organisations. Again, there is a clear north-south divide, with concentrations in the South East. Again, there are some large disparities between places. Using the same example as above reveals an even greater disparity between the two areas: Camden has almost six times the density of VCS organisations as that of Middlesbrough (145 per 10,000 working age residents compared to 26 in Middlesbrough).

Figure 2: VCS rates by English local authority



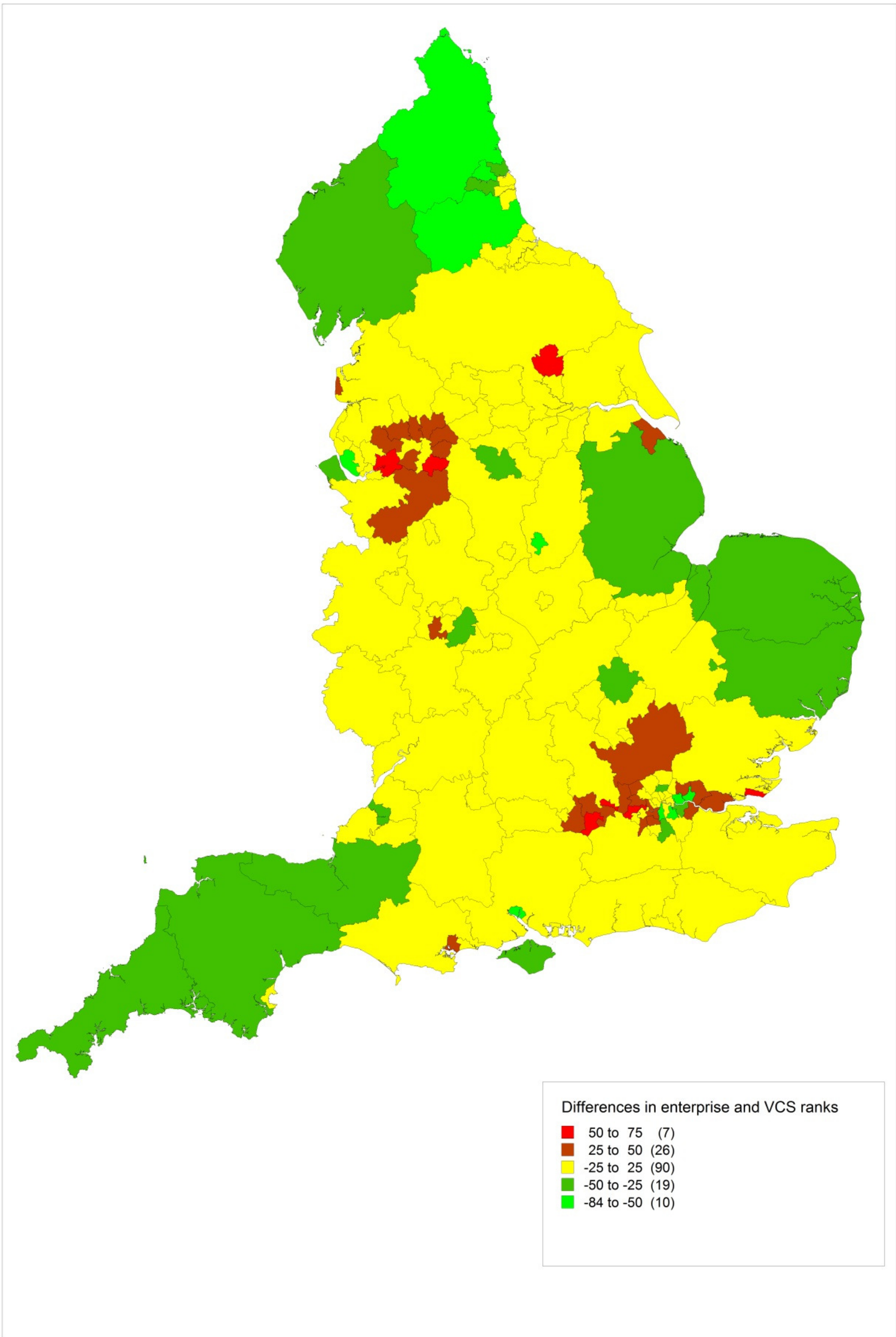
These patterns are backed up by statistical analysis of the data. Figure 3 shows a scatterplot of VCS densities against enterprise densities. A very clear correlation between the two is identifiable, giving a Pearson's correlation coefficient if 0.74. In other words, on the whole, if a place has a higher density of enterprises, it will also have a high density of VCS organisations. Again, this is not especially surprising. An analysis of distribution of wealth across England would display a similar picture. In other words, the hypothesis that wealth distribution as a determinant of economic activities of private sector and VCS appears to be the most likely.

Figure 3: Scatter plot of local authority VCS densities against enterprise densities



Taking this analysis a step further, however, allows some clear identification of places that do not fit these trends. Figure 4 shows a map identifying areas that have a relatively high proportion of VCS organisations compared to private enterprises (shaded green), those that follow the trend of roughly similar levels, and those that have a relatively low level of VCS organisations compared to private enterprises (shaded red).This was achieved by ranking each local authority in terms of both enterprise densities and VCS densities and calculating the difference between the two. As such, this is a relatively crude analysis, but it does nonetheless provide some interesting points for discussion.

Figure 4: Differences in enterprise and VCS ranks by English local authority



The map shows that the rural 'extremities' of England – for example, Cumbria, Northumberland, East Anglia and the South West – have a higher proportion of VCS organisations compared to enterprise rates than might be expected. The areas shaded red are potentially of more interest. These show areas in which there are proportionately lower numbers of charities. In particular, two geographic clusters stand out: the peripheries of Greater Manchester and of London. A number of seaside towns also stand out in this regard: for instance, Blackpool, North East Lincolnshire (home of Cleethorpes), Bournemouth, Poole and Southend-on-Sea. Business densities in these places will be skewed by a high proportion of small businesses serving the seasonal British tourist trade.

Without data regarding VCS finance and especially on business giving, it is hard to postulate further. There may be other explanatory factors for the comparatively low VCS numbers in these areas. Nonetheless, this map suggests that existing VCS organisations in these areas may in theory have greater 'potential' for engaging with local businesses.

3.3. Conclusion

In a similar way that there is no unified voluntary and community sector, there is no unified small business sector. Both sectors, to the extent to which they can be even be called a sector, comprise many parts. Intuitively this is of course no surprise. It highlights too, the problems of understanding sectors as aggregates. More fruitful avenues both for research but also for the sector, may be to think in terms of networks, relationships and flows of resources (financial but more likely in non-monetary terms).

We also found that the potential for business giving is likely to vary quite markedly across the UK, with initial analysis showing that a small number of areas have a particularly high ratio of private enterprises to VCS organisations, suggesting – on the surface at least – that there may be potential for increased business engagement in these areas.

The next section sets out how this might be done by looking at evidence from the perspective of the voluntary and community sector.

4

The Sector's Perspective: evidence from State of the Sector Surveys

4.1. Introduction

There is very little robust data on the extent and nature of business support for local voluntary and community organisations.

This makes developing an extensive understanding of commercial business support for and engagement with the sector very difficult. In this section we present analysis of one of the few data sets that does exist - a 'State of the Sector' survey undertaken across Greater Manchester in 2012/13. 'State of the Sector' surveys typically aim to map the social and economic footprint of the voluntary and community sector across particular localities.[19] The Greater Manchester Survey was developed in parallel with a number of Transforming Local Infrastructure projects that aimed to improved local engagement with the business sector. As such a number of specific questions regarding the sector's engagement with local business were developed for inclusion in the questionnaire. The data therefore provide a unique opportunity to explore the relationship between voluntary and community sector organisations and their counterparts in local businesses at a city-region level.

4.2. The study

A large postal survey was carried out in seven Greater Manchester districts by local support and development organisations. An additional web based survey was also developed to capture the views of 'Greater Manchester wide' organisations operating across all 10 districts, and community contacts at a local level to capture a greater number of 'below the radar' organisations. Responses were received from 1,403 of the 6,391 organisations that were sent a survey questionnaire: an overall response rate of 22 per cent. This makes it one of the largest regional level surveys of the voluntary sector ever undertaken.

The questionnaire was based on one developed for research undertaken in Salford in 2010, but was revised following input from the Research Steering Group. It included several questions of relevance to business giving:

[19] Dayson, C. Eadson, W. Sanderson, E. and Wilson, I. (2013), *Greater Manchester state of the voluntary sector 2013*. This report and locality studies are available at: www.gmcvo.org.uk/true-state-greater-manchesters-voluntary-sector-revealed-new-report

- **income received**: respondents were asked to identify, from a list of 10 options, the different sources of income their organisation received in the most recent financial year (2011/12) and the value of the funds provided. 'Business donations and sponsorship' was one of the options
- **dealings with local businesses**: respondents were asked to what extent their organisation had direct dealings with commercial businesses in their local authority area
- perceptions of local business support for the sector: respondents were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed that commercial businesses in their area:
  - valued the work of their organisation
  - understood the nature and role of their organisation
  - had a good record in terms of CSR
  - provided local VCOs with 'in-kind' help and/or support
- perceptions of local business influence over the sector's success: respondents were asked overall, how the commercial business community influenced their organisation's success.

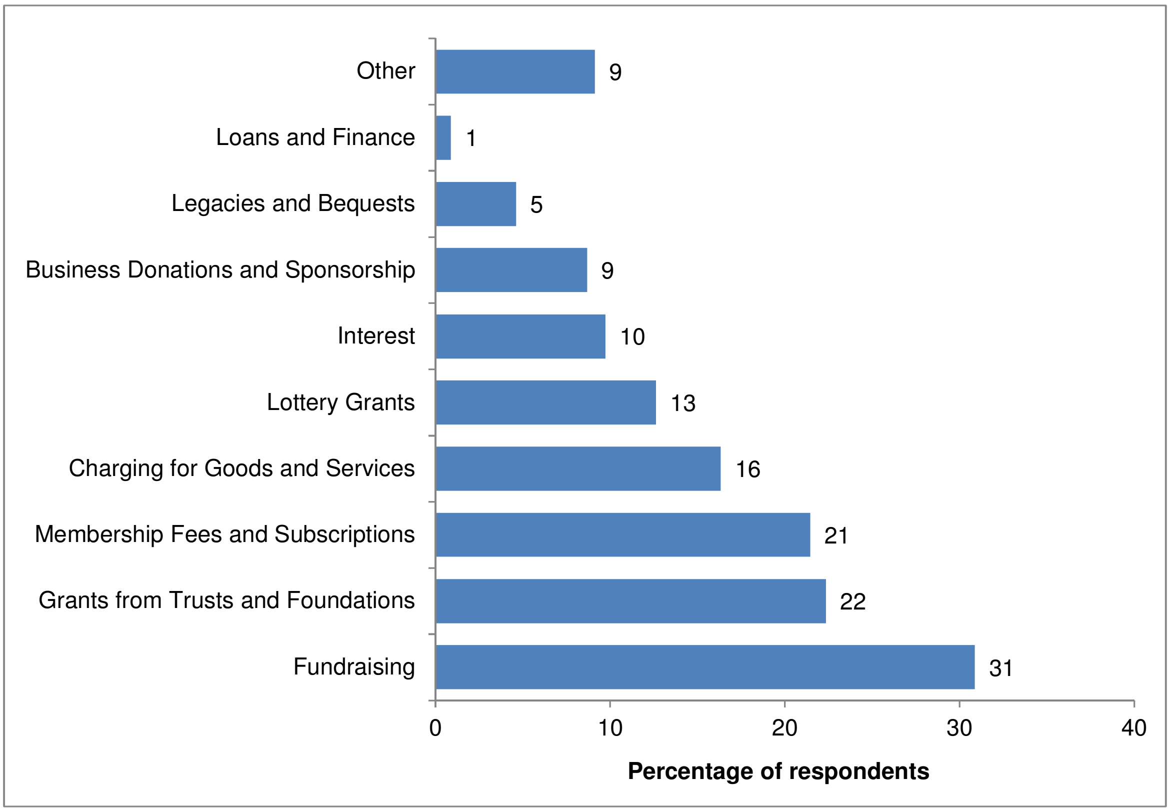
Two of the questions (b and d above) 'mimicked' local authority questions from the Cabinet Office's National Surveys of Third Sector Organisations (2008) and Charities and Social Enterprises (2010), included in the Greater Manchester survey to enable findings about local businesses to be contrasted with findings about local authorities.

4.3. Findings

Income

76 per cent of respondents were in receipt of non-public sector funds but only nine per cent of respondents identified business donations and sponsorship as a source of funds. This compared to 31 per cent for general fundraising, 22 per cent for grants from Trusts and Foundations, and 21 per for memberships fees and subscriptions.

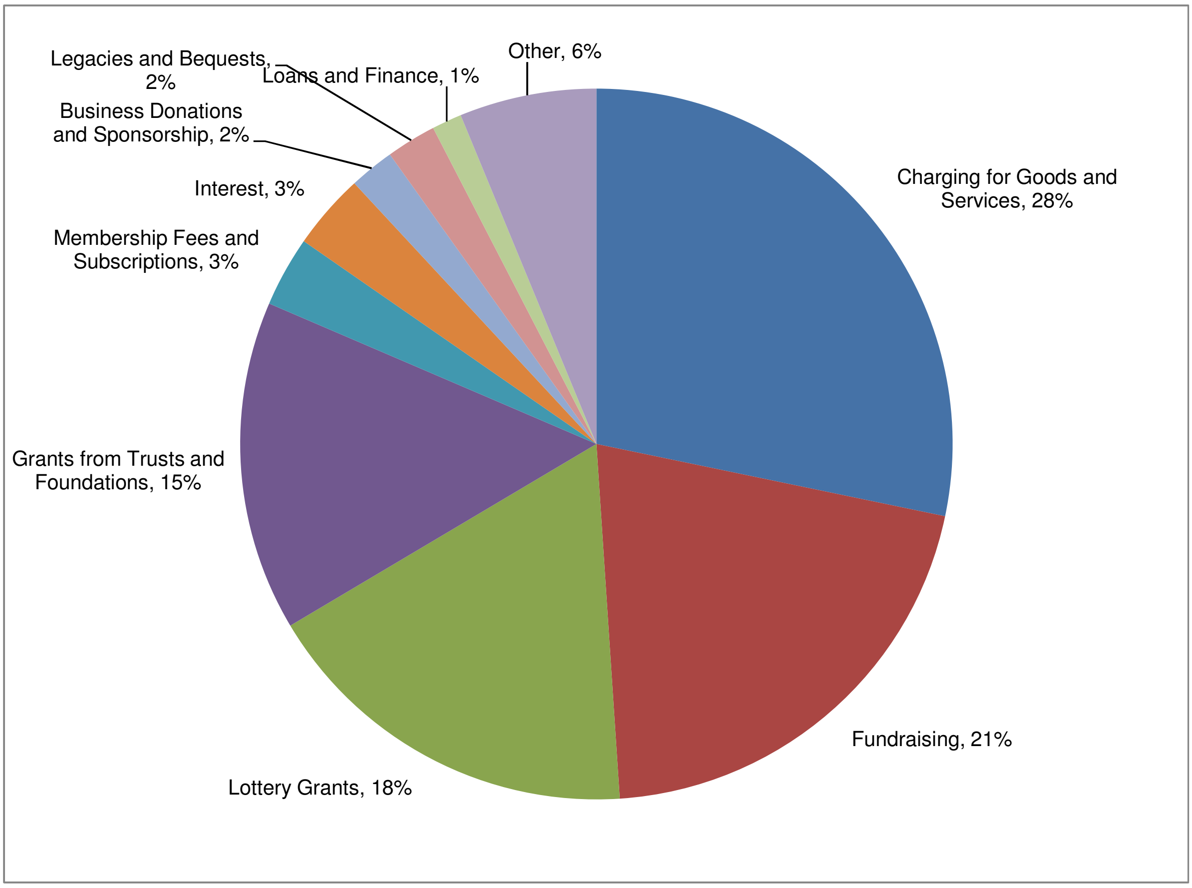
Figure 1: Proportion of respondents in receipt of different sources of funding



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector survey 2012/13
Base: 1,347

Figure 2 shows that income from business donations and sponsorship accounted for only two per cent of all non-public sector funds received. This compared to 28 per cent for charging for goods and services, 21 per cent for fundraising, and 18 per cent for Lottery grants.

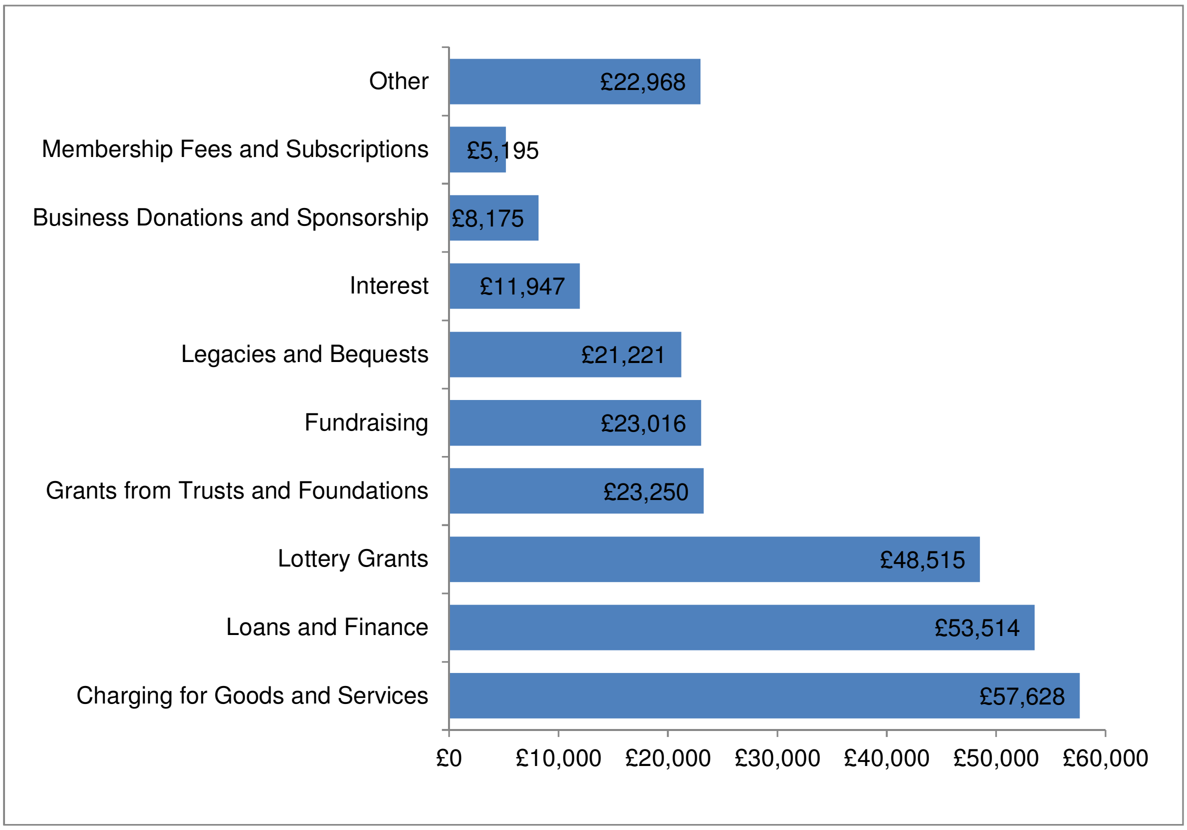
Figure 2: Relative value of non-public sector funds received



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 594

Figure 3 shows that average (mean) value to voluntary sector organisations of income received from business donations and sponsorship was £8,175. This compares to almost £57,628 for charging for goods and services, £53,514 for loans and other finance, and £48,515 for Lottery grants.

Figure 3: Mean value of non-public sector funds received

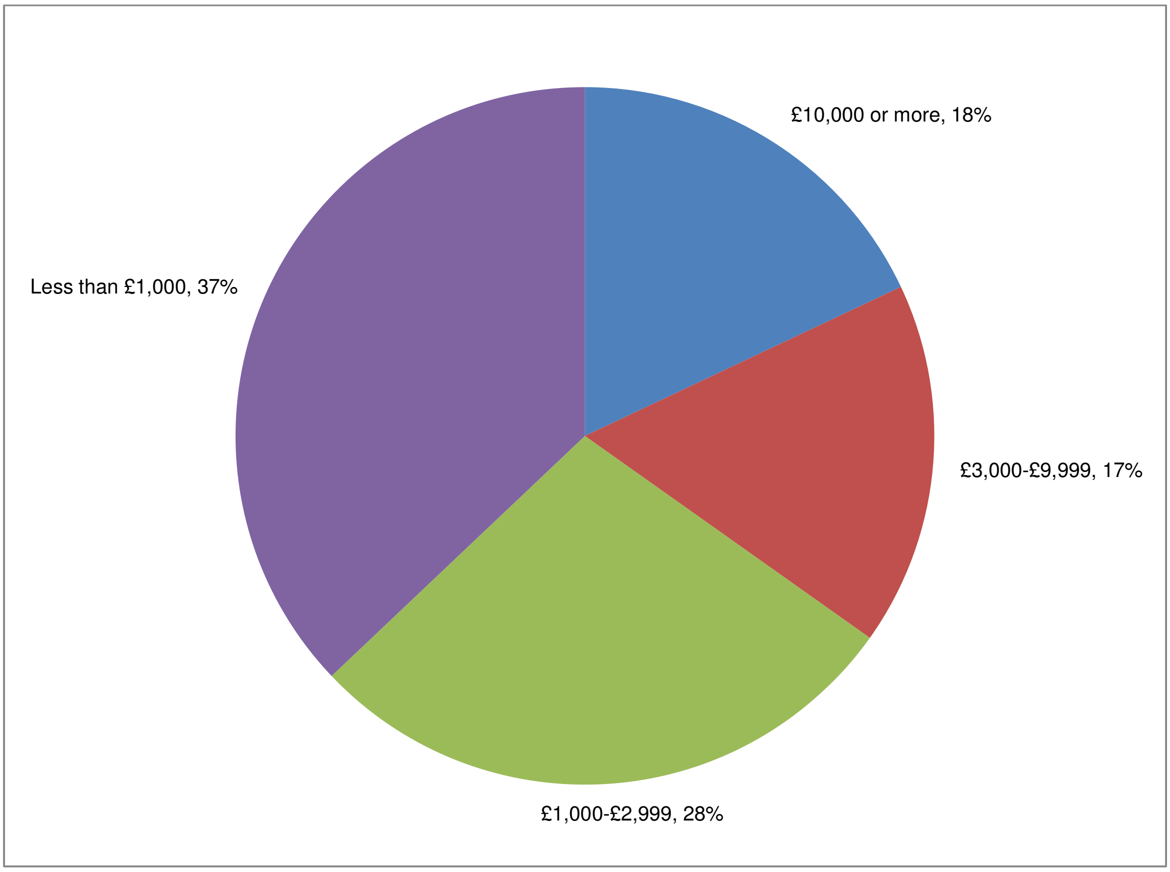


Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 594

Figure 4 shows that of the respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship 37 per cent received less than £1,000, 26 per cent received between £1,000-£2,999, 17 per cent received between £3,000-£9,999, and 18 per cent received £10,000 or more. This is a mixed picture as might be expected but suggests that the private sector is an important contributor for a reasonable proportion of organisations.

Two respondent organisations received more than £100,000 from business donations and sponsorship (£116,000 and £191,000 respectively); the remaining respondents each received £50,000 or less. These are impressive sums. Of the two organisations in receipt of large amounts of income from one was a newly opened state of the art youth centre and one was an arts and heritage trust in the process of renovating an abandoned theatre: both organisations received their donations in support of these large, high profile capital projects.

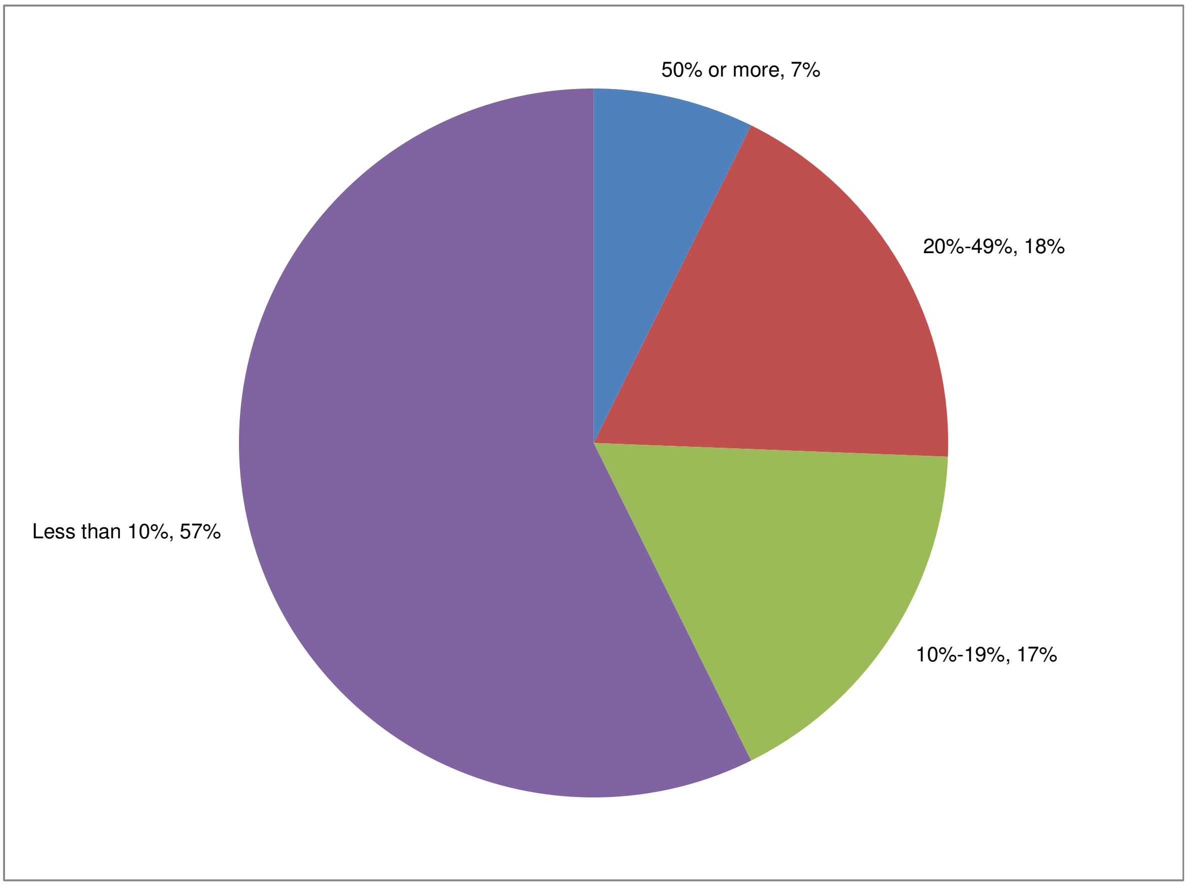
Figure 4: Distribution of business donations and sponsorship by value of income contributed



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 89

Figure 5 shows that for 57 per cent of respondents income from business donations and sponsorship provided less than 10 per cent of their total funds, for 17 per cent it provided between 10 per cent-19 per cent, for 18 per cent it provided 20 per cent-49 per cent, and for seven per cent it provided 50 per cent or more.

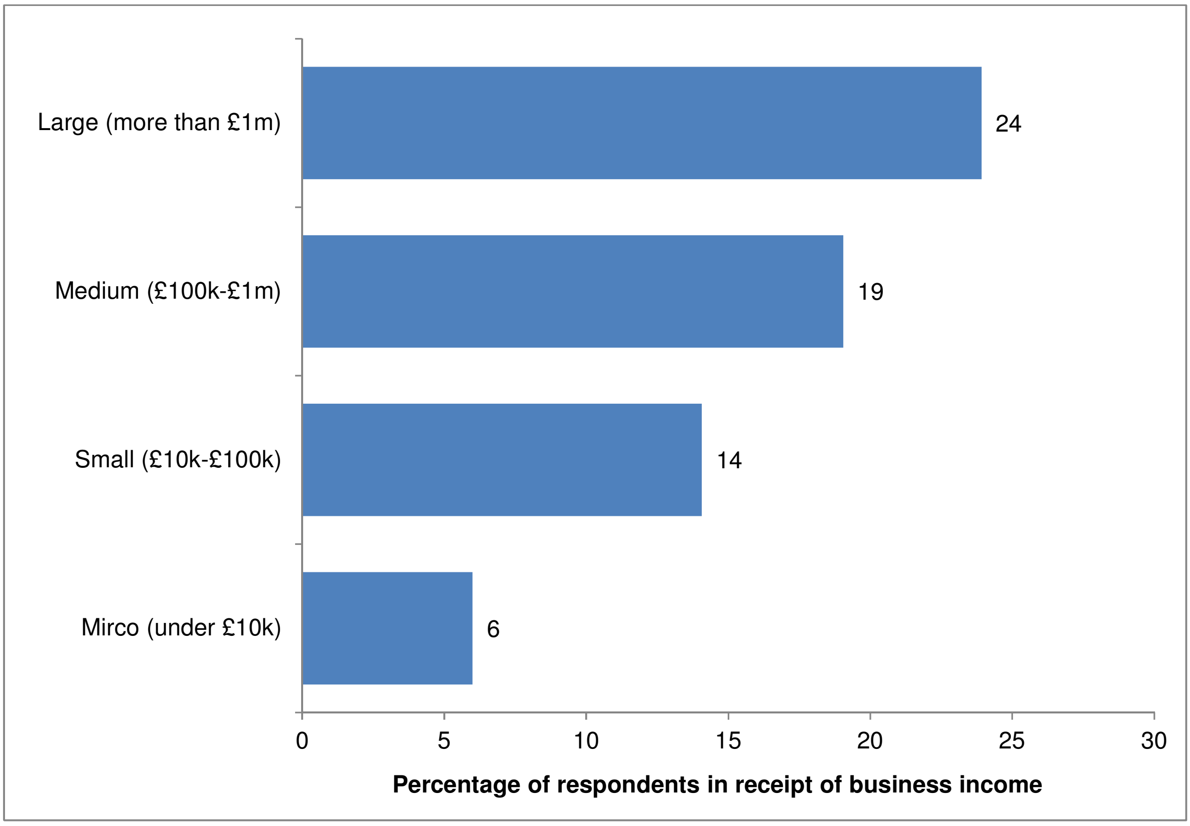
Figure 5: Distribution of business donations and sponsorship by proportion of income contributed



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 82

Figure 6 shows that 24 per cent of large organisations received income from business donations and sponsorship compared to 19 per cent of medium sized organisations, 14 per cent of small organisations and six per cent of micro organisations.

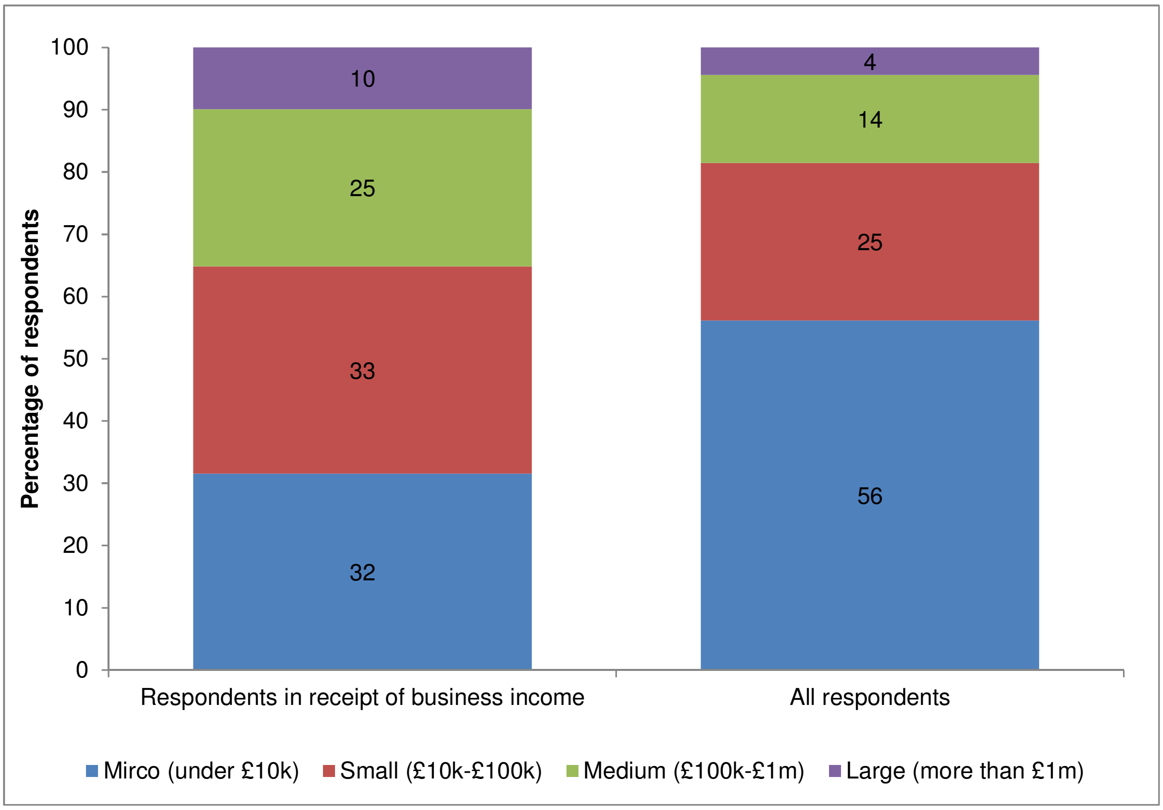
Figure 6: Proportion of respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship by organisation size



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 111

Figure 7 shows that of the respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship 32 per cent were micro, 33 per cent were small, 25 per cent were medium sized and 10 per cent were large.[20] This differed quite markedly from the overall distribution of respondents to the survey and highlights the extent to which larger organisations appear more likely to receive business income.

Figure 7: Distribution of respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship by organisation size



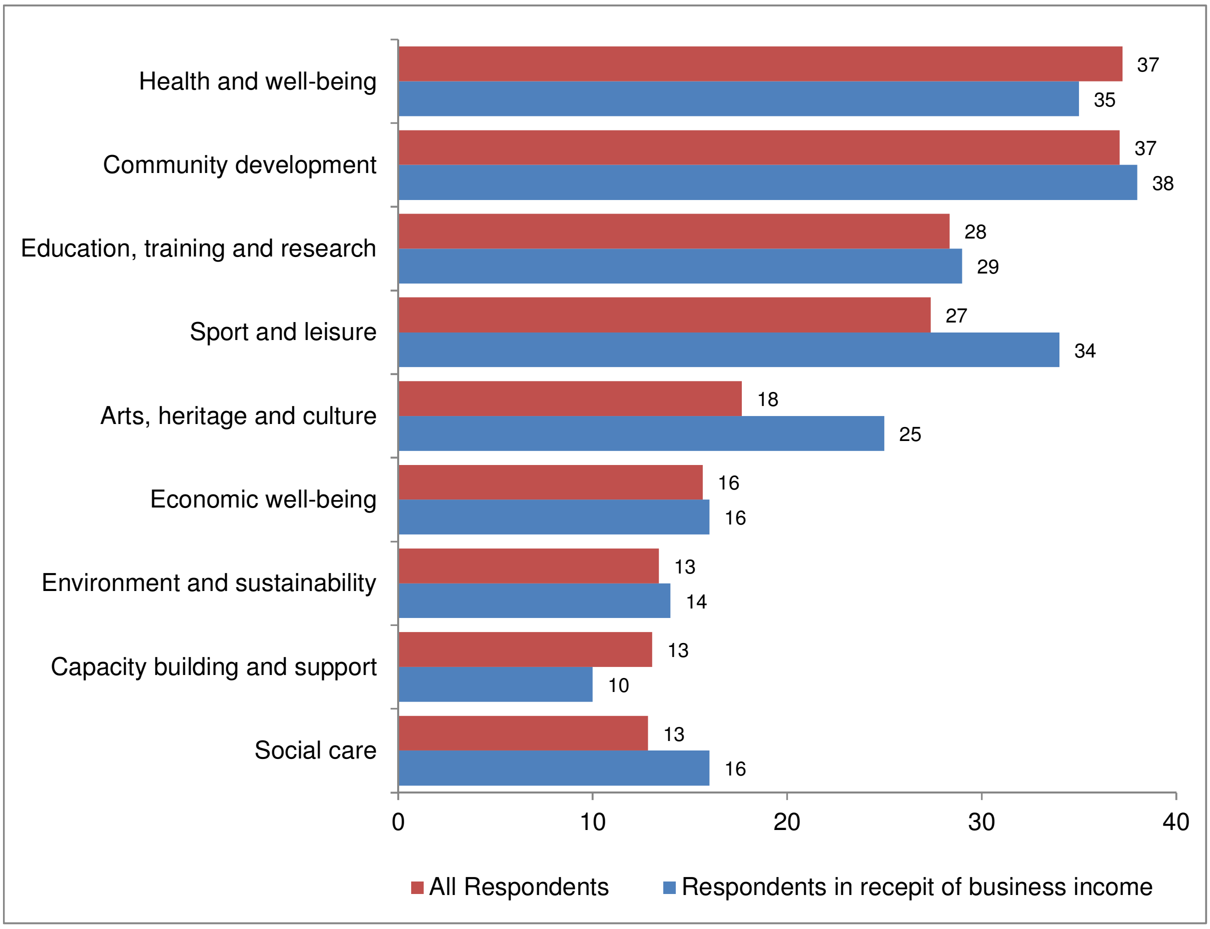
Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 111, 1,040

[20] This relationship is statistically significant: p=<0.01, Cramer's V = 0.186

Figure 8-10 show the distribution of respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship according to organisation type was broadly similar to the distribution across Greater Manchester as a whole. However, there were three exceptions to this:

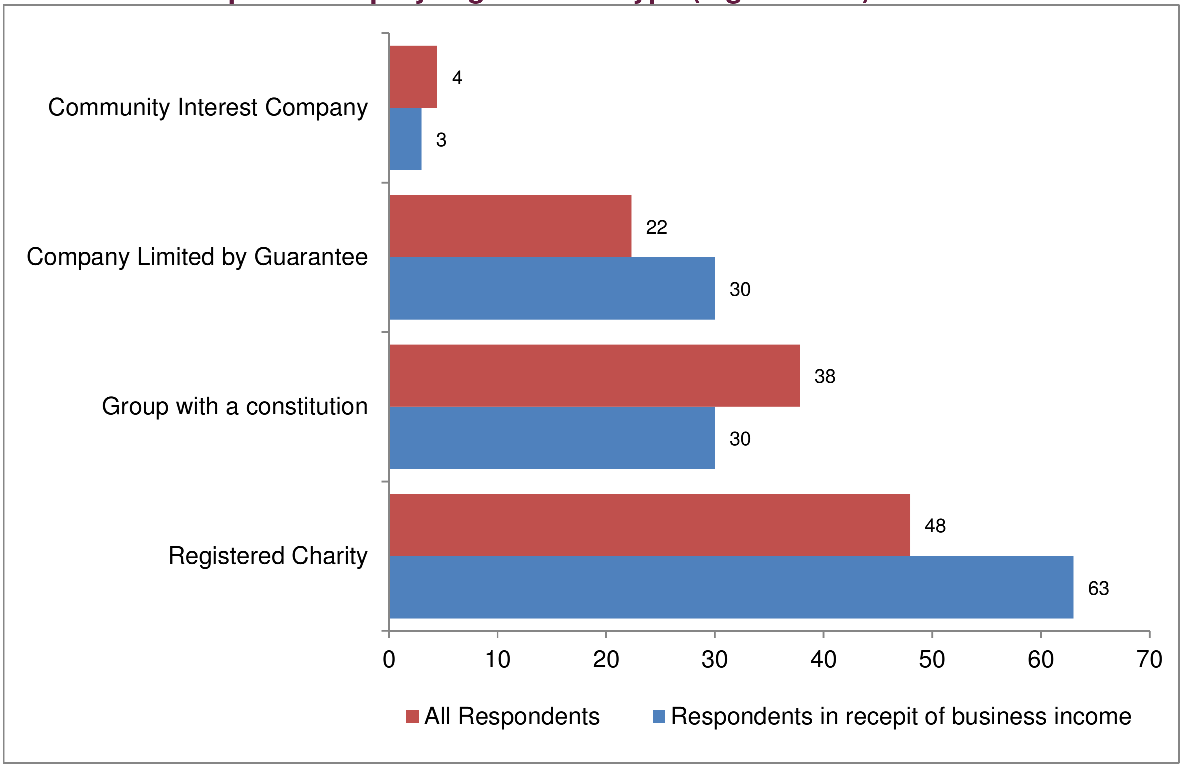
- **main area of work:** 34 per of business income recipients identified sport and leisure as a main area of work compared to only 27 per cent across Greater Manchester as a whole; and 25 per cent of business income recipients identified art, heritage and culture as a main area of work compared to 18 per cent across Greater Manchester as a whole
- **legal status:** 63 per cent of business income recipients were registered charities compared to only 48 per cent across Greater Manchester as a whole
- **organisational form:** 33 per of business income recipients said they were a local voluntary organisation compared to only 26 per cent across Greater Manchester as a whole; and 17 per cent of business income recipients said they were a sport, leisure or social club compared to 9 per cent across Greater Manchester as a whole.Figure 8: Distribution of respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship by organisation type (main area of work)

Figure 8: Distribution of respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship by organisation size



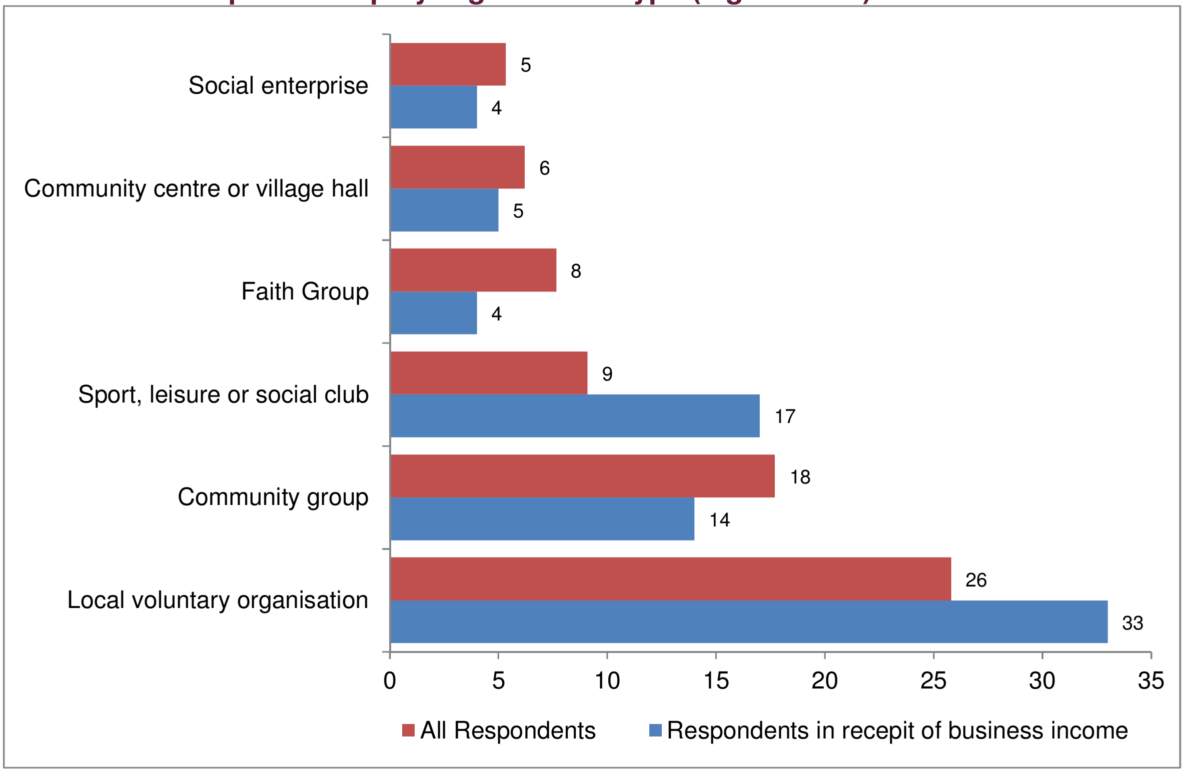
Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 116, 1,191

Figure 9: Distribution of respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship by organisation type (legal status)



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 116, 1,191

Figure 10: Distribution of respondents in receipt of income from business donations and sponsorship by organisation type (legal status)

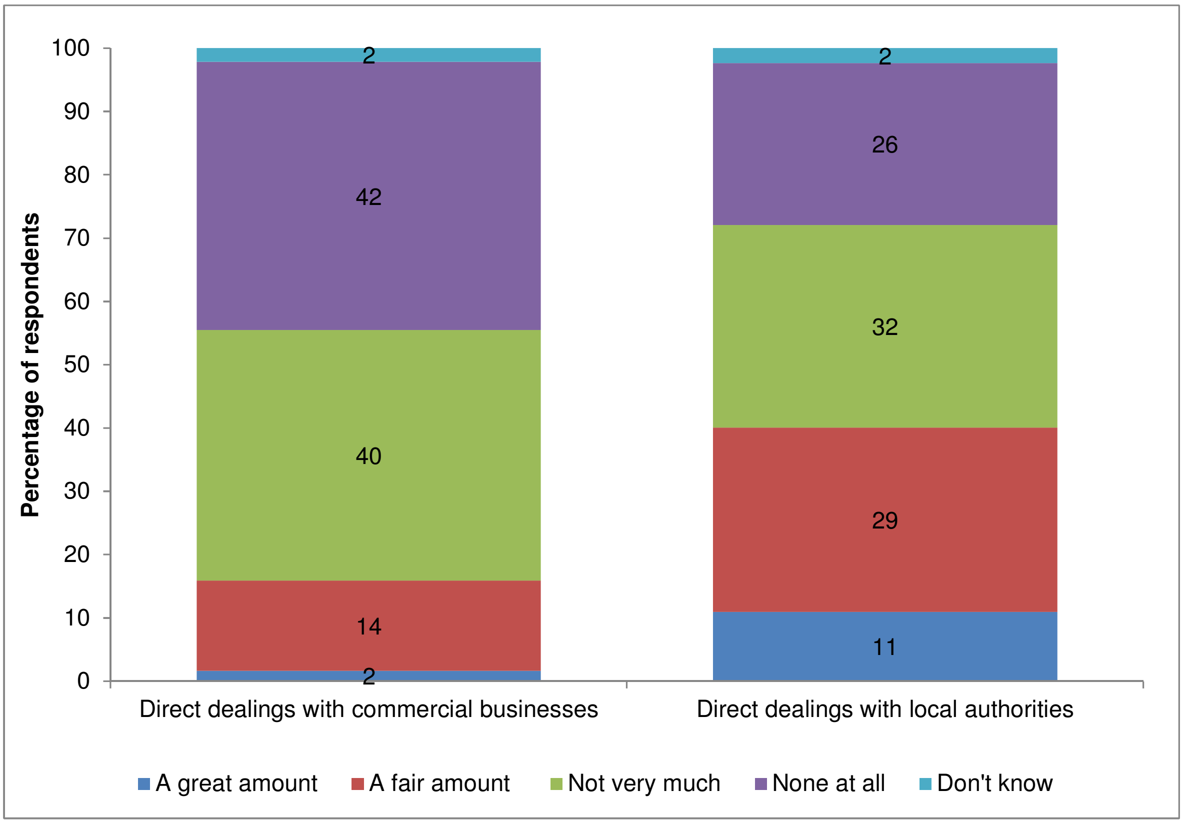


Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 116, 1,191

Relationships with commercial business locally:

Figure 11 shows that only 16 per cent of respondents had what could be described as frequent and direct contact with commercial business in their area and 42 per cent had no contact at all. By comparison 40 per cent of respondents had frequent and direct dealings with local authorities. A note of caution should be raised here around how this question is interpreted. We have assumed that many organisations are not including dealings with their landlords, utility suppliers or professional services. Of course, small, unstaffed organisations reliant on volunteer support and hiring space may have little or no need to contact the private sector.

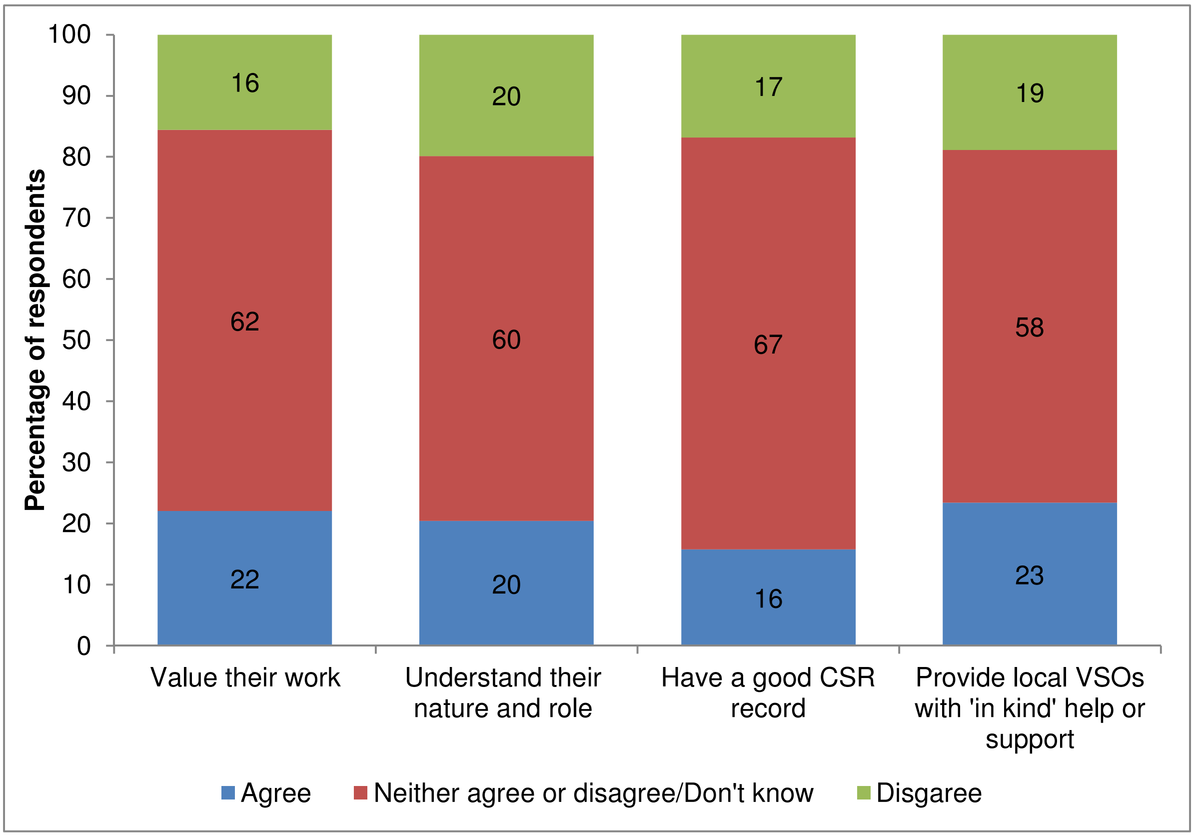
Figure 11: Frequency of respondents' dealings with commercial businesses compared with local authorities



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 796, 1,072

Figure 12 shows that fewer than a quarter of respondents had positive perceptions about local commercial businesses' relationships with the local voluntary and community sector: only 22 per cent thought that commercial businesses valued their work; 20 per cent thought they understood their nature and role; 16 per cent for they had a good record regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR); and 23 per cent thought they provided local voluntary and community organisations with 'in kind' help or support.

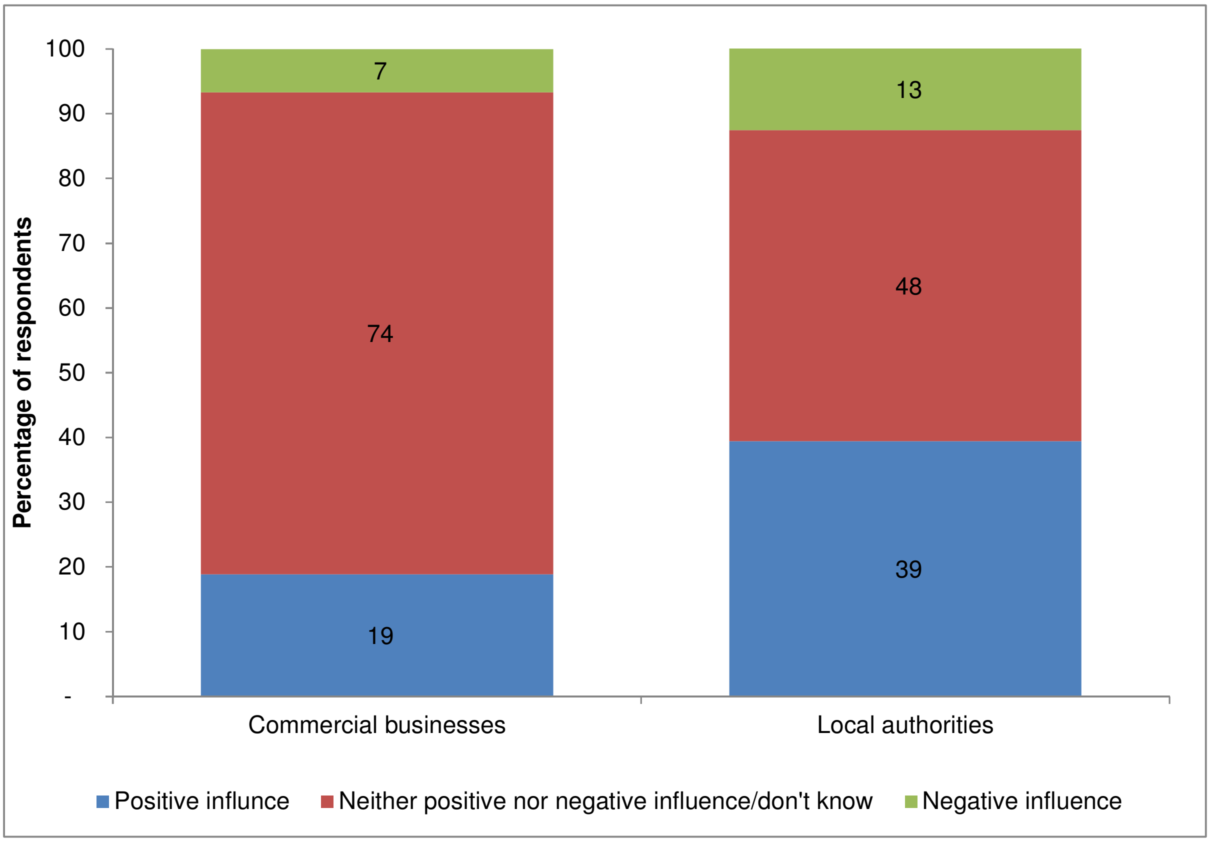
Figure 12: Perceptions of commercial businesses



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 718, 710, 709, 71

Figure 13 shows that only 19 per cent of respondents thought that local commercial business were a positive influence on their organisation's success. This compares to 39 per cent of respondents who thought the local authority was a positive influence on their success.

Figure 13: Perceptions of the influence of commercial businesses compared with local authorities



Source: Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey 2012/13
Base: 745, 74

The quantitative evidence from the Greater Manchester State of the Voluntary Sector Survey is revealing. It confirms that business donations are not a significant part of the sector's income and that this can be skewed by a small number of large donations to capital projects. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that relationships are complex and are likely to take different forms. This is something we pursue further in the following section.

4.4. Qualitative responses

Survey respondents also provide some insight into the nature of the relationship with the private sector. We received 332 responses to a question asking about this relationship out of the total of 1,403 valid survey responses. Of this group 132 organisations responded that they had some form of positive relationship with business. The remainder (171) largely responded that they had no relationship with business. 30 organisations responded that their experience had been negative.

Of those who commented on a positive relationship, 99 commented that the involvement had been relatively minimal. In this relationship the most common forms of support were:

- **donating raffle prizes**: 'Some commercial businesses contribute in kind to our organisation's fundraising by donating raffle items'
- **providing discounted prices for services or reducing rent**: 'Certain members of the local business community are willing to carry out maintenance or remedial works at a bare minimum or even zero cost to help maintain our facility!'
- **sponsorship**: 'Sponsorship helps to provide funds to supply junior players with kits'
- **support from Supermarkets**: 'Supermarkets are willing to allow bag packing and make donations of food for residentials'
- **providing volunteers**: 'Providing volunteers to assist in delivering events and carrying environmental projects in the local community.

On the whole these transactions do not involve monetary donations or where they do they are very small. As one respondent suggested: 'As long as it does not involve money its fine'. This group of organisations also tended to have a single relationship with a business and did not report of multiple interactions.

31 organisations provided a description of a far more substantial relationship with the business sector. For these organisations, interactions tended to involve some form of financial support and involve relationships with more than one business. The following are examples:

- multiple links: 'with 30 plus sponsors the relationship with the commercial business community is 1st class'
- support for service users: 'we work closely with businesses to create jobs for our members and we also receive some support when we hold events'
- support from a supermarket: 'we have a particularly good arrangement and support from X supermarket who have supported us with materials in kind, prizes for competitions and joined in with some of our activities and invited us to join in with theirs. (Community Litter Picking arranged by X Supermarket, staff assisting at our Christmas Lunches, Bakery Manager judging cake competitions, some of our older members from church invited to the X supermarket Christmas lunch etc.) Local butcher gives us preferential prices for the food for our weekly breakfasts and discounts the cost of food for our major events
- finance: 'we rely on financial assistance from the local commercial community.'

More critical comments on relationships with business were made by 30 respondents. The following are typical of their comments:

- sectors do not understand each other: 'We have very little contact with commercial business in Bolton and would like to have more. We think that local companies don't necessarily understand the kind of work we do'
- preference for national charities: 'With two notable exceptions ABC and the XYZ restaurant we have found corporate organisations pretty unhelpful, perhaps because they all seem to go for national charities to support probably because this gives them the best return in terms of positive publicity. We do occasionally get offers for a member of staff to give us one days volunteer work but frankly this is more trouble than it is of use'
- competitors: 'Why would the commercial businesses of [XXXX Local Authority] value our work if they don't know we exist? In fact, because we trade, we are in competition with some private businesses'

- barriers are too big: 'A diverse income is important so corporate sponsorship and support is very attractive. We have found it difficult and time consuming to access support from this area through. Local Business are often forcoming with small donations or raffle prises but do not offer sustainable income. And it seems difficult to build long standing, meaningful relationships. Businesses are also struggling and requests from charities must be very common so it is hard to make our organisation stand out.'

Together these comments highlight that relationships are more likely to take non-monetary forms of giving, and typically involve the donation of a prize for a raffle, providing staff as volunteers to a particular project, or services at a discounted rate. This support matters and is possibly an important starting point in developing a relationship with businesses. But questions must be raised over the extent to which they can be transferred across the sector. Businesses providing financial support will nearly always seek something in return, notably opportunities for branding, advertising and more generally from positive association. These factors are likely to be weighed carefully in any consideration of financial donations.

4.5. Conclusion

The overwhelming finding from this research is that local business support for, and engagement with, the voluntary sector at a local level is very low: few organisations receive financial support. The financial support that is provided represents a tiny fraction of the sector total income. Moreover, the majority of organisations that do receive financial support report that it does not make a significant contribution to overall funds. Larger organisations are more likely to receive financial support than smaller ones, but small/micro organisations make up the majority of the sector. Most organisations don't have frequent and direct dealings with local businesses, particularly when compared to local authorities for example.

However, business-sector relationships should not be discounted. The findings also suggest a reasonably significant group, a core of organisations, for which relationships with business are important. This might be for a variety of reasons, not least the personal interests and relationships of business owners with local charities. The evidence presented thus far suggests that to a large extent the VCS and business sector have had little to do with each other.

The existence of some outlier examples of positive practice suggests that there are opportunities for some organisations to get something from developing relationships with business. A question which this raises is the extent of these opportunities, or the amount of headroom, for business contributions to be increased? Moreover, is there value in VCS organisations committing resources to increasing financial contributions from the private sector? And if there is, how might this be done?

These issues are explored in the next section which presents examples of practice in three localities.

5

Local Practices

5.1. Introduction

Our research considered projects supported by the Transforming Local Infrastructure (TLI) fund in three places: Merton (London), Tameside (Greater Manchester) and North Yorkshire. The majority of local infrastructure organisations had an objective to engage business in some way. The examples chosen were selected for two reasons: they represented three very different contexts (a London borough, a northern metropolitan area and a rural area); and had three quite distinctive approaches to engaging local businesses.

The TLI bid in Merton is a partnership between the Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) and Merton Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has a membership of 600 businesses and is in communication with 2500 businesses, most located in the borough. MVSC recognised that they had a lot in common with the Chamber of Commerce and when the 'TLI' opportunity arose, they approached the Chamber of Commerce and put in a bid for a Business Engagement Manager that would be funded by MVSC but employed by them. The Chamber had their own mailing list, so they were able to hit the ground running.

Tameside for Good (see http://tameside4good.org.uk) came about through talks led by infrastructure organisations in Tameside (now merged to form Community and Voluntary Action Tameside - CVAT) with voluntary and community organisations about the challenges they faced. Local organisations employing staff with a turnover of £100,000 - £1m pounds expressed a desire to do more work on community fundraising and work with businesses. They felt they had lost the skills and capacity to do this. It was also felt that local businesses didn't know much about voluntary and community organisations. Tameside for Good was established to respond to this agenda: it aims to connect local charities with local people and local businesses to increase giving (time skills, resources and money).

In North Yorkshire the North Yorkshire and York Forum (NYYF) has appointed a Creative Change Development Officer whose role is to engage with business, particularly as the voluntary and community sector has to look at ways of replacing public funding. The Development Officer comes with background in business and her role is, 'to build relationships with the business community so that the sector (voluntary) can learn so that perhaps they might be more likely to sponsor and help fund but also might be able to train the sector but also so the sector can promote the services that they have that they could sell to business'. The voluntary sector and private sector could work in collaboration delivering services which draw on their different strengths/expertise – 'this is a new form of collaborative enterprise bringing the sectors together…that hasn't been tried before'.

5.2. Approach

Both the Merton and North Yorkshire approaches involved the establishment of a dedicated post, and for the person taking that post to have credibility in speaking with business. In the case of Merton the post was based in the Chamber of Commerce. One of the roles of the engagement post has been to develop relationships with businesses. In Merton this has been with businesses where the Chamber already had a good relationship. For example, approximately 50 businesses were approached either face-to-face or at networking events. No ‘cold calling’ was used.

The approach adopted by the post holders is important – the focus is not on selling opportunities to businesses to give in various ways but trying to find out how they want to engage. They try to identify opportunities for businesses – what sort of things they want to do and when. Relationships which develop are intended to be long term and a goal is for businesses to align themselves with specific charities.

The business engagement posts reported that not all businesses want to be openly seen to be supporting the community, so those businesses that were modest about their giving work were encouraged to do so to raise the profile of business giving.

Tameside took a slightly different approach with an approach to develop a strong brand around business giving, called Tameside4Good. However, similar experiences have been reported, notably that: ‘it takes people to talk to businesses to find out about the business and to find out what interests them and then to do the matching …selling the charity sector and the great work it does requires dedicated resources'.

In addition to the dedicated posts, each TLI project has access to wider support. For Merton this includes a communications post to ensure that the website is always 'alive'.

In North Yorkshire several events have been organised to bring the business community and the voluntary sector together. Based on turnout at previous events, only small numbers are anticipated to attend but even a small response allows the development worker to engage and begin work with businesses. ‘It’s about changing attitudes’, which takes a long time. A key task of the work in North Yorkshire is also about increasing the skills of the voluntary and community sector to work with business.

Tameside4Good has used Team Challenges where a business sends a team of staff to undertake a short day long project in a charity. This has been found to provide a business benefit in terms of team building.

One specific issue raised in Tameside was around the careful use of language. They decided not to use the term 'pro bono' (often used in the context of free advice from professional services firms) but rather 'Talent Pool' which helped connect with more businesses in Tameside.

Research in each area highlighted the need for approaches to be tailored to the business base of the area. This recognised not just that the business base was diverse but that there were also some common patterns. Where there was a strong base of professional services firms, they tended to be supportive of the project, giving time and advice. This was harder in North Yorkshire and Tameside without the same base of professional services firms. A common finding across all areas was that small firms had ad hoc approaches to supporting local communities and this, for the moment, required very tailored and bespoke approaches. Sharing good practice through networking was therefore important to change this.

5.3. Marketing and Branding

Marketing and branding have been vital components of the work in each of the three areas. In Merton, a website, 'Merton Means Business' (http://mertonmeansbusiness.co.uk/) has been set up showcasing the work and stories of five local businesses that are giving locally. The website has the aim to connect business with the community in Merton. The stories used reflect the diversity of need in the borough. More broadly, the website is used to create news stories, raise the profile and engage local businesses. The stories used are of both large corporates (MacDonald's) to small local businesses.

The Merton project has a good relationship with the local media and a monthly newsletter is produced highlighting the good work done by businesses in the local community. Similarly, Tameside4Good signed up to a partnership agreement with a local newspaper guaranteeing a full page advert once a month – good work is promoted as well as business discounts (e.g. a company might give a 20 per cent discount to charity as well as a proportion to Tameside for Good).

From its inception, Tameside4Good set out to develop a strong brand. It works with a range of businesses giving in different ways, for example in terms of small businesses, a local garage offered to give £1 for every invoice raised in a year, which will raise between £600 and £700. A local bakery did a retail offer for a fortnight to raise money. Medium sized businesses have done employer supported volunteering, giving time and skills. TLI funds have been used for marketing, to develop the brand.

Business networking events were also rolled out alongside the Tameside4Good brand. These were intended to introduce businesses to other businesses and also introduce them all to Tameside for Good: 'there's nothing better than business people standing up saying here's why I support a local charity… you should do the same, they are better adverts for it than we are'.

In North Yorkshire, communications and marketing have been key components of the approach. This has included attendance at various networking events, web portal development, forging links with the Local Enterprise Partnership, and inviting local MPs to a final conference. Alongside this face-to-face communication was found to be vital in effecting change. Our research in North Yorkshire also highlighted that the development of a specific marketing strategy at the outset of the project by a professional marketing consultant was important.

5.4. Sustainability

A common concern across all three TLI projects was around issues of sustainability. In Tameside income streams came from three sources. Firstly, the licensing of the 'Tameside4Good' brand which included both the brand had some potential to bring in additional revenue. At the time of the research, Wigan was establishing Wigan4Good and CVAT staff were in discussions with another area to establish a '4Good' brand there. Secondly, the running of 'Team Challenges' for businesses was also intended to bring an income stream. Thirdly, Tameside4Good had established a grant making programme through the support of Tameside Council which had provided support through the transfer of funds in dormant charitable accounts. At the time of the research Tameside4Good was seeking a grant of £30k to continue the infrastructure elements of the project.

In North Yorkshire, a business model was being developed and trialled. This included running a launch conference to bring the voluntary and business sectors together. Some funding had been secured through the selling of stands at the conference to local businesses. Responsibilities for continuing the work had been divided across 26 partners to the project.

5.5. Barriers

Each of the projects was however experiencing some common barriers. These included:

- small businesses were found to have a low awareness of local giving opportunities, despite professing a commitment to support local communities
- there was a lack of awareness on the part of business of the range of charities which exist locally and as a result charities would either be supported where there was an existing personal connection or where charities had a strong local profile (for example, a local hospice)
- businesses seldom wanted to start any engagement through offering money. They would be more likely to provide other support
- SMEs were found to be more difficult to engage. Large businesses tended to have CSR strategies which meant that they sometimes more receptive to enquiries from charities, although many local charities also reported a mixed experience from approaching large charities
- the recession and subsequent period of historically low growth meant many businesses were reluctant to engage
- some voluntary and community organisations were also reluctant to engage with business. The development/engagement officers reported, unexpectedly, that persuading voluntary and community sector organisations to engage had been a key part of the role.

5.6. Conclusion

The local research into three TLI projects revealed the following lessons:

- **building relationships matters.** One respondent reported that the 'hard sale doesn't work' when trying to create and sustain relationships and the aim is to 'build and nurture trust'
- **business giving cannot just be about giving money**, particularly for small businesses
- **infrastructure organisations were being required to 'reinvent their role, and be clear about the values they are adding'**. As such they had to offer some tangible benefits to frontline charities
- **developing local business giving takes time**. As one respondent noted: 'this is a process that can't be forced on anyone and it's not something that will happen overnight'.

A further message which was made on several occasions was that there needed to be mutual benefit for both the private and voluntary and community sectors.

Conclusion and Lessons

6

A series of four general conclusions may be drawn from the research, six pragmatic lessons for infrastructure organisations, and one cautionary note.

6.1. General Conclusions

i. Behind the Policy Idea

There has been considerable UK Coalition Government interest in the role civic society can play as a counterpoint to, and partner of, the public and private sectors. The policy agenda has taken different forms and used different instruments, some small scale pump priming of innovative and pilot initiatives, some exploration of the potential of tax incentives to encourage business engagement, and a more general call for dialogue between sectors. This policy agenda has been shaped on the one hand by the state seeking to enact considerable cuts in public spending and on the other through an ideological position for the state to withdraw from arenas of civic action and social policy. Following this line of argument, such arenas will subsequently be filled by private and civic action which is more dynamic, innovative and responsive to social need.

ii. An Example of Policy Based Evidence

The policy formulation for business giving we found is based on a relatively slim evidence base. Such evidence which does exist (some of which is excellent) is largely derived from case study examples of large corporations or wealthy individuals. Little is known about the engagement of the majority of businesses with the voluntary and community sector. Our research has shown the limitations of the existing relationships between business and the voluntary and community sector, but also how local sector led research can help fill this gap.

iii. Seeds of the Same Plot

Relationships between business and the voluntary and community sector have been seen as a response to failings in capitalism. Business, in particular large corporates, have embraced corporate social responsibility, and its voluntary nature, as a response to this critique. Other accounts of this relationship we found were less to do with 'civilising business' but much more to do with finding mutual benefit for business and the voluntary and community sector. This agenda has a strong rhetorical and intuitive appeal although it is also one with little detailed analysis of the respective scale of such mutual benefits.

iv. Geography Matters

Despite championing localism as a cornerstone of a new model for policy making and implementation, little attention is given to the economic differences between localities, except to suggest that difference is a reason for more localisation. Our research found that the likely opportunities for business giving will vary markedly across the country. These both reflect the relative profitability of businesses in different places but quite simply that there are significantly more businesses in some places than others. If anything, this finding calls for an acceptance that the mix of funding will vary markedly between places.

6.2. Pragmatic Lessons

i. Relationships and Capacity Matter

The three case studies of TLI projects revealed that 'cold calling' is not the way to develop business giving. Rather relationships between the sectors need to be nurtured and developed, often using pre-existing local events and networks. For this to happen some capacity is required.

ii. Neither about a Prize for a Raffle or about Money

Raffle prizes and money were the two most common starting points a voluntary and community sector organisation might look to in establishing a relationship with business. Alone both represent a single transaction and not an ongoing relationship which involve exchange of information and the identification of areas of mutual benefit. The research in Greater Manchester also showed that the two single largest cash donations to charities were in arts based capital projects. This reflects that businesses will select, perhaps on the basis of personal (owner) preferences, but also that fundraising for a capital project may be more attractive to donors.

iii. What is Mutual Benefit?

We found examples of different approaches to understanding mutual benefit. In Tameside the development of Talent Pool showed how a product and service could be developed which both businesses and voluntary and community sector organisations could support. In Merton there were examples of both large and small businesses identifying joint activities with voluntary and community sector organisations.

iv. Business Giving Takes Different Forms

If giving is not just about a prize for the raffle or money then what is it about? Examples here included the giving of time, expertise, resources/materials and space. Underpinning all was the development of a relationship which was far more than a one-off transaction.

v. Establishing a Place Based Brand

Research on SMEs' relationships with their communities both in the UK and elsewhere suggests that they have a commitment to their areas but that this commitment cannot find expression. A part of the three TLI projects we explored was the development of some form of place based brand. This served different purposes. It provides a clear means to communicate what may be considerable complexity and which does not have the feel of a public sector led initiative. As such it established a policy space for business to engage with the sector. Moreover, such brands may serve as kite marks.

vi. A Different Role for Infrastructure Organisations?

The three TLI examples used in this report showed infrastructure organisations were responding to a challenging policy environment in innovative ways. They were working closely with organisations from across sectors to realise this. At the time of the research the organisations were making steps towards finding ways to generate new streams of revenue funding for charging for some services. Where this was the case they needed to demonstrate what value the service would have or the impact of the service.

6.3. … and a final cautionary note

This research project sought to provide evidence of the extent of business giving. The findings from the survey of voluntary and community sector organisations in Greater Manchester showed that business giving takes many different forms. Case study research with TLI projects also revealed innovative responses from local infrastructure organisations. However, the evidence base for developing business giving policy and practice remains undeveloped. Moreover, the research raises some considerable concerns that it is an agenda which may mean far more in some places than others.