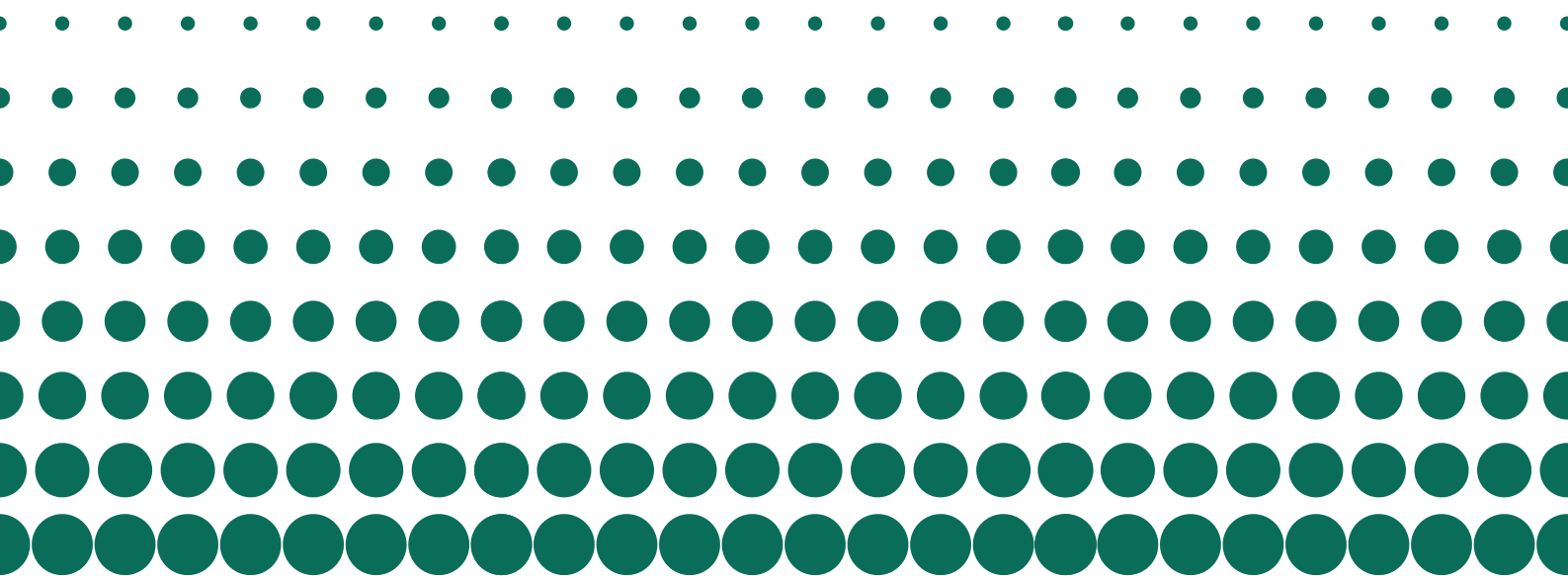




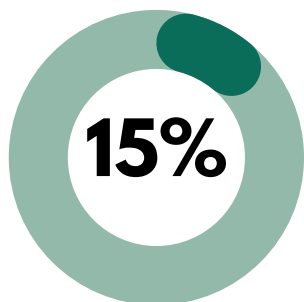
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Pulse Check Report July 23

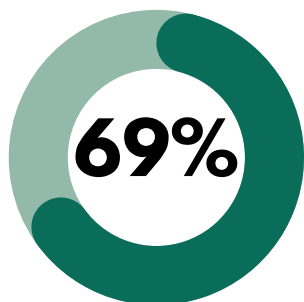


Headlines

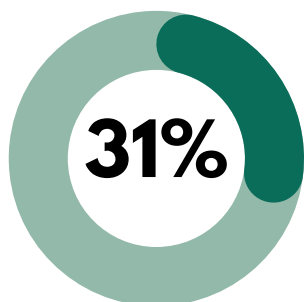
Headline findings based on the responses of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in Bury



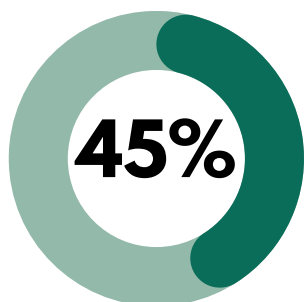
15% of respondents report decreasing volunteer numbers



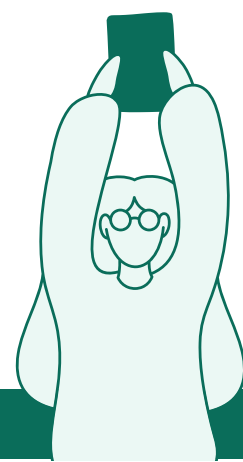
69% of respondents state that in the last twelve months, the time contributed by volunteers has increased.



31% of respondents are having difficulties recruiting volunteers



45% of respondents have found the cost of living crisis has impacted volunteer retention



Key Findings

The Bury Pulse Check is an online survey that was launched in June 2023. It aims to gather a real-time snapshot of some of the issues affecting the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Bury. As the survey was launched during volunteers week it made sense to theme this first one about volunteering!

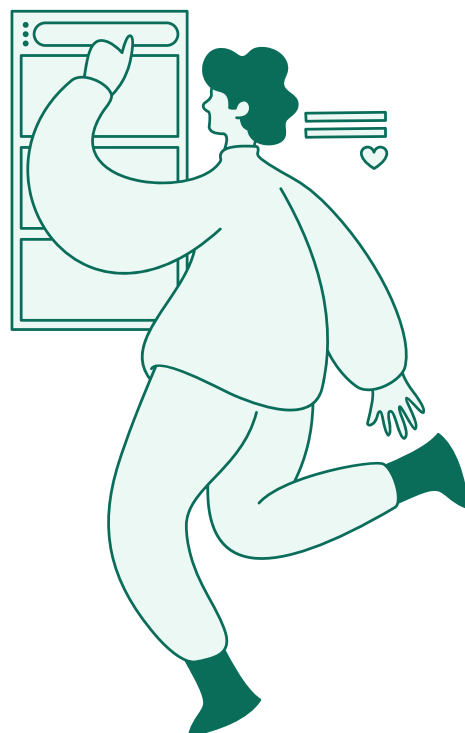
The insight provided by the respondents is detailed in this report and shared with key partners including the public sector, helping to shape future work around the Bury Volunteering Strategy. It will also shape our work as Bury VCFA and the support we offer the sector.

Funding is a mixed picture

We asked groups how their funding had changed in the last 12 months. The responses painted a mixed picture. Whilst 37% of organisations had experienced an increase in funding, another 40% of groups had experienced a decrease. Further investigation identified that those 40% were small or micro organisations. It will take further insight to fully understand the reasons behind this, but it may be linked to the changing funding landscape post-covid. Where the number of small grants available has decreased and funders are pausing activity whilst reviewing or changing their priorities.

Volunteer Numbers

The recent VCSE Sector Barometer (Charity Pro Bono report) found that 23% of organisations have experienced a decrease in volunteers. In Bury the figure is slightly lower with 15% of respondents experiencing a decrease in volunteering numbers. In our findings medium and large organisations are the most likely to have experience a decrease in volunteers.



Key Findings

Recruitment

31% of respondents have had volunteer recruitment difficulties over the last twelve months

Barrier to recruitment

The key barriers to recruitment identified by respondents were

- Low Response to volunteer adverts
- Lack of organisational capacity
- Financial Resources
- Applicants suitable to the role

When we cross referenced with those experiencing decreasing volunteer number and those with recruitment challenges. The key common barriers in both cohorts were organisational capacity and financial resource.

No respondents used national campaigns or platforms as a lever for volunteer recruitment

Recruitment Methods

We asked respondents the main ways that they managed to recruit volunteers. Considering that many of Bury's VCSE Sector are small organisations rooted in place, it came as no surprise that the importance of local connections came out highly. With "Word of Mouth" being the most popular method (54%) and in person events also featuring highly (31%).

Digital marketing skills are increasingly important for groups, with 46% using social media to recruit volunteers. Other responses included working with another organisations (15%) as well as utilising the Bury Volunteer Bank (15%).

Despite the recent growth of national campaigns and platforms including the "Big Help Out" campaign which was for the Coronation. It has become clear that locally driven solutions and approaches are the key to further volunteer growth.

Key Findings

Time Spent by Volunteers

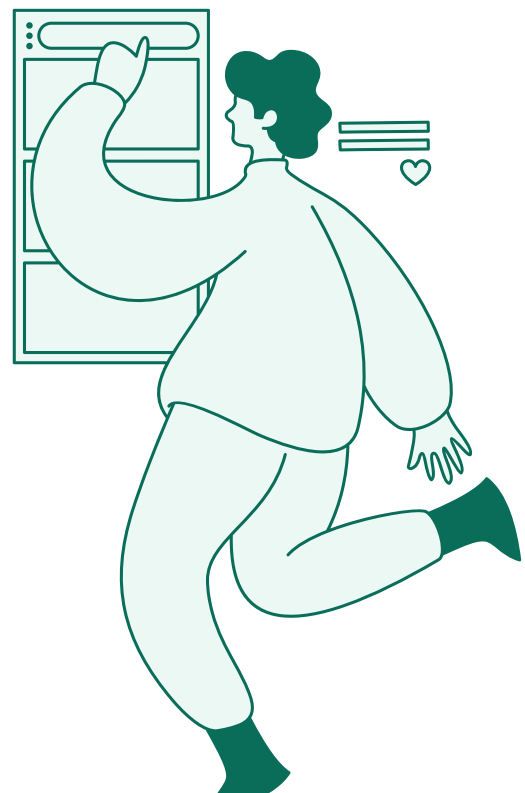
Over the last twelve months 69% of respondent stated that the unpaid time contributed by their volunteers has increased. When you consider the potential challenges on volunteer recruitment and retention reported nationally and within this insight. It could be a sign that a specific number of core volunteers may be masking issues with overall volunteer numbers.

Supporting and Retaining Volunteers

In Bury, only 8% of respondents reported difficulty retaining volunteers. However, a significant number raised concerns about the cost of living crisis having an impact of retention (45%). The same percentage also cited increased working hours / having increased work responsibilities. Also 11% raised the lack of availability of carers.

This echoes the recent "Time Well Spent" Report in which an increasing number of individuals have been put off volunteering as they are worried about out-of-pocket expenses. Over a third of those unlikely to continue volunteering cite 'having less time due to changing circumstances' as a reason.

Combining this with 22% of respondent also highlighting organisational capacity as a barrier to retention. This raises the importance of reinforcing a key message of the Bury Volunteer Strategy. Acknowledging that "volunteering requires resourcing and although volunteers give their time freely, there is a cost to the volunteer-involving organisation" whether in terms of volunteer management or volunteering expenses.



Key Findings

Wellbeing and Recognition

Nationally 17% of charities are reporting decreased volunteer wellbeing. In Bury, the figure is slightly more positive, decreasing only 8%. However, we should not become complacent as with reports of volunteers increasing their hours spent there is a risk of volunteers feeling fatigued or even burnt out, particularly with increasing demand for services.

Recognition is an important part of the volunteer experience. Nationally, four in ten recent volunteers felt receiving recognition for their help and support was important. In Bury, all of the respondents provided some form of reward or recognition. The most common forms of support included award nominations, internal celebrations, social activities, thank you gifts and vouchers with over a half of respondents providing these. A similar figure showcased volunteers work and contribution via case studies and social media. A third used traditional thank you letters and cards and the Bury Roll of Recognition was also specifically highlighted by a third of respondents.

Further Reading / References

[Pro Bono Economic - Analysis of the VCSE Sector Barometer June 23](#)

[NCVO Report - Time Well Spent 2023](#)

[Bury Volunteering Strategy](#)

A huge thank you to all the groups and organisations who completed the survey



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