

## State of the Sector Survey What Tower Hamlets told us in 2017

This report sets out the findings from the 'State of the Sector' survey we conducted for six weeks between May and June 2017. We sent copies of this survey to 1400 e-mail addresses as well as providing access to the survey via Twitter and our website. Yara Marion, our lead volunteer on the project, and I also contacted under 200 organisations by phone to encourage participation.

Over the six weeks we ran the survey we received 67 responses which is an increase on the 49 from the previous year. The survey in 2017 had 44 questions and is available as an appendix on [thcvs.org.uk/state-sector-survey](http://thcvs.org.uk/state-sector-survey).

Analysis of the data we gathered showed that there is resilience in the local voluntary sector;

75% of VCS organisations who responded rent their premises and less than half of these feel they have security of tenure. Despite this 75% feel as confident or more confident about their organisations prospects than they did this time last year. This is despite the widely perceived 'shock' factor of the EU referendum and the triggering of Article 50.

there is a considerable amount of frustration with the process of applying for locally commissioned tenders.

Constraints on time and resources are cited as the single biggest factor impeding more effective leadership in the local sector.

Collaborative work is valued highly across the sector but respondents find it difficult to balance priorities with creating new chances; 75% of respondents feel they don't have time to network to create opportunities to collaborate, but 80% of respondents had established some kind of formal or informal collaboration with fellow organisations.

The sectors' opinion of THCVS impact in liaising with the statutory sector has remained steady over the last two years, although there is an appetite for a stronger voice.



In July 2017 we showed the full findings to 20 people from the sector in Tower Hamlets. We focussed on the findings around local commissioning & recorded suggestions for improving the process of local commissioning in Tower Hamlets. These included but were not limited to; establishing longer timetables for commissioning at design and delivery stages, joining up commissioning strategies with local plans for procurement and quality standards, emphasising the value of local providers when determining 'Value for money'.

We've drawn up plans for improving engagement next year, especially amongst groups and organisations defined as 'small' and 'micro' by NCVO definitions of size by financial turnover. We are focussing on reducing the number of questions, and improving accessibility to the survey, (including making it available in multiple languages) so that we can get a clearer snapshot of the priorities of the local voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the pressures it operates under. The full report into changes we currently plan on making is included in this document following the detailed findings of the survey

Since July we have analysed the last two years' worth of data for the most valuable insights and reduced the number of questions to 25. When the survey runs again in 2018 we may add questions based on issues that are immediately pertinent (such as changes to business rates in 2017).

You can find the full findings of the survey on the same page as this document as well as the appendix containing the full survey from 2017.

Yours sincerely,

Ieuan Care  
Research and Communications Officer