The THCVS State of the Sector Survey Report 2016

1. Background

This report sets out the findings from the 'State of the Sector' survey we conducted between Friday May 6th and Friday June 10th 2016. We chose the theme of 'State of the Sector' to use the survey to determine which topic we should campaign on in the next financial year (conducting an annual campaign is also an MSG target). However, after writing the survey we found there was an opportunity to help build knowledge of the local sector that we could share. We also found that forums, events and conversations with people across the sector has played a large role in alerting us to demand and areas around which we could bring people together to campaign for improvement.

In total there were 51 responses to the survey. All surveys were conducted anonymously. The State of the Sector is envisaged as a multi-year project. This first year was important to gauge baseline answers across a spectrum of areas. Next year we envisage being able to report comparatively and chart changes across the year.

51

Total Responses

Date Created: Thursday, April 28, 2016

Complete Responses: 44

2. Key Findings

We asked questions in nine areas. Here is what we learned from the responses.

Areas of Activity

Organisations in the sector are addressing a huge range of issues and working with a broad cross-section of people in the borough (identified by race, gender and age). We provided twenty nine categories for charitable work from Arts to Women's Rights via Housing and Facilitating Volunteering. Of these twenty nine we know from our own contact that the two that weren't selected (Armed Services, Substance Addiction) are represented in the sector.

Finance

There is a mixed picture financially with 12% saying they could only run a few of their projects and 16% saying they couldn't run any of their projects in the year ahead.

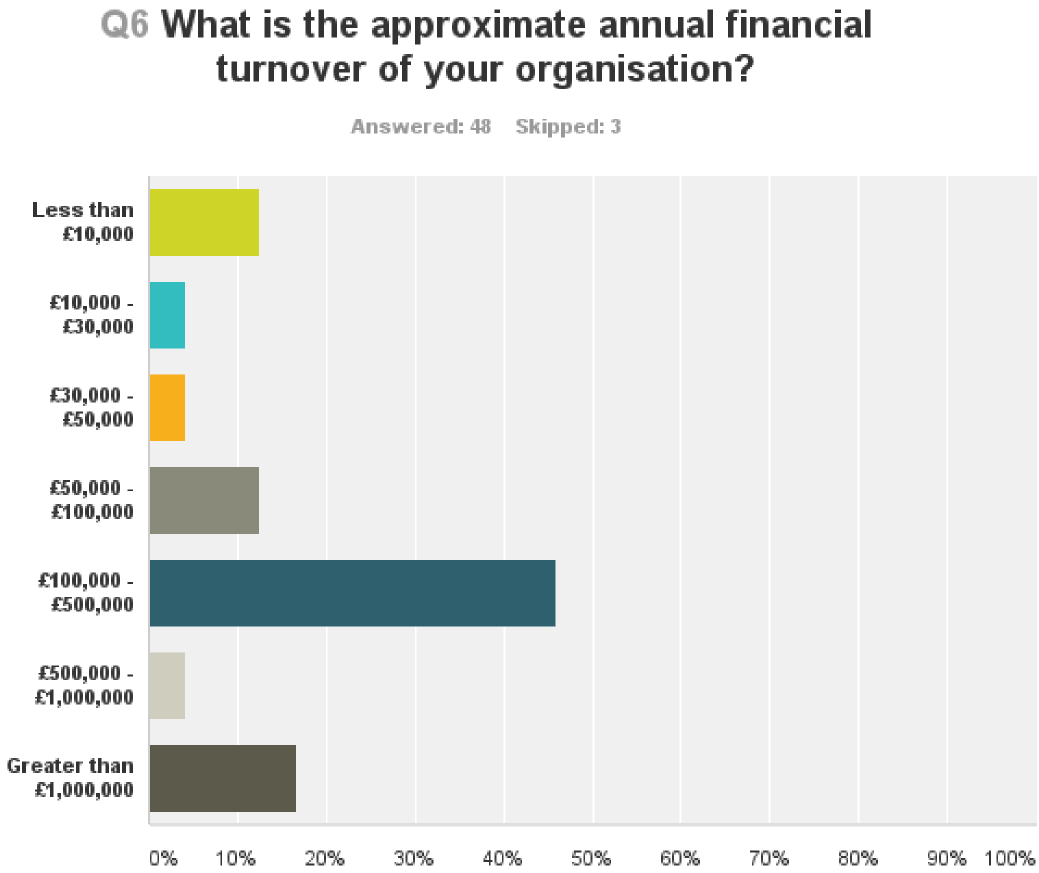

fig. 1

However, three quarters responded varying degrees of confidence in raising funds from non-statutory sources (i.e. direct donations, sales).

When asked about how they felt their organisation would develop in the future in terms of size, there was understandably a high degree of uncertainty. Many organisations did not feel confident giving a prediction. Only two organisations reported that it was likely or possible they will close in the next year.

	1. Very unlikely to happen	2. Quite unlikely to happen	3. You are uncertain	4. Quite likely to happen	5. Very likely to happen	6. You are already considering this/this is already happening	n/a	Total	Weighted Average
Your organisation will grow	11.11% 5	17.78% 8	22.22% 10	28.89% 13	13.33% 6	6.67% 3	0.00% 0	45	3.36
Your organisation will stay the same	15.91% 7	13.64% 6	29.55% 13	18.18% 8	11.36% 5	4.55% 2	6.82% 3	44	3.36
Your organisation will shrink	22.73% 10	31.82% 14	27.27% 12	9.09% 4	4.55% 2	4.55% 2	0.00% 0	44	2.55
You will have to consider merging with another organisation	58.54% 24	17.07% 7	19.51% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.44% 1	2.44% 1	41	1.83
You will close	63.04% 29	13.04% 6	17.39% 8	2.17% 1	2.17% 1	0.00% 0	2.17% 1	46	1.76

fig. 2

Quality Assurance

When asked about their quality assurance systems one third of respondents said they needed support 'to implement new or existing quality assurance systems'.

Collaboration

In terms of collaboration, the sector is alive to the importance of networking to further their work. Whilst three quarters said they needed more opportunities to network thirteen of the sixteen who said they did not have any or many chances to network (1-3 on scale) said they did not have enough time to network. In terms of working partnerships 70% reported that they were in formal partnership arrangements and 84% reported being in an informal working partnership.

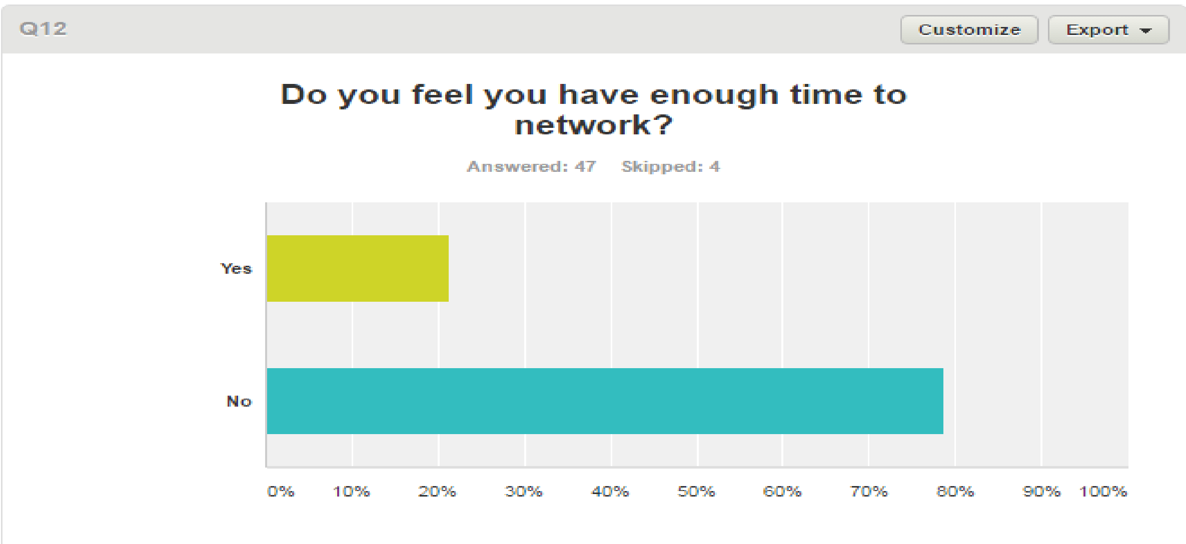

fig. 3

Voice

Organisations within the sector appear not to have much confidence in their voice being heard. Forty four respondents answered 'To what extent do you feel involved in policy development and debate around policy?' On a scale of one to five with one being low, five high, 16% chose one and 0% chose 5. 22.7% did choose four 'We are regularly engaged in policy development' but the overall average was 2.27 on the scale –indicating the respondents did not feel particularly engaged.

	Not at all involved	Slightly Involved in debate or development	Somewhat involved in debate or development	Regularly engaged in policy development	Very engaged in policy development and are influence in policy debates	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Please select a rating from 1-5	15.91% 7	18.18% 8	40.91% 18	22.73% 10	0.00% 0	2.27% 1	44	2.72

fig. 4

Relationship with Statutory Sector

We asked organisations about their working relationships with local statutory bodies. The local council was the partner which respondents engaged the most with. One third said they are currently working with the council and one third reported that they rent from the council. Barts NHS Foundation and Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group were the next highest with 10% currently working with them and a further 10 – 15% confident they could work with them. The London Fire Brigade had the lowest engagement with 58% saying they had no relationship whatsoever and 20% saying 'We know them but do not have a relationship which improves our impact or potential'.

How is THCVS Doing?

The average rating of how THCVS is performing in 'effectively challenging the statutory sector' was 3.39 with the most commonly occurring ratings being 3 and 4 'somewhat effectively' and 'quite effectively'. THCVS will look at mechanisms for detailed feedback through the year.

	1. THCVS does not challenge the statutory sector effectively	2. THCVS does not really offer an effective challenge to the statutory sector	3. THCVS challenges the statutory sector somewhat effectively or effectively in some areas	4. THCVS challenges the statutory sector quite effectively	5. THCVS challenges the statutory sector very effectively	Total	Weighted Average
Please select a rating from 1-5	5.56% 2	11.11% 4	38.89% 14	27.78% 10	16.67% 6	36	3.39

fig. 5

Trustees & Leadership

Faith in leadership within the sector is high with over half rating leadership with the highest mark 'clear, transparent and accountable' and one quarter giving leadership a 4 out of 5 'Leadership is generally clear'. A common reason cited as a drag on impact was a lack of capacity within organisations. This was summed up by one respondent as 'too much work for too few hands'. An example of people doubling up work outside their roles being that just under 15% of respondents said their trustees were involved in service delivery and 10% reported trustees helping with building maintenance. Most respondents described the relationship between their staff and board of trustees as satisfactory. From forty-three respondents, eighteen described the relationship as 'fulfils expectations' (4 on a scale of 1-5) with nine rating is as 5 ('strong') and ten rating it 3 ('constructive in parts but could be improved').

We asked about the range of activities trustees undertake. The most common answers were those that fall within the traditional remit of the role of trustee; providing financial oversight (95%), involved with or making strategic decisions (90%) and compliance with the law and governing documents (79%). The range of activity also included pastoral support for staff (23.5%), building maintenance (9.3%), fundraising (33%) and ad hoc advice (67%). See *fig.6* overleaf for the full range.

Answer Choices	Responses	
The trustees do no play any active role in the organisation	11.63%	5
The trustees are involved with financial oversight	95.35%	41
The trustees are involved with or make strategic decisions	90.70%	39
The trustees ensure we comply with our governing documents and the law	79.07%	34
The trustees provide pastoral support for staff	23.26%	10
The trustees are involved in building maintenance	9.30%	4
The trustees are involved in office administration	6.98%	3
The trustees are involved in fundraising	32.56%	14
The trustees represent the organisation at events	62.79%	27
The trustees help deliver services	13.95%	6
The trustees are open to being asked for advice on ad hoc issues	67.44%	29
Total Respondents: 43		

fig. 6

Premises

In terms of premises for the sector, only 50% of the organisations who answered said 'yes' to the question 'Do You Feel You Have Security of Tenure?'. Seven of those twenty owned their own premises. Feelings of insecurity came from organisations who said they were council or private sector tenants. VCSE organisations reported renting and letting desk space to other organisations as well as the NHS and churches providing accommodation. It is important to note however that the sample size of thirty three for the question of who organisations rent from is too small to be taken as a representative sample.

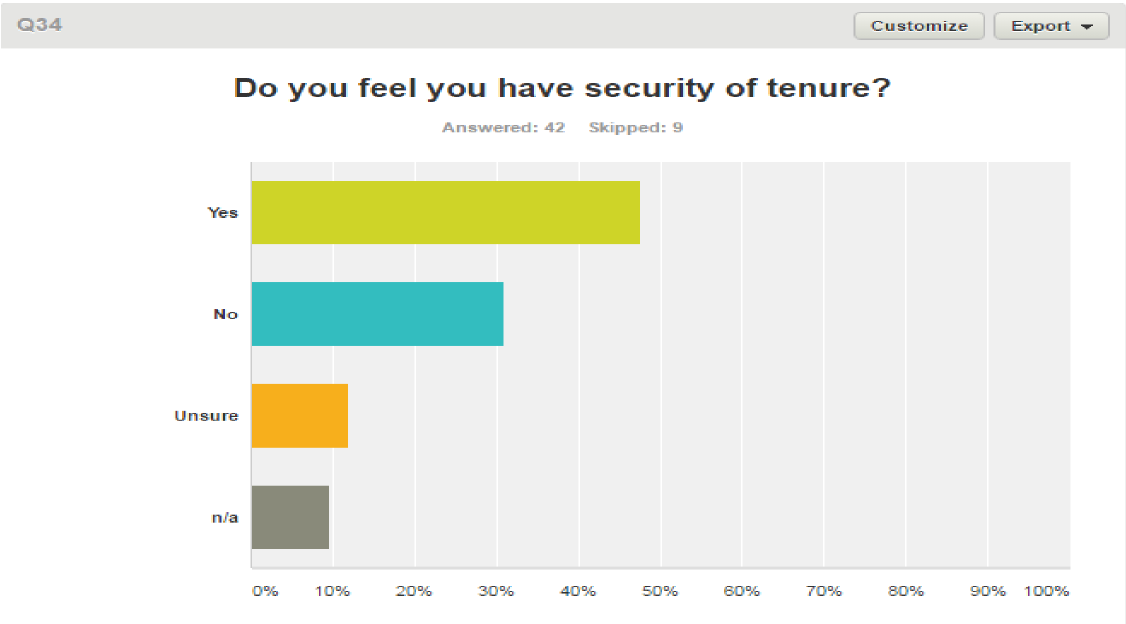

fig. 7

3. Next Steps

Further opportunities to take soundings from the sector on campaign priorities should be developed in the New Year (2017). An event to share the findings of the report and gauge opinion on our campaign priorities would be a reasonable next step.

If the survey is to become a tool for effectively gauging the condition of the local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations then larger buy-in from the sector regarding the survey is required. Whilst a sample size of 51 responses gives us a snapshot of views in key areas it is not sufficient to determine campaign priorities. We should look at supplementing the digital consultation with events in person where we can give organisations a chance to give their view on how the sector is doing, priorities for future campaigns, as well as gathering responses to the survey. When drafting next year's survey we will look at how reporting against questions has worked versus our expectations as well as looking at what big issues have affected the sector. We will then repeat questions where we feel we have a reasonable benchmark, introduce new questions where they can shed light and remove any questions which were not effective.