



Community &
Voluntary Services
cheshire east

Voice of the Sector

2018 Survey Results

One of CVS Cheshire East's core aims is to;
Empower the Voice of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) locally.

We do this through gathering the collective voice of the VCFS on issues and working with the relevant organisation to represent the voice of the sector and endeavour to effect change.

We want to ensure that all VCFS organisations feel able and confident to raise their voice and want to understand how CVS can better support this to happen.

To do this we undertook a survey with the aim of hearing the views of VCFS organisations and Statutory partners to support us to improve our service.

The survey took place between March and May 2018 and was extended for a short period with the aim of encouraging more responses from statutory partners.

86 people completed the Survey with 81% from VCFS organisations and 19% from statutory partners.

The survey was split into 2 sections with representatives from VCFS organisations and Statutory organisations completing different questions.

This document contains the full results from the survey and details what this tells us, what CVS is currently doing in this area and what our future plans would be.

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Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Results

The survey was completed by:

- Trustees/Directors – 26%
- Staff members – 40%
- Volunteers – 34%

This split should give a range of experiences and views.

Working with Partners

To get a picture of who the sector was working with and who they wanted to work with we asked them if they had contact with any statutory or VCFS organisations over the last 12 months.

The results (table 1) showed that most of the organisations had either worked with another VCFS organisation or Cheshire East Council.

Notably around 3/4 of VCFS organisations had not had contact with:

South Cheshire CCG, Eastern Cheshire CCG, the Police Crime Commissioner or Cheshire Fire and Rescue.

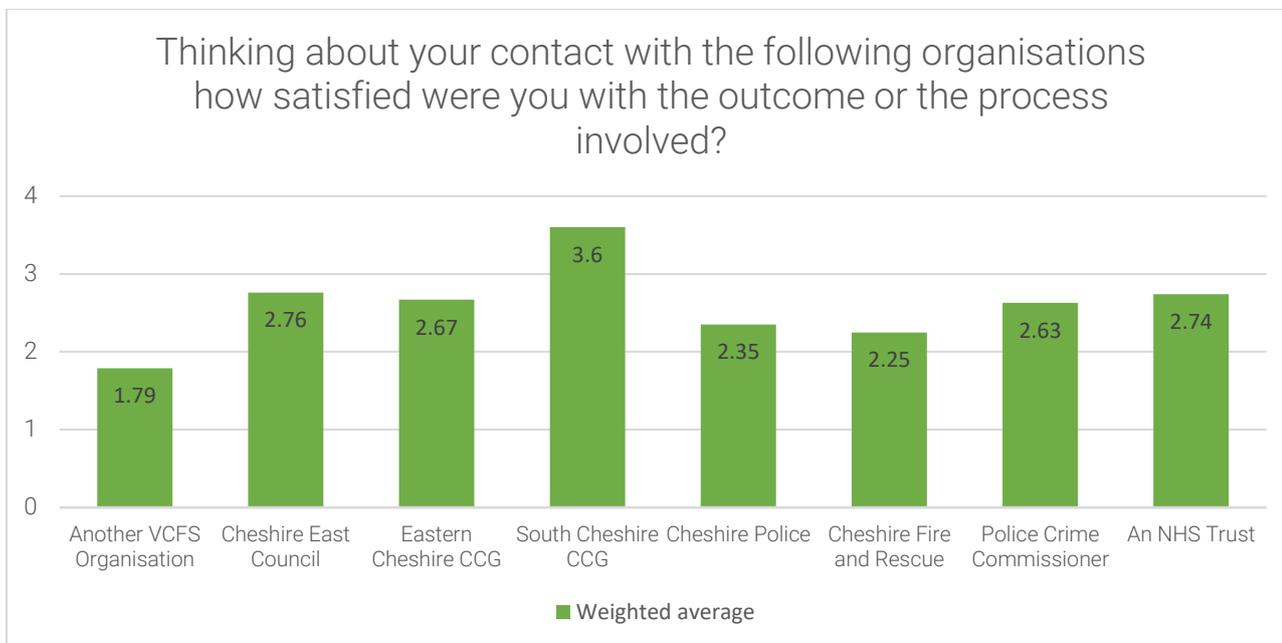
The VCFS organisations rated South Cheshire CCG and Eastern Cheshire CCG's as the organisations that they didn't have contact with but wanted to the most. This was closely followed by an NHS trust.

| | Yes | No | No, but I wanted to |
|--|-----|-----|---------------------|
| Another VCFS organisation | 60% | 38% | 2% |
| Cheshire East Council | 73% | 25% | 2% |
| Eastern Cheshire CCG | 16% | 73% | 11% |
| South Cheshire CCG | 15% | 74% | 11% |
| Cheshire Police | 49% | 47% | 4% |
| Cheshire Fire and Rescue | 24% | 71% | 5% |
| Police and Crime Commissioner | 20% | 73% | 7% |
| An NHS Trust e.g. Mid Cheshire NHS Trust | 43% | 49% | 9% |

Table 1

Overall all VCFS organisations were satisfied with the outcome or process involved with working with another VCFS organisation, 28% were very satisfied.

On average the VCFS organisations were satisfied with the outcome or process involved with working statutory partners. It was noted that no VCFS organisations were somewhat or very satisfied with their interaction with South Cheshire CCG giving it a slightly higher weighted average than other statutory partners.



The examples of good practice when working with organisations fit under 5 areas:

1. Having a cooperative approach, sharing information and joint working or taking cross referrals
2. Generally having good communication with another organisation
3. The importance of having individual contacts and people who are approachable
4. Having a productive funding or financial arrangement
5. Benefiting directly from their service

Area 1 having a cooperative approach was the most common theme among the examples.

"I have worked with Cheshire Police and was very impressed with the level of co-operation and motivation from the people in the group."

"Our contacts in the Council and PCC are very approachable"

"Excellent link to provide accessible activity sessions for disabled young people"

"Linking health services directly to our service offer: they refer individuals to our service"

Overall the examples provided for areas of improvement or barriers to working with partners including those they wanted to, reflected the good practice examples above of needing to have;

- Improved quality of responses or communication
- Knowing who and how to contact individuals in organisations and
- Potential service delivery improvements

"I think across the board it would be good to have clear transparent communication, respond to enquiries in a timely way and be upfront about timescales."

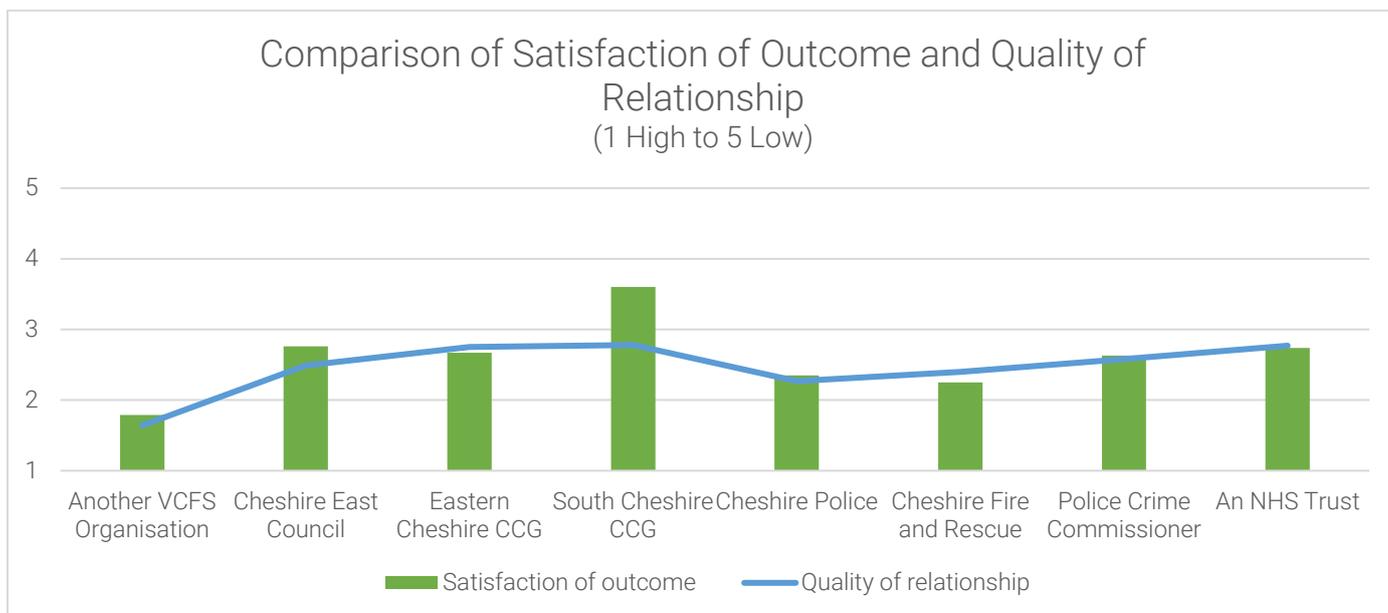
"It's probably knowing where to go and who to contact that we will always need help on"

The VCFS organisations also raised examples here where they felt that statutory organisations didn't have an understanding of how their decisions impacted the VCFS organisations and the services they deliver. There was specific reference to the timescales that decisions were made in, with them either being not communicated or the challenge of being able to respond / explore working together within them.

“Complete lack of understanding by statutory services to understand impact of proposed decisions and lack of commitment to meet with those affected by proposals, no respect for the voluntary sector and its outcomes.”

Quality of Relationships

The VCFS organisations were asked to rate the quality of their relationships with other organisations. In all cases, with the expectation of South Cheshire CCG, the quality of the relationship mirrored how satisfied the VCFS organisation was with the outcome and process. For South Cheshire CCG the quality of their relationship had a better average weighting than their satisfaction levels.



What this tells us

This tells us that overall;

- VCFS organisations have had the most contact with Cheshire East Council over the last 12 months (73%) and that only 2% wanted to but couldn't make contact
- The majority of VCFS organisations have had contact with other VCFS organisations with only 2% wanting to but not being able to.
- VCFS organisations had the best quality and highest satisfaction levels when working with other VCFS organisations.

What actions we are currently taking

- To support to relationship between the VCFS and Cheshire East Council in July 2018 we facilitated a round table meeting between 15 VCFS representatives from the Chief Executives Network and Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director for People and Nichola Glover-Edge, Director of Commissioning from Cheshire East Council

At this meeting Cheshire East Council and the VCFS representatives discussed how we could work together more effectively in the future. It was a positive discussion and there are a range of actions that have been agreed, Caroline Whitney, Chief Executive of CVS and Nichola Glover-Edge will be working through them together and will be working with the Chief Executives Network.

What action will we take

- The focus of much of CVS's work has been with Cheshire East Council and the relationship the sector has with it. CVS will make contact with CCG's and over the next 12 months discuss ways to increase their links with VCFS organisations. This is particularly important with the merger of the 4 CCG's in Cheshire which aims to be completed by 2020.

Confidence in raising issues

We were keen to understand how confident organisations were in raising an issue with either a statutory organisation, or another VCFS organisation and what support they would require from CVS to enable them to do this.

When asked overall how confident they would feel in raising an issue or challenging a decision with another organisation, as with other questions they had a slightly higher level of confidence when dealing with other VCFS organisations but overall, they were, slightly confident to confident across all organisations.

The lowest levels of confidence were with Eastern and South Cheshire CCG's which again reflects previous questions.

Responses that stated why they would feel confident raising issues included themes of;

- having confidence in their service,
- their ability to raise issues and be able to evidence their comments and
- knowing who to approach and having good relationships with those people.

Responses that stated why they would not feel confident raising issues included 2 key themes:

- feeling that they wouldn't be listened to or that action wouldn't be taken following them raising their voice.
- knowing who to contact or approach was also a factor in their confidence in raising their voice.

Support from CVS to raise their voice

67% of respondents stated that support from CVS would improve their confidence levels, (33% stated it would have no change).

The main area that CVS support would affect their confidence level is just through feeling that there is another organisation or person that is supporting them. The responses also felt that CVS would have more experience and wider contacts to support with raising their voice.

"I would feel like I had a big brother or sister looking out for me and holding my hand. The knowledge, experience and influence of CVS would give me more faith in my ability to approach the situation in the best way."

"Another respected voice can only help"

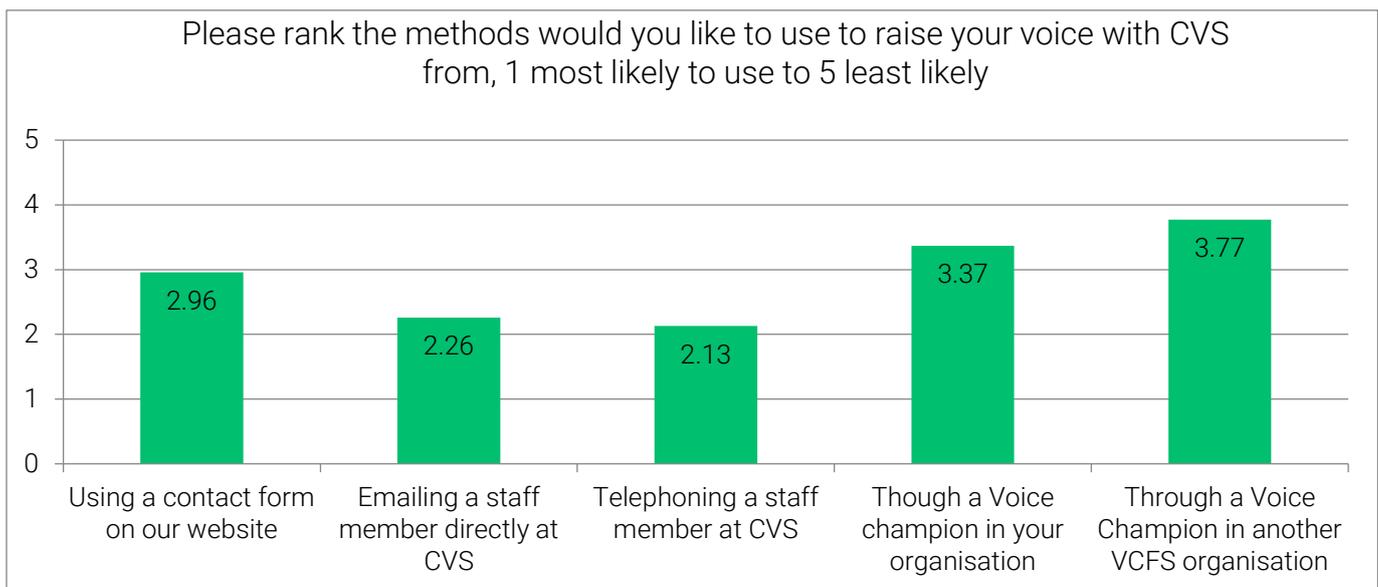
Only 18% of the respondents had approached CVS for support to raise an issue, those that had, 57% stated that there had been a positive impact with 43% stating there was no impact.

75% stated they would contact VCS to support them to raise an issue. Of those that stated they wouldn't contact CVS the two main reasons were;

- they felt able to do this themselves and
- they weren't sure how to access the support or what CVS could do for them.

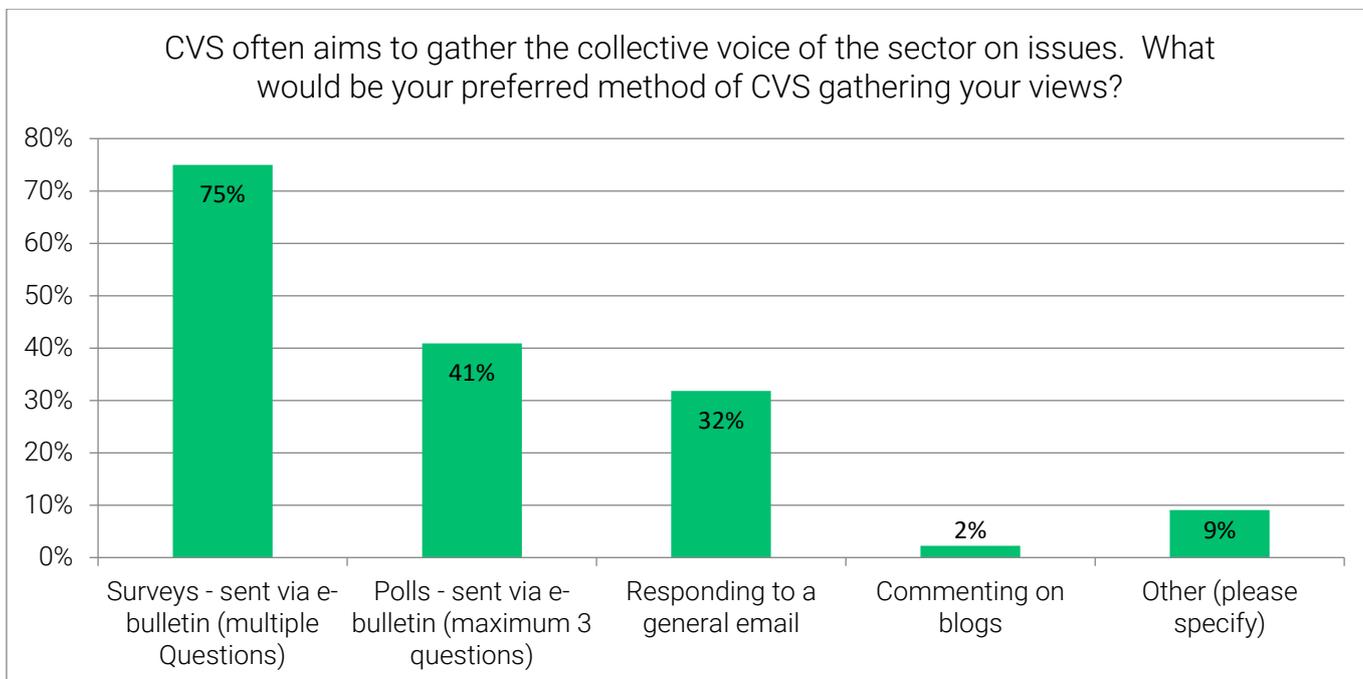
There were also queries about whether organisations needed to be members to raise an issue. One response stated that they didn't see this as a role for CVS.

When asked what methods they would use to raise their voice with CVS. The most popular method was emailing a staff member directly 76% rating 1-2 with telephoning a staff member directly the second with 63% scoring 1-2. The lowest score was through a voice champion in another organisation.



The most popular other ways they would like to raise their voice would be, through face to face meetings with CVS or at other events. One response stated through social media, either a closed Facebook group or direct messaging and one response felt that CVS needed to improve communication back to organisations that had raised issues.

When gathering the collective voice of the sector the most popular response was responding to surveys sent via the e-bulletin.



The other ways suggested were interviews or face to face discussion.

When asked how they would like to receive feedback from CVS on how they had represented their views, 82% stated via a Voice update in the e-bulletin. The next highest response was through a voice themed conference/event. There was little support 3% for a Blog or video clips on the website. When asked what other methods there was again support for face to face meetings or email updates.

56% of respondents were aware of CVS raising issues on behalf of VCFS organisations with 77% of those feeling that VCS has been representing the views effectively.

VCFS organisations representing the Sector

51% of the responses stated they currently attended meetings with statutory partner to share the views of their organisation or the wider sector.

What this tells us

This tell us that:

- Overall VCFS organisations feel confident in raising their voice with other VCFS organisations and statutory partners.
- The majority feel they would benefit from support with raising their voice from CVS and 75% would contact us. Only 18% have currently asked for support.
- The main ways that VCFS organisations want to raise their voice is either through email or telephone.
- 51% of respondents were representing the voluntary sector at meetings but this information is not being shared more widely that their own organisation.

What actions we are currently taking

CVS has been aware that it needs to improve the communication on how to raise an issue and feedback on what we are currently doing. We have reviewed our e-bulletin and will be improving the content of voice information making sure that we feedback what we are doing and how we are raising the voice of the sector.

We have reviewed the content of our website pages to make it clearer what actions we are taking and how VCFS organisations can raise issues with us. This includes;

- improving the use of our blogs section as a record of activity we are undertaking with a named staff member leading on each area
- Sharing which meetings we are attending and which staff member is the lead and representing the voice of the sector.
- Detailing that we can support with a strategic issue or an individual issue and how and when to raise these.

What action will we take

The actions we are currently undertaking have only recently been implemented and so we will continue to improve the communication and increase the feedback that we give to the sector on the work we are undertaking.

We will run mini polls and short surveys to gather the views on specific topics when necessary and produce the results in a timely way, sharing them with the sector and any other relevant organisations.

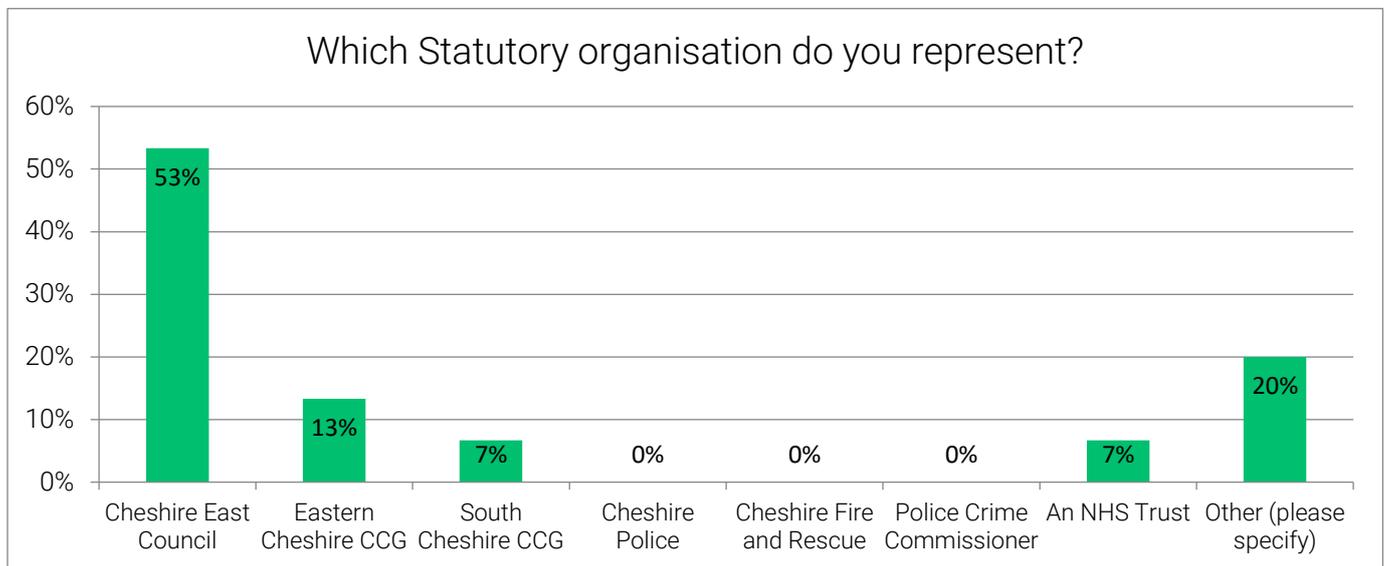
The results showed VCFS organisations didn't really want to report through a voice champion and so we will focus on improving the links directly between CVS and the individual VCFS organisations.

We will continue to engage specifically with faith-based organisations.

Statutory Sector results

We encouraged colleagues from the statutory sector organisations to complete the survey as their views and opinions are vital to us developing the service.

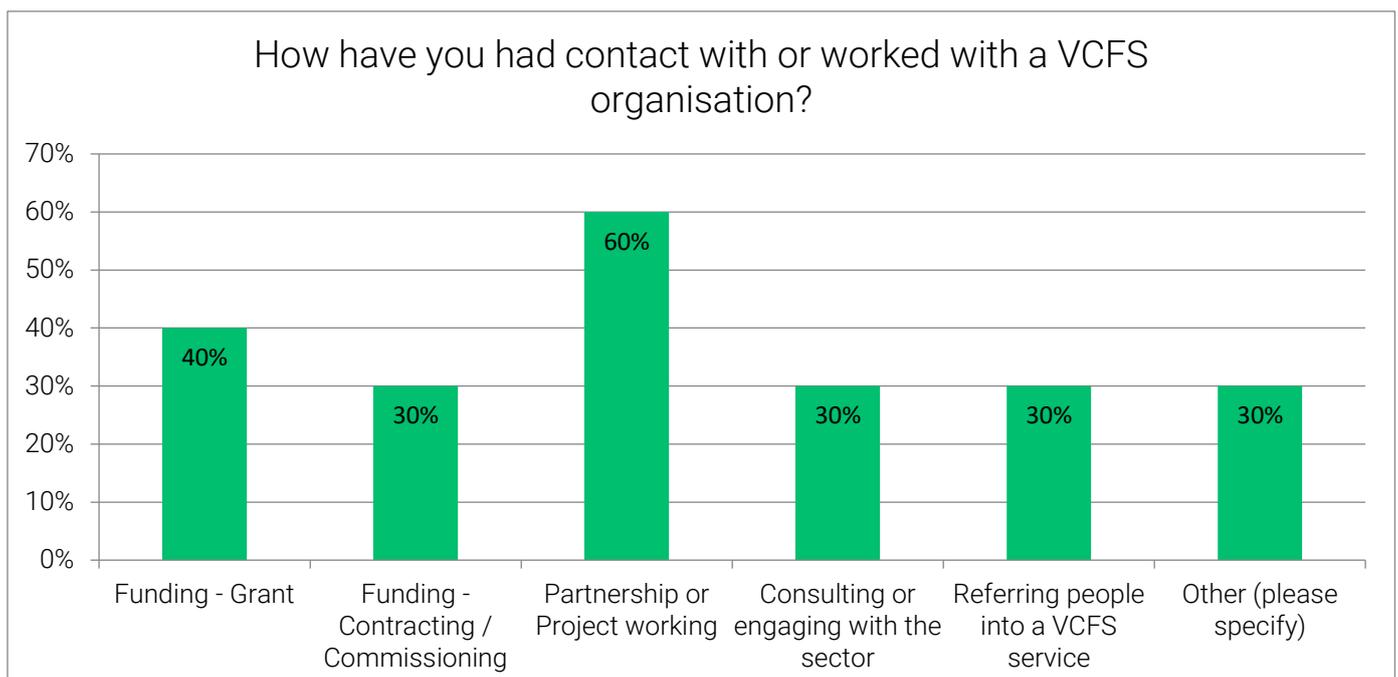
We only received 15 responses to the survey, so we are not able to say this is the view of the statutory sector however it does give us an indication of some of the views.



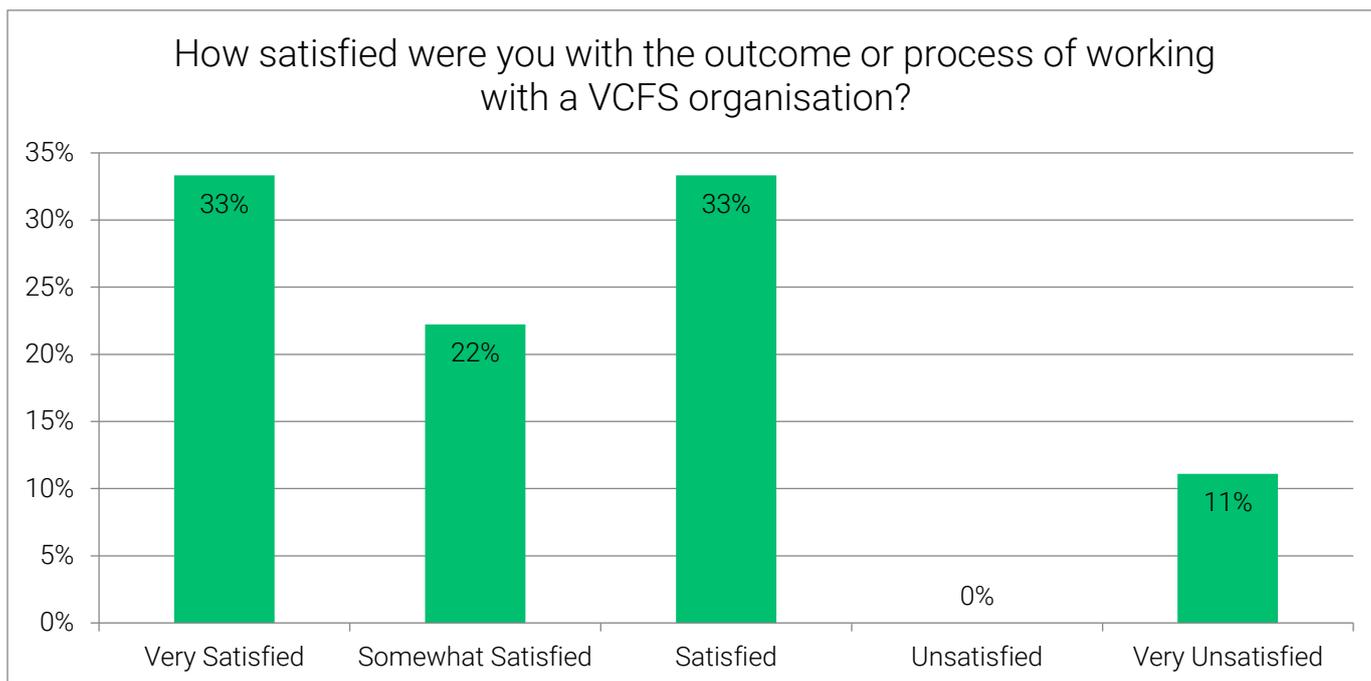
The other responses were all from Town or Parish councils.

Quality of relationships

66% of respondents had contact with or worked with a VCFS organisation in the last 12 months. The main contacts were with partnership or project working (60%), or grant funding (40%)



Overall the majority of respondents were satisfied with the outcome or process of working with a VCFS organisation. 1 respondent was very unsatisfied with the outcome or process.



Some examples of good practice when working with VCFS organisations were;

- helpful advice,
- openness and transparency when working with each other, and
- a willingness to be involved, participate and share ideas.

Some examples of areas for improvement or barriers they faced when working with VCFS organisations were;

- need to have more knowledge sharing,
- take a more proactive lead and not let statutory organisations lead,
- there is sometimes duplication in work, and
- there was a feeling that sometimes VCFS organisations were paying lip service to partnership working.

One response stated that a barrier was that VCFS organisations worked in a certain way and weren't always open to working with new people.

Overall the majority of respondents rated the quality of their relationship with VCFS organisations as Good (56%) or excellent (33%), with 11% rating it neutral.

Confidence in raising issues

We were keen to understand how confident organisations were in raising an issue with a VCFS organisation and what support they would require from CVS to enable them to do this.

The majority of respondents rated themselves as either very confident (29%) or confident (57%) to raise issues with VCFS organisations.

67% of the respondents were aware of CVS raising the voice of the VCFS over the last 12 months with 40% responding CVS was effective and 40% feeling we were somewhat effective.

When asked how CVS could improve the way it shares the voice of the VCFS with statutory organisations the responses included;

- increasing engagement and listening to issues on the ground and
- sharing data better on the size of the sector and the CVS membership to identify gaps and improve partnership working.

When asked what methods they would like to use to raise their voice with CVS the answers were similar to the VCFS responses with the top two being email a staff member or telephoning a staff member. Using a voice champion either in their organisation or another organisation were rated as least likely to use.

What this tells us

This small sample tells us that the main ways they have contact with VCFS organisations is either joint working or funding arrangements. That they would like the sector to take a greater lead in delivery and in reducing perceived duplication in services.

They are generally satisfied with the relationship with the VCFS and feel confident in raising issues with them.

They have raised similar comments to the VCFS in relation to CVS's role in representing the sector which is to improve overall communication.

What action we are currently taking

We are planning to produce a newsletter for statutory partners in August 2018. This will initially be sent to Cheshire East Borough Councillors and staff but can be circulated to all statutory partners. This will provide an overview of the role of CVS and what we are currently working on.

What action will we take

As mentioned this is a small sample and so there is further work needed to ascertain whether these views are more widely held. The initial focus will be on Cheshire East Council, as the organisation that VCFS organisations interact with most and Eastern Cheshire CCG and South Cheshire CCG as organisations they wish to engage with.