

Appendix 2: VCSE Survey carried out by DCF on behalf of Totnes Town Council

Feb 2026

Summary

The Survey had 46 responses from a range of local VCSE [Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise] organisations (Charities, CICs, Community Associations and unincorporated groups) of all sizes, from those run by a single volunteer to those employing several paid staff, including garden projects, sports clubs, KEVICC, Caring Town, CAB, churches, heritage bodies and food initiatives (NB: the updated spreadsheet of community organisations lists about 150 organisations working in Totnes).

Annual income ranges from less than £5,000 p.a. to organisations with an income over £250,000 p.a. Grants make up a major part of the income of all organisations (78.3%), with 40% heavily reliant on them. Just over half (55.6%) had had a TTC grant, a quarter had not (24.4%). We conclude that the Town Council need not be too concerned that local community organisations are dependent on its grant making.

There is longevity in the local VCSE sector – 85% have been in existence for five years or more. However, all organisations reported financial challenges to their long-term sustainability, mainly securing day-to-day running costs combined with increasing demand for services (with no corresponding increase in income). While this situation may not be new, that is to say VCSE organisations rarely enjoy reliable funding, these findings indicate yet again how precarious the VCSE sector is.

The contribution of volunteers is significant, which brings a number of challenges, particularly in relation to recruiting a broad range of volunteers, retaining volunteers and paying for volunteer expenses. However, it is worth noting that 20% of respondents reported no volunteer challenges and 10% do not have volunteers.

As with most of Devon, the VCSE sector in Totnes supports community health and wellbeing (in a broad sense), with a tendency towards families and children. It would be worthwhile exploring whether there are other priority areas where the VCSE could play a more active role.

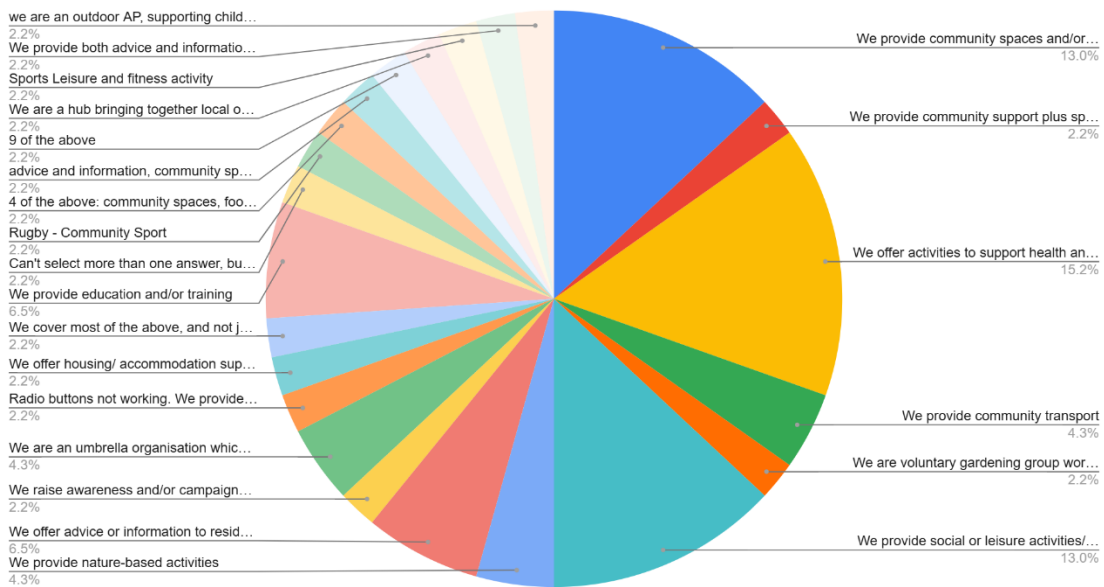
The majority of organisations have links with multiple partners (with all but one respondent mentioning partners). Key organisations and projects in the town are Totnes Caring, the Town Council, Caring Town Totnes, TRAYE, schools/ education providers, sports clubs, SHDC, Transition Town, CAB and Bridgetown Alive! It is worth considering organisations that do not feature in the list of partners, e.g. the police are mentioned once, while social housing providers (LiveWest), social prescribing services, arts and

cultural organisations, care home settings and NHS services/ the GP surgeries in Totnes are not mentioned at all.

What services do you offer?

As participants could select more than one option, a detailed picture of services provided across the town emerges. The majority report delivering health and wellbeing services (which includes gardening, nature-based, fitness/ leisure/ sport activities). Offering community spaces and activities is also noted as part of the VCSE offer (13%)

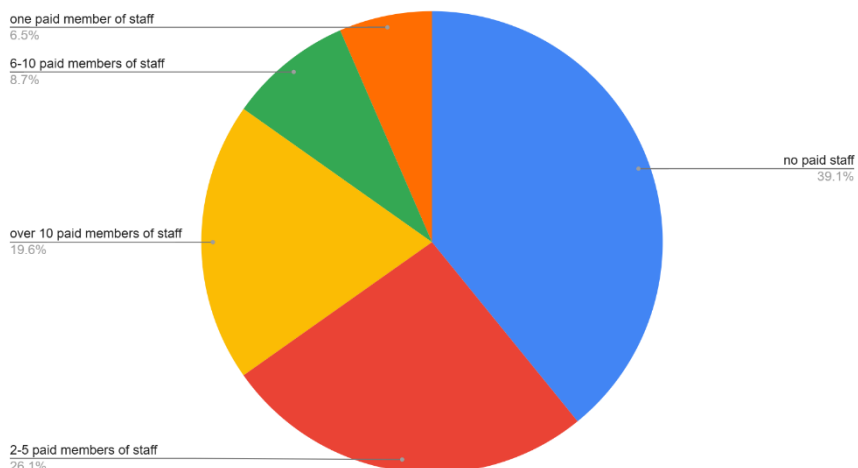
Count of 2. Please select the option that best describes the services you offer in Totnes. Please choose the option that best aligns with your core service. You can select more than one answer.



Staffing

4/10 (39.1%) VCSE organisations have no paid member of staff. One in five (19.6%) have over ten paid members of staff. These results reflect the size of organisations across the town, indicating a mixture of smaller organisations run entirely by volunteers, with a good number of large organisations run by paid professionals.

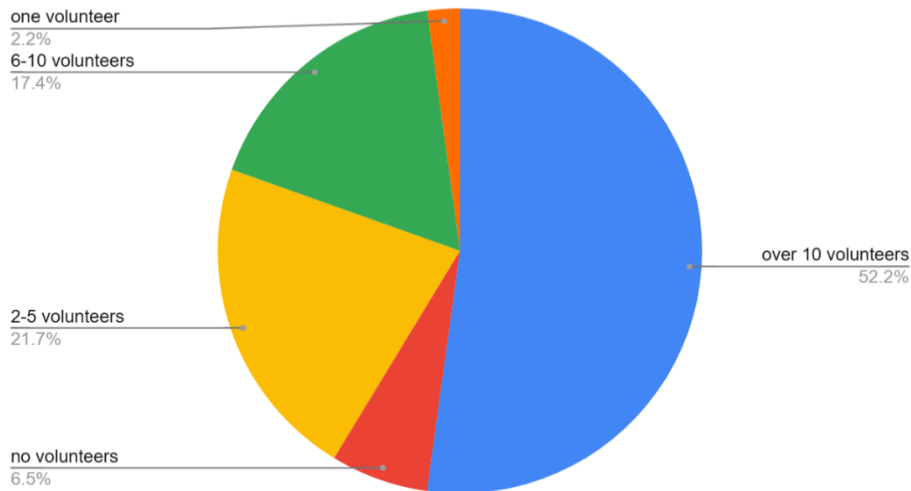
Count of 3. How many paid staff do you have?



Volunteers.

The sector relies heavily on volunteers. Just over half (52.2%) have ten or more volunteers – the majority (69.6%) have six or more volunteers. Only a handful of organisations have no volunteers (6.5%).

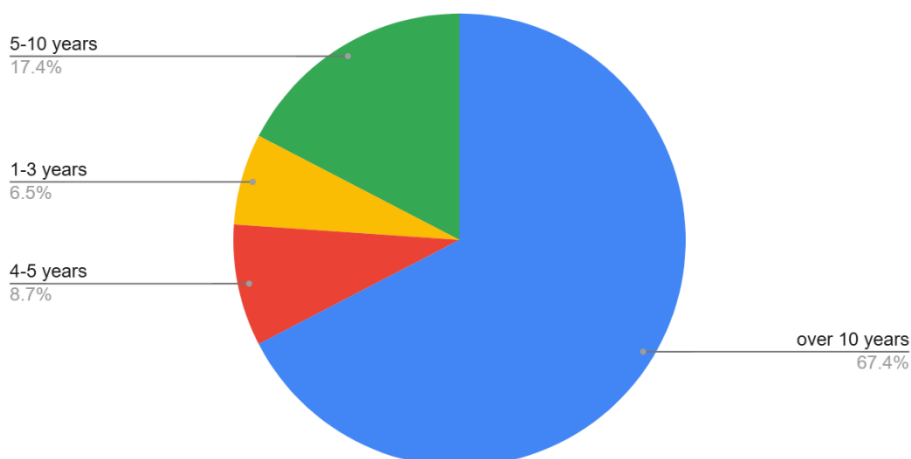
Count of 4. How many volunteers do you have?



Length of service provision in Totnes

The VCSE sector, according to our Survey, is well-established in Totnes with very few 'new comers'. Two-thirds of respondents have been offering their services for more than ten years. Overall, 85% of respondents have been running for more than five years. We acknowledge that this may reflect that newer organisations are not yet well-connected (and, therefore, might have missed the Survey, however, this is unlikely as the updated spreadsheet of local organisations was used to distribute the Survey link twice). It might be that there is no need for new organisations – perhaps the VCSE landscape is 'full', with few gaps to fill.

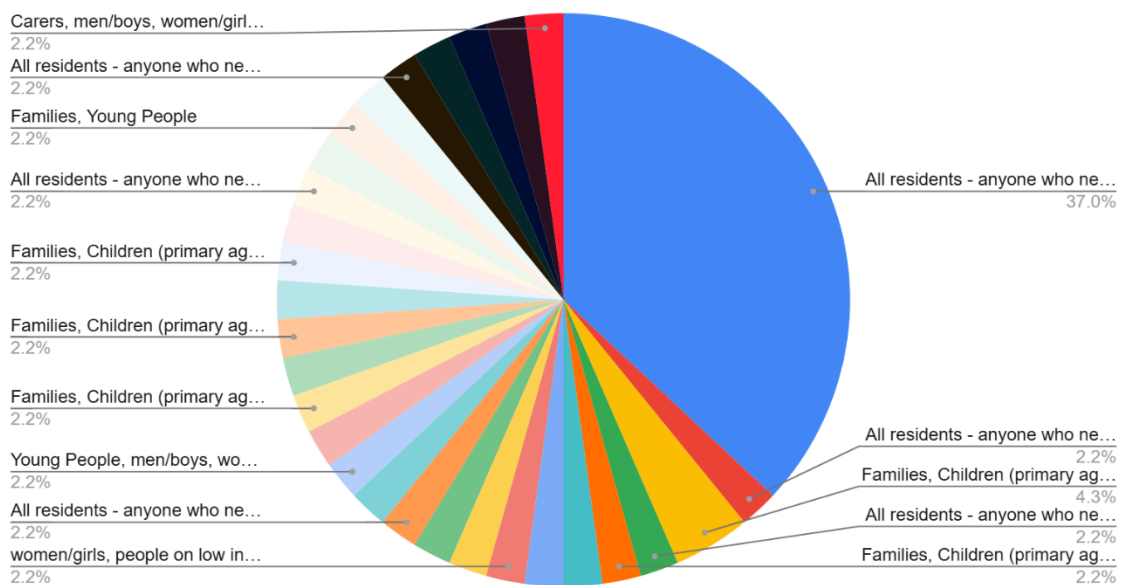
Count of 5. Approximately how long have you been delivering services to people in Totnes?



Beneficiaries

VCSE organisations predominantly offer services to ‘all residents’ (40%+). Families and primary aged children are also beneficiaries of local services. By being open to ‘all residents’, the services on offer by the VCSE sector are, in theory, accessible to ‘all residents’ across the local area. While some services, such as faith organisations and sports clubs attract a wide demographic, in practice, services tend to appeal or be directed at a particular segment of the population (those in most need of the service).

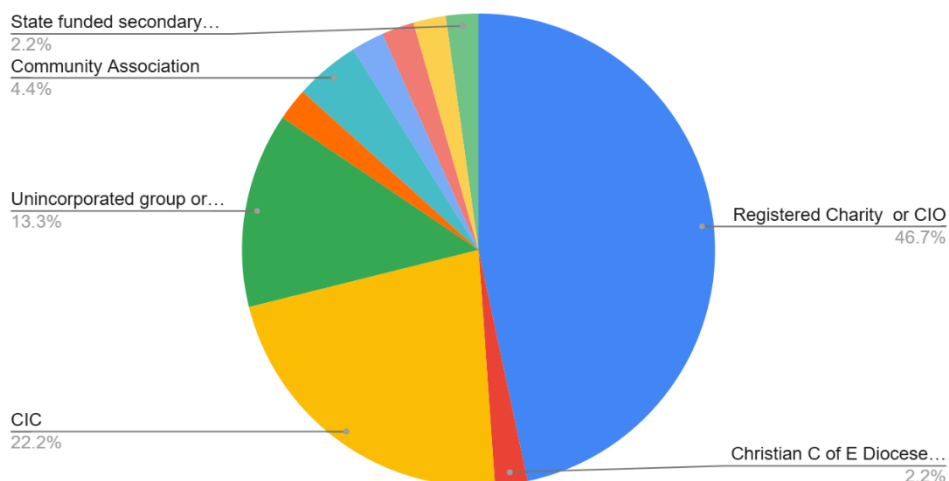
Count of 6. Who are the main beneficiaries of your services/ your work? You can select more than one answer.



Governance models

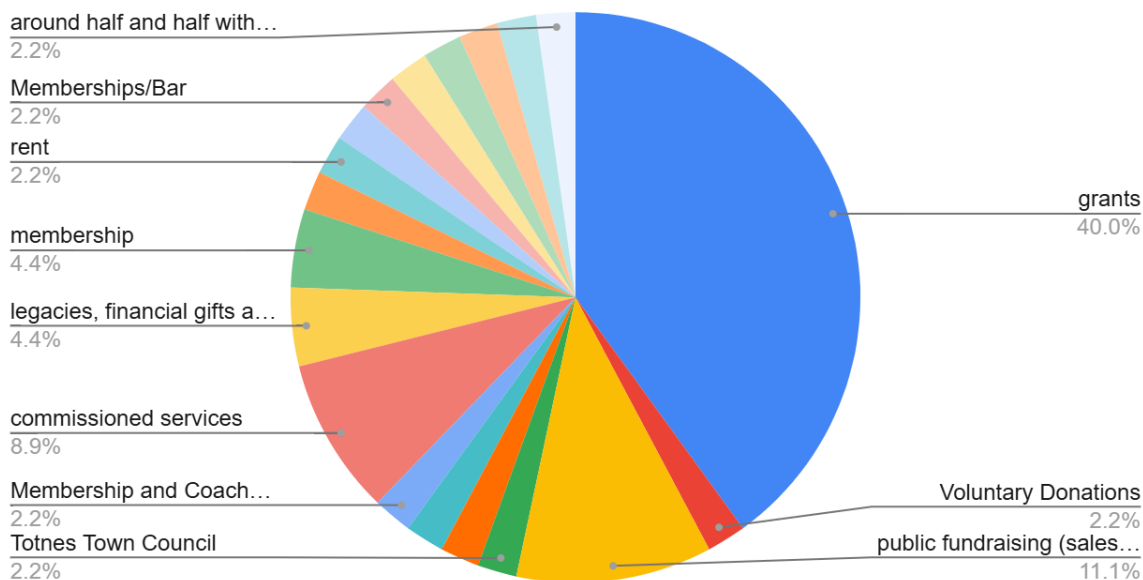
Approximately half (46.7%) of respondents to the Survey are Registered Charities. A fifth (22.2%) are CICs. One in eight (13.3%) are not formally incorporated.

Count of 7. What type of organisation are you? (what is your governance model?).



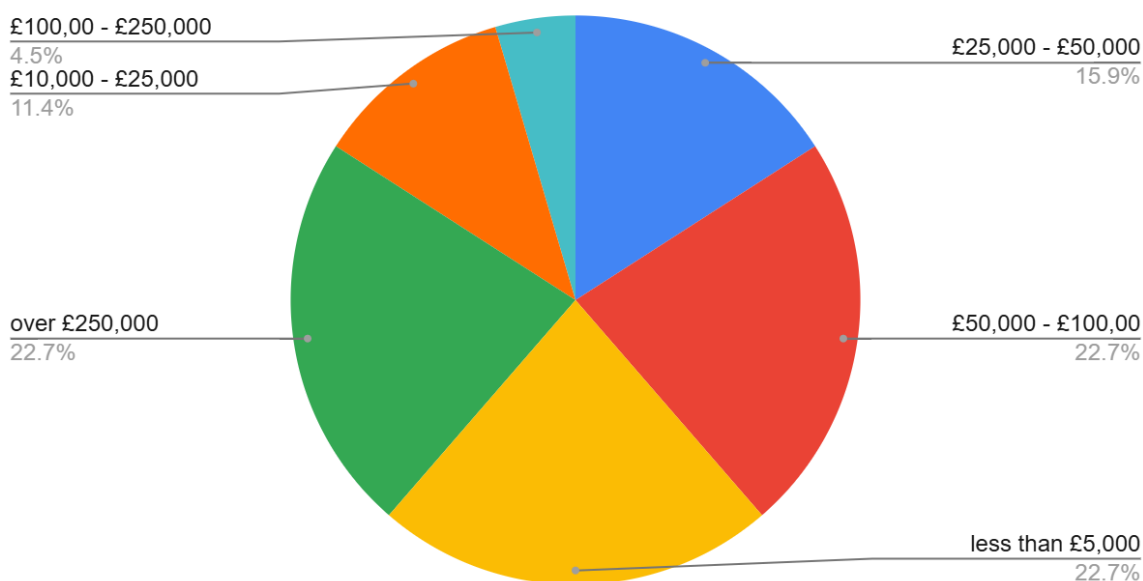
When asked to report on their main source of their income, grants were reported as the main source (40%). About one in ten reported public fundraising as their main source of income (11.1%), with a similar number (8.9%) saying commissioned services.

Count of 10. Where does the majority of your income come from (please select one box)?



Respondents were asked about their annual income. There are relatively even splits across the 46 responses. About a fifth (22.7%) have income £50K - £100K, (22.7%) have an income over £250K and (22.7%) less than £5K.

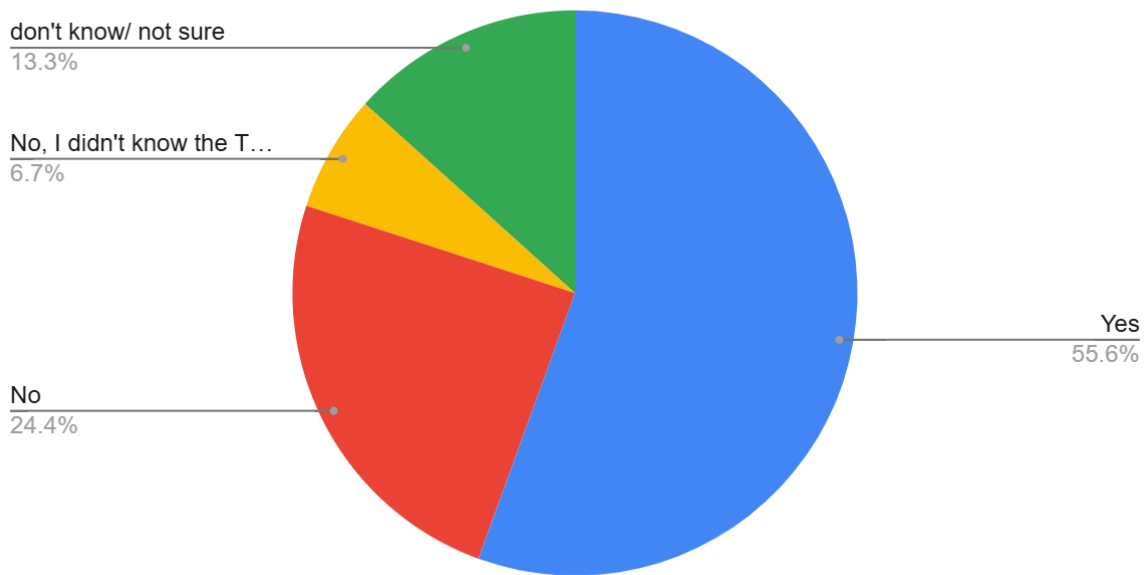
Count of 11. What was your total income in your last Financial Year?



Totnes Town Council grants

Over half (55.6%) have had a TTC grant in the past, a quarter (24.4%) have not had a grant. Only a few respondents (6.7%) were unaware of TTC grants. Subsequent conversations with organisations indicate there is some confusion about when people can apply for TTC grants, how much is available, how they apply (do they need to first go through a 'friendly' Town Councillor, for example?) and who is eligible for larger grants and who is not.

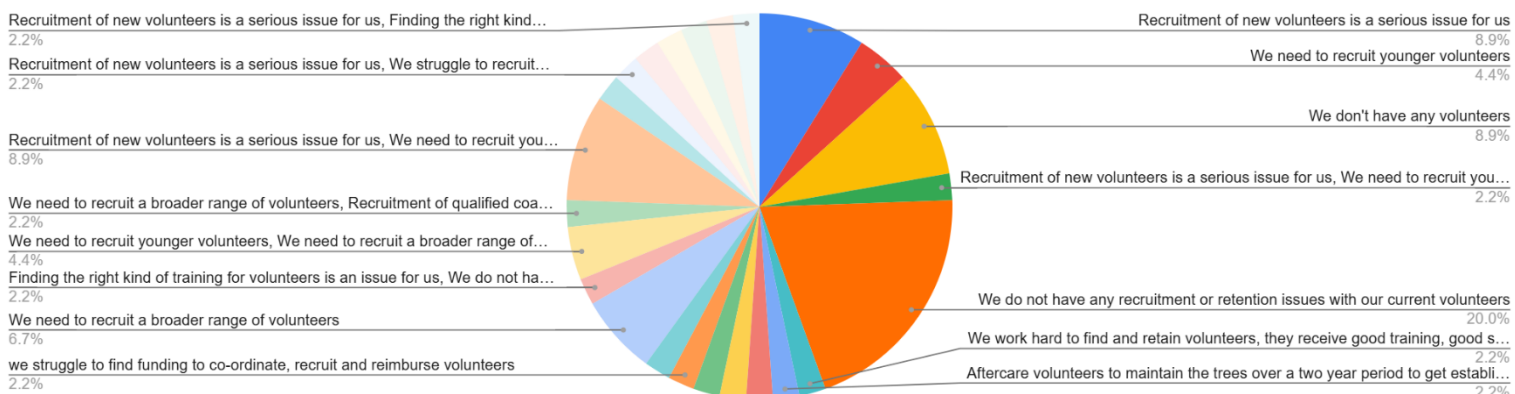
Count of 12. Have you ever had a grant from Totnes Town Council? (you can select more than one)



Challenges with volunteering

The main challenge relates to recruiting volunteers. This includes recruiting younger volunteers, finding a more diverse range of volunteers, retaining volunteers over the long-term and paying volunteer expenses. Of note is that 20% said they had no volunteer challenges. It might be useful to explore why some organisations do not have any volunteer challenges and whether their experiences can inform the wider sector (where there are challenges).

Count of 13. What are the major volunteering challenges you face? You can select more than one answer.



Challenges in sustaining the organisation long-term

An interconnected set of challenges impact on the ability of organisations to plan ahead and remain viable. The pie-chart below suggests this is a complex picture but in essence the challenges combine financial challenges, mainly securing day-to-day running costs, with increasing demand for services (with no corresponding increase in income).

Count of 14. What are the major challenges in sustaining your organisation and the work you do? (you can select more than one answer)

