



# BURNLEY PENDLE & ROSSENDALE COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE

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# How? Conference 2023 Outcome Report

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*Helping people to help others*

# Why?

Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Council for Voluntary Service (BPRCVS) first held a conference in the summer of 2019. It was a huge success and we had planned to do another within the next two years. However, in the following spring of 2020, the covid-19 pandemic became a crisis to which we had to respond, and the lockdowns and regulations made holding another conference impossible.



Once the initial covid-19 crisis was abating, the country was seemingly walking head-on into another crisis. We knew that the VCFSE sector would stand up once again and support as many people as possible in our local communities. Therefore, BPRCVS thought it prudent to hold a conference in the summer of 2023 to explore the impact of the cost-of-living crisis upon the VCFSE sector, its groups and organisations, and the people in local communities supported by these groups and organisations.

The BPRCVS How? Conference was tailored to provide a comprehensive event which would harvest and share a wealth of information from, and with, organisations who could help and support groups and organisations to survive and thrive through the crisis, and help their participants through the crisis too.

The seven keynote speakers were all relevant to the cost-of-living crisis. Each speaker delivered important, valuable information on the services they offer and the support they can provide to VCFSE sector groups and organisations. All in turn to help and support people in our local communities.

Activities were undertaken during the conference which aimed to capture vital responses from the people who know the most. We, the VCFSE sector, are dealing with both business cost increases and an increase in need and hardship experienced by our communities.

BPRCVS would like to say a massive thank you to all who attended and participated in the activities. We have collated the responses provided during the activities and analysed the

findings to develop commonalities being experienced in the VCFSE sector. This report provides the findings and outcomes of the How? Conference for your consideration.

BPRCVS will be using these findings and outcomes in meetings we have with local authorities, health boards,

"Excellent event, good networking opportunities, good speakers and lots of useful information and contacts. Good lunch/refreshments, good venue and a wide range of services/delegates."





public and statutory bodies, and many more besides. We represent you, the local VCFSE groups and organisations at every level. These kinds of findings and outcomes are the best means of influencing key decision and policy makers affecting the sector.

*P.S. We hope you liked the free gifts too!*



"Brilliant day with a wide variety of people/organisations in attendance."

"Brilliant!"

"Really enjoyed the event and the set up. Was well organised and hosted by friendly staff. Was also paced very well – lots of content without being rushed."



"Really useful conference – made some excellent contacts and learned about so many others."

"Excellent. Thank you."

# Who?

In case you missed any of the keynote speakers, or you would like to listen to them again, BPRCVS have provided recordings of all keynote speakers on our YouTube channel.



Darren Thomas MBA, East Lancashire Chamber Of Commerce -

<https://youtu.be/cUbhCRwAb0A>



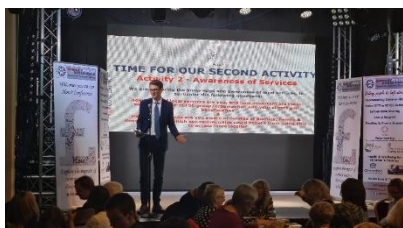
Amena Patel, Citizen's Advice Rossendale & Hyndburn -

<https://youtu.be/X5LLM5moZjg>



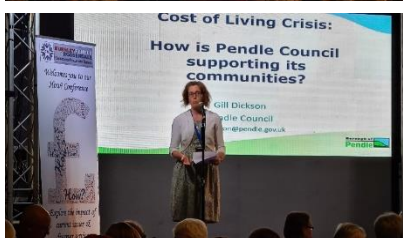
Neil Renwick, National Lottery Community Fund -

<https://youtu.be/FNcMWXV5meY>



Rob Dobson, Burnley Borough Council -

[https://youtu.be/fa\\_yyzXV2Y](https://youtu.be/fa_yyzXV2Y)



Gill Dickson, Pendle Borough Council -

<https://youtu.be/D77KkU5cLyM>



Councillor Barbara Ashworth, Rossendale Borough Council -

<https://youtu.be/HOzCyyU15kc>



James Kelly, Money and Pensions Service -

<https://youtu.be/NT7bWizhTPU>

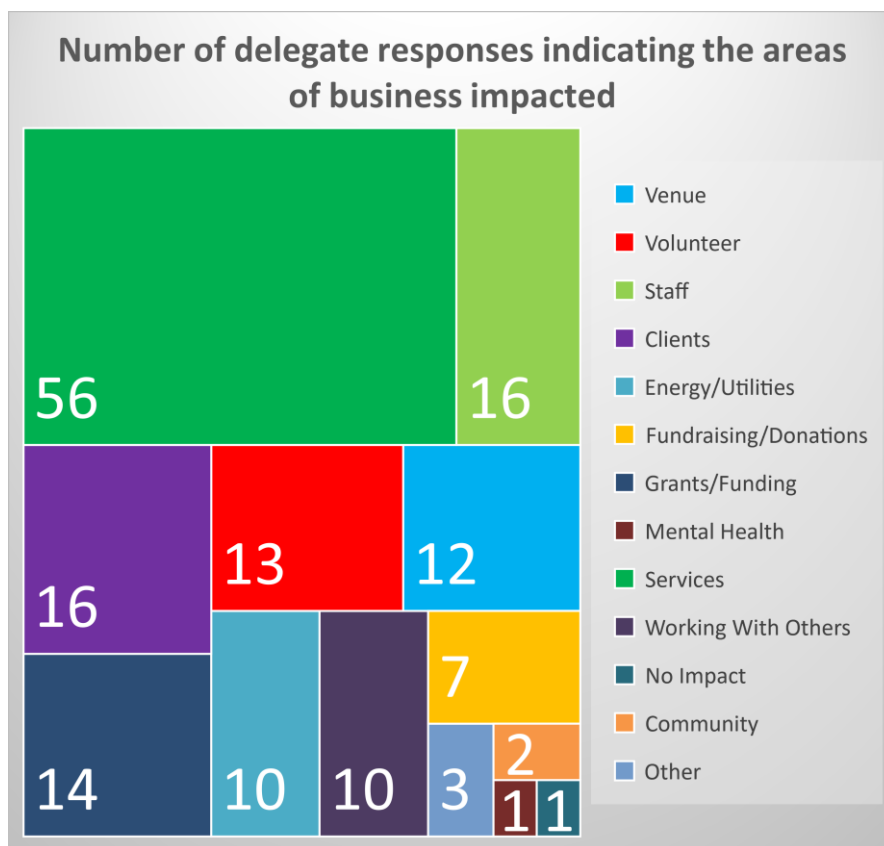


# Exploring What We Found

## How The VCFSE Sector Has Been Impacted

***How has your VCFSE group/organisation responded to and adapted to increasing costs – how have you been impacted?***

The following mapping diagram demonstrates the total number of responses from delegates in regard to particular themes.



The majority of responses centred around the theme of 'services (internal)'. Fifty-six unique responses were collated from delegates which all stated their service(s) being offered had changed in response to the cost-of-living service.

Only one group/organisation suggested they hadn't experienced any detrimental effects upon their group/organisation and the clients they support caused by the cost-of-living crisis. However, this group had only recently started delivering their service and therefore are the anomaly amongst others in attendance. The group did state, "not hit us yet," and therefore one could

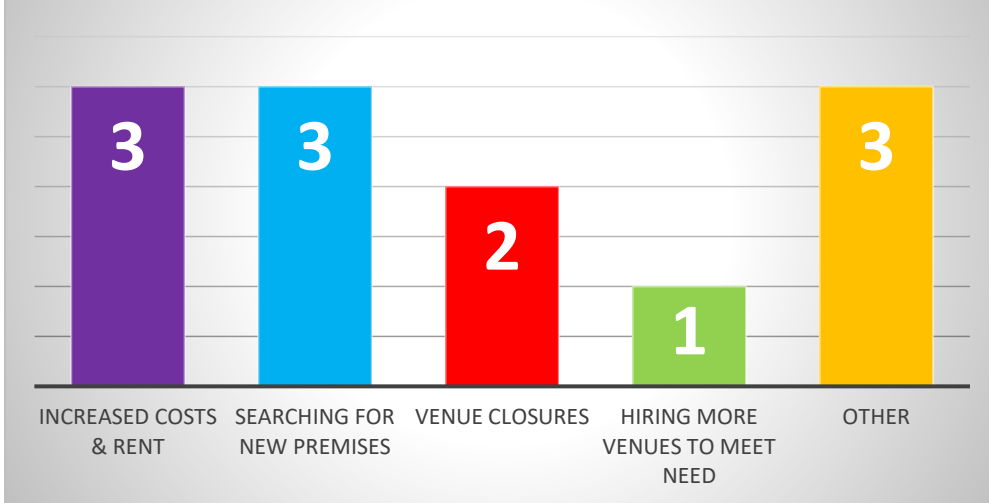
suggest this group is aware it will become a problem in the not-too-distant future.

The following graphs and charts break down the themes from the mapping chart and describe the outcomes from the activity.

"I am new to my role of volunteer coordinator within the charity, Carers Link Lancashire, I must say that I found this conference very helpful and informative. All speakers were very good and the refreshments and lunch provided was top notch! Thank you!"



## Venue-based responses



This graph shows the number of responses from delegates regarding their venue. Other factors such as energy and utilities have been considered separately.

A quarter of responses received stated VCFSE groups and organisations were facing increased costs. Rent increases appear to be a significant issue and as a direct

consequence, a quarter of delegates are searching for new premises to reduce their cost base.

A troubling finding to come out of this activity is fact that two organisations specified they have had to reduce the number of venues they operated. One achieved this through branch closures, and one was forced to reduce the number of venues from three down to one in order to survive. The latter organisation stated it was "more important to retain staff" and this justified the closure of two premises.

One group/organisation stated they don't know how they will manage paying rent. Currently they have been provided the venue rent-free, but this will change later in the year and is causing worry over the future of the service.

There was one group/organisation which claimed they are hiring more buildings to accommodate the increase in service users, "but this incurs greater costs which are unsustainable."

Other comments included references to reduced spaces available to the VCFSE sector, and a lack of a venue budget is prohibitive in respect to meeting people. There was one group/organisation who was positive about the venue they occupy and claimed, "the building we're in is great as it enables wide reaching partnerships."

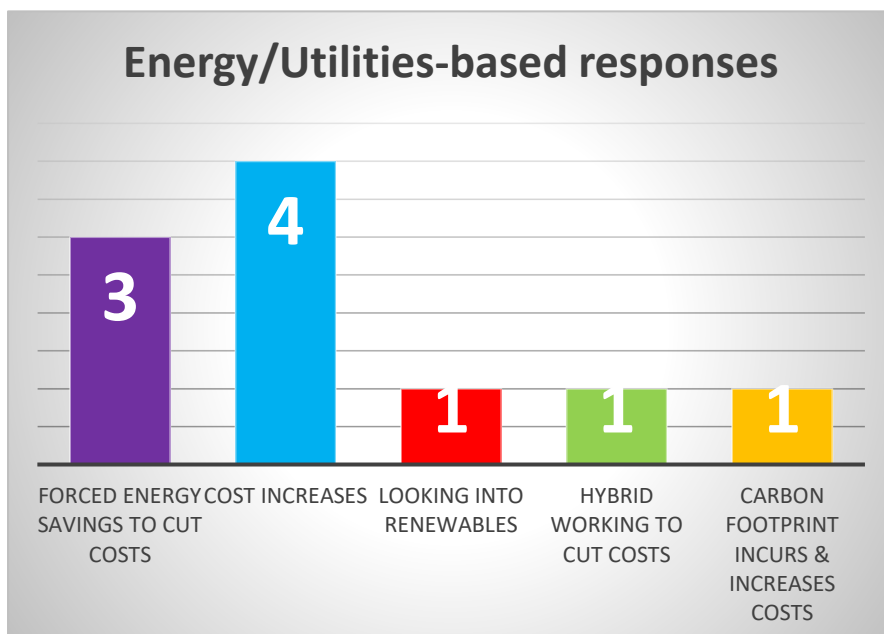
From the findings it could be inferred that the VCFSE sector is at risk of losing a significant number of operational bases as premises become unaffordable to VCFSE groups and organisations. If there are no available venues at affordable rates, groups and organisations will cease to exist and the sector will be decimated.

The graph below displays the number of responses associated with energy and utilities, and the impact thereof upon the group/organisation.

Just under a half of groups/organisations have faced substantial price increases for their energy and utilities.



## Energy/Utilities-based responses



A third of delegates stated they have been forced into energy savings to keep costs down. This includes being forced to turn the heating down and switch lights off to cut costs. This doesn't create optimal working conditions and in turn could lead to increases in staff absence and decreases in volunteer recruitment and retention. Nobody wants to work or volunteer in the cold and dark, but it seems some have been forced into this as the cost of gas and electricity became

prohibitive.

Only one group/organisation claimed they were looking into renewable energy options and were considering installing solar panels. Clearly the VCFSE sector isn't widely considering renewable energy options as a means of cutting costs. This could be due to the initial expense associated with renewable energy technologies. Often the outlay is significant and the return on investment is long-term.

One group/organisation was able to cut costs by continuing to operate a hybrid working model which was implemented during the covid-19 pandemic. It is surprising that more VCFSE groups/organisations didn't make this same claim.

"A great event to remind you we are all helping for the right reasons."

"Great, well organised, useful and valuable event."

Interestingly, one response related to the carbon footprint created by travelling for business needs. Having a high carbon footprint incurs costs and in turn contributes to increases in fuel costs.

Maybe a shift towards hybrid working and reducing carbon footprints along with implementing renewable energy technologies is the best way forward for the VCFSE sector. Costs could be significantly reduced through this approach, but it isn't without its challenges.

The cost-of-living crisis is not just affecting the VCFSE sector in regard to increased costs for venues and energy and utilities. The crisis affects staff too and this has a significant impact on a group/organisation.

Almost a third of VCFSE groups and organisations have concerns over the mental health of their workforce. The cost-of-living crisis affects staff just as much as it affects

"Really great networking and learning opportunity."



## Staff-based responses



clients. Comments indicated staff are continually working above and beyond the call of duty, but facing increasing stress levels and burnout has been an issue. Increases in physical and emotional toil on staff has been experienced. One group summed it up with their response; "staff mental health has become a rising concern – their worries are far greater now."

Increased costs for staff has become a significant concern of

VCFSE groups and organisations. Travel costs to work have become an issue with some groups and organisations utilising means to help alleviate the rising travel costs. Allowing home working and using hot desking facilities closer to home are some of the means being deployed to enable staff to reduce their outgoings.

However, one response indicated that the covid-19 pandemic resulted in staff not liking Microsoft Teams and therefore the remote working means deployed by others are clearly not a suitable approach for all.

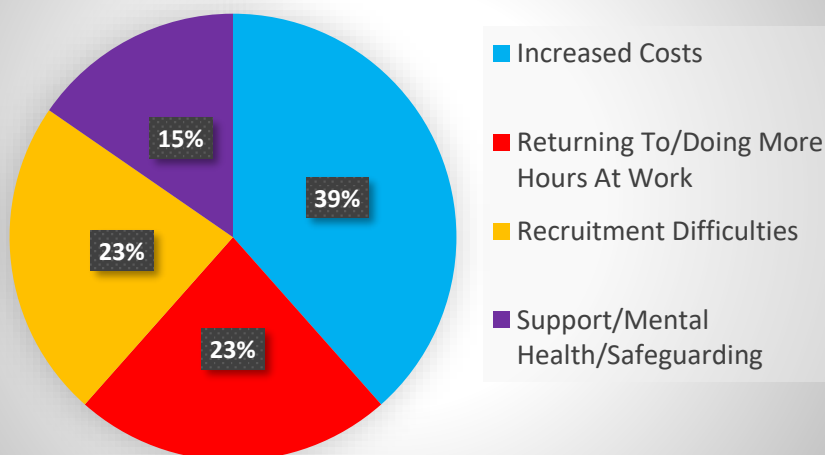
Staff reporting they're unable to pay bills and struggling to feed families has become somewhat commonplace compared to last year. Many staff didn't qualify for

"Very well put together having been to a few, and this was very down to earth and inclusive."

any additional support other than the Council Tax reduction and energy rebate schemes which were both paid out before the full affect of the cost-of-living crisis had been felt.

"Salary expectations have shifted significantly," said one delegate. "Salaries can't compete with public and statutory sector," said another delegate. When combined with those who claimed recruitment and retention had become significantly more challenging, the reasons for which are associated with, albeit not exclusively, salary expectations, it is clear the VCFSE sector is struggling to compete with other sectors.

## Volunteer-based responses



VCFSE groups and organisations have faced significant impact from the cost-of-living crisis with regard to volunteers.

Two-fifths reported increasing costs are making it much harder to cover volunteer expenses with one organisation stating they had "increased contributions to volunteers to cover expenses." Another

organisation stated they provide a five-day intensive training programme for volunteers which incurs costs which have all risen.

Almost a half of VCFSE groups and organisations have seen increased difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers. A consistent thread to come out of the activity is that volunteers are working more hours, returning to work after retirement, and looking after grandchildren as parents can't afford childcare. This means volunteers aren't available to volunteer as readily as before the crisis.



"The volunteer pool is depleting," was a comment from one delegate. Evidently, there is a relatively large population of volunteers who are no longer available. Many groups and organisations within the VCFSE sector believe this is a direct causal effect of the cost-of-living crisis.



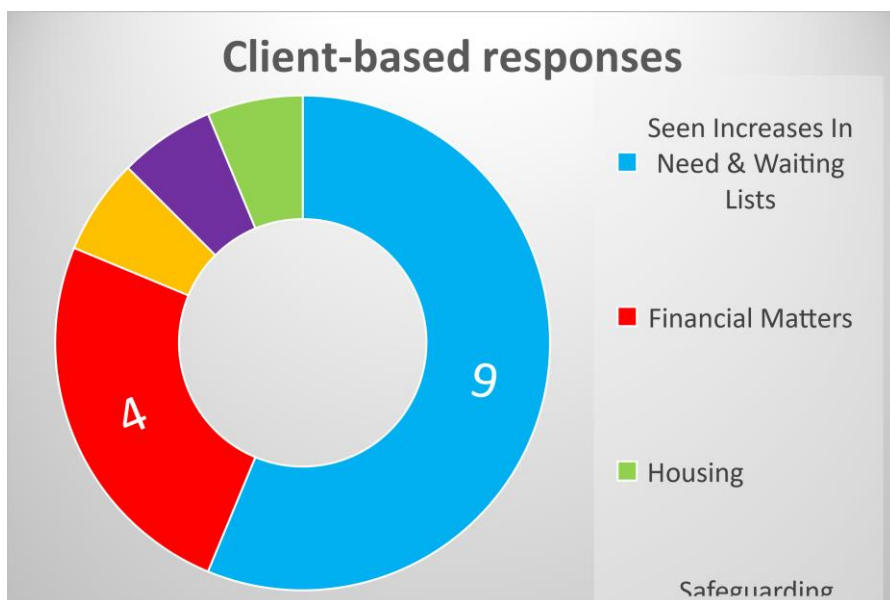
A lack of volunteers has a knock-on effect directly impacting the ability to deliver services.

As the number of clients needing support has increased substantially for many in the VCFSE sector it has made supporting volunteers more challenging. One group

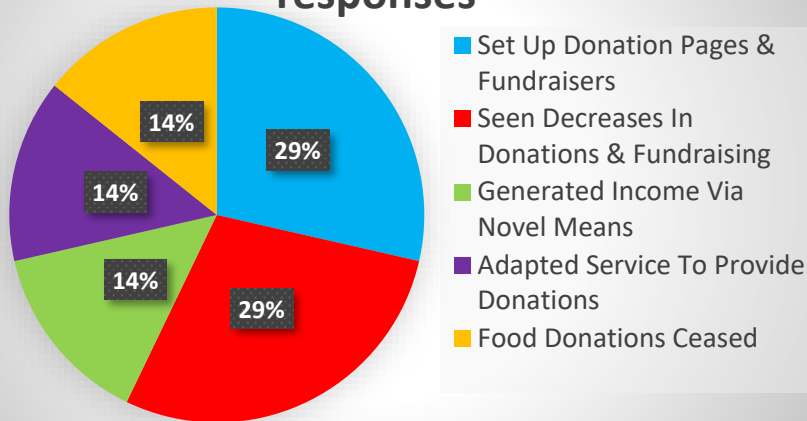
claimed they've "struggled to support volunteers as the number of clients has increased. Therefore, safeguarding becomes a greater concern." Another group stated they've experienced increases in physical and emotional stress amongst their volunteers.

It seems that VCFSE groups and organisations are struggling to support volunteers in the same way as before the crisis whether that be covering costs or supporting volunteers and ensuring their wellbeing.

Clients and beneficiaries of VCFSE sector services have been facing ever-increasing difficulties caused by the cost-of-living crisis. Once the crisis became apparent, it was clear that the sector would have an increase in demand. However, it seems the increase in demand has taken many by surprise as it has involved groups of demographics not previously



## Fundraising/Donations-based responses



requiring support suddenly needing it, and in many cases needing help and support urgently.

More than half of groups and organisations have seen sharp increases in need, and also increases in waiting times for services. The increase in waiting times evidently is a consequence of the increase in need on this occasion. One group said they were seeing a "huge increase in people needing help. It's not tailing off."

Groups and organisations are experiencing more referrals for people with complex needs. Loneliness, homelessness, suicide, grooming, cuckooing, modern slavery, and ex-offender referrals have all seen sharp rises.

A consistent theme coming from the activity, and one to be expected, was the financial struggles experienced by both individuals and families with paying bills and putting food on the table. One delegate stated, "clients are really struggling and facing additional difficulties on top of what they were already going through which exacerbates the problem."



One group/organisation claimed, "the housing crisis is a significant, but under-addressed issue and has impacted clients significantly, in particular with regards to their mental health and physical wellbeing."

It may have been expected to see larger numbers associated with financial matters in respect of the typical clients supported. This section is only reporting on the directly attributable comments to the theme of 'clients'. There are many other aspects of this report which indicate that financial matters are a serious concern to the clients and beneficiaries of VCFSE groups and organisations, for example the 'Services (internal)' section shows that many groups and organisations had to change their services to provide cost-of-living support.

This activity didn't produce too many responses associated with fundraising and donations, although those received did reflect the impact of the wider cost-of-living crisis upon the VCFSE sector.

"The networking was really valuable."

Decreases in donations and fundraisers could be expected during such a crisis as this relies on the wealth and generosity of the public. With constantly



high food, energy and fuel bills it is anticipated the number of donations would be directly impacted as a consequence.

Some groups and organisations have responded to donation decreases by setting up donation pages and attempting to fundraise through activities, sponsorship, etc. It's possible some groups and organisations set these up pre-emptively, and others did so in response to the need to raise more money to continue business and deliver the same standard of service.

"The content of the conference was excellent, if not always relevant to our organisation."

One group/organisation reported that "waste food from supermarkets has now ceased," which is a serious concern for those involved in food banks, food boxes/parcels, and other food support services. This could in part be attributed to the change in sell-by dates no longer displayed on a large range of produce and other food items which allows supermarkets to display items for longer, possibly until expiry rather than donate to food support services and causes.

"Great event!"

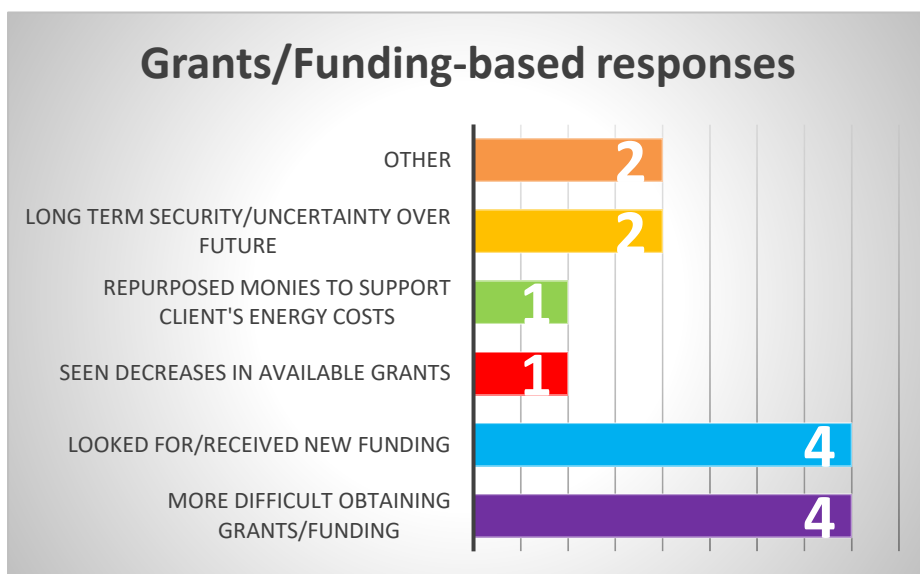
To adapt to clients' needs, one group/organisation "had to start receiving donations of food and arranging food collections".

Most VCFSE groups and organisations rely heavily on grants and funding to deliver their services. The graph above displays the comments grouped into sub-themes received during the activity.

"Really informative day with good refreshments."

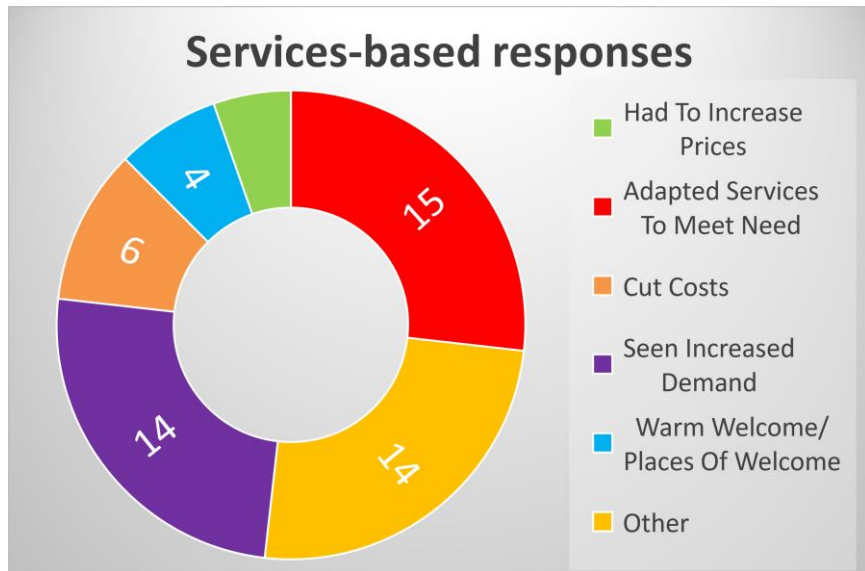
Groups and organisations have found obtaining grants and funding more difficult, and one group/organisation stated they've seen a decrease in the number of available grants.

Looking for new funding sources was a popular outcome and one to be expected. Some have "requested additional funding from funders to cope with added cost pressures". Whereas others were able to repurpose monies into an energy voucher scheme to best support their clients and beneficiaries.



An interesting comment from one group/organisation suggested that having managed to get around the need for grants this has actually been more cost efficient. This suggests that where possible, some groups and organisations may be able to find alternative means of sourcing funds which take less staff time to organise than applying for grants thus creating cost efficiencies.

A small number of groups and organisations were concerned about the long-term security of their service and uncertainty over the future because funding is coming to an end and they're unsure whether the same or similar funding stream would be available in the future. Given that some have also reported that they have found some funders are focused only on very specific outcomes, and in some cases the requirements make it difficult for small groups to apply, this compounds the uncertainty and increases worry over where the money is going to come from to continue to deliver services.



The largest number of responses was associated with the services being delivered by the VCFSE groups and organisations participating in the activity.

A wide variety of responses associated with the theme of services was received. These have been grouped into the most suitable sub-themes although there are some areas of overlap. Where this is the case, the responses have only been accounted for once.

Most VCFSE groups and organisations have adapted and evolved their service provision to meet the needs of clients caused by the cost-of-living crisis. It would be fair to suggest that a significant number of these groups and organisations were somewhat forced into the changes. One group said, "we've effectively become an emergency food bank instead of doing what we normally do," and they are not the only one.

Many groups and organisations have had to become much more fluid in how they respond. In order to deliver services to an increasing client base, and in some cases to reduce costs to ensure business survival, many groups and organisations are changing their delivery method. Instead of the usual face-to-face meetings much more is being delivered using online means such as Facetime, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and other similar technologies. This reduces costs and increases capacity enabling more people to be supported.

"An excellent day, well organised and facilitated. Well done all."



This activity has demonstrated the capacity and willingness of VCFSE groups and organisations to adapt and evolve very quickly to the needs of people in their communities. Often without waiting for confirmation of funding and grants to support delivery, VCFSE groups and organisations regularly step up in challenging times to help local communities.

Increases in demand for services was to be expected in the face of such a crisis. Many have seen sharp increases in demand with some so overwhelmed they've had to signpost to other groups and organisations. The sharp increases have, in some cases, created challenges in delivering services. As a consequence, a small number stated their waiting lists have increased significantly.

Food banks, food clubs and other food-based services have particularly felt the brunt of this crisis with many of them, if not all of them, reporting huge increases in need. Some reflected on seeing new demographics not previously associated with requiring food support such as working families.

Service costs have been cut by a relatively small number of groups and organisations although it is anticipated that more will have done so through a wide range of means. Working from home and using online meeting platforms are some of the means used to reduce business expenditure. However, one group/organisation did note that while online "client meetings reduced the cost base, it in turn widened the client base".

One group stated they have "reduced the amount of printed media to cut costs". This approach will reduce expenditure, but at what cost to the group? If marketing expenditure in the sector is being cut, this will mean fewer people in communities will be aware of services, and fewer VCFSE groups and organisations will be aware of who to refer to. The sector overall will suffer.

Interestingly, a relatively large number of groups and organisations in attendance were involved in Warm Welcome and Place of Welcome schemes. The "Warm Welcome scheme enabled us to be able to provide free activities" and "becoming a Place of Welcome for 3 days a week helped to keep the organisation going".

However, most of the groups and organisations involved in these schemes seem to have evolved very quickly into groups, sessions and activities to support local people with more than simply a warm space. Some of this was enforced as the cost of running the Warm Welcome and Place of Welcome schemes became prohibitive due to cost. One group's Warm Welcome scheme "morphed into clubs and walking groups to keep costs down".

Although, one group did struggle to run their Warm Welcome scheme and it was "suspended due to lack of funding behind it and the incurred costs associated with running the scheme". The funding behind these schemes wasn't substantial and therefore it is no surprise to receive a comment of this nature as not all groups have the opportunity to evolve and respond so readily.

"Welcoming staff from BPRCVS – table was great, friendly, nice informal atmosphere."

"A fantastic day – well done. Wonderful networking opportunity – speed networking was fab. One of the best events I have attended."



## Working With Others-based Responses



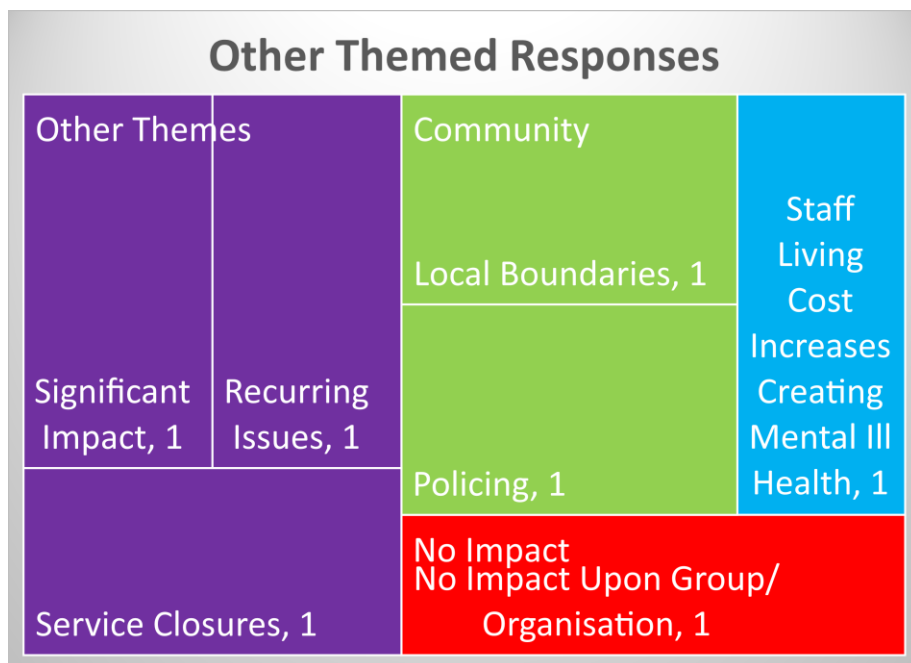
When considering working with others and accessing other services, the number of responses was relatively low. The most common outcomes were centred around networking and partnerships with one claiming, "networking is priceless to find new opportunities". Although, one group did state, "more networking opportunities are needed".

An increase in partnerships, working together and sharing has been seen by multiple groups and organisations when considering the overall outcomes across the whole activity. However, a worthwhile point was raised by one group who suggested, "it seems to be the same few organisations/groups who get these opportunities. The sector doesn't put opportunities out to tender which would give others more opportunity."

Working with others has become more costly too. It is worth considering those groups and organisations who rely on other business services, in particular in the private sector, to deliver their service. If a group/organisation utilises third-party providers whether freelance, affiliates, or other businesses, the cost of accessing their services has increased thus increasing the VCFSE group/organisation's costs and therefore having an impact upon the group/organisation.

This graph represents the remaining responses which fit into their own unique theme, but had very few mentions from other groups and organisations.

While mental health, in particular relating to staff, has been mentioned at various points already under other themes, one group specifically mentioned it under the header of mental health. This group has been seeing increases in mental ill health amongst their staff for which the cause has been directly attributed to the cost-of-living crisis.



The "boundaries have become more blurred" which is having an impact upon the ability for groups to deliver their projects and services. This may also apply to grants and funding opportunities too.

"Not enough police in communities to meet issues head-on rather than after crime and anti-social behaviour occurs. As such, we're aware many occurrences are not reported." This group

clearly feels an increase in policing will be beneficial to addressing the issues they regularly see.

One group expressed they are feeling a “massive impact” upon their group/organisation, and one suggested they “appear to be in a vicious circle”. However, one was able to say, “not really impacted yet; not hit us yet” which would suggest this group anticipates difficulties to be faced in the coming months.

“Leisure is the first thing to go when costs are high” was the comment recorded regarding service closures.

All recorded comments provided during the course of the activity are available in the appendices of this report. See Appendix 1.

## How We Do What We Do

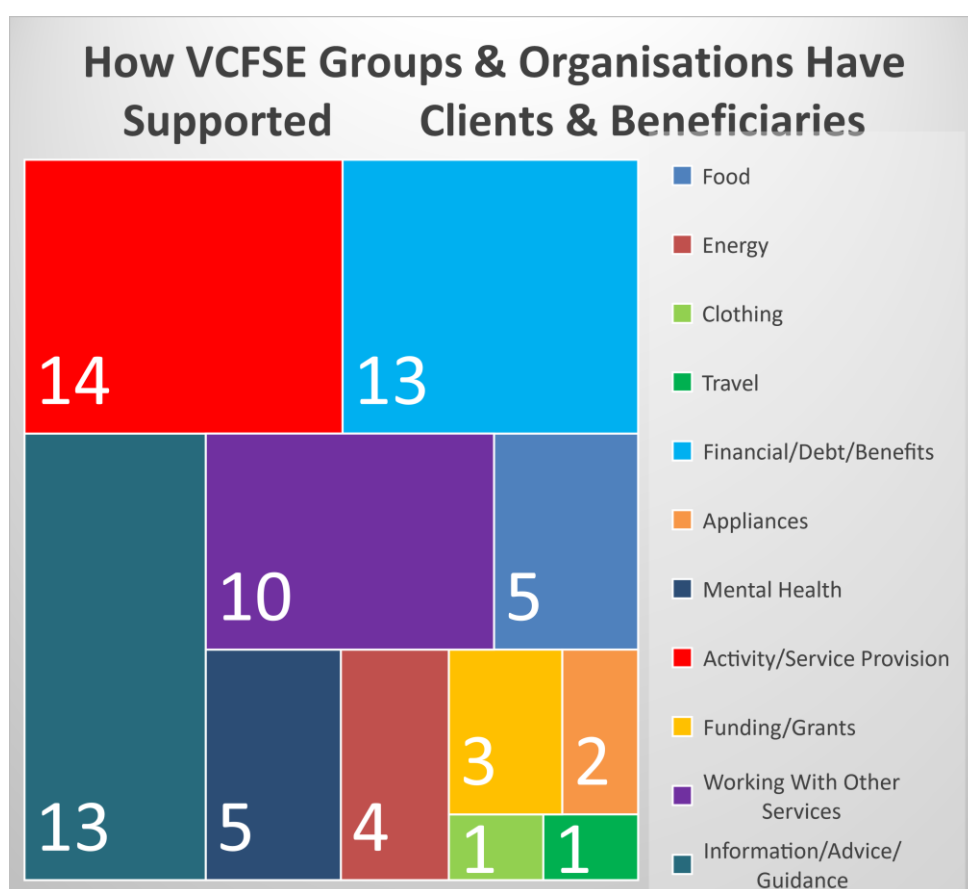
### **'How have you supported your clients and beneficiaries throughout the cost-of-living crisis?'**

The following mapping diagram demonstrates the areas in which support has been provided from seventy-one unique responses.

The greatest area of support from VCFSE groups and organisations in attendance at the How? Conference is based around activity and service provision.

A significant number of groups and organisations have offered free or subsidised activities and services in recognition of the fact their clients and beneficiaries have a vastly reduced disposable income level which would likely result in being unable to access activity and service provision. Many further recognised not adopting this approach would lead to severe decreases in health and wellbeing.

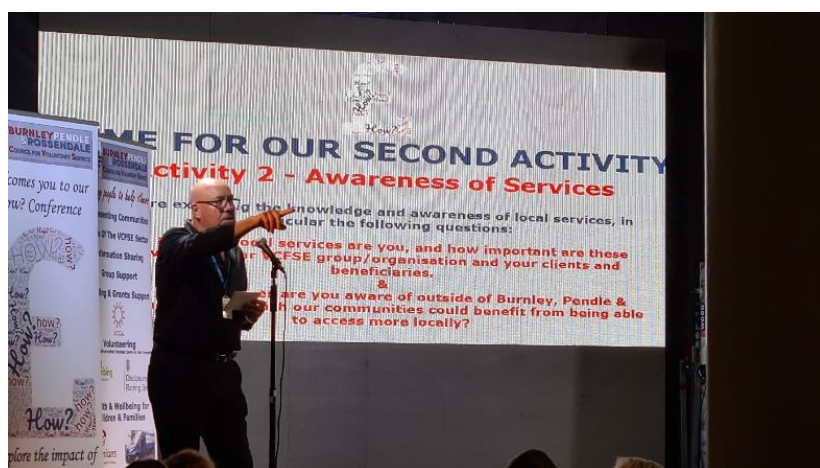
From providing art sessions to physical activity, and from benefits support to delivering skills training relevant to the crisis e.g. cooking, healthy eating, and childcare, the VCFSE sector is capable of stepping up and providing a wide range of activities and services to meet the needs of people in a crisis.



Some used their activities and services as a means of supporting clients with their energy bills by operating simultaneously as a 'warm space'. One group said, "warm spaces set up over winter have carried on over the summer and will become the norm now". This clearly indicates the cost of utilities is still a significant concern to clients even throughout the warmer months otherwise this approach wouldn't be required.



One group stated they had "found a number of short-term solutions that could be implemented – long term solutions don't exist and need developing". This suggests VCFSE groups are able to respond and find solutions, but need support from infrastructure organisations, to develop longer-term solutions which can be implemented.



As to be expected, supporting clients with their financial needs was high on the list of responses. Some groups "waived fees for those in hardship", and some delivered "inexpensive classes for families", but many supported by helping individuals and families to manage their income and outgoings.

Providing support to manage bills, delivering budgeting training, debt advice, and benefits support were commonplace. Some VCFSE groups and organisations have taken on this responsibility for themselves whereas others are referring/signposting out to other organisations.

One group stated, "there are more barriers to people saving money and we can't always help. It's been hard, but we've had to say 'no'". Having to effectively turn people away is never good, but in order to survive sometimes such difficult decisions must be made.

"Praise to Sue our table facilitator – very knowledgeable and kept us up to date and on track."

The analysis indicates that many VCFSE groups and organisations recognised that information, advice and guidance would need to be a prominent feature of their service. It seems this was recognised early on in the crisis. Given that sharing of information is typically relatively low cost it was an easy means to provide additional support.





Many groups and organisations published more content of their own and shared others' content via websites, newsletters, and social media. It is evident that signposting to other services for support has increased.

Working with other services was a common finding from the activity and ties into the previous finding which demonstrated the need for signposting.

This section differs however in that the answers provided relate more to signposting for access to services rather than signposting for information.

Signposting and referrals to other not-for-profit services has increased substantially. One group has had no option but to signpost to others even though they "may have helped before". This demonstrates the increase in need and the struggles of VCFSE groups and organisations in respect of capacity. As referenced previously in this report, partnership working is on the rise and this likely ties in to the issues around capacity for the small, local groups.

Support around food and energy was to be expected, but it was anticipated that more than five responses for food, and four responses for energy would be received. However, there are many responses associated with food and energy under other themes.

Food support has been provided in the form of food vouchers, free goods, and referrals to food support groups. Energy support ranged from providing small grants for gas and electricity to providing energy saving light bulbs.

One group/organisation "provided body warmers, blankets, gloves and socks" to help people keep warm through the winter whereas another recognised there was an appliance shortage among their clients which led to cold homes and being unable properly cook. One organisation supplied crock pots in light of this.

Mental health support was limited to five responses, but each of these responses related to providing mental health support through direct service provision. This includes providing one-to-one sessions and focusing on particular demographics.

*All recorded comments provided during the course of the activity are available in the appendices of this report. See Appendix 2.*

"Wonderful day – great to meet so many people! Would've loved longer to speak to all tables, but the organisation was brilliant and so engaging – thank you!"





# Our Awareness Of Services

*How aware of local services are you, and how well used are these services to your VCFSE group/organisation, and your clients and beneficiaries?*

The following graphs demonstrate the awareness of local services to the VCFSE groups and organisations in attendance at the How? Conference.

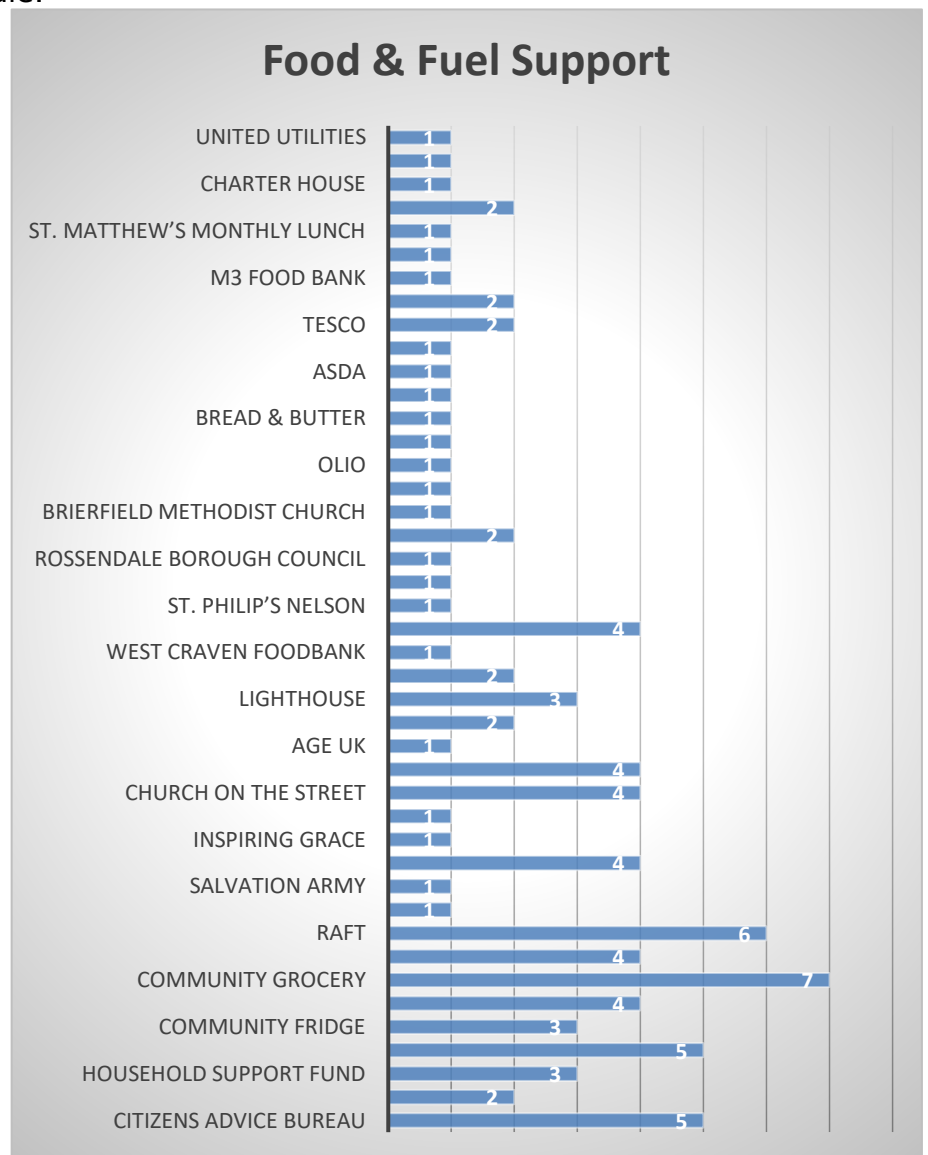
The Food & Fuel Support graph clearly demonstrates the volume of local services available that can support with food, fuel, or both. With no one service significantly mentioned more than another, this would suggest groups and organisations are fully aware of the range of services available.

One thing is evident, there is an impressive wealth of food and fuel-related services available in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale.

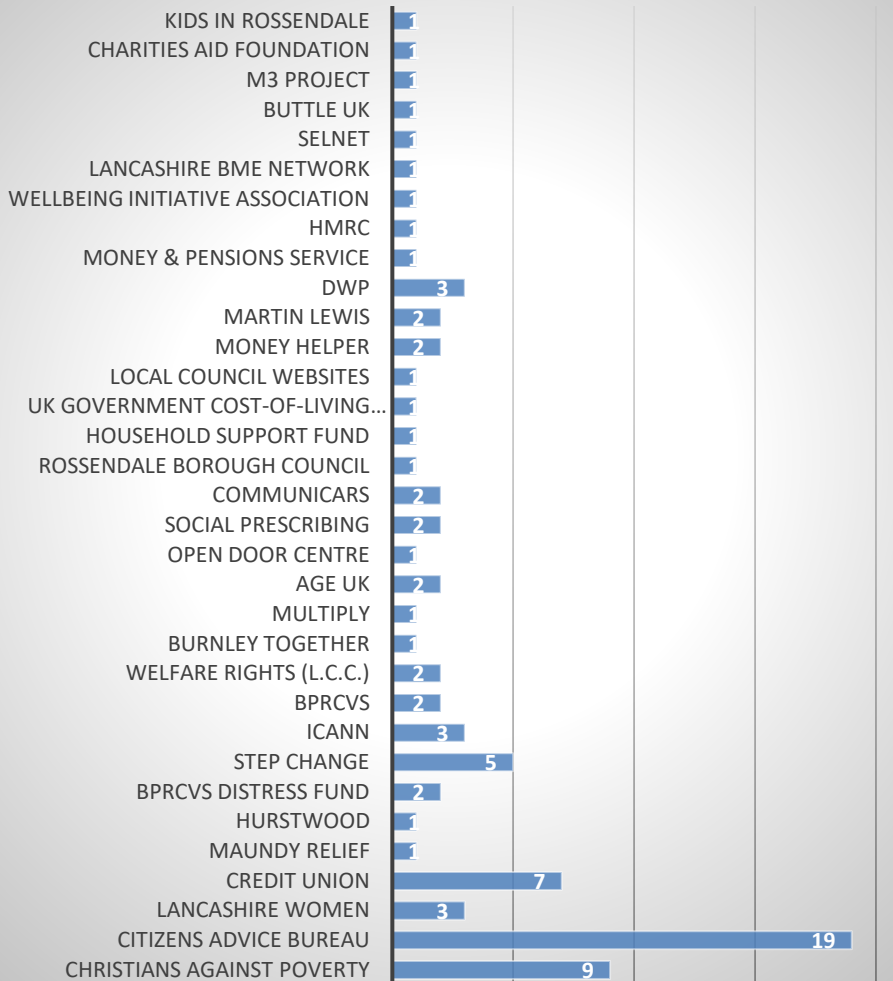
However, it is worth considering whether a number of these services in turn access the same few organisations to obtain the means to deliver food and fuel support. More research would be required to make this determination.

Another point to consider is the local economy. With so many services providing this type of support, is there a wider economic problem other than the cost-of-living crisis? For example, how many of these services have commenced operations solely during the cost-of-living crisis? Again, further research would be required to ascertain this as fact.

It is clear from the findings that the most commonly used service for financial matters is



## Financial Matters



Citizens Advice with ten more mentions than the next most commonly used service of Christians Against Poverty.

Citizens Advice is a long-standing organisation with a national footprint and locally based services. Therefore, the awareness and recognition of this service is widespread and as such reflected in the findings.

There are plenty of services available to local VCFSE groups and organisations for a wide range of financial matters with thirty-three unique services mentioned. From benefits support and completing forms to debt support, and from financial advice to budgeting support, all aspects of financial matters are covered by the high volume of locally accessible services.

The findings also indicate the financial matters workload is being shared, albeit not deliberately, between these services given so many have been mentioned.

The Mental Health Support chart demonstrates the incredible volume of services providing mental health support in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale. Evidently the sector is well aware of the vast array of locally available mental health services.

In total a huge seventy-seven unique services were recorded; Mindsmatter is the most commonly mentioned service, but Stubblelee Greenhouses, Waterwell Foundation and Lancashire Women follow closely behind.

The variety of services is impressive too. There is clearly a wide range of projects, organisations and services that offer a form of mental health support. Some may exclusively offer mental health support, and some may offer it as one of their multiple services, or even as a supplementary service for clients they are supporting with other matters.





The range of services includes support specifically for young people, men, women, older people, and many other sub-demographics too such as refugees and the unemployed.

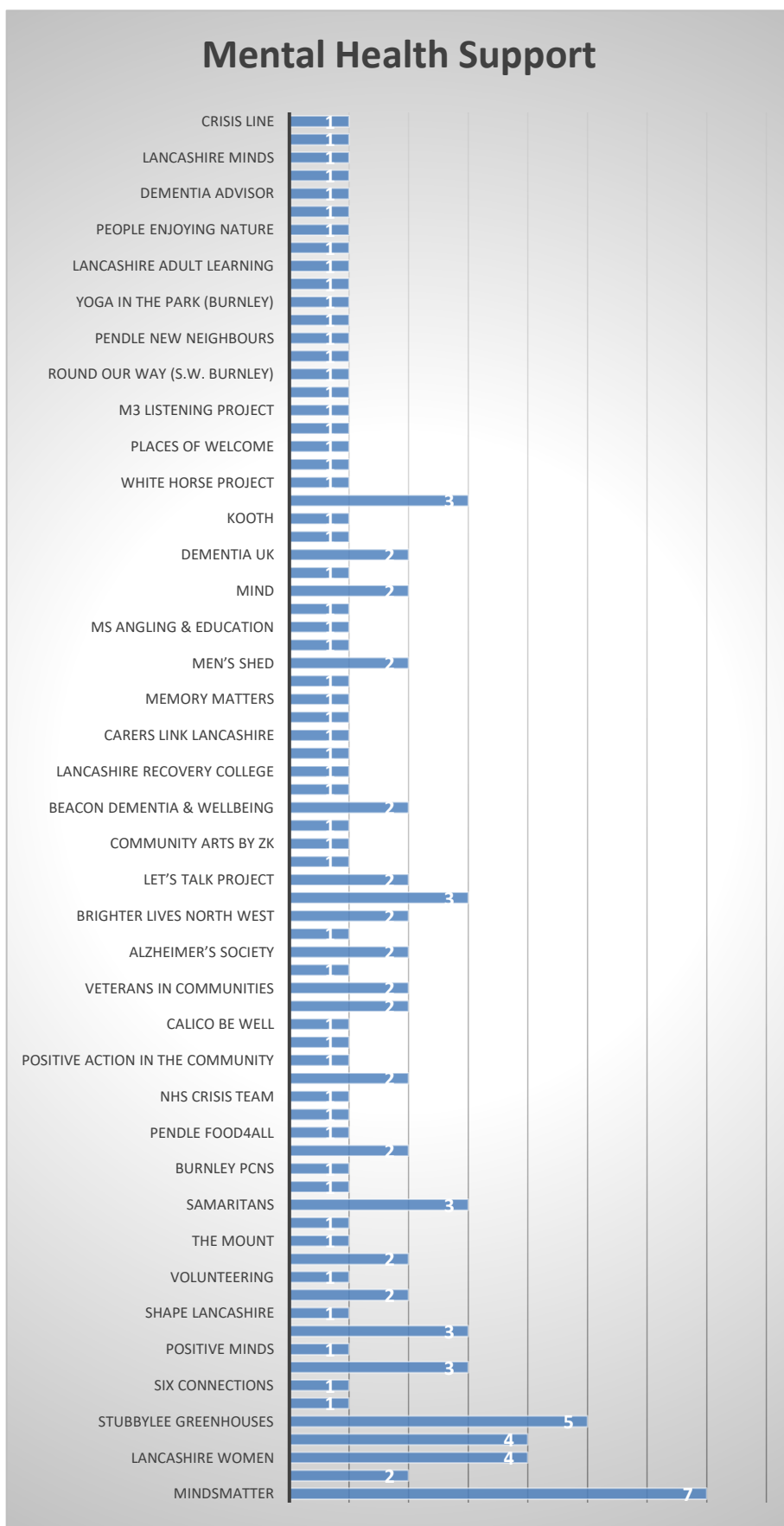
Given the significant number of services mentioned, this would suggest that there is a pressing need for mental health support amongst the communities of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale. However, the findings also imply that VCFSE groups and organisations know where to signpost and refer clients for mental health support.

Only one group mentioned volunteering as a means of mental health support, however it could be inferred that some clients were sent to a number of these services for support, of which the support provided could be volunteering.

When considering the responses for other regularly used services it is important to note that some of these services are featured in the previous charts, but when mentioned in this section it is because the service is used for something other than food and fuel support, mental health support, and financial matters. Despite this there is still a reasonable number of services that haven't been mentioned in earlier parts of the activity.

Fifty-seven unique services were recorded as other services regularly used by VCFSE groups and organisations either for their own purposes or predominantly to meet the needs of their clients and beneficiaries.

Carers Link Lancashire was the most commonly recorded with Age UK, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Foodbanks and Social Prescribing following very closely behind, but given delegates were asked to





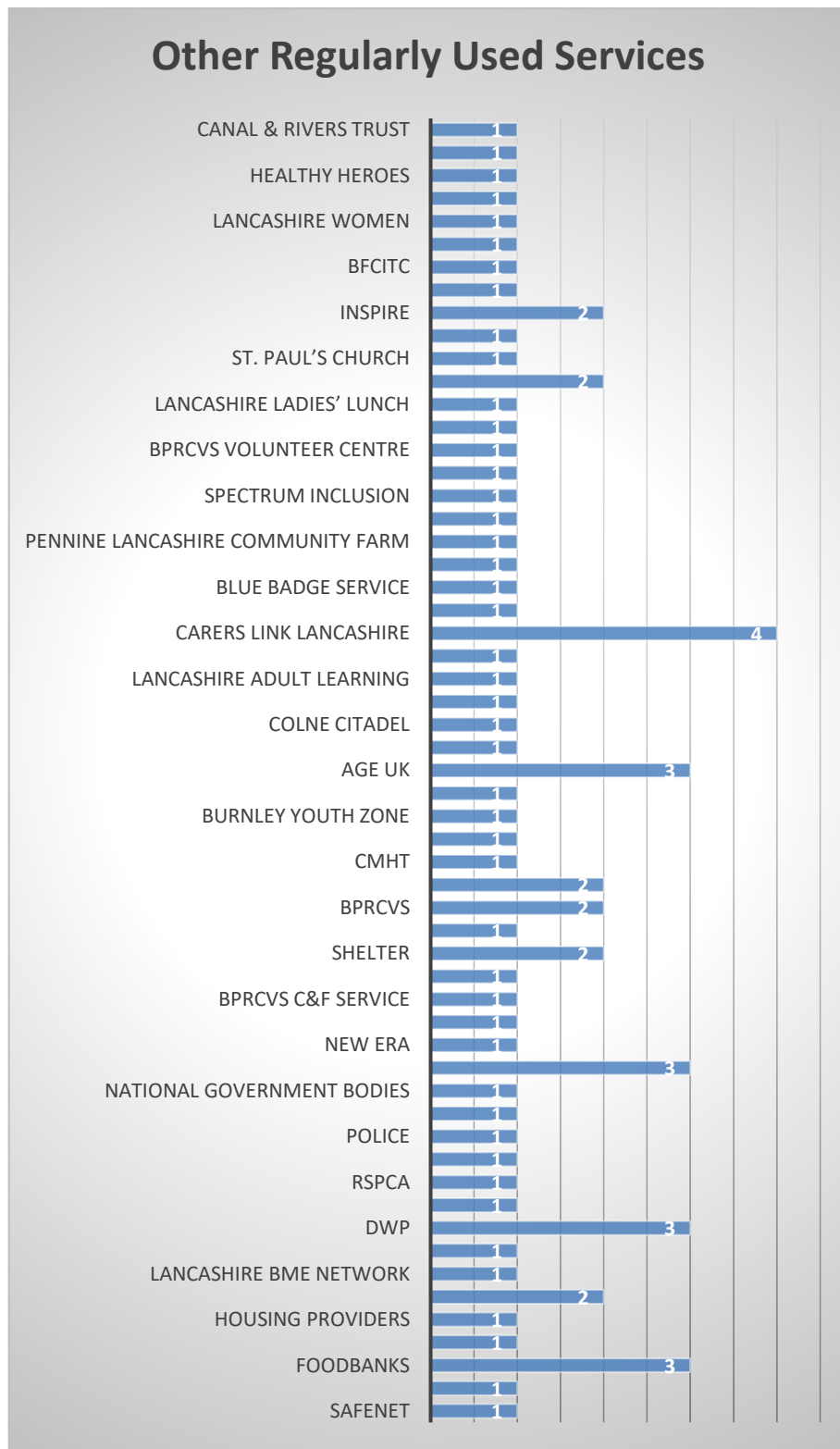
provide any other local services regularly accessed it was anticipated there would be a substantial number recorded only once.

The range of services recorded in this part of the activity is vast and furthers the proof that there is a substantial volume and range of services to support the VCFSE sector.

Given this is a sample from a relatively small number of VCFSE groups and organisations from across the East Lancashire region, it could be inferred that there will be many, many more services supporting the sector that weren't identified and recorded through the course of the activity.



## Services Which Could Benefit Our Communities



### **How many services are you aware of outside of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale from which our communities could benefit from being able to access more locally?**

The following list of organisations is compiled from those identified by delegates as being a benefit to our local communities:

Citizens Advice Bureau – more localised offices\*  
 Eastern European support groups  
 Big Lottery

Menopause groups in Burnley & Pendle  
 Adult neurodivergence support groups  
 Gender Identity Clinic

Church of England  
 NHS Trust  
 Lancashire Adult Learning  
 Initial Response Service  
 Lancashire County Council  
 Thomas  
 ACAS  
 Unions  
 Language Line  
 Shelter  
 Emmaus  
 Homeless Link  
 Carer's Link Lancashire  
 Age UK  
 Silverline  
 Mind

Acorn Recovery Projects  
 Admiral Nurse in Rossendale  
 Adult ADHD support groups  
 Freedom From Torture  
 SIBS  
 SEN provision (post 16-24) in Burnley  
 Samaritans  
 Refugee Integration Programme  
 Carer's Magazine  
 Action Fraud  
 Scam Alert  
 Migrant Help  
 Burnley Community Grocery  
 Alzheimer's Trust  
 Prince's Trust  
 Versus Arthritis

\*mentioned twice by two delegates

Some of these services are nationally available, but by being mentioned there are those who clearly believe having more localised access to these services would be beneficial.

Burnley Community Grocery was presumably mentioned by those in Pendle and Rossendale, and this was reflected in the keynote speeches from the representatives of Pendle and Rossendale Borough Councils.

More research would be required to ascertain whether some of the above services and organisations do actually have a more localised footprint than those in the sector perceive.



# What Did We Think? Piggy Bank Feedback

Delegates will hopefully remember the novel 'piggy bank' feedback activity deployed throughout the course of the How? Conference where each delegate 'deposited' a BPRCVS bank note based on how they rated each speaker and activity.

The following table displays the value delegates felt they received from keynote speakers and activities.

Speaker/Activity	£5	£10	£20	£50	Total
East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce	£70	£170	£360	£900	£1,500
Activity 1 – Impact Of Crisis	£30	£100	£440	£1,850	£2,420

Citizens Advice Rossendale & Hyndburn	£60	£110	£480	£1,450	£2,100
National Lottery Community Fund	£30	£50	£320	£2,450	£2,850
Activity 2 – Awareness Of Services	£20	£130	£320	£1,350	£1,820
Burnley Borough Council	£35	£80	£360	£1,650	£2,125
Pendle Borough Council	£55	£170	£480	£850	£1,555
Rossendale Borough Council	£30	£110	£340	£1,200	£1,680
Speed Networking	£30	£50	£200	£1,650	£1,930
Money & Pensions Service	£20	£40	£220	£1,250	£1,530

The maximum possible value per speaker/activity is £4,450 (based on a total of 89 delegates including BPRCVS staff, volunteers and trustees).

The maximum possible value of the overall conference is £44,500 and delegates valued the conference at £19,510 which equates to 44% of the total value.

It is worth noting that during the latter part of the conference, some delegates had to leave early and therefore the value is impacted by this.

Out of the ten speakers and activities, only three received more £5 notes than £10 notes, but in each case they received a larger proportion of £20 and £50 notes. This implies that while some rated the speaker or activity as poor, overall the majority rated the speaker or activity as very good.

In total there was 76 x £5 notes, 101 x £10 notes, 176 x £20 notes, and 292 x £50 notes used in the feedback exercise. This also demonstrates that the majority of delegates placed significant value on the How? Conference.

## Evaluation & Feedback Survey

Many thanks to every delegate who completed the evaluation and feedback survey. This is important to BPRCVS as it drives our direction for future conferences and events.

40 completed surveys were received. That's a massive 45% completion rate which is fantastic as survey response rates are not typically as high.

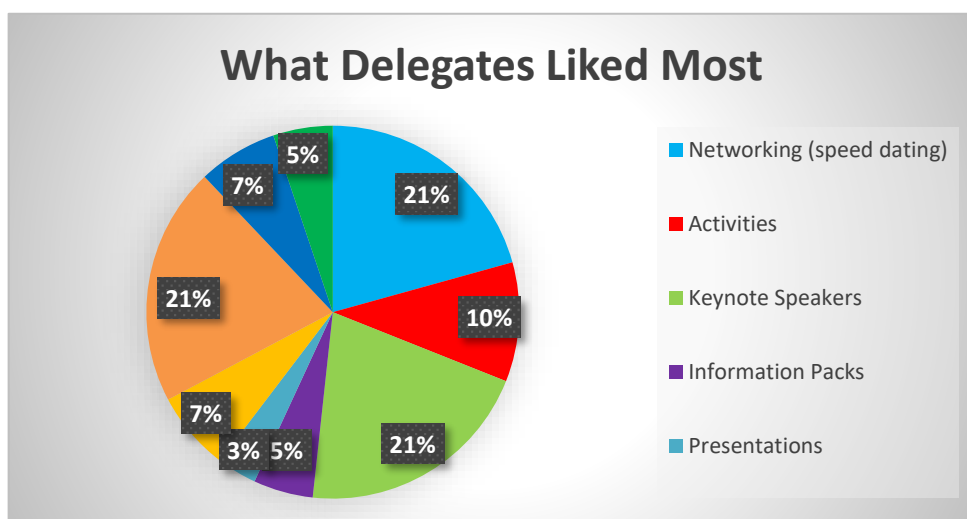
Below is a breakdown of the findings extrapolated from the completed surveys. The table below shows the total responses from the closed questions where delegates were asked to rate each question between 1-10.

Question	Total Response Value	Maximum Possible Response Value	Difference
How would you rate the How? Conference overall?	368	400	-32
How would you rate the theme and topics covered?	367	400	-33
How would you rate the activities overall?	347	400	-53
How would you rate the keynote speakers overall?	349	400	-51
How would you rate the presentations overall?	348	400	-52
How useful have you found the information provided throughout?	359	400	-41
How much have you learned today?	337	400	-63
How much of what you have learned do you think you might implement?	309	400	-91
How would you rate the 'piggy bank' feedback process?	349	400	-51
How would you rate the venue overall?	353	400	-47

The evaluation scores throughout are very impressive which clearly indicates delegates thoroughly valued the How? Conference. The majority of delegates voted either 9 or 10 out of 10 when rating both the conference overall and the theme and topics covered.

The activities, keynote speakers and their presentations were scored almost identically. This consistency suggests that delegates roughly thought the same about each of these elements and evidently they were valued very highly.

The information provided by the keynote speakers is demonstrably valued as being useful as the overwhelming majority of delegates scored this aspect either 9 or 10 out of 10. This led to many

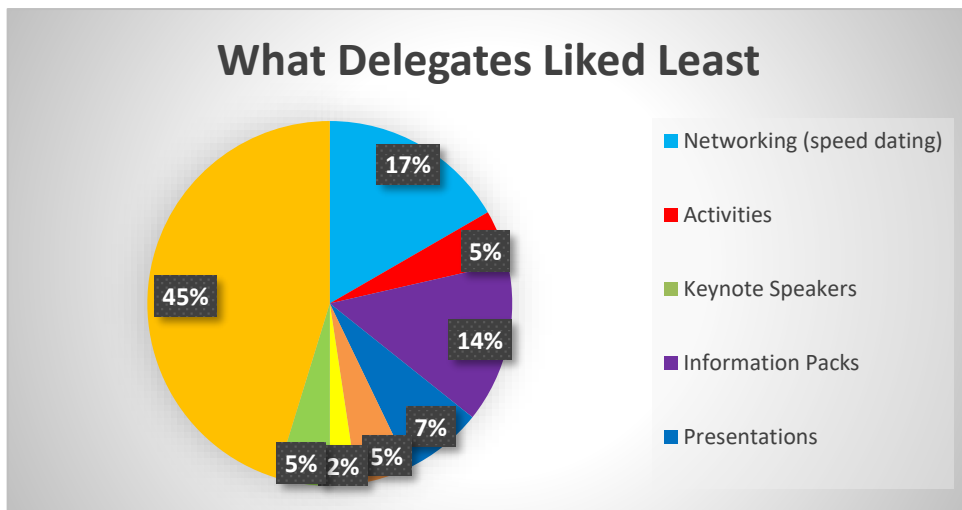




delegates learning plenty and being able to take away a wealth of information and new-found knowledge.

When considering how much of what was learned during the How? Conference that might be implemented, BPRCVS was anticipating a reasonable response, but not one necessarily as high as 77%.

This is incredibly pleasing to BPRCVS as it suggests that the keynote speakers and activities provided relevant and pertinent information that was applicable to a vast array of VCFSE groups and organisations.



When developing the 'piggy bank' feedback process, BPRCVS was hopeful it would work well and as intended. Thankfully it did and it seems that delegates liked the novel approach to recording feedback too. And some delegates even wanted to keep their BPRCVS bank notes!

St Mary's Chambers in Rawtenstall was the venue used for the How? Conference and evidently a significant majority of

delegates rated the venue highly.

Overall, the number of low scores received was exceptionally small. Only a few delegates rated a particular aspect as low as 3 out of 10, but these were very much anomalies.

In equal measure delegates liked keynote speakers, the speed-dating style networking activity, and sharing knowledge and experiences. This accounts for almost two-thirds of the responses received. Listening to informative speakers who can impart knowledge and wisdom on key topics is of importance as is the ability to meet new contacts that may be able to support your group/organisation in the future.

Learning from others facing similar challenges was something that BPRCVS attempted to focus upon at the How? Conference and this seems to have worked with 21% of delegates expressing the aspect they like the most was sharing knowledge and experiences with others.

Delegates were asked to specify what they liked least, however many stated 'not applicable' despite this not being one of



the options! Almost half of respondents expressed this and this infers that for most in attendance what was on offer throughout was valued.

The least liked aspect of the How? Conference was the speed-dating style approach to networking. BPRCVS admits it was a bit chaotic, but while this was the case and some didn't like the approach, there were lots who did.

Nevertheless, BPRCVS understands the importance of networking opportunities to all in the VCFSE sector and the feedback provided will most certainly be considered when arranging future events and conferences. A more structured approach will be aimed for in the future.

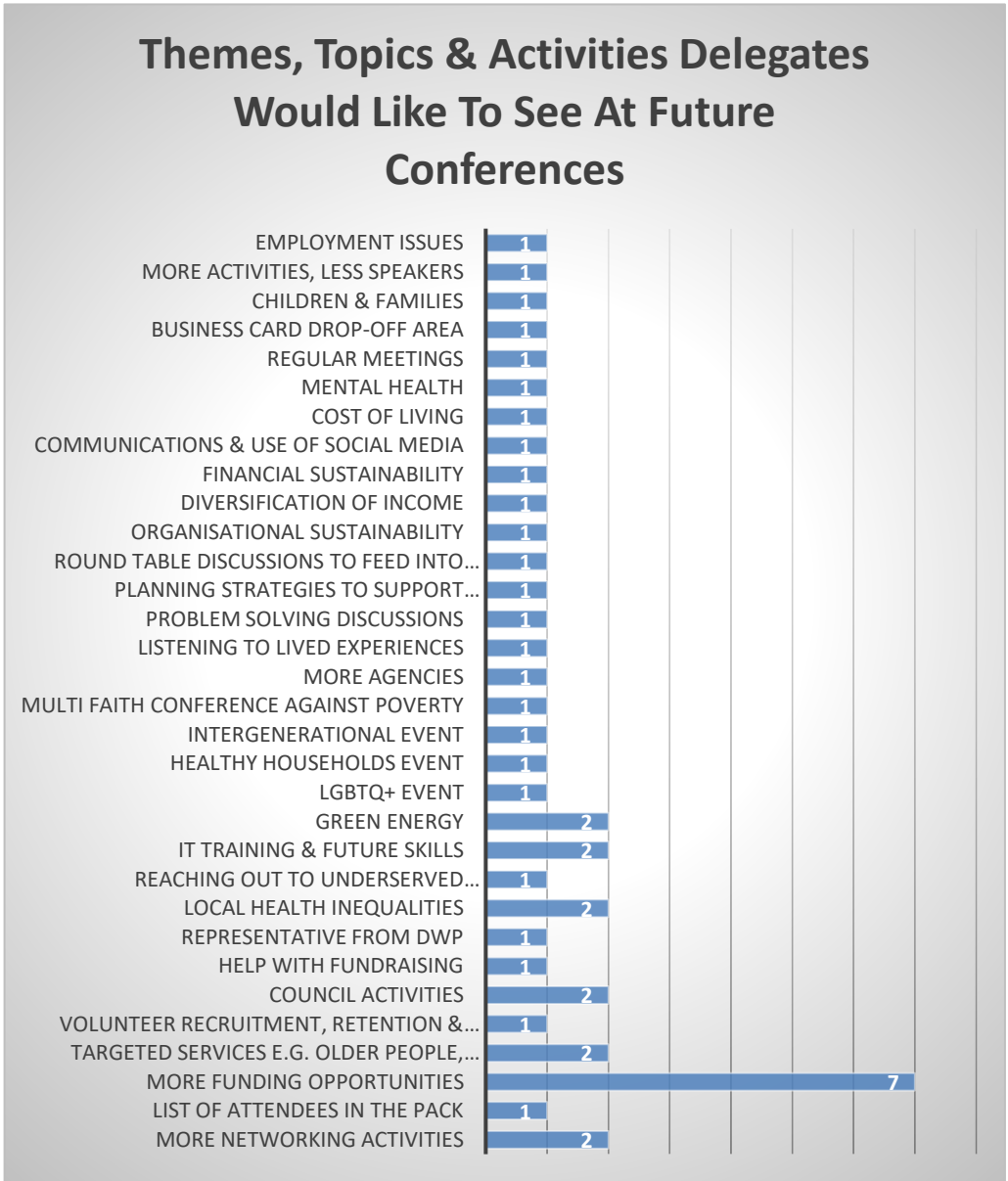
There were relatively low responses received for all other aspects of the conference thus further implying that most delegates were pleased with what was on offer throughout the day.

When delegates were asked to consider what they would like to see at future conferences, there was a wide range of responses which was to be expected as each VCFSE group/organisation has their own priorities.

Unsurprisingly, more funding opportunities was the most prominent answer given. All of these responses are useful to BPRCVS to drive the direction of the next conference and will be considered, but unfortunately every response can't be implemented.

When delegates were asked whether they would attend a future BPRCVS conference, overwhelmingly they voted 'yes' with only two delegates selecting 'maybe' as their answer. That's a massive 95% of delegates.

Rest assured, BPRCVS will be back with another conference in the near future!



# Extra Detail

## Your Responses In Full

### Impact

**How has your VCFSE group/organisation responded and adapted to increasing costs - how have you been impacted?**

#### Venue

Sharp rises in rental costs.  
Looked for new premises.  
Searched for cheaper alternative to our current location.  
Hiring more buildings to accommodate increase in service users, but this incurs greater costs which are unsustainable.  
Now having to make use of external building hire in an effort to reduce costs.  
Reduced expenses through branch closures.  
Building costs in the sector have increased significantly.  
Reduced space available for VCFSE groups and organisations.  
A lack of budget for venues to meet people is prohibitive.  
Reduced from 3 premises to 1 – more important to retain staff.  
Start paying rent in October – don't know how we'll manage this.  
The building we're in is great as it enables wide reaching partnerships.

#### Volunteer

Struggled to cover volunteer expenses.  
Rising fuel costs have made paying volunteer expenses more challenging.  
Struggled to support volunteers as the number of clients has increased. Therefore, safeguarding becomes a greater concern.  
Volunteers are unable to give their time due to needing to work more hours to cover costs or because they're unable to pay for transport upfront.  
Volunteers at our organisation tend to be older people who have recently retired. These people have now continued working instead of opting to retire.  
Transport costs for staff and volunteers have significantly increased leaving less disposable income and greater expenses to be reimbursed.  
Loss of volunteers.  
Provide 5-day intensive training for volunteers which incurs costs.  
Volunteers are either working longer paid hours, looking after elderly parents and grandchildren more often due to care costs.  
Volunteer pool is depleting.  
Struggled to recruit volunteers and believed to be due to the cost-of-living.  
Increased contributions to volunteers to cover expenses.  
Experienced increases in physical and emotional toil and stress on staff and volunteers.

#### Staff

Staffing costs - salaries can't compete with public and statutory sector.  
Retention of staff and freelancers has been challenging as they've sought new employment which pays greater salaries.  
Staff have been impacted, in turn affecting the business. Unable to afford travel to work, struggling to feed families, pay bills and even though low-paid workers many didn't qualify for any support other than the Council Tax reduction and energy rebate.  
Recruitment and retention, especially of experienced staff, has become significantly more difficult.  
Staffing problems have been a regular thing over the past year or so.



Transport costs for staff and volunteers have significantly increased leaving less disposable income and greater expenses to be reimbursed.

Staff are working above and beyond the call of duty.

Salary expectations have shifted substantially – not helped with public sector strikes and many staff and candidates believing if they're worth more money than so are we.

Staff stress has become an issue. However, resilience in staff has increased.

Staff burnout has been an issue with increases in demand.

Staff mental health has become a rising concern – their worries are far greater now.

Lack of job security – organisations are reducing staff numbers.

Covid-19 put staff off using Teams.

Attempted to reduce travel costs for staff by allowing home working.

Using hot desking facilities closer to home over travelling to work.

Experienced increases in physical and emotional toil and stress on staff and volunteers.

## **Clients**

Found many young mothers are struggling to pay bills and feed children.

Clients really struggling and facing additional difficulties on top of what they were already going through which exacerbates the problem.

Huge increase in people needing help. It's not tailing off.

Clients borrowing money for different reasons and found that they're purchasing for survival rather than saving for investment and future white good purchases.

Seeing more referrals for people with complex needs.

Seen increased referrals for homelessness caused by cost-of-living crisis.

A rise in ex-offenders being referred, but no available specialists for serious offenders' mental health.

Cuckooing and modern slavery is an increasing problem.

The housing crisis is a significant, but under-addressed issue and has impacted clients significantly, in particular with regards to their mental health and physical wellbeing.

Seeing increases in loneliness.

Newly diagnosed people with Alzheimer's are waiting longer to be supported.

Found people in need hesitant to access services due to pre-existing stigmas.

Seen people giving up their pets and animals due to cost.

Safeguarding has become a greater concern.

Seeing more clients regarding suicide and grooming.

Seeing increased complexity of needs.

## **Energy/Utilities**

Responded by making energy savings to reduce costs.

Billed separately for gas and electric and this seems to be at higher rates than those who aren't billed separately.

Fixed rate electricity tariffs have increased significantly.

Increases in utility expenditure.

Turned the heating down to cut costs.

Looking into having solar panels added.

Carried on hybrid working since covid-19. This has helped with energy costs.

Had to switch lights off to save money.

Energy costs have increased dramatically.

We increase our carbon footprint when travelling which in turn keeps costs high.

## **Fundraising/Donations**

Generated money through recycling clothing and other items.

Had to start receiving donations of food and arranging food collections to adapt to client's needs.

Fundraising is down substantially compared to the same time last year.

Set up a donate page to raise funds.

Attempting to run fundraisers to raise funds.

Donations are down on previous year.

Waste food from supermarkets has now ceased.

## **Grants/Funding**



More difficult in getting grants. Seems as though monies have been diverted elsewhere and away from the sector.

Grant market seems to be diminishing and there are more 'hoops' to jump through.

Had to look for new funders to continue operations.

Found funders are focused on specific outcomes.

Councils don't get additional cost-of-living funding to 'pass on'.

Received funding for LED lighting to reduce overheads.

Requested additional funding from funders to cope with added cost pressures.

Repurposed monies into an energy voucher scheme.

Funders requirements and outcomes make it difficult for arts and heritage projects to apply and limits what can be offered.

Funding has been decreased.

Funding coming to an end and uncertainty for the future.

Applied for National Lottery funding.

Managed to get around grants – seen as more cost efficient.

Long term security of funding is a worry.

## **Mental Health**

Staff bills have gone up which have created mental ill health and this has impacted the organisation.

## **Services (internal)**

Had to become much more fluid in how we respond.

Trying to increase the capacity of our form filling services as the need has increased.

More demand on services to deliver but not enough specific funding to cover this.

Responded by changing the way we assessed clients; changed to assessing as to need.

Had to change way services are delivered. Now doing more postal and over the phone work.

We've now effectively become an emergency food bank instead of doing what we normally do.

Had to increase prices by nearly 20% to cover increasing costs.

Had to find innovative approaches to income generation.

Had to limit the number of projects and services delivered to reduce fixed and variable costs.

Warm Welcome scheme enabled us to be able to provide free activities.

Becoming a Place of Welcome for 3 days a week helped to keep the organisation going.

Largest single incomes came from party bookings which was down from 3 per week to just 1 per week.

Warm Welcome scheme was suspended due to lack of funding behind it and the incurred costs associated with operating the scheme.

Bacup Warm Welcome morphed into a family centre to support people better and meet the needs of the largest audience attending the Warm Welcome scheme.

Even with unavoidable price increases we haven't seen a fall in demand.

Thursday Night Club now has around 40 attendees – a sharp increase.

Warm Welcome morphed into clubs and walking groups to keep costs down.

Seeing reduced income.

Working from home to reduce costs.

New funding means new projects and this can be a detriment to existing successful projects.

Been more difficult to provide our one-to-one service.

Supporting bereavement has become more challenging.

Using Zoom for client meetings has reduced costs, but in turn widened the client base.

Had to begin signposting to others for support as unable to manage ourselves.

Made changes to our policies so clients can reapply for help and reuse services where they couldn't before.

Rewards requested have changed by type; requesting supermarket vouchers instead of day out vouchers.

Disputes can prove more costly now.

Seeing increases in neighbour disputes and attacks.

Offered and delivered paid for courses and service provision.

Seeing sharp increases in demand and need.  
Addressing needs through creative means.  
Adapted foodbank service to now apply for grants.  
Seeing sharp increases in foodbank usage.  
More refugees, asylum seekers, in work families, and those with mental health and long-term conditions are accessing the foodbank.  
Using new social media to maintain engagement.  
Do everything via social media now – have some leaflets, but not as before.  
Food club has seen increases in usage.  
Found that innovation rather than the tried and tested has proven to work well.  
Changed delivery of service and website content more often to accommodate needs.  
Working flexibly to accommodate the needs to clients.  
More people on long waiting lists as more need help.  
Visiting clients at home now.  
Word of mouth referrals have increased.  
Using remote networking.  
Using Facetime and Teams, etc. much more now to reduce costs and see more clients.  
More use of social media has enabled us to reach and support more people.  
Cut travel costs by using social media.  
Travel time in rural areas is an issue.  
Kept services under review to meet need.  
Not 'putting a plaster on it' has been our approach.  
Working to empower people to make informed decisions.  
Provided advice to more people than originally targeted.  
Experienced hidden difficulties e.g. families in work.  
An alternative to home working is logging in at local libraries and the organisations prefers this arrangement to working from home.  
Started delivering counselling in homes over online means – better from clients perspective.  
Using less printed media to reduce costs.

### **Services (external)**

A lack of Social Prescriber contacts is an issue as they could help and support our clients.  
Become more connected to other services.  
Attended more forums to obtain as much information as possible to provide support and drive strategic direction.  
Seeing more partnerships, more working together and sharing. Although it seems to be the same few organisations/groups who get these opportunities. The sector doesn't put opportunities out to tender which would give others more opportunity.  
Daily rates of freelancers have all increased.  
Begun working with foodbanks, local authorities, and crisis teams.  
Networking is priceless to find new opportunities.  
Access to services can be difficult.  
When complex issues present we're now working in partnership with others.  
More networking opportunities are needed.

### **No Impact**

Not really impacted yet; not hit us yet – just started the service and no waiting list.

### **Community**

Not enough police in communities to meet issues head-on rather than after crime and anti-social behaviour occurs. As such, we're aware many occurrences are not reported.  
Boundaries have become more blurred.

### **Other**

Massive impact.  
Appear to be in a vicious circle.  
Leisure is the first thing to go when costs are high.

# How We Provide Support

## How have you supported your clients and beneficiaries throughout the cost-of-living crisis?

### Food

Provided food vouchers.  
Provided food support which we've never done before.  
Delivered slow cooker training.  
Provided free bread to clients through Warburton's donations.  
Referrals to foodbanks, community fridges and other food schemes.

### Energy

Provided energy saving light bulbs.  
Advising people on how to reduce energy costs.  
Provided small grants for gas and electricity.  
Signposted to BPRCVS for gas and electric vouchers.

### Clothing

Provided body warmers, blankets, gloves and socks.

### Travel

Visiting people in their own homes to save them the travel costs.

### Financial/Debt/Benefits

Launched the 'Engage Card', a pre-paid debit card gives people access to banking.  
'Family Loan' puts something into shares and savings from child benefit.  
Supported by managing bills for clients, especially young mothers.  
Provided budgeting advice and support.  
Waiving fees for those in hardship.  
Delivered inexpensive classes for families.  
Provided funding for families to access services.  
Work with clients on budgeting.  
Refer to Christians Against Poverty for debt advice.  
Refer to ICANN for benefits support and advocacy.  
Completing benefits checks and supporting with form filling and debt.  
We have found the support system needs to be changed as it was unfair and discriminated against several sets of the population. Our group had to rely on the existing support system as we had no means of providing further support ourselves.  
There are more barriers to people saving money and we can't always help. It's been hard, but we've had to say "No".

### Appliances

Became aware of an appliance shortage.  
Supplied crock pots to disabled people in Pendle.

### Mental Health

Provided one-to-one sessions for those struggling with mental wellbeing.  
Provided mental health support.  
Focused on 50+ mental health support.  
In the face of rising mental health issues, in particular in younger people, we have provided access to coping strategies, provided extra levels of support, and shifted delivery styles to help.  
Found older people more proud about talking and their personal experiences enable others to open up.

### Activity/Service Provision

Provided free/subsidised physical activity for those lacking in confidence.  
Supported youth clubs to look at alternative income streams.  
Provided free activities to keep people occupied and at the very least maintain their level of health and wellbeing.  
Offered free or nominal suggested fee for families and children accessing services.  
Opened free clubs for adults because disposable income isn't there and provided respite from having to use gas and electricity even for only a couple of hours.

Provided free art sessions for clients to improve wellbeing.  
Continued to provide the same free support sessions despite increased costs.  
Provide support to complete a wide range of benefits forms and support with assessment and appeals.  
Operated workshops also as a warm space.  
Modified activities to help people learn other skills that could help e.g. cooking, healthy eating, childcare – also provides a social aspect.  
Warm spaces set up over winter have carried on over the summer and will become the norm now. These have become a friendly, safe space for people to talk about the issues affecting them.  
Launched new projects targeting those in need.  
Found a number of short-term solutions that could be implemented – long term solutions don't exist and need developing.  
Helped set up a health check with NHS and UCLan students.

### **Funding/Grants**

Administered the Household Support Fund.  
Provided small grants for gas and electricity.  
Referrals to household support funds.

### **Working With Other Services**

Partnered with Burnley Together to provide more support.  
Begun working together with new, and more organisations than before.  
Developed new relationships within the sector.  
Sharing email and other contact details for other services.  
By being very aware of local services – social media helps with this.  
Accessing, referring and signposting to emergency foodbanks.  
Made referrals to Social Prescribing.  
Signposted many more people to other services for support where we may have helped before.  
Signpost to Citizens Advice.  
Supporting others to recruit more volunteers to build up numbers again.

### **IAG**

Kept providing as much information as possible to support people.  
Published as much supporting information on our website as possible to help people.  
Direct people to the directories of service.  
Share Carers magazine.  
Using social media helps to make people aware.  
Our scam alert service is very useful to help people avoid losing out to scammers.  
Developing a dedicated section on our website containing the most up-to-date information.  
By adopting a more intensive social media communications approach we're able to share more information to more people and newer audiences.  
Access and signpost to the cost-of-living hub on Lancashire County Council website.  
Provided support and guidance with reduction of costs e.g. heat the person, not the home.  
Signposted VCFSE groups to Unity Church, Rawtenstall as there's funding for free venue use.  
Raised awareness of funding available.  
Informing of and accessing Too Good To Go.

**BPRCVS hopes you find this outcome report interesting, but more importantly useful to your VCFSE group or organisation. Such was the turnout at the How? Conference and the volume of responses received both from activities and evaluation, there is a lot of information to consume, but hopefully it will support your decision-making processes, identify gaps and opportunities, and much more.**

**Any comments and feedback about this report, or specific content contained within can be sent to [info@bprcv.co.uk](mailto:info@bprcv.co.uk)**