The Rotherham Infrastructure Survey

Key Findings Report

September 2017

1 | Introduction

This report provides the key findings of the annual Rotherham Infrastructure Survey. The survey was carried out between May and July 2017 by Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) and Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA). The survey has gathered evidence on the individual and collective impact of local infrastructure organisations in Rotherham since 2010. It built initially on VAR's Annual Surveys carried out between 2006 and 2009 and this is the seventh annual infrastructure survey to have been carried out since 2011. The survey aims to provide **an overview of how well local voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) feel that their development, support and representative needs have been met** during the past year and how this compares to previous years.

2 |Methodology

A copy of the questionnaire was sent to a sample of around 550 local voluntary and community organisations that had **engaged with VAR and or REMA during 2016-17**. Online and paper versions of the questionnaire were available. **A total of 256 responses** were received: an overall response rate of about 46 per cent. However, 44 respondents said they had not received support[1] from VAR or REMA during 2016-17. The responses were broken down by organisation as follows:

- VAR service users: 127 responses/66 per cent of all respondents
- REMA service users: 49 responses/26 per cent of all respondents

This represents a considerable increase in the **number and proportion of VAR and REMA service users responding** compared to previous years. Respondents were also asked to identify whether they had received support from any providers other than VAR or REMA and if so, who they were. Just over a third (36 per cent) of respondents had received support from elsewhere: in most cases this was in *addition to* not *instead of* infrastructure support and a range of alternative support providers were identified. These included other larger local/regional voluntary sector organisations and infrastructure organisations elsewhere in South Yorkshire; the local authority; private sector organisations such as accountants, solicitors and law firms; and national funders such as the Big Lottery Fund and Barrow Cadbury Trust.

[1] This includes direct provision of support and services such as payroll, but also engagement in networking and partnership activities, and receipt of communications such as email newsletters

3 | Summary of findings

This section provides a summary of the findings for different aspects of the survey and draws out some of the main implications for VAR, REMA and their key stakeholders.

Awareness of services

Awareness of the services provided by VAR and REMA members followed the same pattern as service use. As such, respondents were more likely to be aware of VAR services than REMA, but awareness of REMA, which increased between 2013-15, has been sustained in 2016 and 2017.

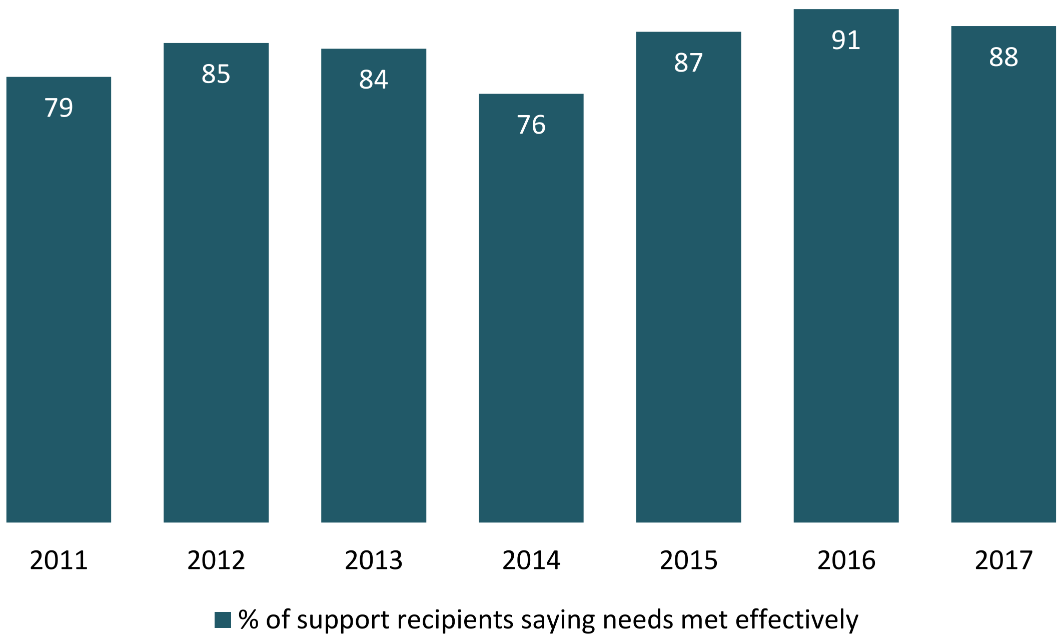
Resources

Survey respondents were asked how their income, staffing and volunteer levels had changed in the past 12 months. The results were more positive compared to recent years, which indicated that the sector was struggling for resources and pointed to a 'double dip' impact from cuts in public sector funding over the preceding years. However, the position will need to be monitored in subsequent years before any firm conclusions about the long term financial health of the sector can be drawn.

Organisational support

Survey respondents had received a range of different types of organisational support from RIN members. Overall, respondents provided feedback about a total of 659 interventions or types of support in the areas of funding, organisational planning, financial management, human resources and legal issues, volunteering, ICT and marketing and communication channels. The most frequently identified interventions were in the areas of communications (257 interventions identified), funding (104 interventions), volunteering (97 interventions) and organisational planning (89 interventions).

The graph below demonstrates that across these support interventions **88 per cent of respondents said their support needs had been met effectively**. This compares to 91 per cent in 2016, 87 per cent in 2015, 76 per cent in 2014, 84 per cent in 2013, 85 per cent in 2012 and 79 per cent in 2011. This means that the perceived effectiveness of support provision remains high, albeit slightly reduced from the 2016 figure which was the **highest** since measurement started in 2011.



Overall the survey findings indicate that the **majority of infrastructure support interventions are perceived to be effective and meet the needs of recipient organisations**. This pattern has been consistently identified over a number of years but is generally higher this year compared to previous years, with the overall percentage saying their needs had been met exceeding 90 per cent for the first time.

These results are summarised in the table below.

	Total number of interventions	Total number saying needs meet	Percentage saying needs met
ICT/Marketing	21	17	81%
Financial management	46	42	91%
Volunteering	97	92	95%
Organisational planning	89	75	84%
HR/Legal issues	45	41	91%
Communications	257	226	88%
Funding	104	87	84%
Overall	**659**	**580**	**88%**

Policy awareness

Respondents were asked about whether the extent to which they were well informed about local and regional policy developments had improved over the past 12 months: similar to previous surveys they were **most likely to say that they were better informed about local developments**, which is important as most organisations in Rotherham operate within the local policy environment.

Respondents were also asked about whether their understanding of policy developments had improved compared to the previous year: **more than half said they had a better understanding of the impact on their organisation and the wider sector** compared to the year before.

Working with other voluntary and community organisations

Around **half of survey respondents were involved in at least one of the local network/consortia of voluntary and community organisations in Rotherham**: this is the same as the past three years. About two-thirds of survey respondents said they thought that, compared to previous years, they had been more effective at networking, collaborating and communicating with other voluntary and community sector organisations in the area. This is lower than last year, which saw a significant improvement compared to the two previous years when only half of respondents reported improvements in working with other VCS organisations. Therefore, the 2017 figures are still higher than the years preceding 2016.

Working with the public sector

As with previous surveys respondents were **more likely to have frequent and direct dealings with the local authority** compared to the local NHS bodies and the police. Overall, and similar to 2016 when there was a reversal of the trend from previous surveys, respondents were more likely to be positive than negative about their experience of dealing with local public sector bodies and the extent to which this had improved compared to earlier years:

- A third of respondents said they had improved the way they involve voluntary and community organisations in decision making
- A third of respondents said they had improved the way they took notice of voluntary and community organisation's views
- A quarter said their ability to influence decisions regarding the delivery of public services had improved in the past year
- A fifth felt that local public sector bodies provided long term funding

Overall, more than a third of respondents said that the public sector bodies in Rotherham had a **positive influence on their success** but this was a small reduction of three percentage points compared to 2016.

Overall satisfaction with support

More than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the support local infrastructure bodies provide for the voluntary and community sector in Rotherham while only four per cent said they were dissatisfied - this is a slight reduction compared to 2016 but is still the second highest figure since the survey started in 2011.

Annex1: Detailed Results

A1 |Awareness of services

Respondents were asked how well informed they were about the range of services provided by VAR and REMA. The responses were broken down by organisation as follows:

- VAR: 83 per cent of respondents said they were well informed – this has remained broadly consistent since 2010
- REMA: 37 per cent were well informed – broadly the same as the previous survey

This follows the same pattern as support recipients and is likely to reflect that organisations tend to feel well informed about the organisations they work closely with but less so about organisations with which their contact is limited. **Overall awareness of service provision is broadly similar** compared with 2016 and preceding years.

A2 |Resources

Respondents were asked whether their income, staffing and volunteer levels had changed last year compared to previous years. The answers are summarised and compared with 2016 below.

Income

31 per cent of respondents said their income had increased compared to the previous year, 42 per cent said it had remained the same and 27 per cent said it had decreased. This is somewhat different to 2016 when 23 per cent of respondents said their income had increased, 41 per cent said it had remained the same and 36 per cent said it had decreased.

This means that, compared to the previous year, a **greater proportion of respondents had experienced an increase in income and fewer had experienced a decrease**. Findings from the past two surveys (2015 and 2016) had suggested that the sector in Rotherham might have experienced a **'double dip' reduction in income from public sector cuts,** and may not be bouncing back as well as previously reported. This year's findings are slightly more positive and could suggest that a corner has been turned. However, this position will need to monitored in subsequent years before any firm conclusions about the financial health of the sector can be drawn.

Staffing

71 per cent of survey respondents said their organisation employed paid staff which was very similar to last year's survey (69 per cent). Of these 33 per cent of organisations said the number of full time equivalent staff (FTE) they employed had increased in the last year, 40 per cent said it had remained the same, and 27 per cent said it had decreased. This is broadly similar to 2016, when 28 per cent of organisations said the number of FTEs they employed had increased, 40 per cent said it had remained the same, and 33 per cent said it

had decreased. However, there was a small increase in the proportion of respondents whose staff numbers had increased, and a similar reduction in the proportion of respondent whose staff numbers had decreased, mirroring (albeit to a lesser extent) the pattern with income.

Volunteers

34 per cent of organisations said their number of volunteers had increased last year compared to previous years, 52 per cent said it had remained the same and 14 per cent said it had decreased. This represents a reduction in the number of respondents with more volunteers compared to 2016, when 41 per cent of respondents said their number of volunteers had increased, 47 per cent said it had remained the same and 12 per cent said it had decreased.

A3 |Organisational support

Respondents were asked a range of questions about the different types of **organisational help, advice and support they had received from RIN members during the past year**. The questions were designed to reflect the range of support available from RIN members. Two questions were asked for each area of service provision:

- Did the respondent receive that type of support from an RIN member?
- If they did receive support, were their needs met?

Overall, 63 per cent of survey respondents identified at least one instance of support. The results are outlined in some detail and compared with 2015 below.

Funding

- 27 per cent said they had received **support to identify** appropriate new sources of funding (2016 = 24 per cent): 83 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 89 per cent).
- 17 per cent said they had received **support to apply for** new sources of funding (2016 = 18 per cent): 87 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 91 per cent).
- 5 per cent said they had received **support to develop an income generation strategy** (2016 = 4 per cent): 80 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 86 per cent).

Organisational planning

- 4 per cent had received **support to develop a constitution** (2016 = 5 per cent): 78 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 80 per cent)
- 4 per cent had received **support to implement appropriate legal structures** (2016 =5 per cent): 88 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 78 per cent)

- 10 per cent had received **support with issues relating to governance or management committees** (2016: 10 per cent): 86 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 94 per cent)

- 7 per cent of organisations said they had received **support to develop a strategic plan or an action plan** (2016 = 9 per cent): 81 per said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 88 per cent).

- 7 per cent said they had received **support to implement a quality standard** (2016 = 7 per cent): 87 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 77 per cent).

- 9 per cent said they had received **support to monitor and evaluate their services** (2016 = 11 per cent): 84 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 90 per cent).

Financial management

- 10 per cent of organisations had received **support to manage their payroll** (2016 = 9 per cent): 90 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 88 per cent).

- 7 per cent of organisations had received **support regarding accountancy and bookkeeping** (2016 = 13 per cent): 94 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 88 per cent).

- 4 per cent of organisations had received **support relating to the costing and pricing of their services** (2016 = 1 per cent): 89 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 50 per cent).

Human resources and legal

- 9 per cent of organisations had received **support to recruit new staff** (2016 = 7 per cent): 89 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 100 per cent).

- 4 per cent of organisations had **received support relating to employment law** (2016 = 9 per cent): 100 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 88 per cent).

- 9 per cent of organisations had received **support relating to human resources policies and procedures** (2016 = 12 per cent): 89 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 95 per cent).

Volunteering

- 22 per cent of organisations had received **support to find new volunteers** (2016 = 21 per cent): 94 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 90 per cent).

- 15 per cent of organisations had received **support on working with volunteers** (2016 = 18 per cent): 100 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 97 per cent).

- 8 per cent of organisations had received **support to put in place volunteering policies and procedures** (2016 = 12 per cent): 89 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 95 per cent).

ICT and marketing

- 3 per cent of organisations had received **support in relation to information and communications technology** (2016 = 3 per cent): 57 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 100 per cent).

- 7 per cent of organisations had received **support in relation to marketing** (2016 = 14 per cent): 93 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 96 per cent).

Communications

- 46 per cent of organisations had accessed an **email bulletin** (2016 = 47 per cent): 92 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 90 per cent).

- 34 per cent of organisations had accessed a **newsletter** (2016 = 35 per cent): 86 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 98 per cent)

- 23 per cent had **received information or attended an 'audience with' session** (2016 = 25 per cent): 82 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 91 per cent)

- 17 per cent had accessed **Rotherham Gismo** (2016 = 18 per cent): 89 per cent said their needs had been addressed effectively (2016 = 82 per cent)

Other support services needed

Survey respondents were asked whether there were any services or types of support that they would like to be able to access that were currently not available or they were not aware of. Overall, 16 per cent - compared to 19 per cent in 2016 - said there were, some of whom provided some examples of the types of support they needed. These included:

- Bite sized training on key issues such as data protection

- Increase the provision of support, training, meetings and events that can be accessed outside of normal working hours so that they can be accessed by volunteers who also work full-time

- Help to measure outcomes and impact, including social return on investment

Similar to previous years, many of these suggestions related to services or support that already exist, suggesting more could be done to improve some groups' awareness of the support that is available, or perhaps increasing or broadening the availability of existing support. The most obvious example is support to identify new/appropriate funding opportunities and submit funding bids, which was identified by nine of the 26 respondents who answered this question in detail.

Overall, the overwhelmingly positive survey responses about the range of support provided suggests that VAR and REMA do a good job in providing support that enables local VCS organisations carry out their work more effectively.

A4 | Policy awareness

Respondents were asked whether their **awareness and understanding of policy developments** affecting their work and that of other voluntary and community organisations had changed last year compared to previous years. The results from this section are outlined in more detail below. Overall, they suggest that the improvements in policy awareness identified between 2013 and 2016 have been sustained in the last 12 months, with further improvements in local policy awareness.

Local policy awareness

67 per cent of organisations said that, compared to the previous year, they were better informed about **local polices and strategies** affecting the voluntary and community sector (2016 = 60 per cent).

Regional policy awareness

46 per cent of organisations said that, compared to the previous year, they were better informed about **regional polices and strategies** affecting the voluntary and community sector (2016 = 41 per cent).

National policy awareness

41 per cent of organisations said that, compared to the previous year, they were better informed about **national polices and strategies** affecting the voluntary and community sector (2016 = 36).

Policy understanding

52 per cent of organisations said that, compared to the previous year, they had a better understanding of how policy and strategy developments might **affect their organisation** (2016 = 53 per cent).

53 per cent of organisations said that, compared to the previous year, they had a better understanding of how policy and strategy developments might **affect the voluntary and community sector** in Rotherham (2016 = 60 per cent).

A5 | Working with other voluntary and community organisations

Respondents were asked a range of questions about how effective they were at working with other voluntary and community organisations in the area. The findings are outlined below.

Involvement in networks and consortia

Overall, 50 per cent of organisations had been **involved in at least one of the voluntary and community sector networks and consortia** operating in Rotherham in the past year (2016 = 50 per cent). Of these:

- 56 per cent of organisations had been involved in the **VAR information/network meetings** (2016 = 78 per cent)
- 19 per cent of organisations had been involved in the **Ethnic Communities Network** (2016 = 22 per cent)
- 20 per cent of organisations had been involved in the **Children, Young People and Families Consortium** (2016 = 22 per cent)
- 14 per cent of organisations had been involved in the **Adult Services Consortium** (2016 = 18 per cent)
- 9 per cent had been involved in the **Food in Crisis Partnership** (2016 = 12 per cent)
- 8 per cent had been involved in other networks or consortia (2016 = 14 per cent)

Networking and collaborating

62 per cent of organisations said that last year, compared to previous years, they had been **more effective at networking and collaborating** with other voluntary and community sector organisations (2015= 73 per cent)

Communicating

61 per cent of organisations said that last year, compared to previous years, they had been **more effective at communicating** with other voluntary and community sector organisations (2016 = 75 per cent)

A6 | Working with the public sector

Respondents were asked a range of questions about their experiences of **working with the range of public sector bodies** in Rotherham. The results are outlined in more detail below.

Direct dealings

52 per cent of organisations said that they had a ‘fair amount’ or a ‘great amount’ of dealings with the **local authority** (2016 = 54 per cent). 16 per cent of organisations said they had no dealings at all with the local authority (2016 = 14 per cent).

28 per cent of organisations said that they had a ‘fair amount’ or a ‘great amount’ of dealings with the **NHS Clinical Commissioning Group** (2016 = 25 per cent). 41 per cent of organisations said they had no dealings at all with the CCG (2016 = 38 per cent).

19 per cent of organisations said that they had a ‘fair amount’ or a ‘great amount’ of dealings with the **NHS Foundation Trust (hospital)** (2016 = 13 per cent). 53 per cent of organisations said they had no dealings at all with the Trust (2016 = 55 per cent).

32 per cent of organisations said that they had a ‘fair amount’ or a ‘great amount’ of dealings with the **Police** (2016 = 37 per cent). 32 per cent of organisations said they had no dealings at all with the Police (2016 = 33 per cent).

Involvement in decision making

Referring to the local public sector bodies in general, 33 per cent of organisations said they had improved the way they **involve voluntary and community organisations in decision making** in the past year (2016 = 33 per cent) and 11 per cent said it had got worse (2016 = 12 per cent).

Taking notice of VCO's views

Referring to the local public sector bodies in general, 32 per cent of organisations said their **the extent to which they take notice of the views of voluntary and community sector organisation's** had improved in the past year (2016 = 34 per cent) and 12 per cent said it had got worse (2016 = 11 per cent).

Influencing public service delivery

Referring to the local public sector bodies in general, 25 per cent of organisations said that their **ability to influence decisions regarding the delivery of public services** had improved in the past year (2016 = 28 per cent) and 11 per cent said it had got worse (2016 = 14 per cent).

Long term funding

43 per cent of respondents were **in receipt of public sector funding** (2016 = 41 per cent) but only 21 per cent felt that local public sector bodies provided **long term funding agreements** (2016 = 22 per cent) compared to 41 per cent who felt this was not the case (2016 = 41 per cent).

Responding to consultation

48 per cent of organisations had responded to **local level consultations** in the past 12 months (2016 = 47 per cent) and 24 per cent had responded to **national level consultations** (2016 = 26 per cent).

The Compact

50 per cent of organisations were **aware of the local compact** (2016 = 45 per cent) but of these only 37 per cent felt it had **improved overall relationships** between voluntary and community organisations and the local public sector bodies (2016 = 28 per cent).

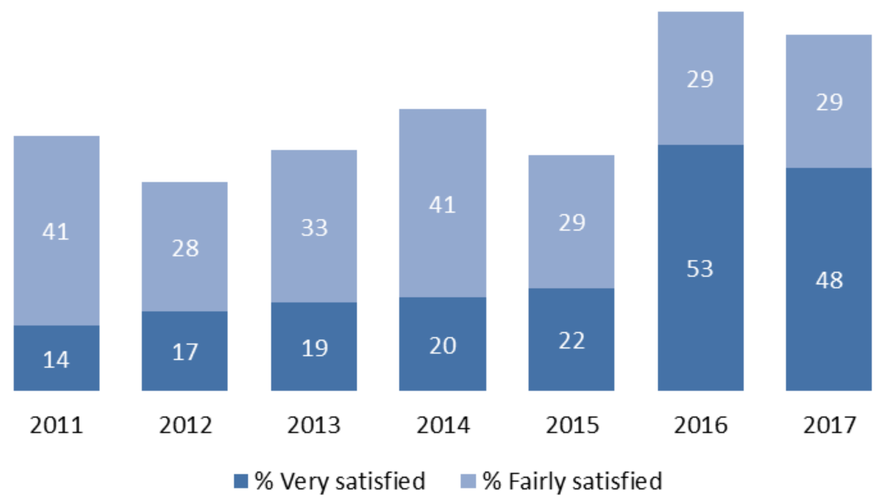
Overall influence

Overall, 36 per cent of organisations said that the public sector bodies in Rotherham had a **positive influence on their success** (2016 = 39 per cent) compared to 8 per cent who said it had a negative influence (2016 = 8 per cent).

A7 | Satisfaction

Respondents were asked, taking everything into account, **how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the support local infrastructure bodies provide for the voluntary and community sector in Rotherham**. 76 per cent said they were either very satisfied (48 per cent) or satisfied (29 per cent), while 4 per cent said they were dissatisfied. The remaining 19 per cent said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

By comparison, in 2016 82 per cent said they were either very satisfied (53 per cent) or satisfied (29 per cent), while 4 per cent said they were dissatisfied. The remaining 14 per cent said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Satisfaction figures for the past seven years are compared in the graph overleaf. This shows that satisfaction has declined slightly compared to 2016 when it improved markedly compared to previous years, in particular compared to 2015 which had seen a dip in overall satisfaction levels. The current satisfaction level is still considerably higher than it was between 2011-15.



Comparison can also be made between the survey findings and Cabinet Offices figures for national (21 per cent satisfied) and local (19 per cent satisfied) satisfaction with local infrastructure support services (NSCSE, 2010). Although these figures have not been updated since 2010 they are the only source of national comparative data and provide a helpful point of reference for the Rotherham data..