

WELCOME TO THE BETTER TOGETHER FORUM

Celebrating a Thriving Voluntary and
Community Sector

2nd December 2025

1.30pm to 4pm



Better for everyone

Welcome & Introductions

Kate Burrows

Executive Director, Durham Community Action
Chair of the Better Together Forum



Better for everyone



Third Sector Trends 2025



Community
Foundation
North East

LLOYDS BANK
FOUNDATION
England & Wales



WcVA
CgGC

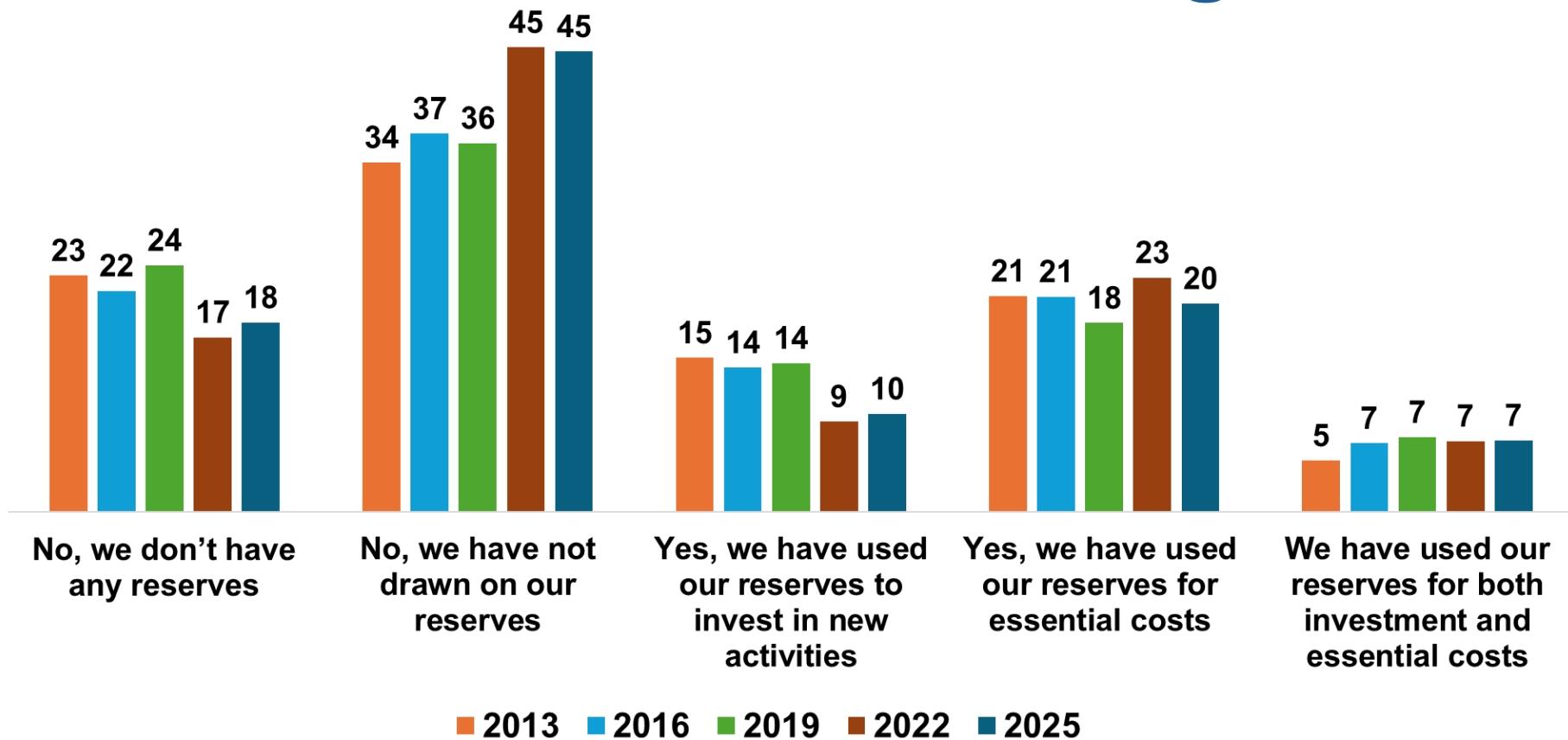


Millfield House
Foundation

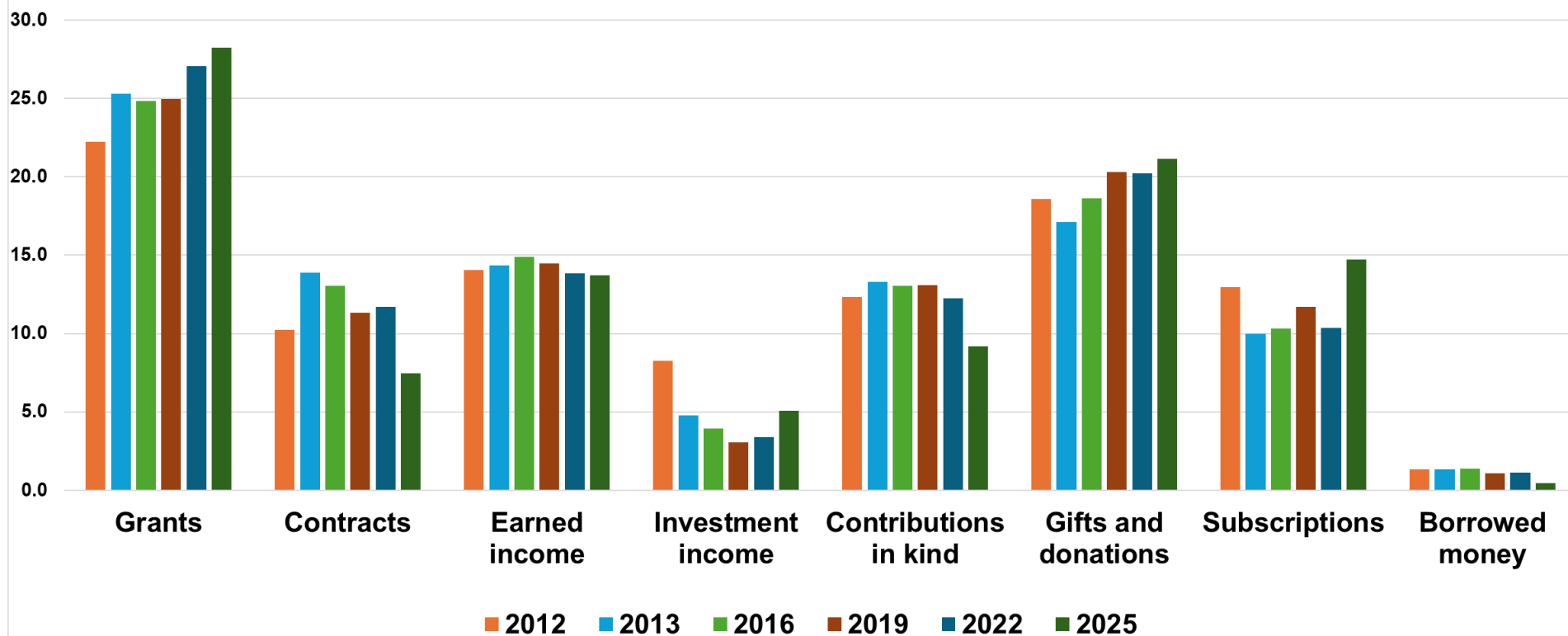
Key figures for County Durham

- Number of voluntary organisations = 1,470, total income ~£407.650,700
- Total employees 7,700, salary cost £254m.
- 30,440 regular volunteers work ~2.2m hours median wage equivalent £31m.
- Economic value produced by sector is ~£689m.
- Economic and social value of sector totals £1.6bn: that's £2.9m per 1,000 residents.

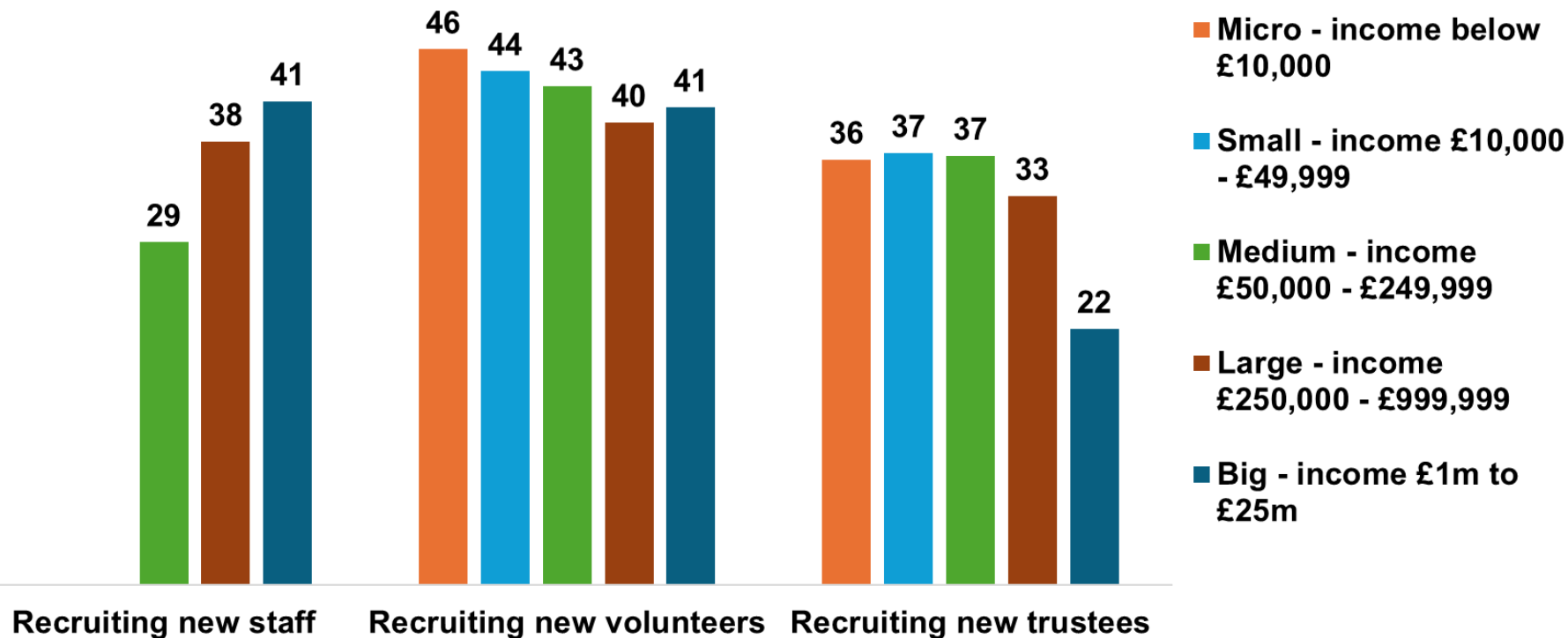
Financial wellbeing



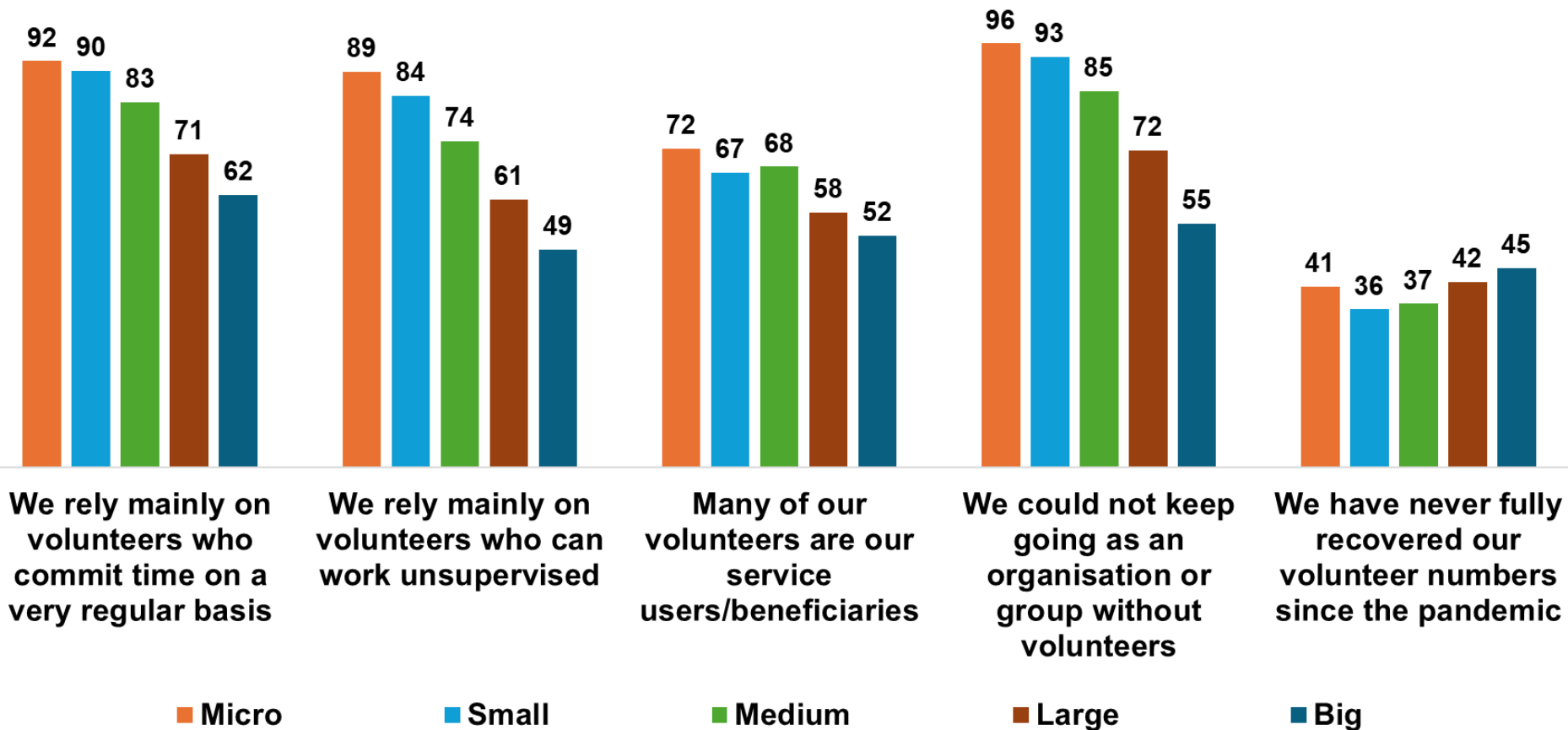
Reliance on income sources



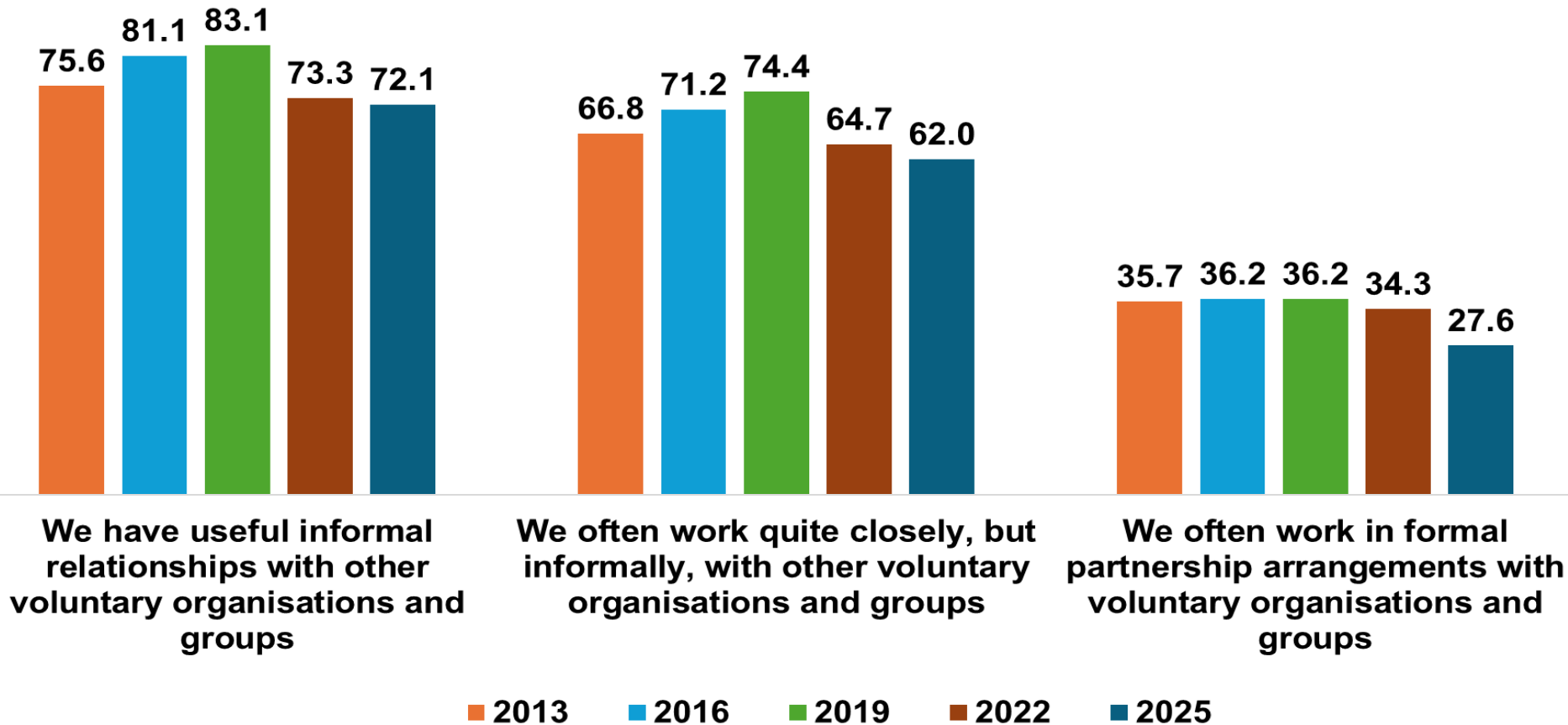
Labour force challenges



Reliance on regular volunteers

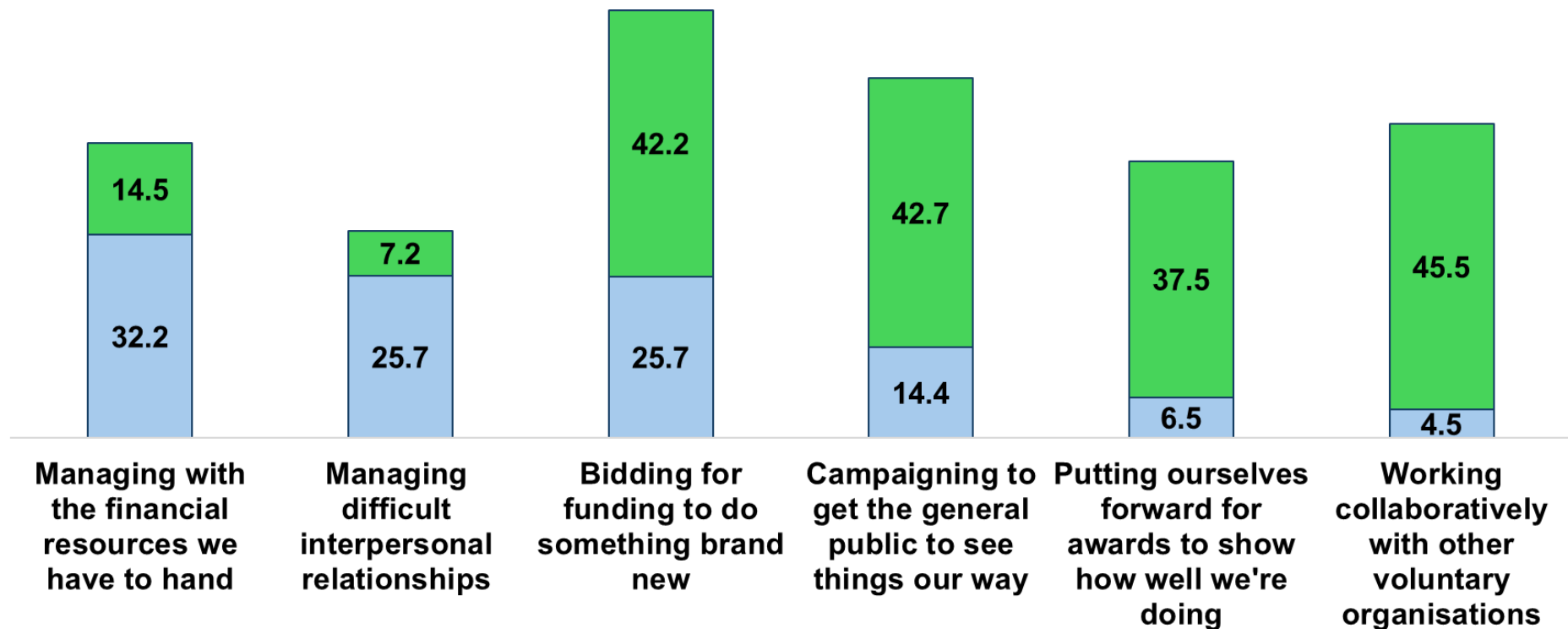


Working together



What worries/excites leaders

■ Worried ■ Excited



If you want to keep up with the new findings from Third Sector Trends reports you can access them [here](#)

For more information on the study's methods and previous reports, click [here](#)

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Blackhall Community Centre

An East Coast Perspective

Alison Paterson



Better for everyone

Blackhall Community Centre Video



Better for everyone



Time Together Teesdale
Grace Crawford
Funding & Strategic Development Officer
UTASS



"Adding Some Sparkle to our Local Communities"





"Sitting alone,
left to rot until I
pop off"

"I'm too scared to
go out"



"I play scrabble
to pass the
hours.... my
left hand plays
against my
right hand"

"Going out and having a nice time with people, reminds you
what you're missing. It makes the rest of the time here in the
house, on my own worse, so I'd rather not bother"



Work together as a partnership to develop and deliver a pilot scheme which meets some of the needs of the most vulnerable, lonely and isolated people living in Teesdale



Provide one2one support in people's own homes when they are in need of companionship

Reduce impacts of isolation (geographical, emotional) for people who are living alone, have health issues which means they are housebound, or are feeling lonely

Provide an opportunity for family carers to take time out/have respite from their caring responsibilities

Provide a volunteering opportunity that is varied, supported and offers an unique opportunity to gain skills and experience of working with people





40 active volunteers supporting residents across Lower Teesdale, from Barnard Castle to Gainford and surrounding villages.



90% of companions reported feeling less lonely and more connected.

Volunteers noted visible improvements in mood, conversation, and confidence.

Strong evidence of intergenerational friendships forming.

100% of volunteers described the experience as rewarding and meaningful.

Several volunteers reported improved mental wellbeing themselves, citing purpose and belonging.

Partnership approach

Mitigating risk

boundaries

Staff retention

Managing referrals, expectations and demand

Resilience or reliance...



CHALLENGES

Volunteer recruitment

Maintaining

Networking Learning About Each Other



Celebrating a Thriving VCS- a County wide perspective

Alzheimer's Society

County Durham

Hannah Johnson- Local Services Manager
Hannah.johnson@alzheimers.org.uk

Dementia Advice and Support Service

Alzheimer's Society deliver Dementia Advice & Support Services in County Durham, commissioned by Durham County Council.

We support people over 18, living in County Durham, who are worried about their memory, diagnosed with dementia and their carers.

We support people by telephone, online and face to face- whichever way people choose.

A Dementia Adviser will work with people through the diagnosis process, following a diagnosis and throughout their journey, listening to people's needs and offering tailored information, advice and support. The Dementia Adviser will support people to set and achieve their own personal outcomes and consider their future options.

Dementia Advice and Support Service

We provide access to further Alzheimer's Society services e.g. Specific Dementia Adviser Services, Dementia Voice, National services. We also refer/signpost to other organisations.

We aim to provide the right information at the right time, to ensure people are supported in the right way, throughout their journey. People can access the service as many times as they need.

We also deliver Dementia Friends sessions and service talks to any organisation who is interested; increasing awareness of dementia and promoting dementia inclusivity.

Specific Dementia Adviser Services

Alongside the Dementia Advice and Support Service, we are also commissioned by Durham County Council to deliver specific dementia support:

Young Onset Dementia Adviser- supports people who are worried about their memory, diagnosed with dementia under the age of 65 and their carers and facilitates the Young Onset Dementia Voice Group based in Derwentside.

Veteran Dementia Adviser- supports people who are worried about their memory, diagnosed with dementia and their carers who have served in the Armed Forces.

Prison Dementia Adviser- supports people who are worried about their memory, diagnosed with dementia and their carers who live or work in County Durham prisons. We have two peer support groups in HMP Frankland.

Singing for the Brain

Singing for the Brain brings people affected by dementia together to sing a variety of songs they know and love, in a fun and friendly environment.

There is currently one session a month in Spennymoor, and one session a month in Peterlee.



Together we are help & hope
for everyone living with dementia

Alzheimer's Society- National Support

Dementia Support Forum- our online community is a place where you can ask questions, share experiences and get information and practical tips on living with dementia. It's free to use, open 24 hours a day and all you need is an internet connection.

Dementia Support Line- our Dementia Advisers will listen and give you the support and advice you need, connecting you to help you need. Monday to Wednesday 9am – 8pm, Thursday and Friday 9am – 5pm, Saturday and Sunday 10am – 4pm
0333 150 3456

Companion Calls- our trained volunteers make regular phone calls to check in and have a friendly chat about anything the person they're calling fancies. It could be their favourite TV show, the weather or simply to talk about how things are going.



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Alzheimer's Society- National Support

Lasting Power of Attorney Digital Assistance Service- our Digital Assistance service is for people affected by dementia without access to the internet, or who do not have the confidence to complete the Lasting Power of Attorney forms online themselves. Appointments are conducted over the telephone by trained volunteers.

NHS Continuing Healthcare Appeals Service (CHC)- provides information and support to people challenging CHC decisions without professional help. The service provides support to people pursuing appeals to enable them to feel confident and is delivered by by telephone and email.

Case Study

A couple referred by the Memory Clinic for information about Alzheimer's disease and carer support.

The Dementia Adviser completed a home visit. They listened to their needs, and the couple agreed their outcomes:

- **'I would like to understand more about Alzheimer's disease.'** The Dementia Adviser talked the couple through Alzheimer's disease, answering questions as they went, and provided written information so the couple could refer back.
- **'I would like support in my caring role.'** The Dementia Adviser discussed Durham County Carers Support, and the carer agreed to a referral. They also discussed the Dementia Support Forum, which the carer was particularly interested in and said they would access.
- **'I would like to start planning for the future.'** The Dementia Adviser talked through Lasting Power of Attorney, answered any questions, and provided written information for reference. They also discussed the Lasting Power of Attorney Digital Assistance Service, and the couple agreed they would like a referral, which the Dementia Adviser completed.
- **'I would like to consider making our home more dementia friendly.'** The Dementia Adviser discussed small changes that can be made to make the home more accessible. Written information was provided. **The couple were given a motion sensor light and a day/ night clock to support some immediate needs.** The Dementia Adviser also showed the couple the Alzheimer's Society online shop so they could get ideas of what may help them. Occupational Therapy was also discussed, but the couple weren't ready for a referral to be made.

Both the person with dementia and carer were involved in the appointment and were appreciative that we work so inclusively. They said having a Dementia Adviser has enabled them to understand the diagnosis and start planning. They also appreciated that we helped them to contact other services who would offer support.

"Thank you for your help. We felt quite alone and unsure where to look for help. You have helped us with that."

Celebration

As part of our dementia support provision, we were granted equipment to promote independence for people affected by dementia.

- 105 people have received equipment.
- 84% of feedback showed a positive impact.
- Highest impact theme: promoted independence and autonomy.
- Second highest theme: promoted safety in the home.

Challenges

- New service offer- learning what works and what doesn't.
- Promotion of offer.
- Ensuring people are referred to Dementia Advice and Support Services so they can access the offer.

Feedback from people we support

"It is so lovely that you ring and keep in touch. I recommend Alzheimer's Society to everyone I come across who is affected by dementia and tell them of the great support I have received from you. You have kept me sane during this very difficult journey, and I appreciate everything you have done for me." - Carer

"You've been brilliant. I didn't know about any of these things before I spoke to you. I wish I had known about your service a while ago. I have found your knowledge and expertise to be extremely helpful, and I appreciate everything you've done."

"Thank you for helping our little family. I'm glad there are people like yourselves. You've been able to tell us about so much and provide so much information. I appreciate all the connections. Thank you."

"You are doing above and beyond as far as I'm concerned, and I cannot thank you enough. Thanks again for all of your help." – Person with dementia

"When we spoke last you were on speakerphone with my husband listening. He has been so involved and has learnt a lot from what you said. We have had some good conversations, and my husband and I feel more relaxed. We have covered so many issues, and you have saved me an unimaginable number of hours. I am extremely grateful, thankyou."

How to get in touch or make a referral

Email: durhamandchester@alzheimers.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 389 0400 (please leave a message if your call goes to voicemail)

Online portal (Professional referrals): [Make a referral for dementia information, advice and support. | Alzheimer's Society \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](#)

Thank you

Thriving Together

DCA Networks and Partnership
Opportunities

Better Together Forum

Members: Leaders in larger/specialist countywide VCS organisations

Remit: share best practice and look for new opportunities to collaborate.

Bi-monthly, in person.

Kate.burrows@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Volunteer Coordinators Forum



Members: staff / volunteers responsible for volunteer management in their organisation

Remit: training, support, networking and good practice initiatives

Quarterly, alternate in person/online.

charlotte.linton@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Employer Supported Volunteering Network

Members: Employers across County Durham with a staff volunteering offer.

Remit: Working collaboratively to connect businesses with the VCSE, share best practice, learning and shape future projects.

Quarterly, in person.

charlotte.linton@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Social Prescribing Link Workers Network



Members: Social Prescribing Link Workers across County Durham.

Remit: sharing information, good practice, local knowledge, professional development.

Monthly, in person.

Susan.garrett@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Wellbeing Link Worker Networks

Members: organisations and groups that support the wellbeing of individuals living in County Durham.

Remit: six local networks sharing information and knowledge to enable smooth referrals between services offering support.

Quarterly in each locality, online and in person

susan.fern@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Cree Network

Members: Cree Coordinators from 22 organisations delivering 39 Crees across county Durham.

Remit: Peer support, networking, training and sharing good practice .

Quarterly, 3 held in person and 1 online

susan.fern@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Community Growing and Food Network



Members: organisations with projects or an interest related to growing and food.

Remit: sharing information, good practice, local knowledge and showcasing projects.

Quarterly, in person with some additional online events.

georgia.donohue@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Share and Learn Network



Members: community organisations who run local buildings and local services.

Remit: focus on wide ranging topics including governance, funding, compliance and climate action.

Bi-monthly, online.

Isla.ballard@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Rural Durham Community Research Network



Members: VCSE organisations and community groups across Teesdale, Weardale and Derwent Valley with an interest in leading community research.

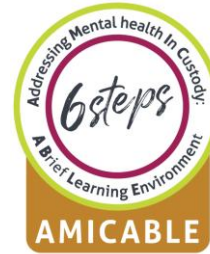
Remit: build research capacity and capability in rural communities to investigate local issues and influence positive changes in policy and practice.

Quarterly, online with additional in person training and events.

jemma.austin@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk



Other Networks and Partnerships



County Durham



Poverty Truth Commission



Climate Action in Rural North East is a partnership initiative funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.



Roundtable Discussions

1. How do the trends identified in this year's Third Sector Survey reflect your experiences?
2. What can your organisation do to navigate the road ahead?
3. What support is needed?



Plenary – Summing Up

Kate Burrows
Executive Director, Durham Community Action



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