# COVID-19 VCS SURVEY 2020

## 1. Executive summary

Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (KCSC) is the local infrastructure body for voluntary and community organisations (VCOs). We are a strong advocate for local voice and through our engagement with the sector, such as this survey, we seek to influence local decision makers to improve the lives of local residents.

This report presents the findings from a KCSC online Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) survey which was shared with our members in June 2020. The survey was created to help KCSC gather information on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the sector and help KCSC to continue to support and advocate for its members.

This report aims to inform the reader about the impact of Covid-19 on the respondents (as a proxy for the wider voluntary and community sector) by exploring the issues faced by their service users as well as the changes made to their service delivery and financial confidence.

This report also seeks to understand how key stakeholders (including KCSC) can help support the sector through Covid-19 and beyond. The report concludes with recommendations which will be considered as part of our strategic planning process to inform a future strategy to help us effectively support and represent the voluntary and community sector in Kensington and Chelsea.

The results are based on responses from 24 organisations that we are confident provide us with a good understanding of how voluntary and community organisations are coping since Covid-19.

## 2.Our Approach

A recent survey by the Charity Times[1] found that charities are facing a significant deterioration in financial health; this signals worrying times ahead nationally, and so we therefore wanted to gather information at the local level to help us understand the future of the voluntary sector in the borough and how we can respond to future challenges.

We developed a mixture of free text and single-choice questions that we felt captured the breadth of the potential issues facing the sector during the crisis.

Most of the comments are based on what an individual organisation has stated rather than an accumulation of answers from individual organisations.

When conducting analysis on the free-text responses we looked at common themes within the data to underpin our recommendations. We also grouped respondents by the size of

[1] https://www.charitytimes.com/ct/coronavirus-charities-face-significant-deterioration-in-financial-health.php

their organisation to see whether there were any significant trends that may not have been easily be conveyed in the data containing all respondents. These categories were titled small, medium and large[2]. We also looked at organisations that fall under the BAME[3] Category as they tend to be underrepresented. The data containing the breakdown of responses by organisation is in the appendix.

# 3. Key findings

- Service users from Black and Minority ethnic backgrounds, families, residents with English as a second language and the elderly have been identified as key groups facing the economic, technological and mental health challenges brought about by the crisis.
- Large organisations are more likely to carry out intelligence–gathering exercises to better-understand the issues faced by service users.
- Most organisations who delivered online services during the pandemic report that they are considering delivering some of their services online moving forward.
- There has been an increase in food collection and delivery services offered by organisations.
- 45% of respondents believe the financial adaptions made to tackle the crisis will not be permanent with 42% planning a full and safe return to face-to-face provision.
- 50% of respondents are less confident about their financial future for this financial year and 67% were less confident about their financial future for the previous year before the Covid-19 Crisis.
- 88% of respondents have developed new partnerships to aid their response to the crisis
- Respondents put advocating for the VCS, providing advice and best practice sharing around service delivery and transitional working arrangements as the topmost ways in which KCSC could provide support to their organisations.

# 4. Results from survey

## 4.1 Issues faced during pandemic

The beginning of the survey asked organisations to provide details or examples of the kinds of issues their service users were experiencing during the Covid-19 crisis. The table below shows their responses:

| |
|---|
| Digital divide |
| Social isolation |
| Preference for face-to-face provision |
| Mental health issues, anxiety and depression |
| (Increasing) Financial insecurity and unemployment |
| Increase in domestic violence |
| Unsuitable housing |
| Access to food |
| Confusion around government support e.g. furlough and benefits schemes |

[2] Organisation size - (small = annual income of less than £100,000, medium = annual income of less than £1 million and large = annual income over £1million).

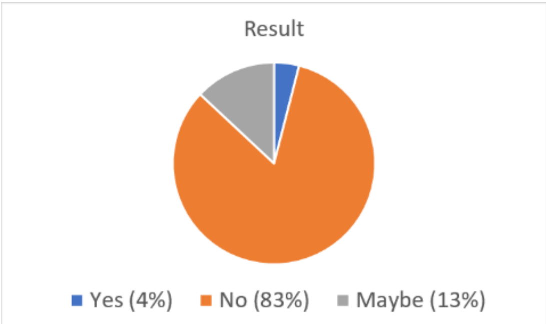
[3] BAME = Black and Minority Ethnic VCOs, primarily set up by and for BAME people

## 4.2 Survey and intelligence gathering

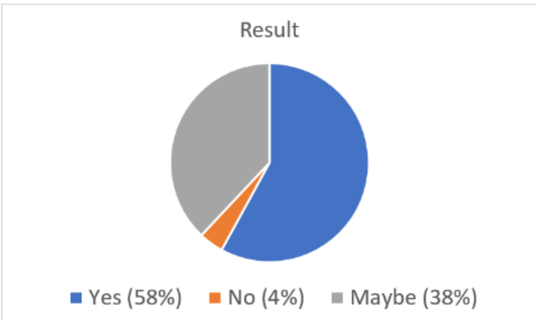
At the time of being surveyed, 71% of respondents said they had not conducted intelligence-gathering exercises to better understand the experiences of their service users compared to 29% that said they had. Our findings show that that large organisations were more likely to engage in intelligence-gathering than both small and medium sized organisations.

## 4.3 Delivery of services

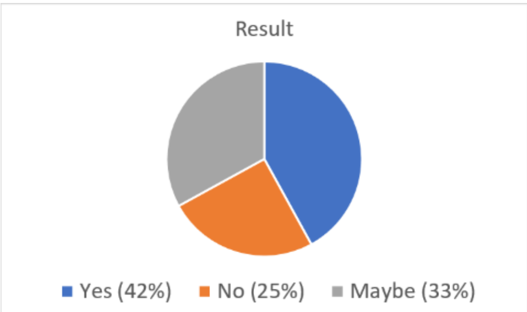
When asked how VCOs plan to use online services in the future, the pie chart below shows that 83% of respondents said they do not plan to deliver *all* their services online in the future.




When asked about likelihood of continuing to deliver *some* of their services online in the future 58% of respondents answered yes, only 4% answered with no and 38% said maybe (see pie chart below).




In reference to the pie chart below, 42% of respondents indicated they would like to return fully to face-to-face provision in the future, whilst 33% may do so) which suggests that there is still a strong appetite and requirement for in-person delivery from the sector.



## 4.4 Changes made during pandemic

The survey asked organisations to detail any significant changes that they made to their services and a summary of their responses are listed in the table below:

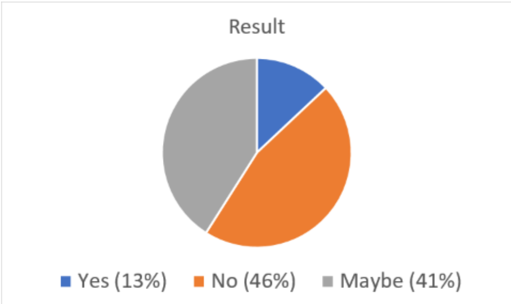
| |
|---|
| Reducing or stopping face-to-face activities/provision |
| Providing online services |
| Signposting services and information (health & safety) online |
| Increase or decrease in working hours |
| Increased use of telephone and WhatsApp |
| Adding or extending food delivery services |

## 4.5 Financial adaptations

Organisations were also asked to detail the financial adaptations they have made in response to the crisis and a summary of their responses are listed in the table below:

| |
|---|
| Flexible working/work contracts |
| Reducing or increasing working hours of staff and projects |
| Furlough of staff |
| Extra capital spend to support remote working |
| Increased spend on cleaning venues |
| Non-essential spending on hold |
| Greater reliance on volunteers |

With reference to the chart below, when asked whether any of these financial adaptions would be permanent, 46% of respondents responded with no and only 13% of respondents responded with yes. 41% of respondents responded with maybe which suggests that organisations are still operating under great uncertainty which makes it difficult to give definitive answers.




## 4.6 Confidence in financial future

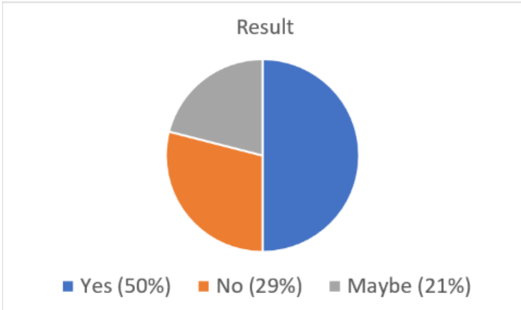
The table below shows how respondents expressed their level of confidence in their financial future for this year and next year compared to their confidence prior to the Covid-19 crisis.

| | Less confident | Same | More confident |
|---|---|---|---|
| This year | 50% | 42% | 8% |
| Next year | 67% | 29% | 4% |

The comparative results show that organisations are less confident in their financial future as time goes by given the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19. Though this has been suggested from the data respondents were not asked directly about the nature of their uncertainty and the factors that could affect their confidence, but this is likely to be linked to levels of uncertainty about the future more generally.

## 4.7 Financial shortfall

The survey also asked organisations to state whether they foresee a financial shortfall compared to their budget this financial year.

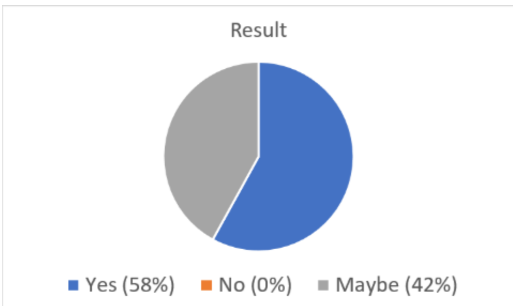



The pie chart shows exactly half of respondents expect to experience such a financial shortfall.
The table below is a summary of the responses to the survey question on the impact a financial shortfall would have to their organisation and services:

| |
|---|
| Impact on projects and services with targeted/ring-fenced funding streams |
| Reduction in provision (I.e. essential services only) |
| Impact of staff recruitment |
| Impact on staff salaries |
| Use of reserves |
| Review of general organisational strategy and operations |
| Additional fundraising |

## 4.8 Long term changes

Respondents were also asked about whether any of the changes they had made to their services or organisation, whether financial or non-financial, as a result of their experience during the Covid-19 crisis, would be long-term.

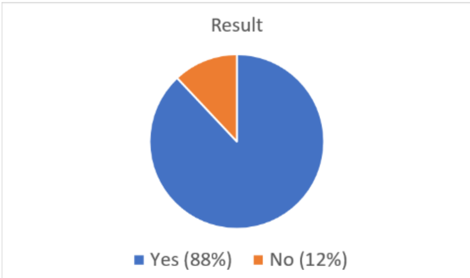



As per the pie chart above, 58% of respondents answered yes and 42% responded maybe. The table below contains a list of examples of some of the long-term changes they plan to make.

| |
|---|
| Investment in technology for remote working and digital service provision |
| Develop/review wider strategy and operations (incorporating digital upskilling, consultations with service users, assessing impact of changes and external comms) |
| Partnership working/collaborating with external organisations |
| Increased use of outdoor space and offer access to other organisations |
| Increase mental health services for members/users post-lockdown |

## 4.9 Development of new relationships/partnerships/collaborations

Respondents were asked whether they had developed any new partnerships to aid local recovery, with the assumption that during this period organisations may have had to consider working with other organisations to respond to the C-19 crisis. The pie chart below reveals that 88% of respondents did work with other organisations (voluntary, community and statutory) during this time whilst 12% did not.




Further analysis of responses found that 17% of respondents said they had only developed new relationships with statutory partners during this time, whilst 50% said they had only developed new relationships with voluntary and community partners. Just of a third (33%) surveyed said they had developed relationships with a mix of both statutory and voluntary sector partners (When asked to highlight any other collaborations developed in response to the crisis many organisations mentioned receiving food donations and in-kind contributions from the public and being a part of informal networks as a common occurrence. Furthermore, 79% of respondents indicated that they did intend on continuing to work together with partners to aid local recovery.

## 4.10 Commitments from the statutory sector

In the survey organisations were asked about the commitments they'd like to see from the statutory sector to aid local recovery. Please see the summary of responses in the below table:

| |
|---|
| Respond to monthly reporting from VCS that have had to submit reports during the crisis and share findings |
| Support VCS to respond to crisis and help tackle issues experienced by service users |
| Free provision of tests and PPE equipment for frontline staff |
| Clarity on Covid-19 guidance specifically for VCS to support nature of work incl. Return to work advice |
| Provide free training to staff and share best practice |
| Support to help VCOs with employment matters as lockdown eases |
| Financial support to enable older people to access internet from home |
| Funding |
| Tackle food poverty |

| |
|---|
| Involvement of VCS in local recovery and policies |

## 4.11 KCSC support for organisations

The survey also asked organisations to express the ways KCSC could support their organisation. The table below shows how the organisations responded:

| Question | Yes | No | Maybe |
|---|---|---|---|
| Advocating for the VCS | 92% | 0% | 8% |
| Advice and best practice sharing around service delivery | 92% | 0% | 8% |
| Advice and best practice sharing around transitional working arrangements | 79% | 0% | 21% |
| General organisational development support | 54% | 21% | 25% |
| Practical support for funding applications | 54% | 17% | 29% |
| Practical support for partnership development | 63% | 13% | 25% |

The results show that a desire for KCSC to support organisations in the voluntary and community sector KCSC currently provides services of these kind already so it is not clear as to whether respondents want more of this provision or whether they categorise the services of KCSC in this way. From the results support such as advocating for the VCS, advice and best practice sharing around service delivery and advice and best practice sharing around transitional working arrangements are particularly popular types of support that these organisations want from KCSC.

## 4.12 Useful insights

The survey then went on to ask organisations whether they had learned anything from their experience during the Covid-19 crisis. Most of the insights involved technical efficiency and appetite for remote provision and information sharing. However, service usership and community observations were also mentioned. Below represents the range of useful insights organisations said they gained:

| |
|---|
| Usefulness of digital platforms that allow remote working and provision (e.g. Zoom) |
| Importance of (developing) strong external communication for information |
| Lack of transparency and knowledge shared between local authority and residents |
| Crisis has shown cracks in society |
| Parents engaging better online |

To conclude the survey, organisations were asked to share anything else they'd like to tell KCSC, which most organisations used as opportunity to thank KCSC for its on-going support. The below includes the summation of other responses to this question:

| |
|---|
| More cohesion between voluntary sector and the council |
| Different groups in society were experiencing anxiety during this period |
| Funders need to understand the strategic importance of the volunteer sector to help the long-term economic crisis |
| Admirable response from the community and resource sharing |

| |
|---|
| Funding opportunities should be made public as soon as possible to feed into strategies |
| KCSC has been very supportive |

# 5.Analysis

Due to the low response rate to the survey these results provide only an indication of what is happening within the sector. However, we believe the findings are reasonably representative of what is happening within the sector and within communities. It is in keeping with other report findings produced throughout the year to assist in drawing the conclusions below.

## 5.1 Service users

- The survey suggests that common issues faced by service users during the Covid-19 crisis relate to mental health, employment, the digital divide, domestic violence and food scarcity. Although these issues existed prior to Covid-19 the responses suggest that the crisis has exacerbated persistent issues.
- Similarly, the survey also suggests that whilst organisations put their services online in response to the Covid-19 crisis it may have created additional barriers for existing service users wanting access to their services due to issues relating to the digital divide.
- BAME, families and the elderly appear to be service-users disproportionately affected by Covid-19 suggesting the organisations serving these groups of people may have experienced additional strain to their resources and operations during this time.

## 5.2 Service delivery

- The data suggests that large organisations have the capacity and resources to deliver intelligence gathering compared to smaller organisations.
- Smaller organisations are well placed to develop personal/intimate streams of communication with their service users so it is possible that such intelligence-gathering exercises are taking place in less formalised ways e.g., such as through conversations and experiences.
- All of the respondents have added or intensified remote and/or telephone provision for their service users and staff. Some respondents also commented on the efficiency of digital platforms whilst some others articulate a desire to return, at least, partially to in person activity. As already mentioned, there exists a digital divide that prevents some people from accessing services. This suggests that for every problem technology has solved during the crisis it has created another and, in some cases, it is not a viable alternative.
- Many respondents mentioned adding or extending commitments to collecting and delivering food which suggests that access to food is a significant issue within the borough and organisations have had to remove resources from other activities to cater to this demand.

## 5.3 Funding

- It is expected that most organisations feel less confident about their financial future but the survey was not able to capture the factors that determine the confidence of an organisation. However, throughout the survey respondents allude to the negative impact a reduction or end to funding could have on services and organisations.
- As the voluntary and community sector relies on grants and donations from bodies and organisations which would also have had to make some financial adjustments due to Covid-19 we can anticipate that future economic challenges may result in cuts or terminations to VCS funding. This could leave members of the community without access to essential services and worsen their quality of life. This further illustrates the link between an underfunded or ill-resourced voluntary sector and the well-being of the local community.
- It is likely larger organisations will have more resources to draw on when faced with financial challenges, however the survey found that larger organisations were more concerned about their finances for this financial year compared to small and medium size organisations. This suggests that funding streams are a big issue for all types of organisations to some degree.
- Respondents also addressed the importance of funding for investment in remote working and service technology, cleaning offices and keeping staff safe. Covid-19 has not only disrupted funding streams for existing services but required organisations to locate additional funds to keep in line with Covid-19 health and safety guidance.

## 5.4 Collaboration

- Most of the organisations that responded to the survey said they had developed new relationships to aid their response to the crisis. This data suggests that partnership working was essential for particular services such as food delivery and information-sharing. With the majority of respondents intending on continuing to work together to aid local recovery it is possible that there will be an increase in demand for more long-term collaboration (or at least whilst the Covid-19 crisis persists).
- This is further demonstrated by the 62.5% of respondents who said they would like KCSC to provide practical support for partnership development and requests to have VCS reports to feed into the council's response strategy.
- Though only 12.5% of respondents said they did not intend to continue partnership-working to aid local recovery it is not clear whether it is because they did not find the partnerships efficient or if it was an unsustainable, short-term method to address fill the gaps in local/national response to the Covid-19 crisis.
- The information on food distribution and increased reliance on volunteers show that individuals/members of the public played a key role in supporting the voluntary sector to continue service delivery and cope with additional challenges created by the crisis. Questions arise pertaining to the extent to which organisations understand include such civic generosity in their wider organisational strategy.

## 6.Recommendations

### For KCSC

- Develop policy recommendations on behalf of the VCS to influence local decision making.
- Policy work should seek to identify specific issues that have affected residents and the VCS during Covid-19 for more in-depth research. These could include issues such as food poverty and/or the digital divide.
- Work with BAME VCOs to identify key areas of support required that will strengthen their capacity to deal with the impact of Covid-19 on their organisations.
- Support members (especially from small and medium sized organisations) to develop their intelligence-gathering practices.
- Continue to encourage and support partnership working between VCOs and with statutory partners
- Continue advocating on behalf of the voluntary sector – survey confirmed that the sector wants KCSC to hold this role as an independent body.
- Lobby statutory bodies on behalf of the sector for local funding to remain stable and flexible to aid the VCS in responding to future challenges due to the impact of Covid-19.

### Voluntary sector

- Continue to build on the collaborative culture that has been strong during lockdown, developing partnerships seeking to address new challenges due to Covid-19.
- Services should continue to seek to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on residents, addressing issues highlighted in section 4.1.
- Gather more evidence to understand how the digital divide is impacting residents and work collectively to see how this can be addressed.
- Work with KCSC to produce joint policy recommendations in response to Covid-19 to present to local decision makers.
- Monitor experiences and engagement of key groups during Covid-19 that will help inform how services can continue to adapt.

### Statutory Sector

- Prioritise long term funding for the VCS in order to stabilize the sector and services.
- Make Covid-19 guidance clear and accessible for all residents and keep lines of communication open at all times.
- Produce VCS-specific work guidance in a timely and supportive manner to enable the sector's essential work to be carried out in a safe way.
- Invest in closing/ending the digital divide – setting ambitious goals.
- Prioritise coordinating a joined-up approach in supporting local responses to food poverty.
- Provide free PPE kit and testing for frontline VCS staff who deliver essential services.

# Appendix

The below data show the responses to the questions included in the Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (VCS) online survey which was shared with our members in June 2020.

The charts illustrate the data from the aggregate responses (all organisations who responded) and a breakdown according to the size of each organization (small, medium and large). In this report small, medium and large organisations are defined as having an annual turnover of less than £100,000, between £100,000 - £1,000,000 and more than £1,000,000 respectively.

<u>Survey questions and responses:</u>

**Have you carried out any exercises such as surveys/intelligence-gathering meetings with your service users to understand the issues they are facing?**

- All organisations - 71% responded yes and 29% responded no.
- Small organisations - 60% responded **yes** and 40% of respondents responded **no**.
- Medium organisations - 55% responded **yes** and 45% of respondents responded **no**.
- Large organisations - 100% responded **yes** and 0% of respondents responded with **no**.

**Will you deliver <u>all</u> of your services in this way in the future?**

- All organisations - 4% responded yes, 83% responded no and 13% responded maybe.
- Small organisations - 0% responded yes, 60% responded no and 40% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations - 9% responded yes, 91% responded no and 0% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 0% responded yes, 88% responded no and 12% responded maybe.
- **Deliver <u>some</u> of your services this way in the future**
- All organisations - 58% responded yes, 4% responded no and 38% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 40% responded yes, 0% responded no and 60% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations - 64% responded yes, 0% responded no and 36% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 62% responded yes, 13% responded maybe and 25% responded maybe.

**Return fully to 'person to person' services in a safe way?**

- All organisations – 42% responded yes, 25% responded no and 33% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes, 20% responded with no, 20 responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 36% responded yes, 28% responded no and 36% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 37% responded yes, 26% responded no and 37% responded maybe.

**Will any of these (financial adaptations) be permanent?**

- All organisations – 13% responded yes, 46% responded no and 42% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 0% responded yes, 40% responded no and 60% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 18% responded yes, 55% responded no and 27% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 12% responded yes, 38% responded no and 50% responded maybe.

**Thinking about your confidence in the financial future of your organisation: how confident are you now, compared to your confidence prior to the Covid crisis -**

**To the end of this financial year?**

- All organisations – 50% responded less confident, 42% responded same and 8% responded more confident.
- Small organisations – 60% responded less confident, 40% responded same and 0% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 45% responded less confident, 45% responded same and 10% responded more confident.
- Large organisations - 50% responded less confident, 37% responded same and 13% responded more confident.

**For the next financial year?**

- All organisations – 67% responded less confident, 29% responded same and 4% responded more confident.
- Small organisations – 60% responded less confident, 20% responded same and 20% respondent more confident.
- Medium organisations – 64% responded less confident, 36% responded same and 0% responded more confident.
- Large organisations – 75% less confident, 25% responded same and 0% responded more confident.

**Do you foresee a financial shortfall compared to your budget this financial year?**

- All organisations – 50% responded yes, 29% responded no and 21% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes, 0% responded no and 40% responded maybe.
- Medium organisation – 55% responded yes, 45% responded no and 0% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 37% responded yes, 26% responded no and 37% responded maybe.

**Have you developed any new relationships/partnerships/collaborations to aid your response to the crisis?**

- All organisations – 88% responded yes and 12% responded no.
- Small organisations – 80% responded yes and 20% responded no.
- Medium organisations – 82% responded yes and 18% responded no.
- Large organisations – 100% responded yes and 18% responded no.

**With other Voluntary and Community Organisations Only?**

- All organisation – 50% responded yes and 50% responded no.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes and 40% responded no.
- Medium organisations – 45% responded yes and 55% responded no.
- Large organisations – 50% responded yes and 50% responded no.

**With Statutory Partners Only?**

- All organisations – 17% responded yes and 83% responded no.
- Small organisations – 0% responded yes and 100% responded no.
- Medium organisations – 27% responded yes and 73% responded no.
- Large organisations – 13% responded yes and 87% responded no.

**With a mix of both?**

- All organisations – 62% responded yes and 38% responded no.
- Small organisations – 20% responded yes and 80% responded no.
- Medium organisations – 73% responded yes and 27% responded no.
- Large organisations – 75% responded yes and 25% responded no.

**Other?**

- All organisations – 33% responded yes and 67% responded no.
- Small organisations - 20% responded yes and 80% responded no.
- Medium organisations – 36% responded yes and 64% responded no.
- Large organisations – 37% responded yes and 63% responded no.

**Are you intending to continue working together to aid recovery?**

- All organisations – 79% responded yes, 13% responded no and 8% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes, 20%responded no and 20 responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 82% responded yes, 18% responded no and 0% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 88% responded yes, 0% responded no and 12% responded maybe.

**How can KCSC provide support to your organisation?**

**Advocating for the VCS?**

- All organisations – 92% responded yes , 0% responded no and 8% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 80% responded yes, 0% responded no and 20% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 91% responded yes, 0% responded and 9% responded maybe.
- Large organisations - 100% responded yes, 0% responded no and 0% responded maybe.

**Advice and best practice sharing around service delivery?**

- All organisations – 92% responded yes, 0% responded no and 8% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes, 0% responded no and 40% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 100% responded yes, 0% responded no and 0% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 100% responded yes, 0% responded no and 0% responded maybe.

**Advice and best practice sharing around transitional working arrangements?**

- All organisations – 79% responded yes, 0% responded no and 21% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes, 0% responded no and 40% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 60% responded yes, 0% responded no and 40% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 75% responded yes, 0% responded no and 25% responded maybe.

**General organisational development support?**

- All organisations – 54% responded yes, 21% responded no and 25% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes, 40% responded no and 0% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations- 55% responded yes, 0% responded no and 45% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 50% responded yes, 38% responded no and 12% responded maybe.

**Practical support for funding applications?**

- All organisations – 54% responded yes, 17% responded no and 29% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 100% responded yes, 0% responded no and 0% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 46% responded yes, 9% responded no and 45% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 38% responded yes, 38% responded no and 24% responded maybe.

**Practical support for partnership development?**

- All organisations – 63% responded yes, 13% responded no and 24% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 60% responded yes, 0% responded no and 40% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 73% responded yes, 9% responded no and 18% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 50% responded yes, 25% responded no and 25% responded maybe.

**Are there any changes that you will now be making long-term to your organisation/services, as a result of your experience during the Covid crisis?**

- All organisations – 58% responded yes, 0% responded no and 42% responded maybe.
- Small organisations – 80% responded yes, 0% responded no and 20% responded maybe.
- Medium organisations – 36% responded yes 0% responded no and 64% responded maybe.
- Large organisations – 75% responded yes, 0% responded no and 25% responded maybe.