Annual Return for Volunteer Centres 2012/13

Summary of high-level findings

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For more than a decade the Annual Return for Volunteer Centres (ARVC) has represented a unique attempt to gauge the experiences of the Volunteer Centre network in England, including income, demand, capacity and staffing issues. This short summary report presents findings reporting on the 2012/2013 financial year (April 2012 – March 2013), describing the methodology of the survey, and the main outcomes including context and comparisons with previous years where appropriate. Full data tables are provided in the appendix.

1. Methodology

ARVC 2012/13 was an online survey sent to 261 Volunteer Centres in late 2013. It was completed by 159 Volunteer Centres (61% response rate). The Volunteer Centres were asked to record various data relating to the 2012/2013 financial year.

2. Headline findings from ARVC 2012/2013

Of the 159 responding Volunteer Centres:

- **99 per cent were members of NCVO, one** per cent were not.
- **93 per cent were accredited/working towards accreditation**, seven per cent were not.
- **32 per cent were independent** and **68 per cent integrated**, 94 per cent of which with a CVS.
- **10 per cent had branches**, and **53 per cent had outreach points**. Both of these figures are unchanged from last year.
- They had a median **one full-time member of staff** and **two part-time members of staff**, both unchanged from the previous year.
- However, looking at the mean values, they reported a **small increase in the number of full-time staff members**, with the mean rising from one in the previous year to two this year.
- **They engage 12 volunteers (median) in running the Volunteer Centre**, the same value as the previous year. The equivalent mean values rose from 17 in the previous year to 24 this year.
- **Median income has returned to the level observed in 2010/2011, but mean income has grown significantly.** Given that the mean value reflects the presence of significantly higher values while the median reflects the most common level of income, this suggests that there are a number of organisations reporting incomes significantly and markedly higher than their peers.
- **Local government funding sources remain important to the operation of the VC network, but the relative importance of grant-making bodies is growing very quickly.**

3. Findings

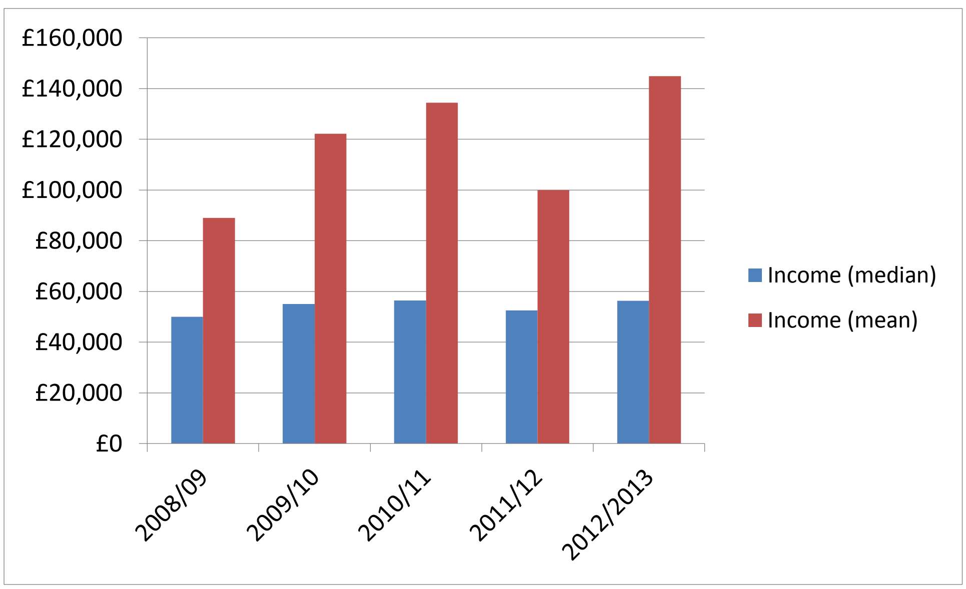
3.1. Income

We noted in our statistical bulletin for 2011/12 that the average (median) income for Volunteer Centres had dropped to £52,500, a fall of £3,932 from the year before, representing the lowest overall income since 2008/09.

Looking at Figure 1, this year the median income value for 2012/13 was £56,307, representing a very similar figure to the 2010/2011 findings. Looking back at the last five years of income figures, it is perhaps surprising that these figures are so stable, though this is partly a result of examining medians rather than means. Medians emphasise the 'central' value in a set of ranked figures, so extreme high and low figures do not make a substantial difference to the final value; instead the median value reflects the income of most of the responding Volunteer Centres. The organisations surveyed in the ARVC are diverse in terms of size and level of income, and previous years findings have demonstrated that high outlying values for a small number of organisations can distort the mean value. Note also that these figures do not take inflation into account, so even 'stable' funding levels can represent a loss in real terms.

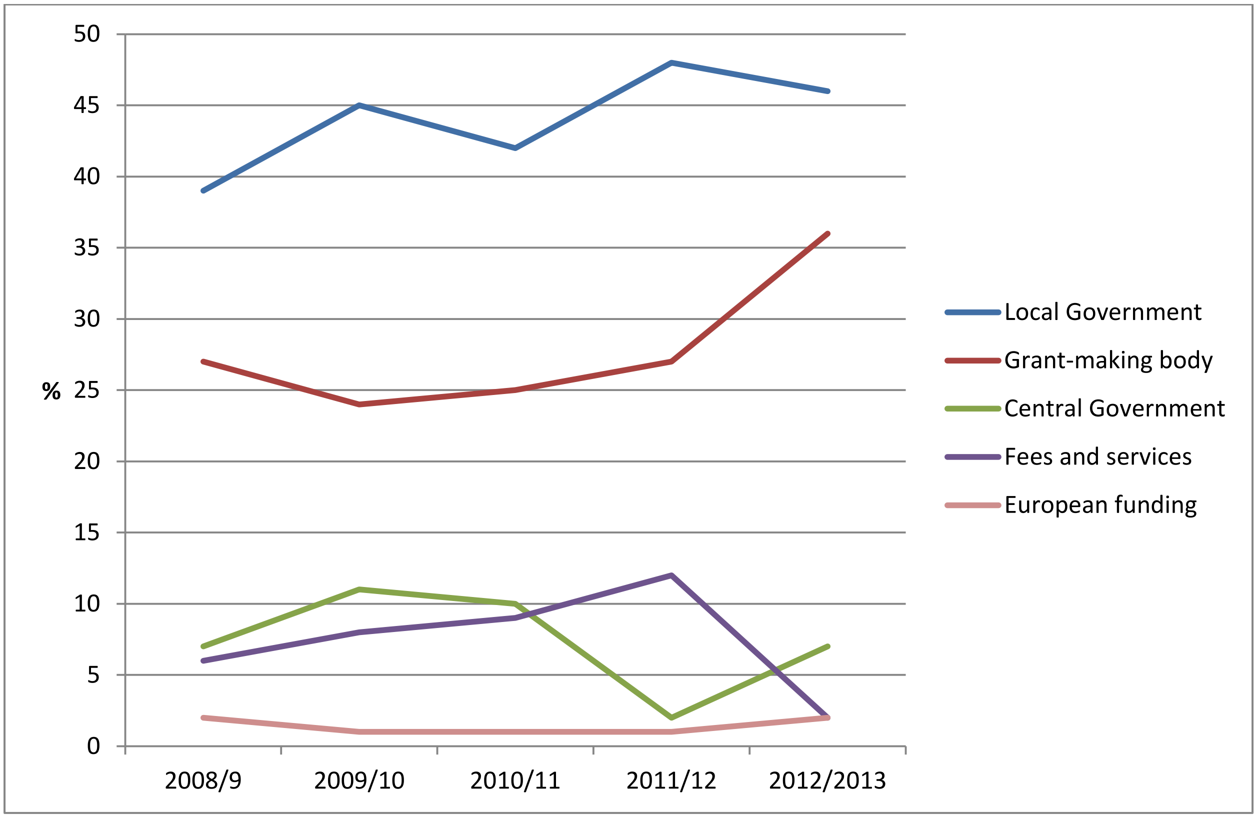
If we look at the means instead, however – which are influenced by extreme high and low values – the story is different. The higher means (alongside a stable median) in 2012/2013 suggested that a small number of organisations had incomes that increased by a large amount from the previous year

Figure 1. VC network average income



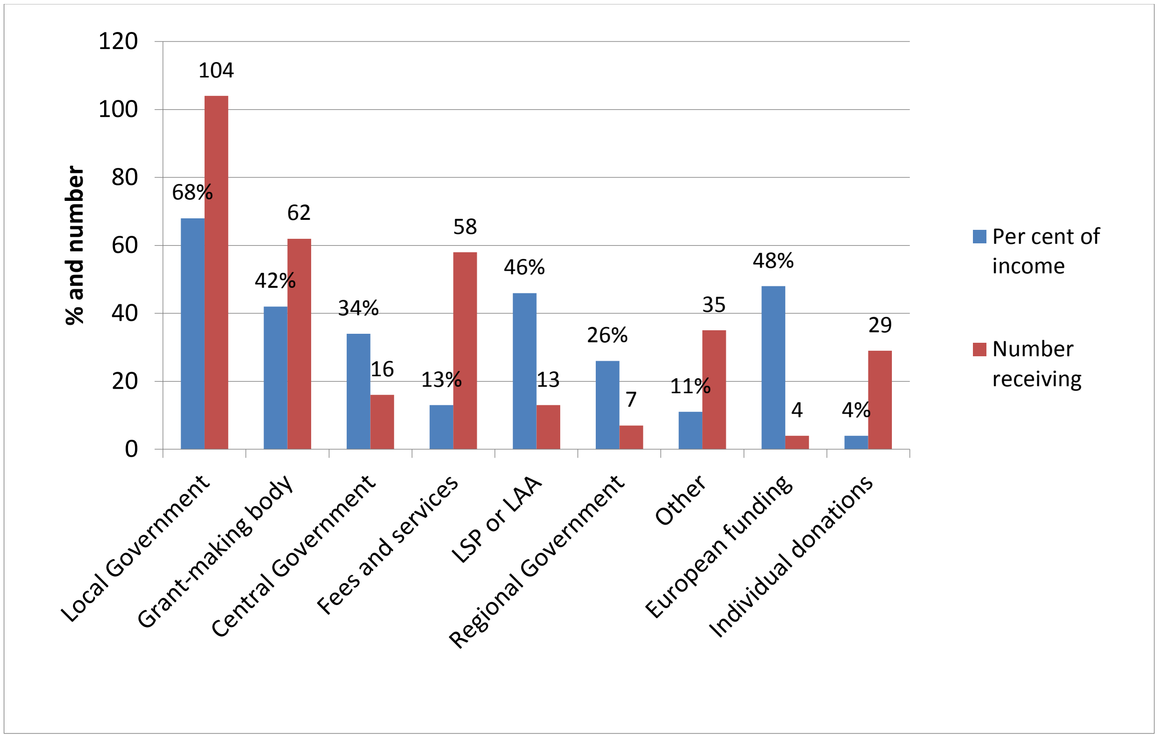
We can examine what makes up these total income figures in a number of ways. One is to look at the percentages of total income that come from various sources, as shown in Figure 2; this tells us the relative importance of each funding source. There are a few important (and perhaps surprising) findings from these data in 2012/2013, including a significant rise in the proportion of income coming from grant-making bodies. There have been drops in the proportion of income from local government sources, and also from fees and services. There has also been a small rise in the proportion of income from central government.

Figure 2. VC network income sources by year



A further way of looking at the 2012/2013 data is to examine how important each source was to individual responding organisations. This provides a different perspective on the proportional figures shown above, and is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. VC network income sources for 2012/2013: individual proportions and numbers receiving



- Local government funding remained of crucial importance throughout the VC network. 104 VCs received income from local government, providing an average of 68% of their income.
- 62 received income from grant making bodies, and for those organisations it made up 42% of their income.
- In contrast, only a relatively small number of responding organisations (16) received income from Central Government, but for those organisations that income made up 34% of their income.
- A similar pattern – where only a few organisations receive a particular form of funding, but for those organisations it represents an important component of their funding – is observed for Local Strategic Partnerships/Local Authority Agreements and regional government funding. It is most evident in EU finding, where only six organisations received this form of funding but for those groups it made up 48% of their income.
- The opposite pattern – where many organisations reported receiving a form of income, but one that only made up a small proportion of their income – was reported for fees and services, donations, and 'other' sources, perhaps because these are forms of income that more organisations are beginning to moves towards.

See Tables 5-7 in the appendix for more data on VC network incomes. Table 6 in particular shows changes in these incomes over time, where, for example, 76% of respondoing organisations received funding from local authority sources compared to 83% in the previous year. The idea that grant-making bodies may be filling this gap also does not seem to be borne out here: indeed the proportion receiving funding from these sources has also dropped.

3.2. Capacity and demand

Demand on Volunteer Centres remained high, often outstripping capacity:

- Volunteer Centres received **an average (median) of 1,240 volunteering enquiries**, and placed an average (median) of 222 volunteers. This produces a conversion ratio of 1:6 (i.e. approximately one placement results from every six enquiries).
- **Demand outstripped capacity in four of the six core functions** of Volunteer Centres:
    - Brokerage
    - Marketing
    - Good practice development
    - Developing volunteering opportunities

However, VCs appear to have made progress in **increasing their capacity for policy responses and campaigning, as well as the strategic development of volunteering.**

It should be noted, however, that accreditation procedures have now been modified to specify only five core functions of volunteer centres[1]. These questions will be changed in the 2013/2014 survey to reflect this.

See Tables 1-4 and 8 in the appendix for more data on VC network demand and capacity.

3.3. Accreditation

[1] http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/content/article/12-volunteer-centres/353-volunteer-centre-quality-accreditation

Virtually all (99%) respondents (141) were NCVO members. Similarly large numbers (93%, 133) had or were working towards accreditation. Of those working toward/with accreditation, all were NCVO members. Of those not having or working towards accreditation, most (8) were members of NCVO.

4. Summary

What overall picture do we get from these data? Demand remains high, and in 2012/2013 at least there was still significant income from local government, though there was an increasing reliance on grant-providers. Does the rising mean income suggest optimism for the voluntary sector? Viewed alongside the median figures, distribution of incomes and income sources, and anecdotal evidence from the volunteer centre network, perhaps not.

Instead, these findings appear to be indicative of how the sector is changing, most importantly in terms of how organisations report their budgets alongside parent or partner organisations. This represents a significant challenge for data collection in the Annual Return exercise in the coming years, and the upcoming survey will attempt to address these challenges.

Appendix: Data Tables

Characteristics of Volunteer Centres (VCs)

Table 1: Independence/integration of VCs

%	2012/2013	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
Independent	32	33	28	33	31
Integrated	68	67	72	67	67

Table 2: Characteristics of those 68 per cent of integrated VCs

%	2012/2013	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
Integrated within a CVS	93	94	92	90	60
Discrete budget	57	55	72	69	n/a
Separate governance	0	0	1	1	n/a
Host delivers functions	49	44	43	35	n/a

Table 3: VCs with outreach points and branches

%	2012/2013	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
With branches	10	10	10	10	9
With outreach points	53	53	41	47	46

Table 4: VC staff composition

	2012/2013	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
Full time staff (mean)	2	1	2	2	2
Full time staff (median)	1	1	1	1	-
Part time staff (mean)	3	3	4	4	3
Part time staff (median)	2	2	2	2	
Volunteers (mean)	24	17	12	12	11
Volunteers (median)	12	12	8	8	

Funding of the Volunteer Centre network

Table 5: Total income for the VC Network

	2012/2013	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
Total income (median)	£56,307	£52,500	£56,432	£55,000	£50,000
VCs income (mean)	£144,865	£100,028	£134,371	£122,246	£89,000

Table 6: VC Income (percentage receiving income from source)

% total network income	2012/2013	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/9
Local Government	76	83	89	88	84
Grant-making body	46	55	56	57	56
Fees and services	43	38	43	37	32
LSP or LAA	10	10	20	24	30
Central Government	12	7	24	22	14
Regional Government	5	11	11	12	10
Other	26	35	38	29	35
European funding	6	3	8	7	4
Individual donations	23	29	25	25	27

Table 7: Total network income: percentage of income from each source

Funding source	2012/2013	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/9
Local Government	46	48	42	45	39
Grant-making body	36	27	25	24	27
Central Government	7	2	10	11	7
Fees and services	2	12	9	8	6
LSP or LAA	3	2	5	5	9
Regional Government	1	4	4	3	2
Other	3	4	3	3	7
European funding	2	1	1	1	2
Individual donations	0	1	1	1	2

Capacity and demand

Table 8: Rating averages for the capacity, demand and difference between these for the six core functions of VCs. Ratings range between 1 (low) and 3 (high)

	Demand			Capacity			Difference		
	2012/13	**2011/12**	**2010/11**	**2012/13**	**2011/12**	**2010/11**	**2012/13**	**2011/12**	**2010/11**
Brokerage	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.5	2.4	2.5	-0.3	-0.4	-0.4
Marketing	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	-0.2	-0.3	-0.3
Good practice development	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.3	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1
Developing volunteering opportunities	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.2	2.0	2.2	-0.3	-0.3	-0.3
Policy response and campaigning	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	0.2	0	0
Strategic development of volunteering	1.9	2.1	2.2	1.8	1.8	2.0	0.1	-0.3	-0.2

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