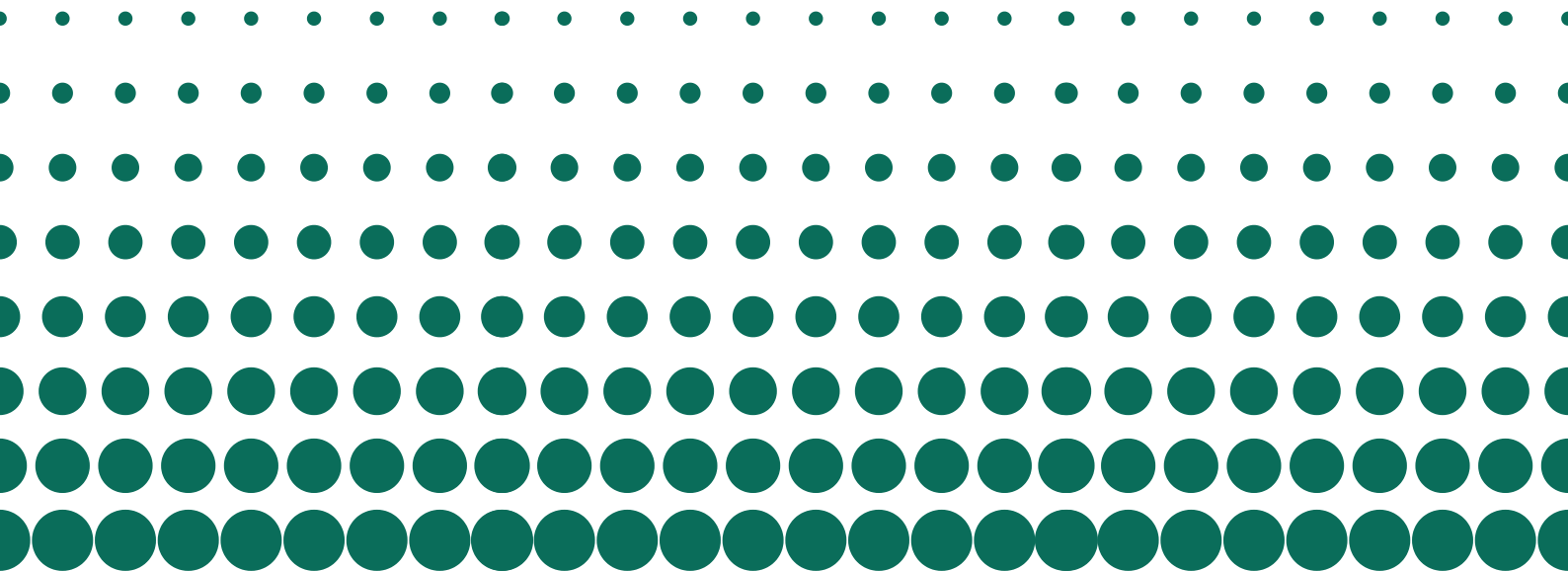




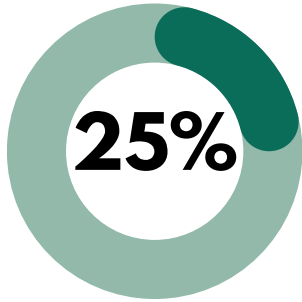
BURY
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Pulse Check Report August 2026

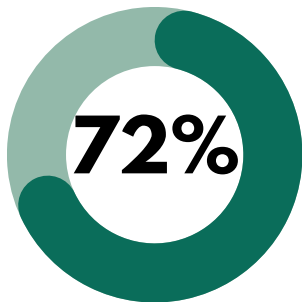


Headlines

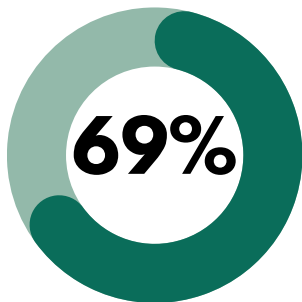
Headline findings based on the responses of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in Bury.



25% of respondents anticipate operating at a deficit this financial year.



72% received funding from grant giver other than Bury VCFA in the past two years.



69% of respondents felt that Bury VCFA had a positive impact on their ability to secure funding as an organisation.



93% of respondents found the Bury VCFA grants process good or excellent.



Survey Highlights

The Bury Pulse Check is an online survey launched in June 2023 that runs periodically to gather a real-time snapshot of some of the issues affecting the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector in Bury. The key theme this edition was around finances and funding.

The insight provided by the respondents is detailed in this report and shared with key partners including the public sector. It will also shape our work as Bury VCFA and the support we offer the sector.

The Financial Health of the VCSE Sector

Based on responses, approximately three-quarters of organisations responding expect to break even or generate a surplus. However, nearly one quarter expect to operate at a deficit, reflecting ongoing financial uncertainty. Rising costs were identified as a key common pressure, e.g. rising operational and utility costs as well as increased staffing costs. However, many organisations also reported reduced income via grants or trading. The financial health of the sector is further explored in the State of the Sector research due to be published in September 2026.

"Most of our money is spent on running costs to keep the branch open."

The Social Economy and Trading Organisations

41% of respondents identified as organisations that trade or operate within the social economy. Of those respondents, 77% identified that Bury VCFA had a positive impact on their ways of working in the last year.

"We are constantly amazed to have access to resources such as the Bury VCFA. Their skills at "pinpointing the nub of a problem" have helped us so many times to refocus our efforts and they are much appreciated."

Challenges Facing the Sector

These respondents highlighted three key challenges in terms of their support needs:

Accessing grants, loans and other funding

69% of the social economy respondents had also applied for and received Bury VCFA-administered grants, and 62% had received grants from other funders. Organisers within this group tended to be slightly larger (46% medium) and tended to be seeking grant funding to enable core costs or capital spend.

"We are currently looking for much larger sums, to cover building maintenance.....we don't have enough funds we can risk taking from our standard years running costs"

Finding and winning contracts and tenders

Several respondents (46%) highlighted the need for additional support around contracts and tenders. Although there is a lack of further information on the exact details, one respondent did highlight some of the particular challenges around austerity/lack of tenders currently in the market for some organisations.

"Lack of funding in social care as they tend to commission my service."

Finding customers, contacts and sales opportunities

A similar number of respondents highlighted wanting to find more customers and increase sales (46%). The additional comments highlighted challenges around networking, marketing, and building connections.



Funding Impact

Ability to Secure Funding

69% of respondents felt that Bury VCFA had a positive impact on their ability to secure funding as an organisation.

In terms of broader support, four areas of activity emerged:

- 72% - Funding searches / Finding the right grant
- 47% - Meet the funder session: a chance to ask questions and raise queries
- 38% - Support developing ideas for potential grant funding
- 34% - 1-1 support reviewing or improving grant applications

"A full-time job and kids, as well as the practical volunteering and organisation - I physically cannot keep up with the admin."

Bury VCFA Administered Grants

- 91% of respondents have applied previously for a Bury VCFA-administered grants programme, of which 93% had been successful in receiving at least one grant-funded programme.
- 93% of respondents found the Bury VCFA grants process good or excellent.

Many groups also received funding from external organisations with 72% receiving funding from another grant giver in the past two years.

"Bury VCFA makes the process very easy and is extremely supportive with its regular funding news and meet the funder events."

"The VFCA professionals are brilliant. Always helpful with quick responses. The application process is straight-forward."

Funding insights

Application Process

In terms of the application process, we asked groups what single application method they preferred:

- 47% some form of written application
- 19% had no strong preference / dependent on the fund
- 13% a combination of written and verbal (e.g. a form and a conversation)
- 9% some form of pitch presentation (either online or in person)
- 9% an expression of interest with a second stage if shortlisted



Feedback from “Make A Wish” at our annual Grants Celebration Event echoed this. While many respondents preferred traditional written applications, there was also interest in alternative formats such as videos, presentations and pitches. Feedback further emphasised the value of relationship-based funding, including project visits and face-to-face engagement with funders.

Type of funding support

Organisations were asked what type of funding, if available, would be most helpful to them as organisations. The top five responses were:

- 50% Unrestricted/flexible funding to use where most needed
- 44% Specific project, pilot or new activity
- 34% Core or staffing costs
- 13% Capital funding including buildings and vehicles
- 13% Volunteer-related or back office expenses

“Financial security knowing that we will be able to cover bank fees and insurance costs for the foreseeable future.”

The Grants Event “Make A Wish” feedback discovered that the strong demand for project funding was actually a need for investment that enables proven services to continue meeting local needs and expand their reach and impact rather than for new approaches and innovation.



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**A huge thank you to all the groups and
organisations who completed the
survey.**

Contact: Marie Wilson
Bury VCFA
Bury Castle,
Market Pl,
Bury
BL9 0ND

Tel: 0161 518 5550.
Email: admin@buryvcfa.org.uk

