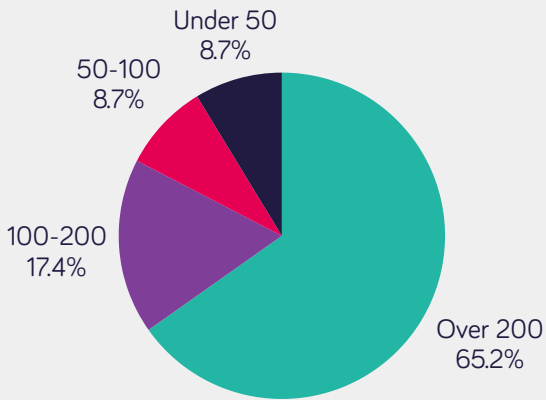
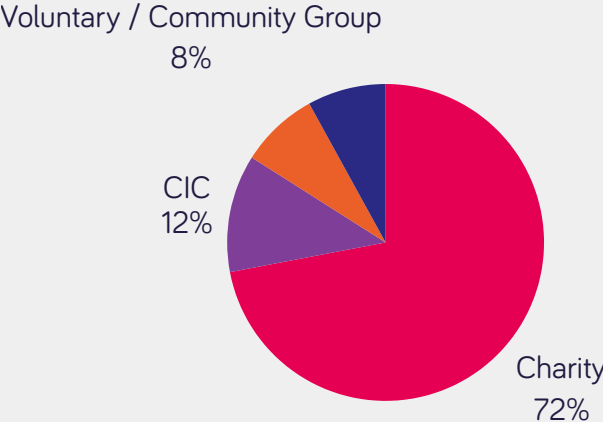




Individuals supported through Braintree VCS orgs every month



Type of organisation



Areas of focus for Braintree VCS organisations



This place plan, is based off of **23** VCS organisations completing the survey.

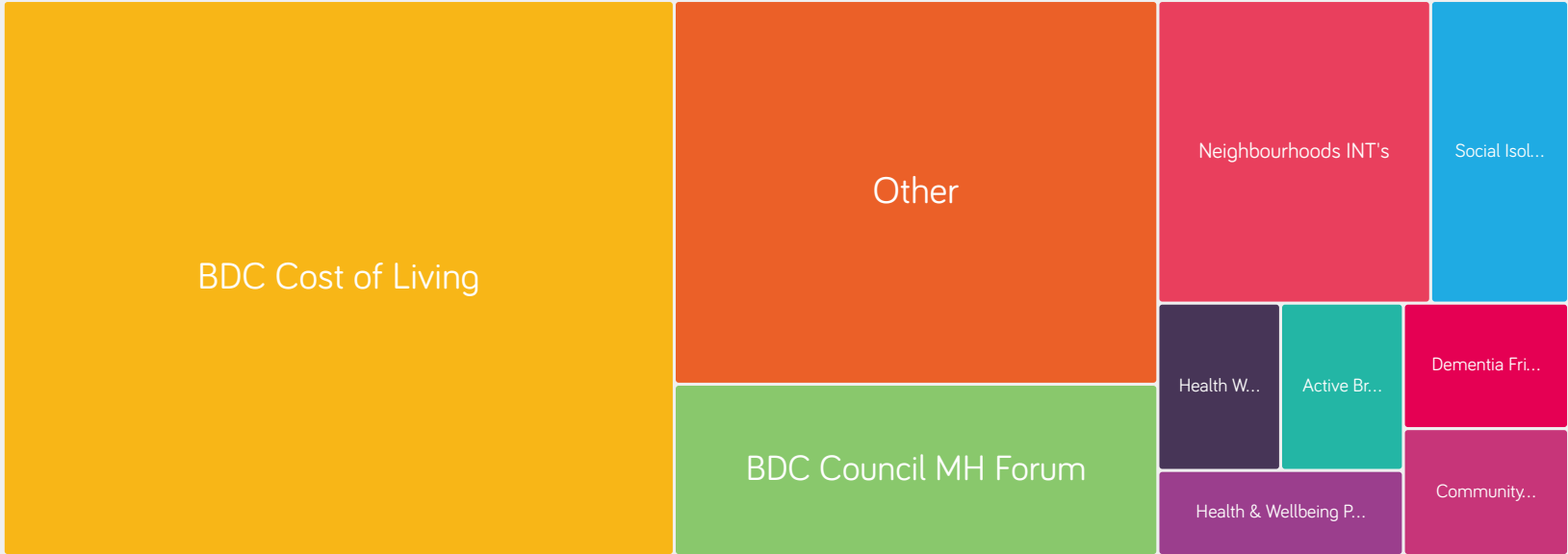
Braintree VCS organisations sustainability



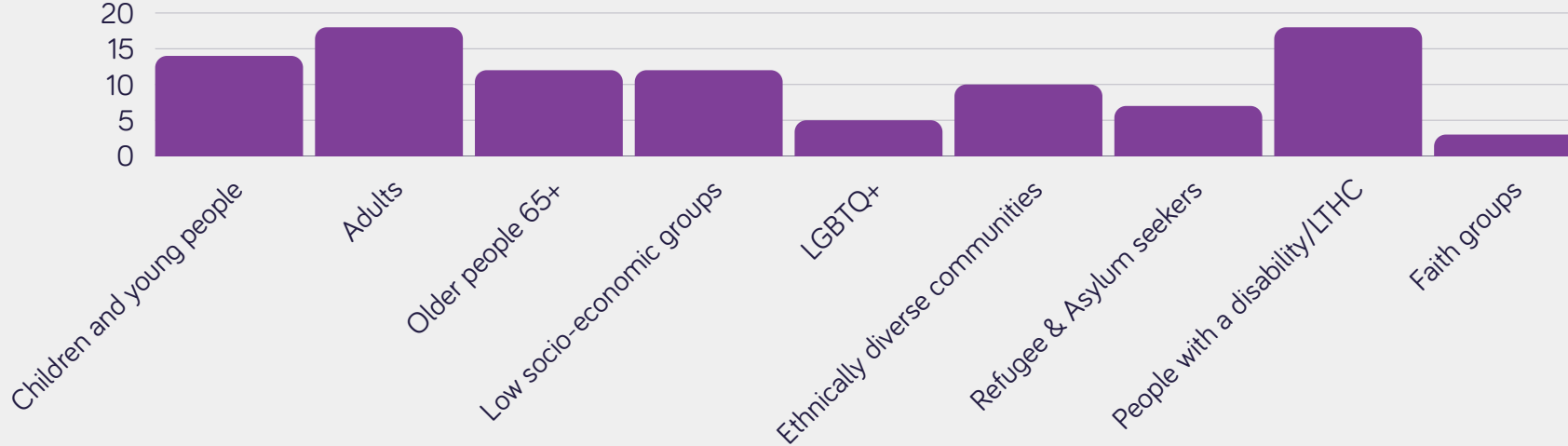
The current unmet support needs in Braintree



Networks and forums already being utilised in Braintree



Types of people VCS organisations support in Braintree





This place plan, is based off of **23** VCS organisations completing the survey.

Fundraising and income generation is the most common unmet support need, followed by **engaging target audience, comms & PR** and **partnership working**

Training opportunities will include:

- Diversifying income
- Evidencing Impact
- Volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition
- Developing effective communications and publicity
- Trustee recruitment and developing highly skilled boards
- Workshops on financial management, legal compliance and policy development

Networks will include:

- Meet the funder
- Regular networking opportunities
- Regular e-bulletin of funding opportunities local, county, national
- Trustee Network

Bespoke support will include:

- 121 with Active Essex to discuss local needs unmet through E-Portal
- Matchmaking and brokering service with other local organisations

Community Participation:

Discovery and sharing days from TAWS/ATF as volunteer recruitment and engaging our community were common high priority support needs.

What does the survey not tell us? What does their response tell us beneath the surface?

Braintree is a rural district where organisations often experience a sense of isolation. Strengthening networking connections is essential to enable organisations to share knowledge, collaborate, and address common challenges effectively.

Greater coordination is required to minimise duplication of funding efforts. Funders should work in closer alignment to ensure resources are distributed more equitably, preventing an overconcentration of services in specific areas.

Connecting individuals with volunteering opportunities has been particularly challenging in the district. More streamlined processes are needed to efficiently match potential volunteers with suitable roles, ensuring both individuals and organisations benefit.

Funding remains an ongoing challenge for VCS organisations. The constant search for new funding sources, coupled with limited support for core operations, hinders long-term sustainability. Greater emphasis on sustained financial support is crucial to ensure these organisations can continue delivering vital services.





What else have we found/heard?

What support would you value right now and in the future?

Regular Training and Networking

Affordable training options and regular opportunities for networking and connection (training directory), understanding how to grow the organisation, formalise structure and policy

Stronger relationships

Build relationships and partnerships with Commissioners/funders/other VCS orgs

Understanding communities

Clearer communication, more time to connect, and better understanding of local contexts to avoid duplication and enhance social value investment

Volunteering links

Better connections to help individuals transition into volunteering roles.

3
forums held

3
drop-in
sessions
held

Have you accessed anything past or present that has been particularly useful?

Forums and funding support from Braintree District Council; Support from CVS, funding newsletters, CVS Funder Surgery (highlighted as beneficial for connecting with funding sources); Set up information for orgs, advice on what you need to cover in an agm etc; finding volunteering opportunities for our clients; CVS/MDC support; importance of networking events to meet people and share resources.

Funding

Many voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations struggle with securing funding, particularly for core operational costs. While project-based funding is more readily available, it often leaves essential day-to-day expenses, such as staff salaries, rent, and infrastructure, unsupported. This creates financial instability and forces organisations into a continuous cycle of searching for new funding sources to stay afloat. Long-term sustainability remains a pressing concern, as reliance on short-term grants makes strategic planning difficult.

01



Training

Accessing relevant and affordable training is a significant challenge for both staff and volunteers in the sector. Many organisations require training in areas like safeguarding, governance, fundraising, and digital skills. However, cost barriers and limited availability of training providers create difficulties in upskilling teams effectively, leading to gaps in knowledge and capabilities.

02



Top
challenges:

03

Volunteers

Volunteers Recruiting and retaining volunteers remains a critical issue. Many organisations rely heavily on volunteer support to deliver services, but finding individuals with the right skills and availability can be challenging. There is often a disconnect between those looking to volunteer and the opportunities available, making effective matchmaking essential.



04

Networking

Isolation can be a concern for organisations, particularly in rural areas like Braintree. Stronger networking and collaboration are needed to foster knowledge-sharing and peer support among organisations facing similar challenges. Limited opportunities to connect with other organisations and professionals in the sector can hinder growth, innovation, and resource-sharing. Building a more cohesive support network would help organisations navigate challenges more effectively and avoid duplication of efforts.





What's the plan going forward?

Strengthening Communities:

Pilot Workshop: Writing an Effective Funding Application

- Deliver a structured session guiding participants through key elements of successful funding applications and identifying funding opportunities.
- Provide practical examples, templates, and expert insights to enhance application quality and success rates.

Engagement: Conversations with Local Partners

- Initiate strategic discussions with local organisations that have expressed interest in collaborating.
- Explore shared goals, funding challenges, and potential partnerships to strengthen community initiatives.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing to help organisations navigate funding opportunities more effectively.

Networking Event: Exploring Key Themes for Organisations

- Host a focused networking session where organisations can connect and exchange ideas.
- Discuss pressing challenges, emerging funding trends, and collaborative opportunities.
- Create a platform for knowledge-sharing and fostering partnerships that enhance sustainability and growth.

Strengthening Partnerships:

Exploring a Voluntary Sector Collaborative Working Group

- Objective: Establish a structured platform for voluntary sector organisations to collaborate, share resources, and drive collective impact.
- Engagement: Bring together a diverse range of organisations to discuss common challenges, funding opportunities, and innovative solutions.
- Capacity Building: Facilitate peer-to-peer learning, workshops, and best practice exchanges to strengthen organisational capabilities.
- Advocacy & Influence: Provide a voice to represent the voluntary sector in key discussions with funders, policymakers, and community stakeholders.
- Sustainability & Growth: Encourage joint funding applications, resource-sharing, and strategic partnerships to enhance long-term viability.

Universal Offer

- Signpost to county offer / creating the conditions / lunch and learn sessions
- Provide first point of contact VCS support
- Identify bespoke support and signposting via The 6 S model
- Run a scored application process to identify key models
- Provide insight and support needs to Your Community Essex elements
- Continue to gain insight