



Gloucestershire Community Foundation

Strengthening Communities Report 2023



CONTENTS

GCF AND OUR WORK

Pages 2 - 6

- CEO foreword
- About us
- What are the trends in our grantmaking?
- Who and where did we support in 2023?

OUR RESEARCH 2023

Pages 7 - 11

- What is the purpose of the research and who did we survey?
- What are the focuses of our community groups?
- What is the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on Gloucestershire community groups?
- Will our community groups survive the economic crisis? A system already under strain...

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Pages 12 - 18

- What makes a strong community?
- What is Gloucestershire doing well and not so well?
- Let's Talk, Let's Listen feedback
- What are the barriers and challenges to building stronger communities?
- What are the funding needs of community groups in Gloucestershire?

LOOKING AHEAD

Pages 19 - 26

- What are the anticipated needs of our communities in the future?
- What else do community groups need?
- What have we learnt from our research?
- Get involved
- References



Fair Shares and Friendship Café
Allotment, Gloucester

GCF AND OUR WORK

“We just love GCF, our local funder - you understand the issues we have in the county around rural poverty and isolation, lack of provision for young people and inclusion in mainstream activities”

Anna Bonnallack, Creative Sustainability

CEO FOREWORD



This report focuses on the past, present and future, remaining mission driven, in creating a **Gloucestershire where everyone gets access to what they need for a decent life**. Currently, the stark reality is so many people in our county don't. We reflect on our recent work, then shine a light on the present using our current research findings, identifying what makes a stronger community. We set out future thinking and the actions GCF will take, but we can't do this alone, in the face of a permacrisis, this report is a county call to ACTION.

Previously, in 2021, we researched the needs of the sector post-pandemic. This helped guide our strategy and delivery over the last 3 years, highlighting how to best use the finite resources we had and directing our own non-financial programme delivery and grant making practices, such as:

- **Launching our INVEST Leadership Programme;** mentoring and supporting 33 charity leaders to grow their confidence and develop strategically.
- **Updating our funding practices;** improved and refined our application processes, created trusted partnerships, by getting to know every applicant and we formally committed and participated in the IVAR Open and Trusting Grant making programme.

Since we launched our last major research, a lot has happened in the world we operate within. As we emerged out of the pandemic, any thoughts of returning to 'business as normal' were short lived as we lurched into a 'Cost of Living Crisis'.

Poverty became our focus with **current data suggesting that up to 41,000 children and young people in Gloucestershire were now living in poverty** (a third of all children). With 7 out of 10 of those children living in working households, poverty was and is still escalating to an all-time high in modern history.¹

We responded by launching our Cost of Living Crisis Appeal, raising more than £100,000, and distributing 70 grants to organisations fighting poverty, supporting over 30,000* people. However, the unprecedented level of poverty is not declining, so we have launched our **POVERTY HURTS** appeal, to fight poverty for the next 3 years, but we can't do this alone and need the help of the county.

Unfortunately, the crisis has not only escalated poverty in our communities, but as with so many other charities responding to the crisis, we have seen our funding income decrease. **This has led to an overall reduction in the size and number of grants we award, at a critical time.**

Our current research, which forms the basis of this report, was to help uncover and understand the extent of all the issues charities and community groups are now facing. We wanted to learn about the changing needs of our communities and not only where GCF should focus support, but to publicly shine a light and give a voice to what our charities see as the greatest needs and what they are asking for.

Strong communities are a benefit to all sectors, therefore our key findings will help not only guide our response, but should inspire a cross sector response. We also want to encourage collaborations to tackle some of the issues raised in this report; so we can all ensure **Gloucestershire is a place where everyone can access what they need for a decent life**. Gloucestershire needs to pull together, as we can't fight these issues alone.

**Based on estimated beneficiary numbers provided by applicants.*

ABOUT US

Gloucestershire Community Foundation (GCF) was established in 1989 to support grassroots projects and communities in Gloucestershire.

For over 30 years we have worked across the county to distribute millions of pounds in much needed funds to groups supporting those most in need.

Through partnership working, independent research and working directly with those delivering services on the ground, we offer unique insights into addressing some of society's most complex issues. We work with key partners who can deliver solutions locally and we act as a trusted broker between donors and the voluntary and community sector in Gloucestershire.

GCF is a member of a national network of Community Foundations operating in 47 counties.

We focus on helping Gloucestershire to be a place where people and communities are empowered to become resilient and strong. Our research is key in helping us to understand how we can support our communities to thrive, ensuring everyone has access to what they need for a decent life.

Our goals are to:

- Bring communities together
- Inspire local giving
- Strengthen Gloucestershire communities

Our experience comes from:

- Over 30 years of working in the region
- Ongoing research which informs our grant making
- Collaboration and working in partnership with other key organisations and agencies
- Creating purposeful spaces to discuss the challenges facing communities in Gloucestershire and opportunities to make a difference and make positive changes for the future
- Working directly with those delivering services on the ground

WHAT ARE THE TRENDS IN OUR GRANTMAKING?

As an independent grant maker we support a wide range of causes serving communities of all ages and backgrounds. Since our peak in 2020, where we saw an influx of public and private funding during the Covid lockdown, we have seen our funding drop significantly. This follows a national trend:

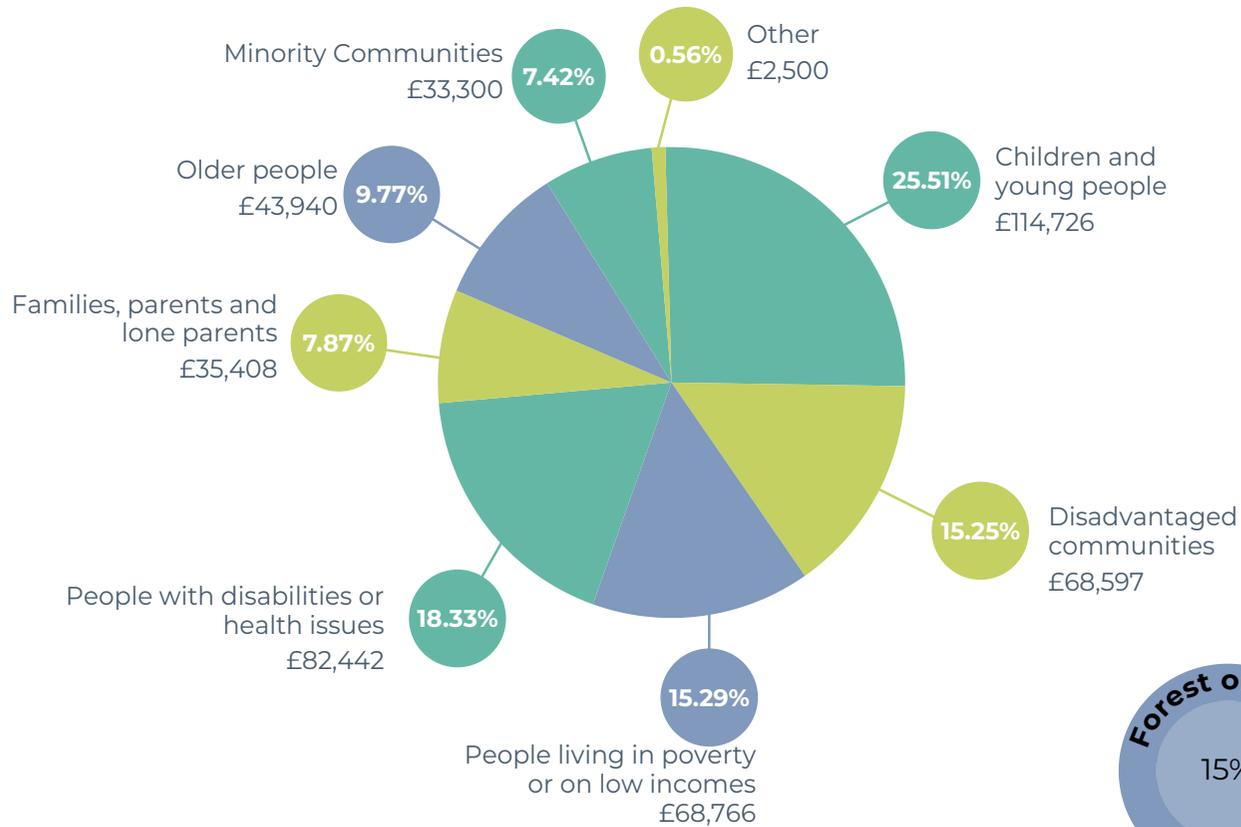
In 2022, Pro Bono Economics warned that by the end of 2023/2024 charity income could fall by up to £2.2 billion in real terms as demand for support soars. ***“Surging inflation, spiralling borrowing costs and rising unemployment mean household budgets will come under severe strain. The demand for charity support will be substantial. Given the enormous pressure on public spending and household budgets, charity income will inevitably dip as people have less to give and government funds are stretched”*** ²

<i>Grants awarded 2022 and 2023</i>	2022 Total	2023 Total
All grant making		
<i>Value of grants awarded</i>	£535,287	£449,680
<i>Value of applications received</i>	£1,503,633	£1,002,816
<i>Number of grants awarded</i>	160	165
<i>Average grant size</i>	£3,345	£2,738
<i>Percentage of Applications Successful</i>	53%	61%

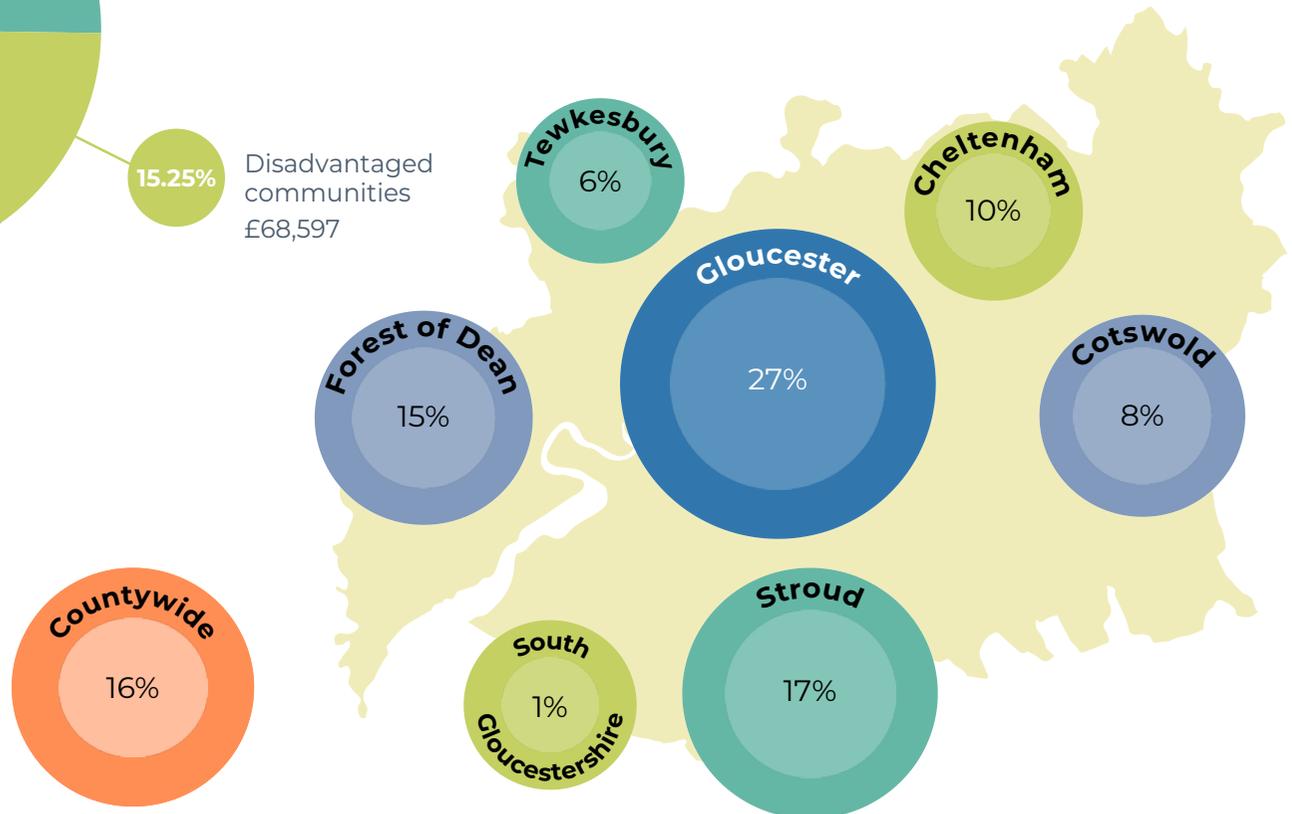
In 2022, the total value of grant applications received to GCF was £1,503,633, almost three times the value of funds available to distribute. As a result, we needed to reduce the maximum grant size for some of our programmes in 2023, but the value of applications received was still more than double the value of funds available. The most common reason we declined applications was due to "insufficient funds."

WHO AND WHERE DID WE SUPPORT IN 2023?

Percentage of grants GCF awarded to primary beneficiary groups (as selected by the applicant)



Percentage of grants GCF awarded in each area





Fresh Hope, Cheltenham

OUR RESEARCH 2023

“The cost of living crisis has increased the numbers (of those that we support) three-fold and more. Burnt out volunteers need more support than community groups have the capacity to offer. Community groups are often led by volunteers.”

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH AND WHO DID WE SURVEY?

We undertook this research to make sure that the support we offer charities is reflective of local needs and the current socio-economic context of our communities.

Between October 2022 and July 2023, we consulted with 100 individuals representing community groups, through an online survey, and complemented these findings with two Let's Talk, Let's Listen online sessions attended by over 120 participants.

We gathered data to identify and highlight changing and emerging needs of the organisations that we serve to deliver appropriate and targeted support.

Representatives of community groups who have participated in our research have raised awareness of **soaring demand** and a worrying **lack of funding**. They also shone a light on some excellent opportunities that exist to build and strengthen our communities in Gloucestershire.

It was inspiring to hear about activities that are already working well to build stronger communities.

Who are the research respondents?

Community group size

Less than £50k	22%
£50k - £100k	16%
£100k - £500k	34%
£500k - £1million	11%
£1million+	17%



WHAT ARE THE FOCUSES OF OUR COMMUNITY GROUPS?

Our team has read more than 550 grant applications and corresponding grant progress reports over the past two years, helping us to understand and build our knowledge of the needs and activities within our county. In our grantmaking, we see a high level of requests for support for:

- **Disadvantaged communities and people living in poverty**
- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Fairness and reducing inequalities**

The sampling of our survey incorporates these areas as well as a wide range of other charitable interests that benefit our communities.

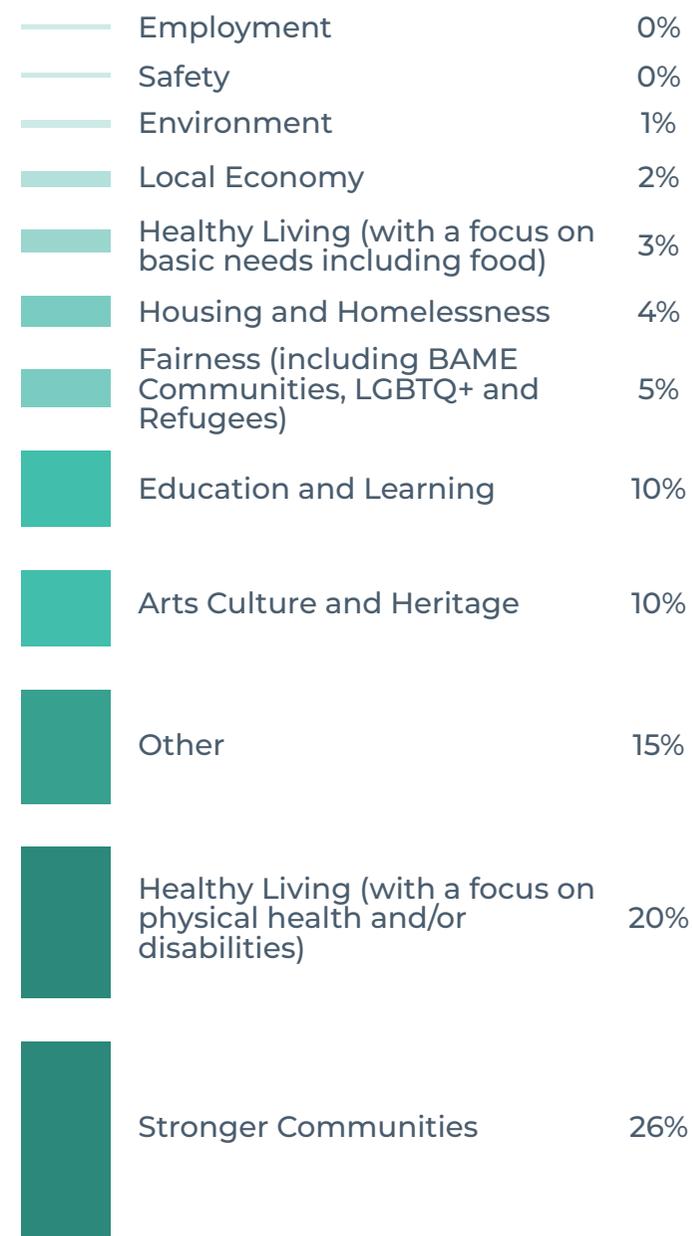
Organisations that completed the survey cover all six districts of Gloucestershire, with an even spread across those areas and more than a third of groups covering the whole county. **The majority of respondents worked in both rural and urban communities (63%)** with similar amounts of respondents working in predominantly rural communities to urban communities.

More than two thirds of our sample (68%) are involved in direct service delivery.

The primary beneficiary groups noted by community groups responding to the survey were:

- **Adults**
- **Children and young people**
- **Families**
- **People on low income**
- **People with mental health difficulties**

Community groups represented covered a range of sizes with turnover ranging from less than £50,000 to more than £1 million. **72% of organisations responding had an income of less than £500,000.**



WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS ON GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY GROUPS?

We know that the cost of living crisis has affected the income and expenditure levels of many charities. In order to deliver effective support we wished to understand more about which streams of income and expenditure have been affected the most.

Over 45% of survey respondents reported an overall decrease in fundraising income as a result of the crisis, and 65% reported an increase in revenue costs. In addition to the financial impact, many organisations have also experienced a dramatic increase in demand for their services.



Impact on Income

44%

Reduction in regular giving by individuals

61%

Some of the grants we would normally receive are reduced or withdrawn

45%

Overall, fundraising income has decreased



Impact on Expenditure

74%

Increase in costs of items purchased for beneficiaries

71%

Increase in energy bills

65%

Additional staff costs due to inflation

WILL OUR COMMUNITY GROUPS SURVIVE THE ECONOMIC CRISIS? A SYSTEM ALREADY UNDER STRAIN...



Please note: Data does not show 6% of responses which replied with 'other'.

Whilst over a third of the charities and community groups were confident of operating indefinitely; we are concerned about the support needed for groups (48%) who are doubtful about their longer-term sustainability, and especially those that are not confident of their survival beyond one year (9%).

These many and varied long-serving charitable organisations all provide unique support, delivering life changing and lifesaving work, either county-wide or in rural areas where access to services is already limited.

The work of these groups is not replicated elsewhere. Without them, many vulnerable individuals and families will have nowhere else to go.

The trends in Gloucestershire are similar to the national picture. In October 2023, the National Council of Voluntary Organisations reported that faced with a 'triple threat' of falling income, climbing costs, and increasing demand for services, **1 in 5 charities could be forced to close until things improve**, leaving people and communities at risk.³

A staggering 85% of charities predict that this winter will be as tough, or even tougher, than the last. And as many as 27% said they already believe they won't be able to meet the increasing demand for their services.³

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

“A place where people feel supported to live healthy and fulfilling lives, where there is affordable housing and employment within reach, and where we provide appropriate care for those who need it, where there is an emphasis on sharing strengths and ameliorating disadvantage across all sectors, where everyone feels valued and can contribute positively to their community.”

Annie Gould, Longfield Community Hospice



WHAT MAKES A STRONG COMMUNITY?

We asked people in our survey **“What makes a strong community?”**

A community which supports all within it from the strongest to the weakest, who celebrate each other's progress and victories, no matter how small, and who champion improving the lives of the community and the services which are provided to, and by, the community.

A community that welcomes all people, offering them the opportunities of joining in with the activities of the centre; enabling and supporting them enough to offer their own skills and the opportunity to learn new skills. Perhaps most importantly to meet their neighbours and communicate but also to have fun: Preventing isolation and loneliness.

Everyone working together for the benefit of a better place to live and work.



Fair Shares Community Allotment, Gloucester

People coming together/building a network to support and care for one another regardless of difference.

A strong community can be described as one where people feel heard, respected and acknowledged, one where people feel part of, and a sense of connection to the wider community and where they feel they have a place, a value and representation.

A community where everyone has equal access to basic needs and easy access to help when needed. Where those who struggle with everyday life are supported so that they do not fall into crisis.

An active vibrant and caring community that supports, represents and helps all of its members.

Common Themes:

- **Access to support**
- **Listening/having a voice**
- **Welcoming**
- **United**
- **Caring**
- **Supportive**



GL11 Community Hub, Gloucester



The Keepers community cafe, Wotton Under Edge

WHAT IS GLOUCESTERSHIRE DOING WELL AND NOT SO WELL?

We asked charities and community groups how well they feel communities in Gloucestershire are performing against a range of possible indicators for strong communities. While Gloucestershire is perceived to perform well against some, more work needs to be done against others, especially in terms of financial support to communities as income falls and costs increase.

DOING WELL

- 96%** agreed that Gloucestershire based community organisations are responding well to local needs
- 84%** agree that there is good accessibility of community spaces and events and activities
- 78%** believe that strong relationships exist between people in the community
- 53%** agree that there are opportunities for communities to be included in the decision making

We have engaged in fun activities funded by our Charity and parish council to promote working together and helping each other.

We provide facilities for very varied groups and encourage new groups to set up and use our facilities at reduced costs to help them to establish themselves.

NOT DOING WELL

- 54%** of respondents did not believe that public services are responding to local needs
- 47%** did not believe that funding from private and charitable sectors is available and that there is a sustainable local economy
- 46%** did not think that people trust in and feel represented by institutions

Greater recognition of, and funding for, local organisations who make a big difference to their community, especially when that community has major disadvantages is needed.

I do think that Gloucestershire gets a lot right, but we're also hindered by national priorities and governance in areas where, if we had more localised power we could affect more positive change.

LET'S TALK, LET'S LISTEN FEEDBACK

Our research isn't just about completing surveys, we create purposeful places, a space for local groups from our communities to share their thoughts and ideas and discuss the issues they are facing. We spoke to over 120 representatives from community groups in two online Let's Talk, Let's Listen sessions to complement our research.

“Let's Talk is very, very useful. It's excellent for sharing and finding out what is going on. It really is fabulous”

Susie Bromwich, Cotswold Friends



Asked ***“What makes a strong community?”***

Themes the group identified included:

- People working together
- Sharing common goals or interests
- Enabling access to services
- Listening and giving people a voice
- Having ways to share information
- Having a place to meet and feel safe
- Uniting diverse communities via food provision

Asked ***“What are the barriers and challenges?”***

Groups felt strongly about:

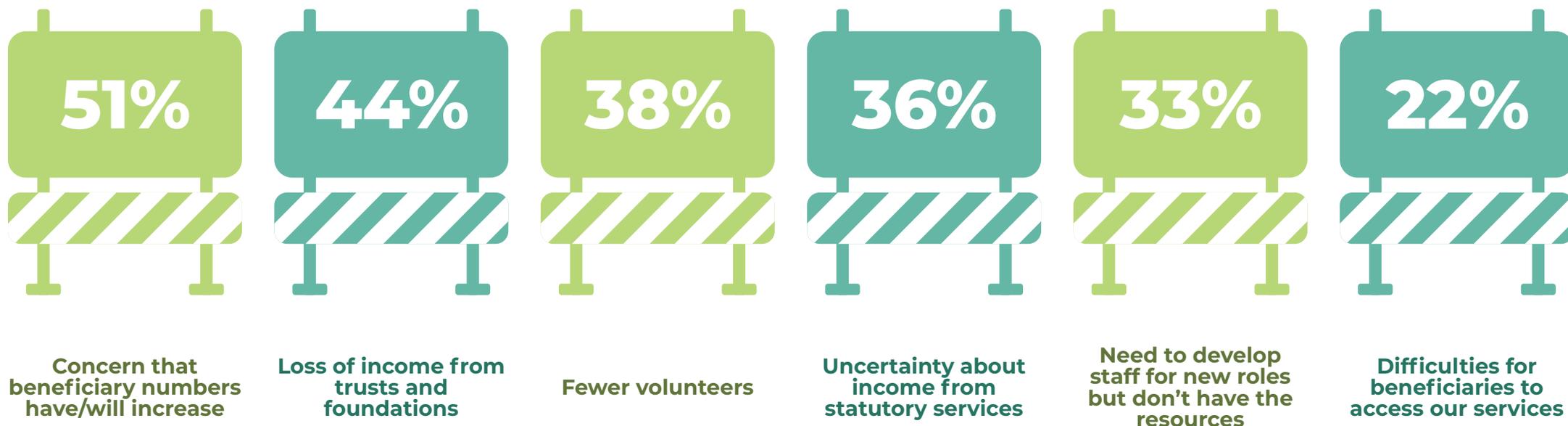
- Poor transportation links in Gloucestershire, particularly in rural areas affected by the withdrawal of public transport services
- Difficulties for some people in accessing support and the need to work together to deliver more easily accessible provision
- Access to funding
- Recruitment of staff and volunteers
- Low pay across the voluntary and charity sector
- A lack of understanding about the impact and value of our community organisations

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES?

Community groups across the county are working tirelessly but funding is being reduced whilst costs and demand for services continue to increase. Since our last report, the number of organisations who are concerned by the rise in demand for their services has increased from 38% to 51%.

"I think the sector as a whole and funders need to address community worker wages. Recruiting new staff is getting more and more difficult and I think one of those reasons is low wages. I think most people working in the community sector have other reasons for this work and I don't think we'll lose them, but we are simply not inspiring the next generation of community workers to step into roles."

Chair of a Gloucester-based community group and regular volunteer



WHAT ARE THE FUNDING NEEDS OF COMMUNITY GROUPS IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE?

Many of the barriers and challenges outlined by respondents are directly or indirectly related to funding sources. Our research also asked what type of funding was most and least needed.

TOP PRIORITY



58%

reported that funding for regular service delivery was most needed

SECOND PLACE



46%

costs to make up for funding shortfall in previous years

THIRD PLACE



40%

funding to deliver additional support created by the cost of living crisis

FOURTH PLACE



39%

infrastructure funding to help develop our staff

FIFTH PLACE



20%

one-off funding to help cover increased energy costs

"Income to GCF has decreased in the last three years from more than £1.7 million in 2020 to less than £524,000 in 2023. We are currently only able to support around half of applications received and often at a lower level than requested. GCF as a charity also needs to secure funding to support our own organisational operating costs. Survey respondents face similar needs with requests for funding for essential resources, unrestricted funding and sufficient salary and service funding being most popular." Talitha Nelson, GCF CEO.



Gloucestershire Gateway Trust,
Gloucester

LOOKING AHEAD

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

Margaret J Wheatley,
Writer and Community Enthusiast

WHAT ARE THE ANTICIPATED NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES IN THE FUTURE?

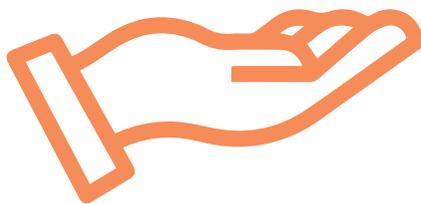
GCF support charities providing vital services across a wide range of social issues (as outlined on page 5 of this report). We wanted to ensure that our giving continues to align with the priority areas identified by those living and working in the area. We therefore asked participants what they think our funding priorities should be over the next 12 months.

Looking ahead, overwhelmingly 67% of Gloucestershire residents believed that the top priority area most in need of support is Mental Health, followed by Poverty and Isolation.

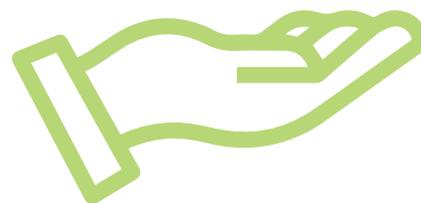
Mental Health and Isolation were also identified as top priorities in our *"Supporting the Solutions"* research which was conducted in 2020. This demonstrated the continued importance of these issues in the eyes of those on the ground. Poverty, identified as a new priority since the Cost of Living Crisis, has also significantly affected communities over the last two years.

Top priorities for our community groups:

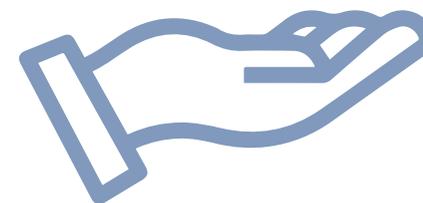
Mental Health



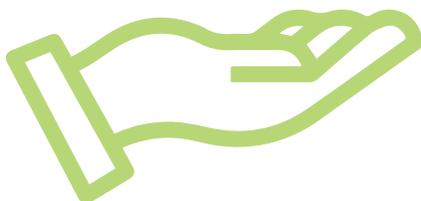
Poverty



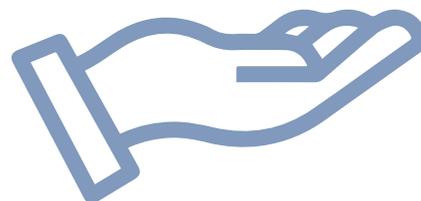
Isolation



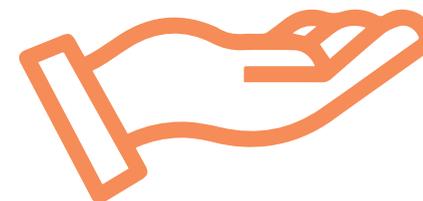
Housing and Homelessness



Family Breakdown



Reliance on Foodbanks



WHAT ELSE DO COMMUNITY GROUPS NEED?

The aim of the research was to better understand the needs of communities and the groups supporting them in the county. As well as grant funding, we wished to find out what non-financial support might also be needed so that our community groups are robust and supported to survive, sustain, and thrive in the current climate.

Significantly, the top priority was **support to form partnerships or work collaboratively** (as it was in our 2021 research) and a new priority was **access to pro bono services**.

Types of Support Requested



62%

Helping us to form partnerships and collaborations



55%

Linking organisations up with pro bono resources



42%

Advocating and shining a light on issues impacting our county



33%

Support with application writing and impact reporting

How should such support be delivered?



66%

In person group sessions and networking



56%

Regular information shared with email



51%

Themed meetings - focused on particular social issues



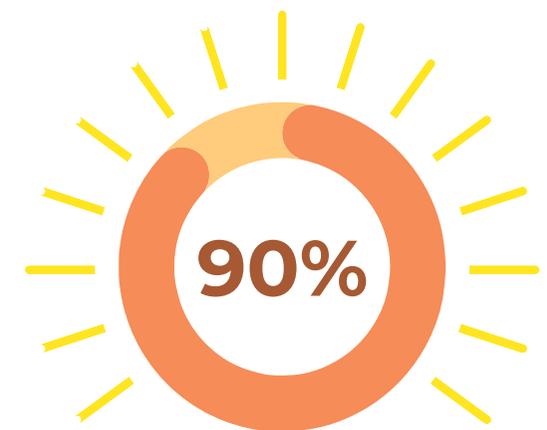
47%

Digital/online training and courses



46%

Online - Webinars, networking, Let's Talk, Let's Listen sessions



Participants believe GCF is well placed to deliver this type of support

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM OUR RESEARCH?

We have identified common themes for what is needed to build stronger communities, some of which are already working well in many areas of the county.

FUNDING

Community services and groups need adequate funding. Many run on a shoe-string and are seeing funding cuts.

Particular themes and needs identified by our research are:

- Accessible and proportionate processes
- Unrestricted funding for essential resources
- Funding to meet additional demand
- Funding to support staff recruitment, development and training
- Support for the most vulnerable people in our communities



GCF is committed to supporting these needs through our grantmaking and advocating for more flexible funding from fundholders and donors.

NON-FUNDING SUPPORT

In addition to funding, our research has identified various non-financial needs:

- Volunteering and staff support
- Networking and collaboration opportunities
- Building skills in the sector
- Advocating and publicising the needs and the achievements of Gloucestershire communities
- Representing the sector and building relationships with statutory services and influential people
- Working in a way that removes stigma and judgement

Whilst GCF is already supporting some of these needs, we encourage support from other organisations in Gloucestershire who can also make a difference.



GCF is committed to expanding our INVEST programme as well as our Let's Talk, Let's Listen events to continue bringing people together in purposeful spaces to enable networking, collaboration, as well as the sharing.

LOCAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Gloucestershire is a rural county where people face difficulties accessing services. Particular local needs identified by our research are:

- Accessible local services
- Transport provision
- Community spaces and places for meeting. For example, community centres, support cafes and community hubs



GCF is committed to supporting accessible community services through our funding as well as championing locally accessible services within our networks.



Talking Cafe Fairford and Lechlade

The Talking Café in Fairford and Lechlade is alleviating pressure on local GP surgeries by providing a social space for people who are feeling lonely or need help with trained staff available to direct them to appropriate support services.

Creative Sustainability, based in Stroud, have developed a strategic model for Community Hubs. This identifies eight key roles carried out by hub organisations, to bring together and share specialisms and expertise to support the wider community and to encourage systemic change:

“The strategic approach works on the premise that first we must understand how to develop a connected, resilient, and collaborative community sector and best practice collaboration between the public and community sectors. Only then will we be able to create inclusive, resilient communities that support mental, emotional, and physical health and wellbeing for everyone.” ⁴

GET INVOLVED

VITAL STEPS

The challenges facing our local communities are many, and local giving has never been more needed. From poverty, mental health, isolation and loneliness, housing and homelessness and climate change, there are huge challenges ahead that our community sector needs sustained support to meet.

Gloucestershire Community Foundation is here to help. We believe engaged local giving is enriching for everyone, a view that we know is shared by our fundholders, donors and supporters. Local giving builds strong communities and gives everyone the chance to access the services and support they need for a decent life. Together we can make a real difference to people's quality of life now and far into the future.



DONATE

Funding is essential to help our communities not just to survive but to thrive.

Giving back involves us all taking responsibility for our local charitable and community organisations, ensuring they have the funding they need to fill gaps, meet needs and prepare for future challenges.

From this report we can see, that if we do not act quickly, Gloucestershire is at risk of losing local charities providing vital services.

If you can donate funds, please think about offering unrestricted donations. These can be used to meet the changing needs of our communities as well as supporting an organisation's essential operating costs so that they can continue to serve our communities.

Choose to give through GCF because:

- We help you identify local charities, voluntary and community organisations to support, tackling issues that matter to you.
- We have extensive knowledge of voluntary, community and charitable organisations in the county.
- We have a proven track record in targeted, effective grant-making, with a robust and thorough application and due diligence process.
- We provide the information you need to make considered decisions and do the right thing with your money.
- You can be confident that your money will be spent wisely.

Gloucestershire Community Foundation has the knowledge to connect you with the organisations in your local area that are already making a difference and that could achieve so much more with your support.

**GIVE
TODAY**



Making an online donation is quick and easy using our QR code



PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS

We can provide a vital connection for you and your clients offering independent advice, guidance and information to those who want to make a difference locally.

With your customer insight combined with our expertise, there is a huge opportunity to enhance the service you provide to your clients and increase local charitable donations. Do ask your clients about their interests in philanthropic giving and feel free to contact us to help you or your clients to learn more.



VOLUNTEER

Not everybody can give money but your time and expertise can be just as precious.

There are many opportunities to support with such a breadth of skills interests and expertise within our local communities; from practical maintenance work, mentoring or advisory roles, to strategic leadership positions such as becoming a trustee.

Charities need the experience and time of people from all backgrounds.

A good place to start is www.govolunteerglos.org



SHARE AND TALK

Share this report as widely as possible, talk about the challenges that our communities are facing and bang the drum for organisations that are making a difference or have great ideas to bring their community together. Local groups are deeply embedded in communities and understand how best to support them.

Help establish a strong giving culture in Gloucestershire, by talking about your giving or volunteering with your family and friends and **make donating time and money fashionable.**

We want **Gloucestershire communities** to be top of the agenda, both when decisions are being made about issues that impact our county, and when people are thinking about how they can help.



CONTACT US

Please get in touch with our CEO Talitha Nelson at ceo@gloucestershirecf.org.uk if you would like to find out more about how you can give back to our communities.

REFERENCES

1. Loughborough University 2023, *Number of Gloucestershire children in poverty reaches over 41,000* [online] Planet Radio <https://planetradio.co.uk/greatest-hits/gloucestershire/news/gloucestershire-children-in-poverty/> [Accessed 8th November 2023]

2. CAF, 2023, *Charity Resilience Index: Charities forced to turn people away due to entrenched financial challenges* [online] <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/charity-resilience-index> [Accessed 8th November 2023]

3. Mark Whittaker, 2022, *PBE Reacts: Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2022* [online] Pro Bono Economics <https://www.probonoeconomics.com/news/pbe-reacts-chancellors-autumn-statement> [Accessed 8th November 2023]

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CONTACT

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Gloucestershire, GL51 0TJ
Registered Charity: 900239
Website: www.gloucestershirecf.org.uk

Giving Back - Talitha Nelson, CEO:
ceo@gloucestershirecf.org.uk

Grants and Funding - Sarah Sharma, Grants Manager: grantsmanager@gloucestershirecf.org.uk

DONATE TODAY



www.gloucestershirecf.org.uk/donate

THANK YOU

We would also like to thank our trustees, staff and volunteers who have contributed both to the development of this report and to our grant making and fundraising which are so vital in helping us to support local communities.

Of course, it wouldn't be possible for us to make a difference without all the wonderful charities and organisations in the county who provide essential support on the ground to Gloucestershire communities, helping some of the most vulnerable people in our county and making it a brighter place to live.

Thank you to CCLA for funding this research project as well as our major donors who financially support us to all keep going. Finally, thanks to those who made photo contributions, including fantastic photographers, Tom Cross and Reyaz Limalia.

RED SAVANNAH



CCLA
GOOD INVESTMENT



SOVEREIGN



THE
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